

**prologue\_**  
LIFESTYLE

The Magazine

## **Rana Florida on Upgrading Your Work and Life**

“You’ve been sitting in coach class for too long, it’s time to upgrade” - Rana Florida in UPGRADE



I read [Rana Florida's](#) best selling book "[UPGRADE](#)" when it first came out and loved it. I interviewed her because I felt her overall message resonated with what we are trying to do at Prologue Lifestyle. The best thing about her message is that it applies to anyone who wants to 'upgrade' themselves or any area of their life. What I didn't know before the interview was how much fun I was going to have talking to this dynamic and powerful woman who is a living example of what happens when you live life according to the key messages she shares in her book. Below are the highlights of our chat.

**Out of the 7 key principles in your book, which is the one you've had to work on the most yourself?**

**Rana:** Time. I learned that lesson from Andre Aggasi. He always has this concept of time slipping away. When I interviewed him I thought it was really interesting. A lot of us struggle with time and *time famine* is a real crisis and the goal in life is to be *time affluent*...to be rich in time. Everyday we are bombarded by things competing for our time and learning to prioritize time is key. And that's one thing I constantly work on.

**How have you built your muscle of saying no to the wrong things and yes to the right things?**

**Rana:** What I learned was to prioritize 'it' in one of those 3 buckets that I listed (in the book). 1) Have fun, everyone's definition of having fun is completely different 2) Be Productive: Work on yourself, your business, your career, your work, your education, learn and grow because that will give your life a sense of accomplishment and 3) Give Back: raising children, helping a charity or a non-profit, mentoring others. That really gives your life a sense of purpose and meaning so if the request doesn't fill one of those three buckets then that's when I turn it away and say no thank you.

**Out of those 7 key messages in your book, which is the one, that people are most likely to misinterpret?**

**Rana:** Collaboration. It is really about working with others and a lot of people think that when they make it to the top it's their job to be the leader and to dictate and to give orders. I learned from interviewing all these interesting, creative and special people that you really need to think about leadership as the all important task of inspiring, mentoring and setting a vision for your team. I think that's a really important message for people to rally around.

**Let's talk about taking risks, also one of the 7 key action steps. What's the biggest risk you've taken in your life?**

**Rana:** I was told my entire life to go to school, get good grades, go on to graduate school, land a high level corporate paying job and.. you know play it safe. And that's what I did. I got an MBA, I landed a high level corporate job just out of Washington, D.C.. One day when BMW called my then fiancé's office saying they wanted to create an entire advertising campaign based

around his theories of the creative class he thought it was a great opportunity for me to join the company as CEO and we had many discussions about this. I didn't want to leave my cushy job with the safety net of a steady pay-check, high salary, bonuses, an office and a whole staff to go into full on start-up mode...become an entrepreneur, build a team and have no budget. All of a sudden I took the leap after being taught my entire life that, that was risky so it's probably the biggest risk I took. And it definitely paid off because I really gained control over my time and schedule. That was really important to me.

**What did you learn about yourself from taking this risk?**

**Rana:** I like Facebook's model which is '*to move fast and to break things*' meaning it's okay to take a chance on several things at once. The reality with most of us is thinking that risk-taking takes a severe emotional toll, it causes fear, confusion, it can cause fatigue and a lot of us already think life is risky why do we want to rock the boat? So I learned that a lot of us are not rewarded for taking risk in our work or life.

I heard Steve Batiche who manages the applied science group at Microsoft speak at a conference. He said '*curiosity is stifled in a risk free environment*'. His job at Microsoft is really to encourage 'stupid' ideas. He gave an example of people laughing at the guy who invented seat belts. In the creative process things that may seem unlikely or out of the ordinary are only so because of your frame of reference. Your frame of reference is always changing. So an idea that may be absurd now won't seem so stupid when it comes of age. It's about getting out of your safely zone. Risk has a big pay off.

**Another favourite, from your 7 key principles is 'Embracing Failure'. In the entrepreneurial community there is a culture of embracing failure. Why is this important?**

**Rana:** As human beings we learn through trial and error. We really need to reset our definition of failure. Instead of looking at it as a set back or something we weren't able to accomplish look at it as a learning experience. A lot of the entrepreneurs I interviewed in the book say there is no such thing as failure. It is all part of the learning process. They believe that new discoveries and innovations come out of trial and error and it's really the fundamental method of problem solving.

***“Looking at ‘failure’ as a time of growth and self realization is important.”***

**Talk to us about your personal style, how have you developed your personal style?**

**Rana:** I always felt like I needed to wear the lady pants in corporate America and early on I felt like that wasn't me and I wasn't being myself. I came across challenges and I think that gave me more fuel to develop my personal style and to encourage my own way of looking because I really don't think that you have to wear a man's pant suit and have short hair to be a successful

intelligent leader in this world. I try to push the boundaries a little more just to reinforce the fact that it's okay to be yourself and still be an intelligent, accomplished and successful woman in the work place.

A lot of people look to the past as the right way of doing things when it's the future that holds the answers so I think if you can be a little courageous and still be a great contributor to the team in the work place you should take that leap.

### **What haven't we asked you that you'd like to be asked?**

**Rana:** Why are people living in a stage of what I call managed dissatisfaction? A lot of us don't think about how we can optimize our lives and we just kind of get stuck in that treadmill. We are doing okay and managing to get by but with the underlying hinges of unhappiness. Certain things like an annual vacation, a new car or a slight promotion at work lifts up our spirits for a while but before we know it that wave is crashed. Noble Prize Winning economist Herbert Simon introduced a theory 'satisficing'. He said a lot of us don't consider every option and every alternative and we often choose the first solution that works, sacrificing what's best for what still looks good enough.

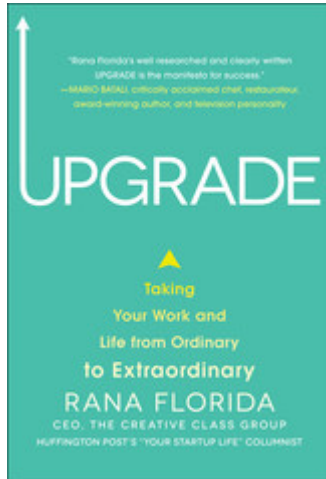
I firmly believe that it's never too late to envision an entirely different future and to simply upgrade your life. It's not about more time or more money. Anyone can do it, young or old, single or married.

***“It's not one magical thing that is going to change your life it's simple principles and simple things that you can do to actively upgrade your life.”***

### **Why did you choose the title UPGRADE?**

**Rana:** I am constantly trying to upgrade everything in my life from work to personal. I just felt that everyone wants an upgrade but doesn't know quite how to get it but it's easily accessible through small tweaks. Anyone can get an upgrade if you just focus your efforts a little and we all deserve an upgrade.

I enjoyed [UPGRADE](#) and highly recommend it. It's not a how-to business or self-help book, it's an enjoyable read for anyone who likes to get an upgrade.



- Elle

June 04, 2014 by Elham AyoubZadeh