

# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED

# "B" Your Best

Seven years ago, self proclaimed "tech geek" Ran Zilca was working at IBM's research division, developing the next voice biometrics technology. Little did he know at that time that he would soon start a chain reaction in his life starting with recruiting an all-star team of social scientists, founding the first company to release positive psychology and coaching apps, becoming a social scientist, going on a 6,000 mile solo motorcycle trip, and eventually completing coach training at the Institute for Life Coach Training and earning his Board Certified Coach credential. Today, as Chief Scientist of bLife, Inc, Ran has the opportunity to be a part of the team that formed bLife - the first iPad coaching app, utilizing his research knowledge, his personal transformation, and his coaching experience.

In this edition of "Technology Enhanced Coaching" we're looking at this unique app that Ran describes as a mixture of three interlocking components: Evidence-based behavioral science; a finely tuned user interface which incorporates algorithms replicating the natural coaching process; and a third element Ran refers to as "heart" - that which makes the sum total of all of the parts in some way personable and likeable. I find myself immediately

thinking of what makes Jobs' iPhone and other Apple creations so insanely likeable for so many people. Users know it when they see it, but they can't quite say exactly what makes it that way.

Considering his professional background, we might expect such a three-part, formulaic description from Zilca. After all, he holds a Masters of Science in Electrical Engineering from Tel Aviv University and a Bachelors of Science from Ben-Gurion University. He served six years in the Israeli Army specializing in the research and development of statistical and signal processing algorithms, followed by further work at IBM in New York where he worked in the area of biometrics and for the first time got interested in social science when researching the idea of a "mind print". Yes, a "mind print", like hand scanning or a fingerprint only, well, a tad more complex .... I'm thinking we'll be hearing more about this in the upcoming editions of Wired Magazine.

Yet it wasn't only deep, objective scientific rigor that led Ran to become a coach and focus on coaching technology. The rigor is certainly there, but it was his zest for life, that desire to "head out on the highway" and experience the fullness of a coast to coast adventure atop that beloved, two

# D COACHING

## LYLE LABARDEE



wheeled thing of beauty that gives every rider a roaring sense of freedom.

As Ran tells it, his desire to travel across the country on a motorcycle started out innocently enough, as it might for any of us reflecting on a mid-life passage. He just, literally, pushed a few buttons in one of the company's earlier apps; more specifically the buttons having to do with setting goals; buttons that, by the way happen to be wired to algorithmic equations incorporating motivational psychology. Ran was about to discover the power and effectiveness of that science. Before long, he found himself actually following through on each and every goal he set, going from having a remote dream right up to straddling that seat, firing it up, rolling off the kickstand and, well, heading out on the highway.

That was just the beginning. The idea turned into a personal video project and blog, called "Ride Of Your Life". Along the way Ran met with his partners

and collaborators, to have a deep discussion into the philosophy of happiness and inner peace: authors like Deepak Chopra, Byron Katie, Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky and Dr. Barbara Fredrickson. Like all personal life adventures, Ran's experience brought more than miles traveled and remarkable meetings, it brought awareness of a deeper sense of calling and purpose, to more fully and completely "be". To not only support the work of those involved in effecting positive change in the lives of others but to personally experience the dynamic growth and change that comes with living a full-on, fully-alive, on-purpose life; ultimately he decided to become a life coach.

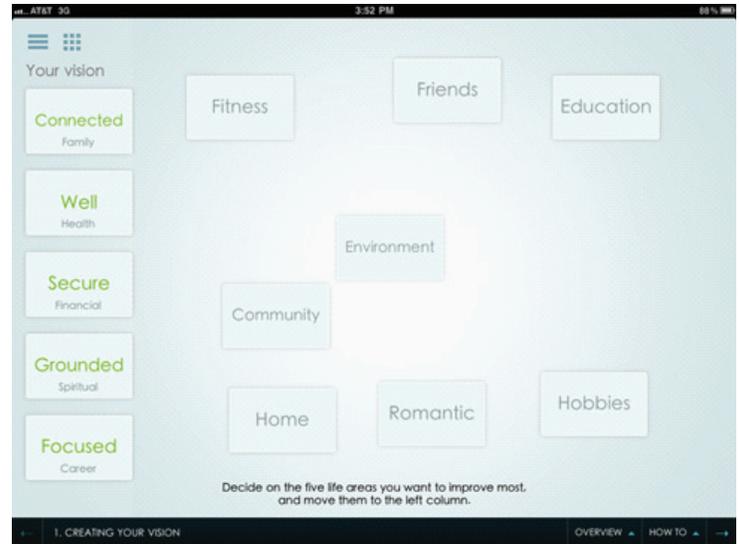
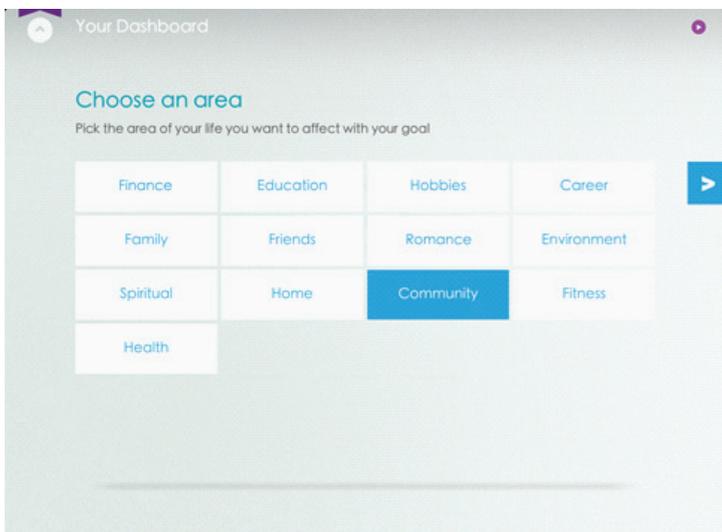
The bLife app is a product of the company's years of experience in the field and it delivers. Though its iPad-only functionality and interaction with Facebook might be a little intimidating for those not quite familiar with similar apps, or who otherwise spend more time on their laptop or iPhone than their iPad (like me), it quickly becomes comfortable. Once I started the program I found myself simultaneously engaged and energized. It's a place I found myself wanting to be. Ah, there's that "be" word again. Perhaps it's the soothing colors, the light and airy music that links each part of the program together for us like a secure guide rope that gently slips through our fingers as we travel along from one step to the next, or maybe it's the authentic and inspiring voice of program guide and motivational psychologist, Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson. Then again, maybe it's the way

# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED COACHING

the information is served up; in bite size pieces that lead us easily from one interactive exercise to the next. More than likely it's all of these elements and more.

Overall, bLife provides the user with a systematic, step-wise approach to developing life goals that are well-defined and derived through the application of motivational science: Thus the goals one finally arrives at are goals that are much more likely to promote authentic happiness and actually be achieved.

Upon logging in for the first time the user is introduced to the objective of bLife: to assist the user in creating goals consistent with their personal vision. The easy to use, drag and drop interface enables users to select and slide major life areas from the main part of the screen to the column on the left. Once a major life area is selected the user is then invited to start developing goals by writing words that help define what the user hopes to achieve relative to the major life area selected.

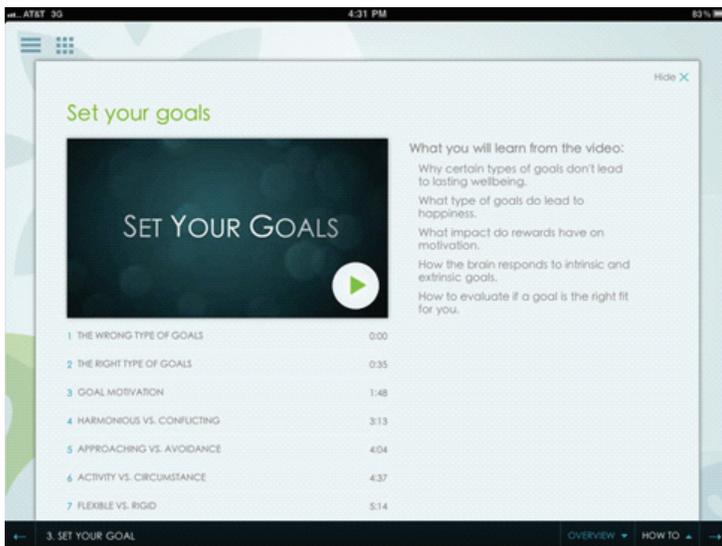


As the user builds their vision and related goals, they receive instruction along the way from Dr. Heidi Grant Halvorson. Dr. Halvorson delivers the science of motivation and goal setting in a brief and engaging way, and makes it easy for the user to grasp and apply the concept in the exercises that follow. In "Setting the Right Goals", Dr. Halvorson instructs users on the importance of being specific, and challenging themselves with

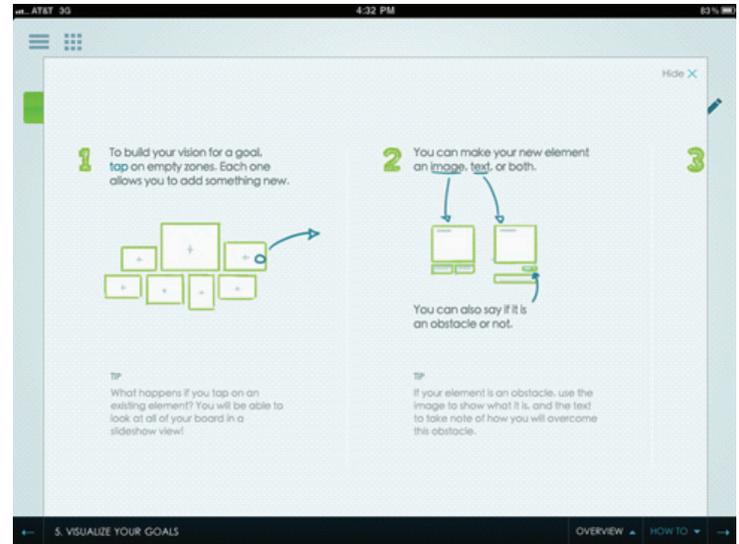
## continued

goals that go beyond what they might at first imagine to be possible to achieve.

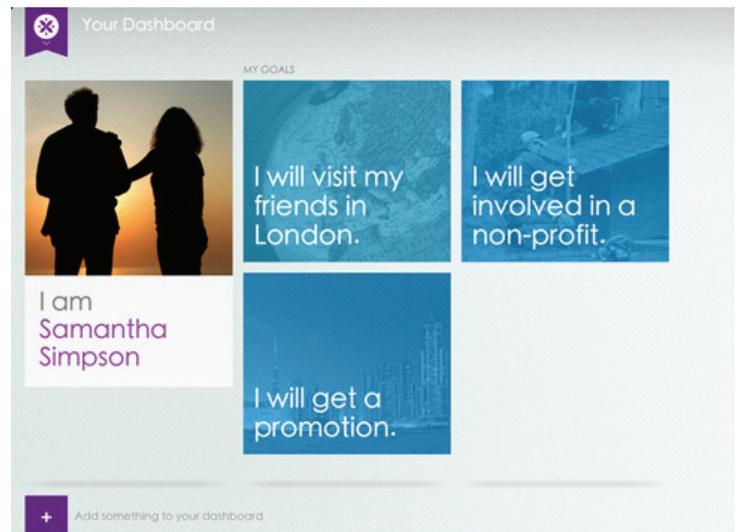
Now that the user is beginning to think about big and specific goals, Dr. Halvorson uses the section entitled “Set Your Goals” to provide additional insights into the qualitative aspects of goals. For example users learn that they are much more likely to achieve goals born out of intrinsic desires, than goals that are purely, externally, reward based.



In “Mindset for Success”, Dr. Halvorson helps users develop a mental way of approaching goal pursuit that leads to success. Here she points out that it is persistence, motivation and adaptability in the face of obstacles that enables one to overcome and ultimately achieve success. The interactive exercise that follows presents users with the opportunity to build a vision for their goal by uploading meaningful pictures and words. Pictures capture the vision of the goal and related obstacles, and text boxes provide a place to write strategies for overcoming obstacles.



Once pictures and messages have been uploaded the user is presented with a personalized visual representation of their goal and strategy for achieving success.



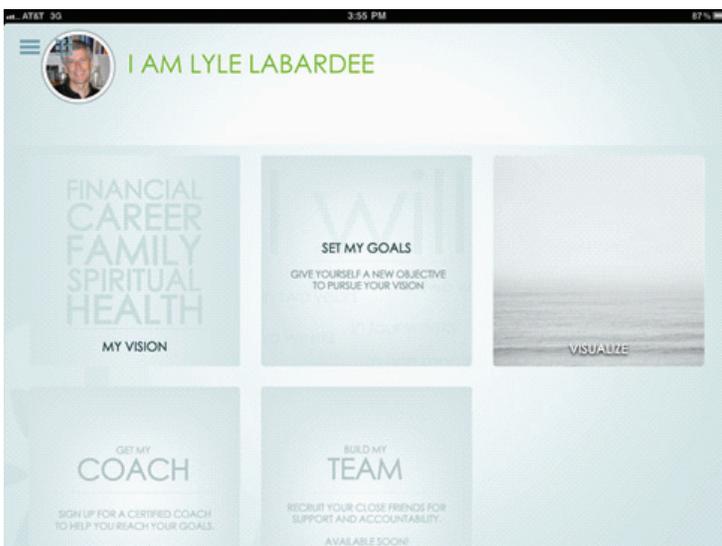
The specific, well developed goal is then reinforced in the “If/Then Plans” section. Here Dr. Halvorson provides guidance on how users can create and use if/then thinking to increase self control and stay on track in reaching their goals. Lastly, in

*continued*

# TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED COACHING

“Stay on Track”, Dr. Halvorson leaves the new goal setter with a final word about the importance of remembering the reason the goal was set in the first place. Here she reinforces the value and importance of goals based on intrinsic rewards as these are the ones that are most attainable and will ultimately contribute to one’s sense of authentic happiness.

Having completed the initial goal development phase of the bLife app, users are then presented with their personalized dashboard where they can see and update their vision, set goals, and visualize their goals in new ways. Users are also provided with a glimpse of what lies ahead on the bLife roadmap, specifically, the ability to make contact with a qualified coach and, or trusted team members for support and encouragement.



Overall, bLife does a great job of systematically guiding users through the development of personal goals that incorporate the ingredients

for success, and training users in how to develop and apply mental strategies reinforcing goal attainment.

To the extent the goal of the bLife team was to build an app that brings together evidence-based behavioral science, a finely-tuned user interface, and the essence of the interactive coaching process, it appears as though they’ve been pretty successful. I think users will find bLife extremely helpful in its delivery of the science around effective goal setting and a pleasure to interact with. This is an app with heart. ■

TO LEARN MORE about the bLife app go to: [www.myBlife.com](http://www.myBlife.com)

TO LEARN MORE about Ran and his personal coaching practice go to [www.RideOfYourLife.com](http://www.RideOfYourLife.com). Also, watch for Ran’s E-Series course on “Meaningful Goal Pursuit” slated for release at the [Institute for Life Coach Training](http://Institute for Life Coach Training) in the summer of 2012.

**Lyle Labardee, LPC, BCC, DCC**, is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Board Certified Coach who is credentialed in distance counseling. He serves as CEO of the Institute for Life Coach Training and its parent, [LifeOptions Group, Inc.](http://LifeOptions Group, Inc.) He is based in Michigan, USA and may be reached via [lyle@lifecoachtraining.com](mailto:lyle@lifecoachtraining.com).