Exploring the Role of the: Product Owner & Scrum Master in

LeSS

Gene Gendel, Certified Enterprise & Team Coach (CEC-CTC), Certified LeSS Trainer (CLT)

About Gene

Gene Gendel is an organizational design specialist, agile/lean coach and trainer, consultant and adviser to senior leadership. Almost 15 of 20+ years of his professional experience – Gene dedicated to working with companies of various sizes and lines of business, trying to help them improve internal dynamics, organizational structure and and becoming a better place to work. Gene engages at all organizational levels: senior- and mid-level management, teams and individuals. In his work, Gene uses various methods, tools and techniques to amplify learning by others and to ensure that people gain autonomy after Gene "coaches himself out of the job".

Gene is Certified Agile Coach (CAC), by Scrum Alliance – small elite community of Scrum Alliance Certified Enterprise Coaches (CEC). Today, he is the only CEC who resides in NY State. Gene is also one of the co-creators of Team Level Coaching Certifications (CTC) program for Scrum Alliance.

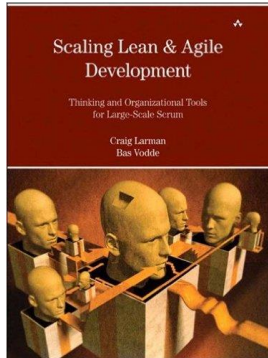Gene is also one of very few **Certified LeSS Trainers (CLT)** that are based in the United States.

He is also well-recognized blogger and publisher. He is the author of **Adaptive Ecosystems: Collection of Independent Essays About Agility** and co-author of:

- **Agile Coaching: Wisdom from Practitioners** (free pdf).
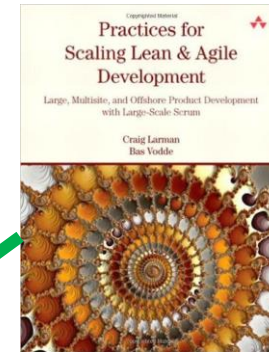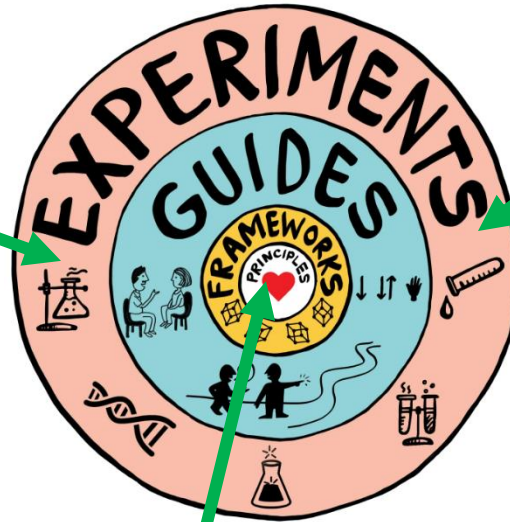- **Best Agile Articles of 2017 and 2018**

Gene significantly contributes to global and local agile communities, where he influences people by running workshops, webinars, seminars, panel discussions, lunch & learn, coaching retreats, professional gatherings and other events. While teaching and coaching Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) to organizations, Gene has built the biggest in world (today) LeSS meetup community that is used as a free educational hub about LeSS available to many people.
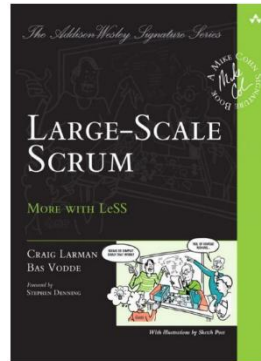
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LeSS – The Big & Picture History

2008

2010

2016

Rules ~ Frameworks

LeSS Was NOT defined, as a 'commercial product', to be sold to companies

Less is More: De-Scaling / Flattening

> **?** *What does "de-scaling" really mean?*

LeSS is was actually "**mis-labeled**" ☺…. And this requires some explanation…
LeSS is about Scaling Scrum by means of **Organizational De-scaling**…
And….

What LeSS Is and What It Is NOT?

LeSS is not: Many teams doing <u>their own</u> Scrum

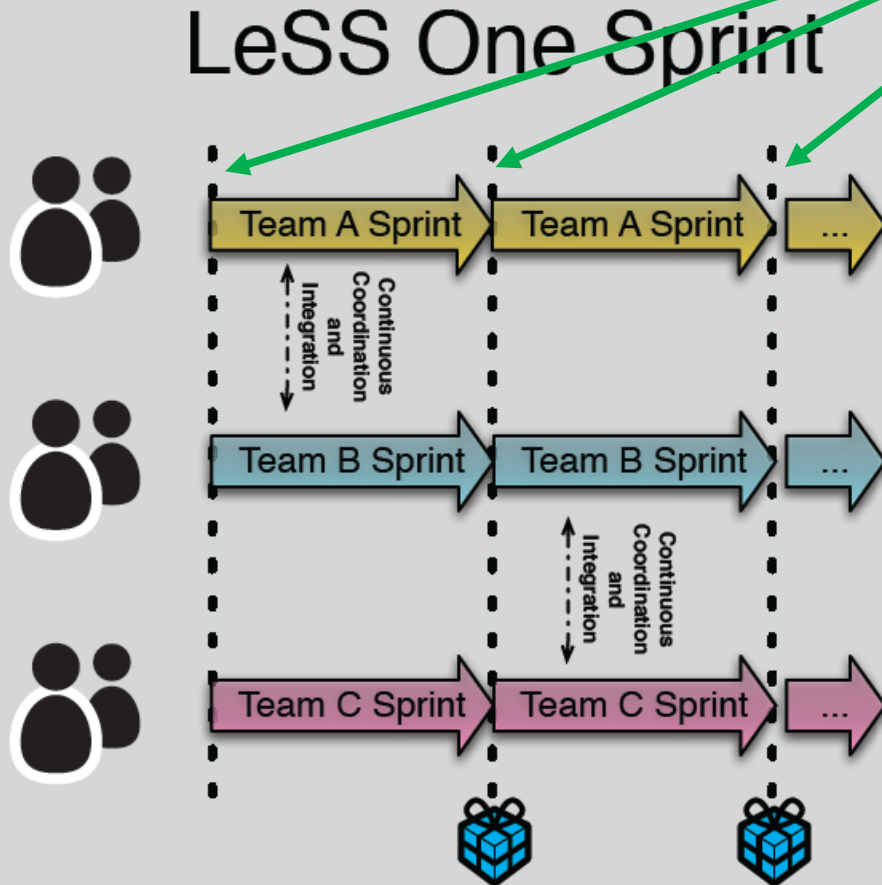**LeSS is:** Many teams <u>scrumming together</u> (on same Product)

YES

NO

Sprint Cadence in LeSS

Sprints are parallelized, not staggered

LeSS One Sprint

Team A Sprint | Team A Sprint | ...

Continuous Coordination and Integration

Team B Sprint | Team B Sprint | ...

Continuous Coordination and Integration

Team C Sprint | Team C Sprint | ...

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? What is advantage of parallel sprinting?

Sourced from LeSS training materials of C. Larman and B. Vodde

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Sprint Cadence in LeSS

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LeSS Adoption: Deep & Narrow

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LeSS Adoption, as a Sushi Roll

It is vital to appreciate that organizational agility cannot be achieved by a development team in isolation -- it is a system challenge for organizational redesign. Especially when you are interested in LeSS within an R&D department of thousands, where each product group may have 200 or 700 people distributed in two or five sites around the world. If an engineering team has the technical capacity to adapt or change quickly, but requirements management, legal practices, product management, HR policies, site strategies, and deployment processes all emphasize rigidity, conformance to original plans, conformance to the status quo, and slow practices, then how can there be real agility?

Source: https://www.scrumalliance.org/community/spotlight/craig-larman/june-2015/less-agile-or-less-agile

http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2017/08/agile-organization-as-a-sushi-roll/

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This May Not Be Obvious to Everyone

Organizational **STRUCTURE** –

is the **1st Order Factor** (Variable) that has impact on everything else inside **ECOSYSTEM**.

Everything else just follows behaviors, norms, values, principles, policies

This is what many unexperienced Agile Coaches fail to teach to Organizational Leaders ….

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This May Not Be Obvious to Everyone

Larman's Laws of Organizational Behavior

(Russian translation here)

After decades of observation and organizational consulting, here are *Larman's Laws of Organizational Behavior*. These are observations rather than laws to follow ;)

1. Organizations are implicitly optimized to avoid changing the status quo middle- and first-level manager and "specialist" positions & power structures.

2. As a corollary to (1), any change initiative will be reduced to redefining or overloading the new terminology to mean basically the same as status quo.

3. As a corollary to (1), any change initiative will be derided as "purist", "theoretical", "revolutionary", "religion", and "needing pragmatic customization for local concerns" — which deflects from addressing weaknesses and manager/specialist status quo.

4. As a corollary to (1), if after *changing the change* some managers and single-specialists are still displaced, they become "coaches/trainers" for the change, frequently reinforcing (2) and (3).

5. Culture follows structure.

Or, *Culture/behavior/mindset follows system & organizational design.* i.e., If you want to really change culture, you have to start with changing structure, because culture does not really change otherwise. By the way, this is an observation in large-scale; in small start ups, it's the reverse: structure follows culture (org design follows mindset).

And "culture follows structure" (in large scale) is why deep systems of thought such as *organizational learning* are not very sticky or impactful by themselves in large scale, and why systems such as Scrum (that have a strong focus on structural change at the start) tend to more quickly impact culture — if the structural change implications of Scrum are actually realized.

I discovered that the well-known systems-thinker/advocate John Seddon also observed this: "*Attempting to change an organization's culture is a folly, it always fails. Peoples' behavior (the culture) is a product of the system; when you change the system peoples' behavior changes.*"

Awareness of Agile "Theater"

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Product Owner
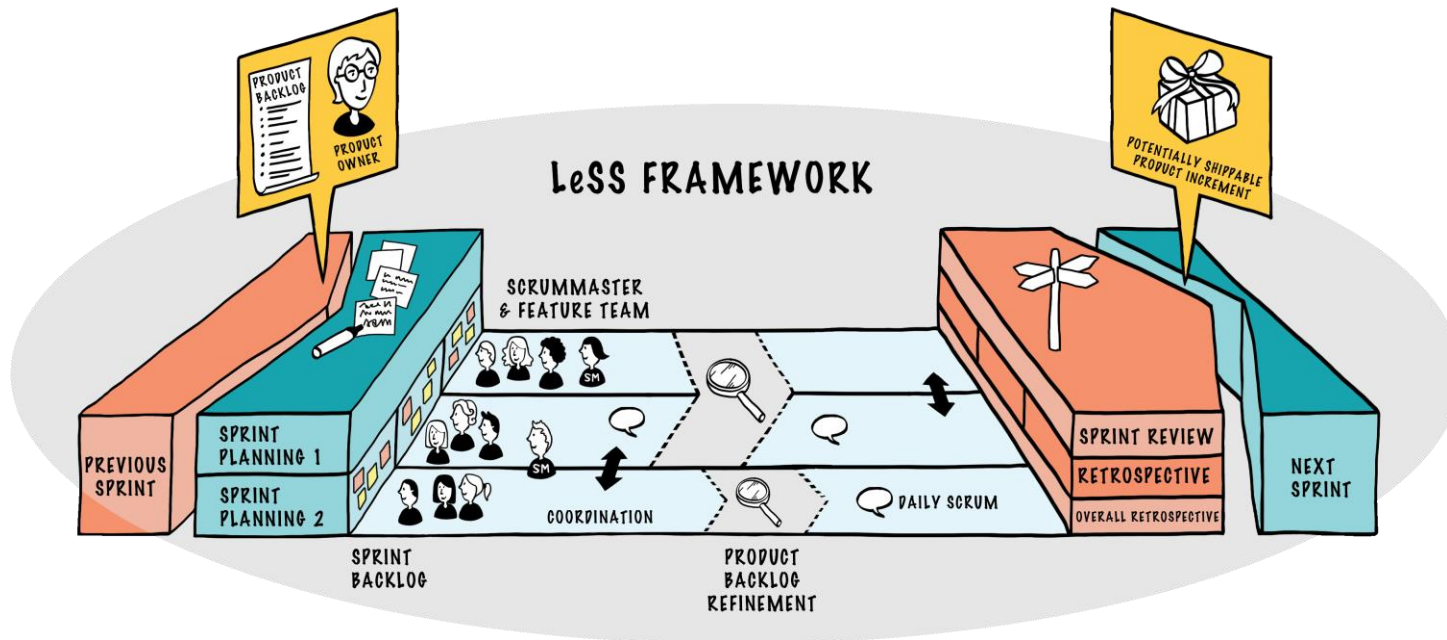
Local Optimization In Roles

Bad SQL
(in HR Database)

It is amazing if your company, creates the following important titles (marked in red) in its HR database, to support agile roles and careers. However, it is a sign of a deep systemic dysfunction and 'agile masquerade', if the following SQL queries are ran, as a batch job, overnight...☹.

Avoid This:

```
UPDATE table_employee
        SET table_employee.title = 'Senior Agile Coach'
WHERE table_employee.title = 'Senior Project Manager'
```

```
UPDATE table_employee
        SET table_employee.title = 'Scrum Master'
WHERE table_employee.title = 'Junior Project Manager'
```

```
UPDATE table_employee
        SET table_employee.title = 'Product Owner'
WHERE table_employee.title = 'Business Analyst'
```
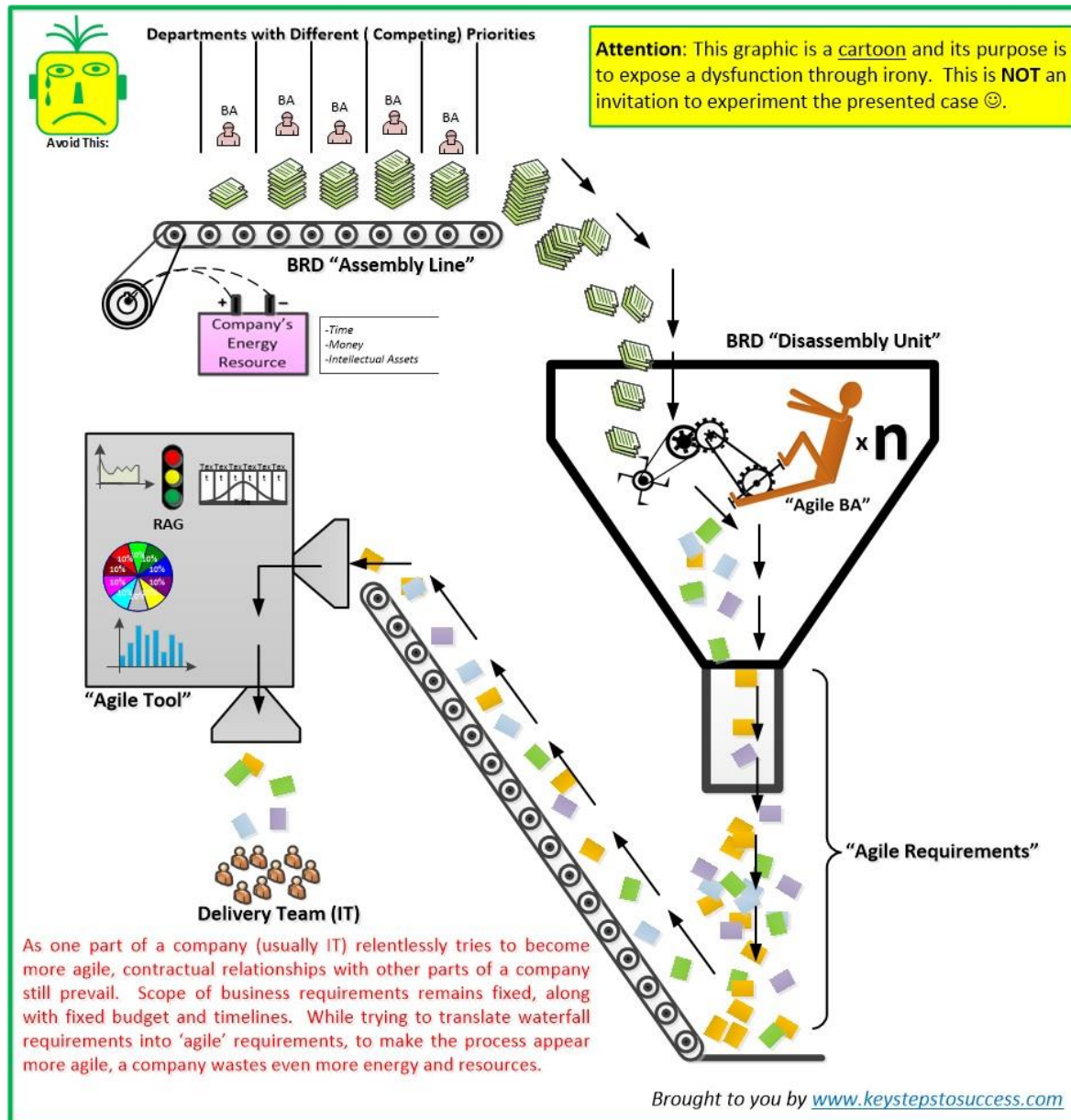
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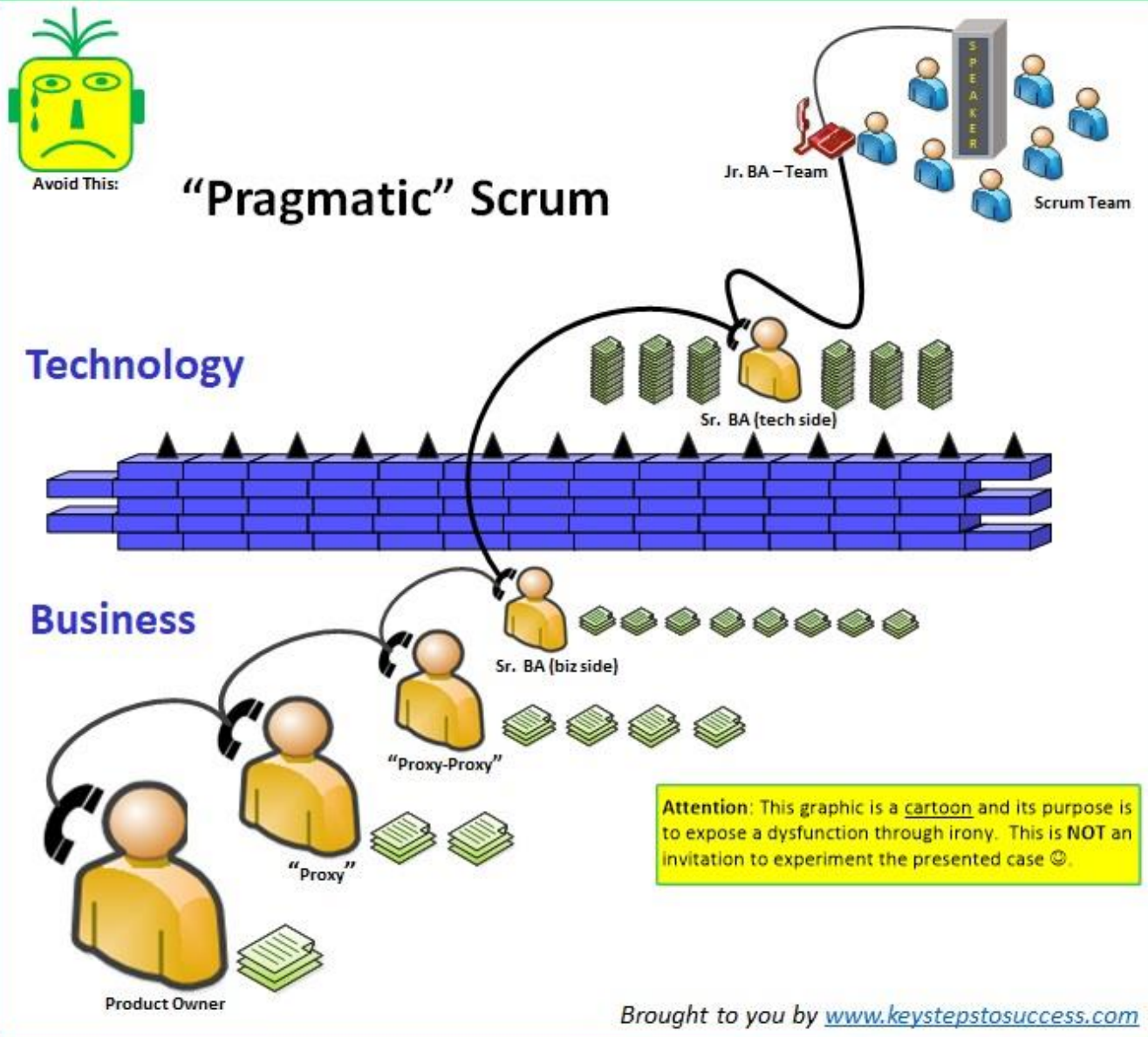
Local Optimization In Roles

Local Optimization In Roles

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Local Optimization In Roles

Tonight's Play in Agile Theater

Title: "*Rearranging Deck-Seats on Titanic*"

Summary: *Intermediate ~~Senior !!!! Business Analysts~~ Product Owners* 🥵
(proxies) talk to Users and write ~~BRDs~~ User Stories for developers, and
answer developers' questions

And arguments we hear:
- ➢ Efficient
- ➢ Productive
- ➢ Best
- ➢ Good
- ➢ Optimized
- ➢ Ideal
- ➢ Cost-Effective

Now we are Agile!!!

HELL YEAH!

Product Owner: 5 Relationships
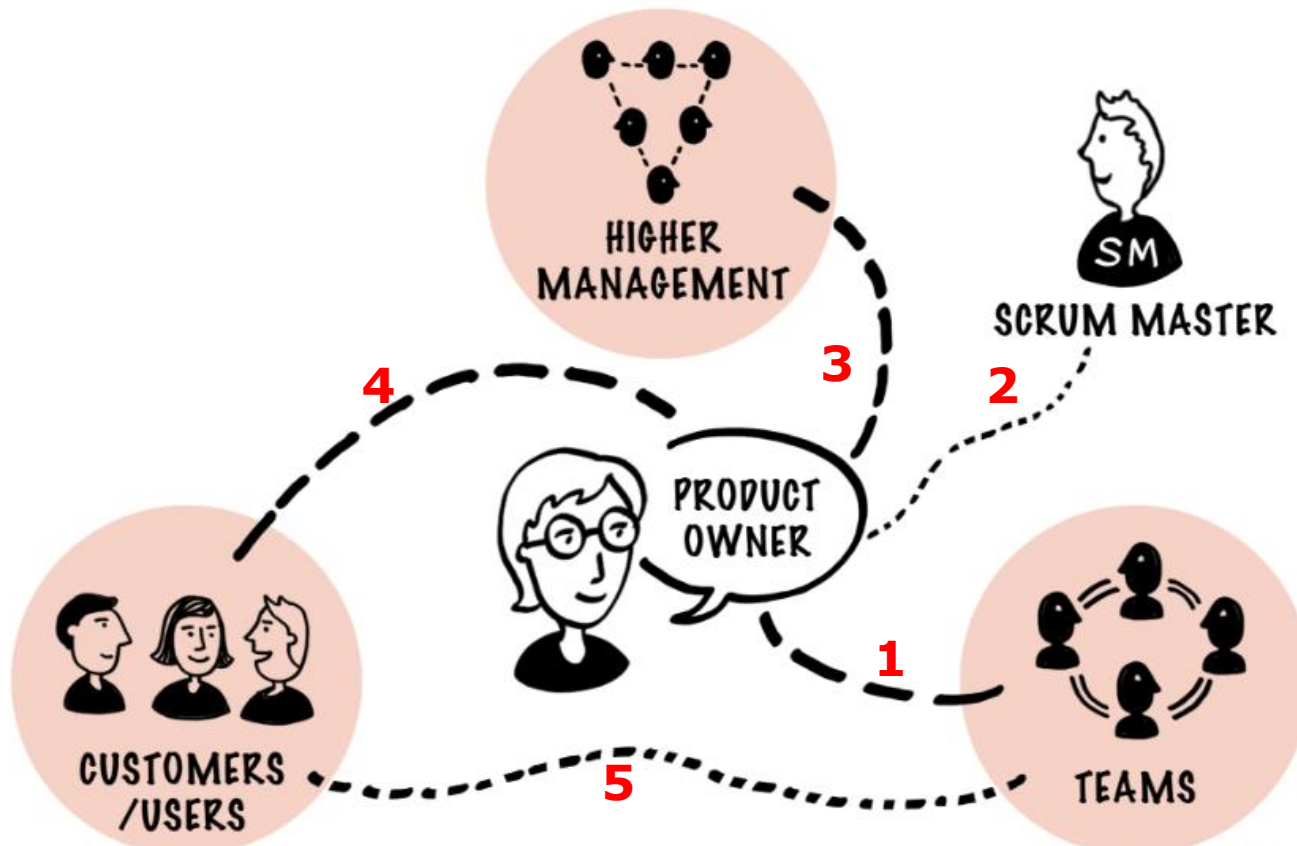
Sourced from LeSS training materials of C. Larman and B. Vodde

Product Owner: Prioritization vs. Clarification

Sourced from LeSS training materials of C. Larman and B. Vodde

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ScrumMaster

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Scrum Master

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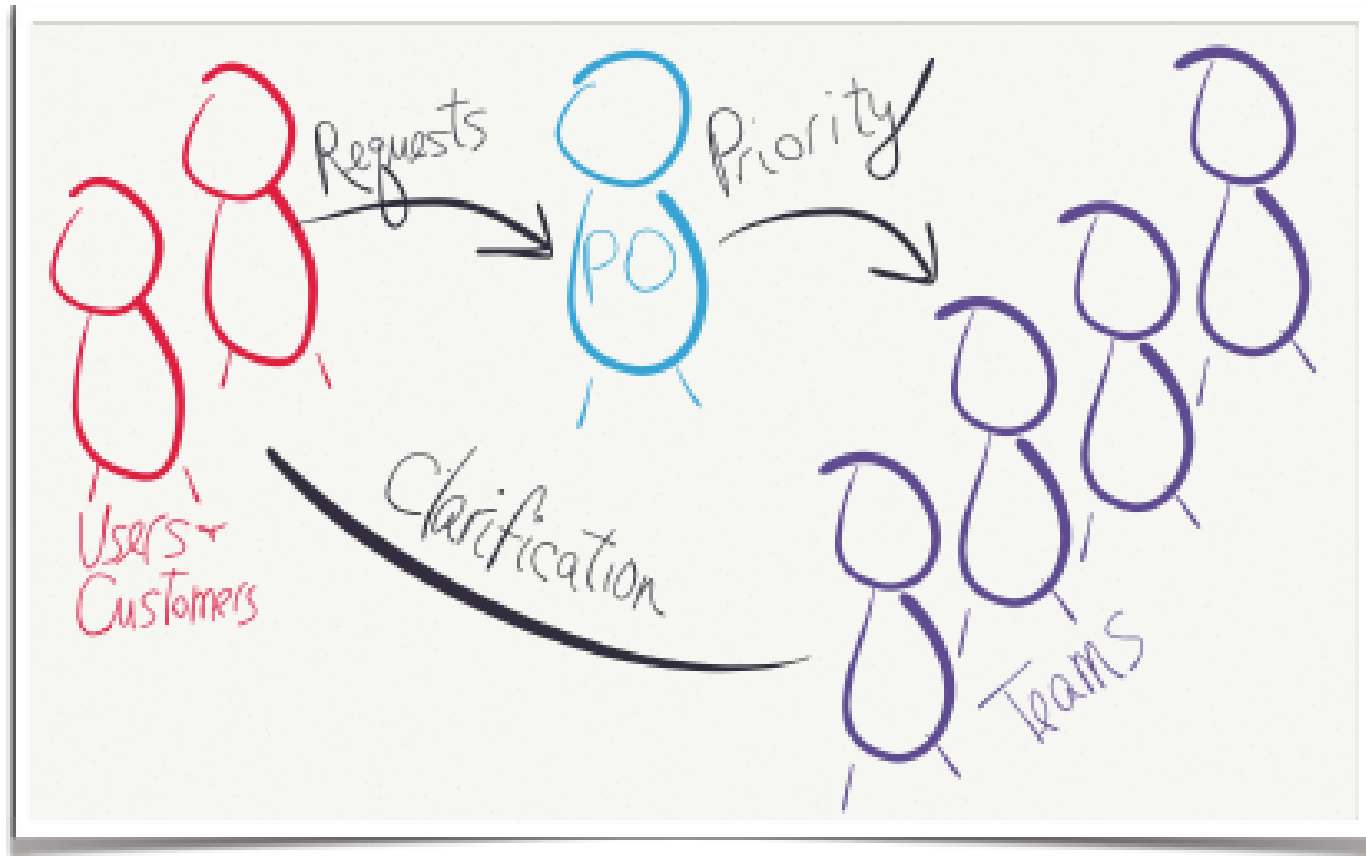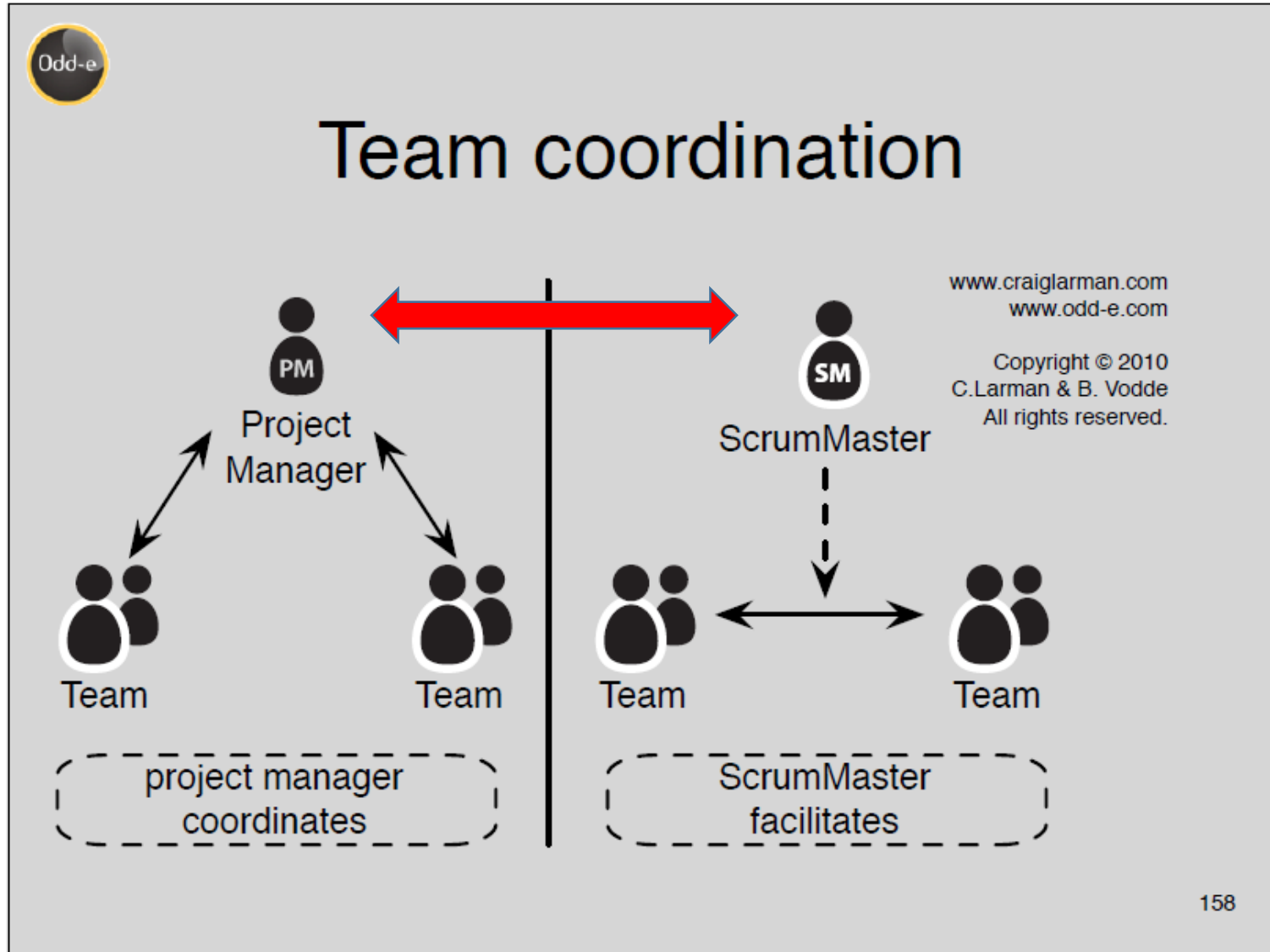
Scrum Master

Scrum Blind Date [with Mask Show]

Avoid This:

Scrum Team

Scrum Master

Project Manager

Smoke Screen

Product Owner

Business Analyst
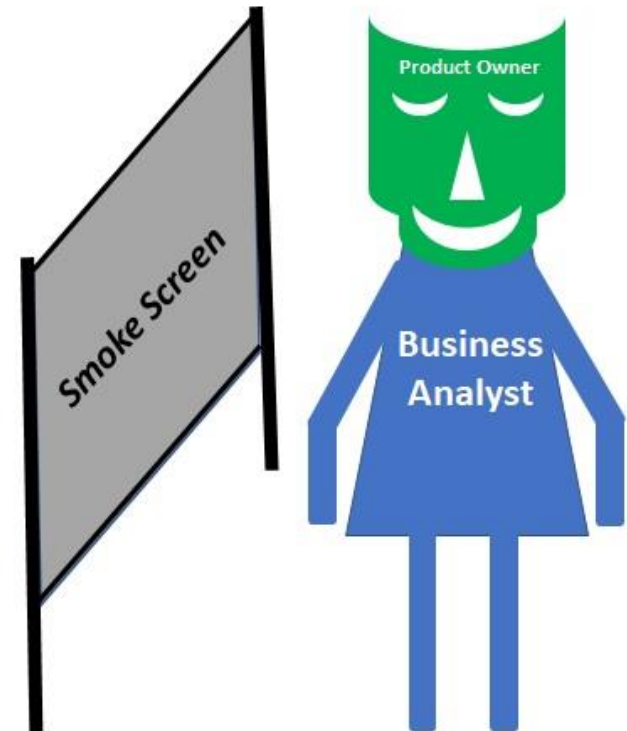
...while **Team** wishes to have a real **Scrum Master** (servant-leader, promoter and supporter of Scrum process), <u>AND</u> a real **Product Owner** (empowered person, responsible for management and prioritization of Product/Backlog)....

This is What Team Gets

...organization assigns any historically abundant, but frequently unsuitable candidates to fulfill these two important Scrum roles, and by doing so, adds challenges, dysfunctions and inefficiencies to the Scrum process... Such classic organizational mistakes, as internal contractual relationships, bureaucracy, overhead and local optimization, find their way into Scrum and adversely impact its dynamics...

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ScrumMaster

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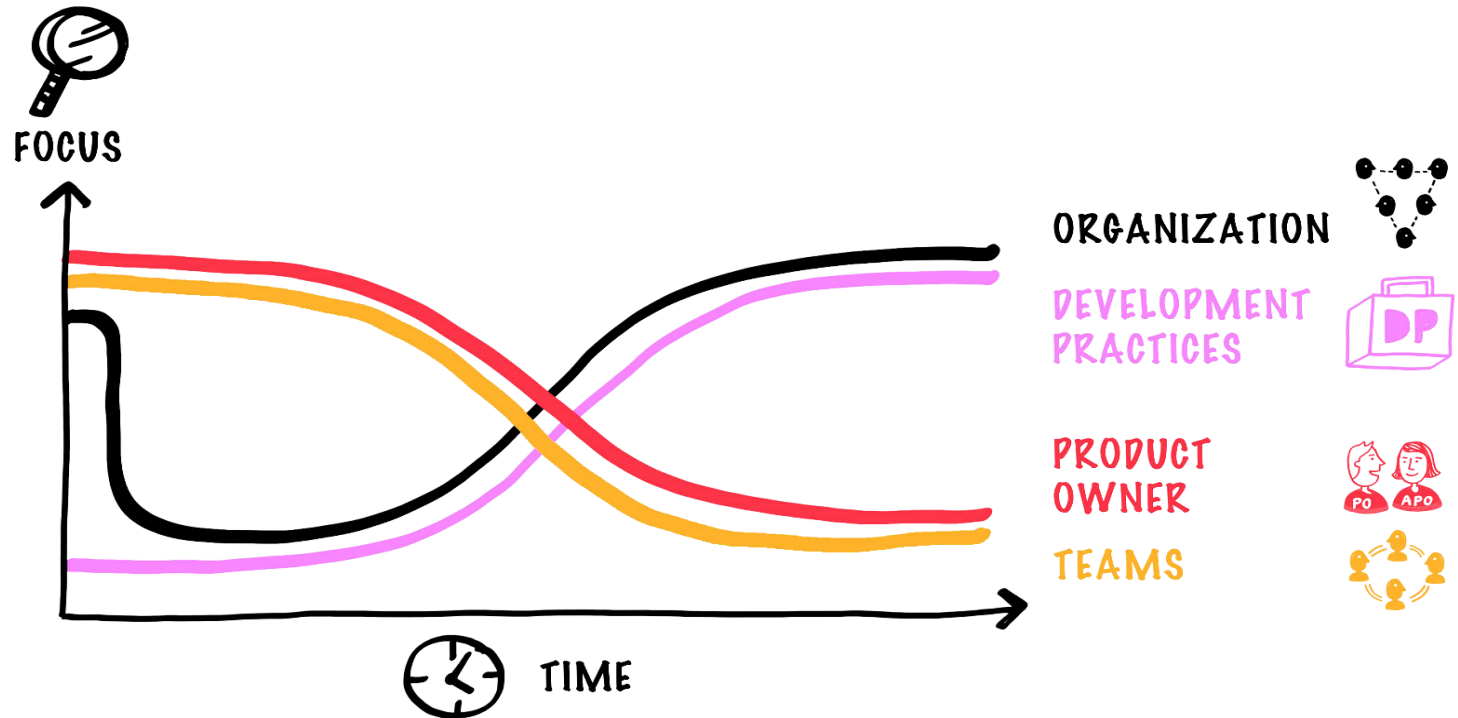
ScrumMaster

Misunderstood

The ScrumMaster role is a new one and often not understood by teams and organizations who are adopting Scrum. A frequent response is to make the "leftover people" the ScrumMasters. They might be nice people but often lack the right skills, motivation, and Scrum knowledge to be effective ScrumMasters. They morph the role into something else which then becomes accepted within the organization as the way a ScrumMaster should be. After all, the ScrumMaster should know if they're doing things correctly, right? Sometimes well-meaning ScrumMasters who are new to Scrum or not a good fit for the ScrumMaster role cause things to happen that are actually counter to Scrum and detrimental to Scrum adoption, thereby transforming them into anti-ScrumMasters.

Q: Is there **Career Path** for F/T Scrum Master?

Dedicated full-time role

In LeSS, the ScrumMaster role is vital. We've seen many organizations try part-time ScrumMasters, which usually leads to no ScrumMasters at all. This then affects the LeSS adoption enormously. In LeSS the ScrumMaster is a dedicated, full-time role in the same way that being a Scrum Team member is a dedicated, full-time role. Having said that, it is possible for one full-time ScrumMaster fill the role for up to three teams, depending on any number of factors.

Sourced from less.works

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Q & A

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Relationships in LeSS

Guide: TRY…. Keeping LeSS Huge Organizational Reporting Structure As Flat and Simple As Possible

Product Owner Team— Product Owner plus all Area Product Owners. Conceptually, the same as in a LeSS structure. In huge LeSS Huge, there are also APO Sub-Teams that are, essentially, what is Product Owner team is in LeSS. Each APO Sub-Team consists of Area Product Owner and customers/users that can help APO with clarification and other daily work (**NOT** departments of analysts, specification writers, UI/UX designers, or architects).

Head of Product Group - most likely, a traditional "head of product group". Whereas the whole group supports teams by Go See and help them remove obstacles and improve, Head of Product Group plays the *role of the line manager* of all the teams, whatever that is called in your organization. Product Owner Team members (including APO Sub-Teams) and all developers from teams in requirement areas, as well as people in other supportive organizational structures (e.g. support, 'undone' department, competence & coaching) -all report to Head of Product Group. **Note**: Since LeSS organizations don't have matrix structures, there are no dotted-line managers.
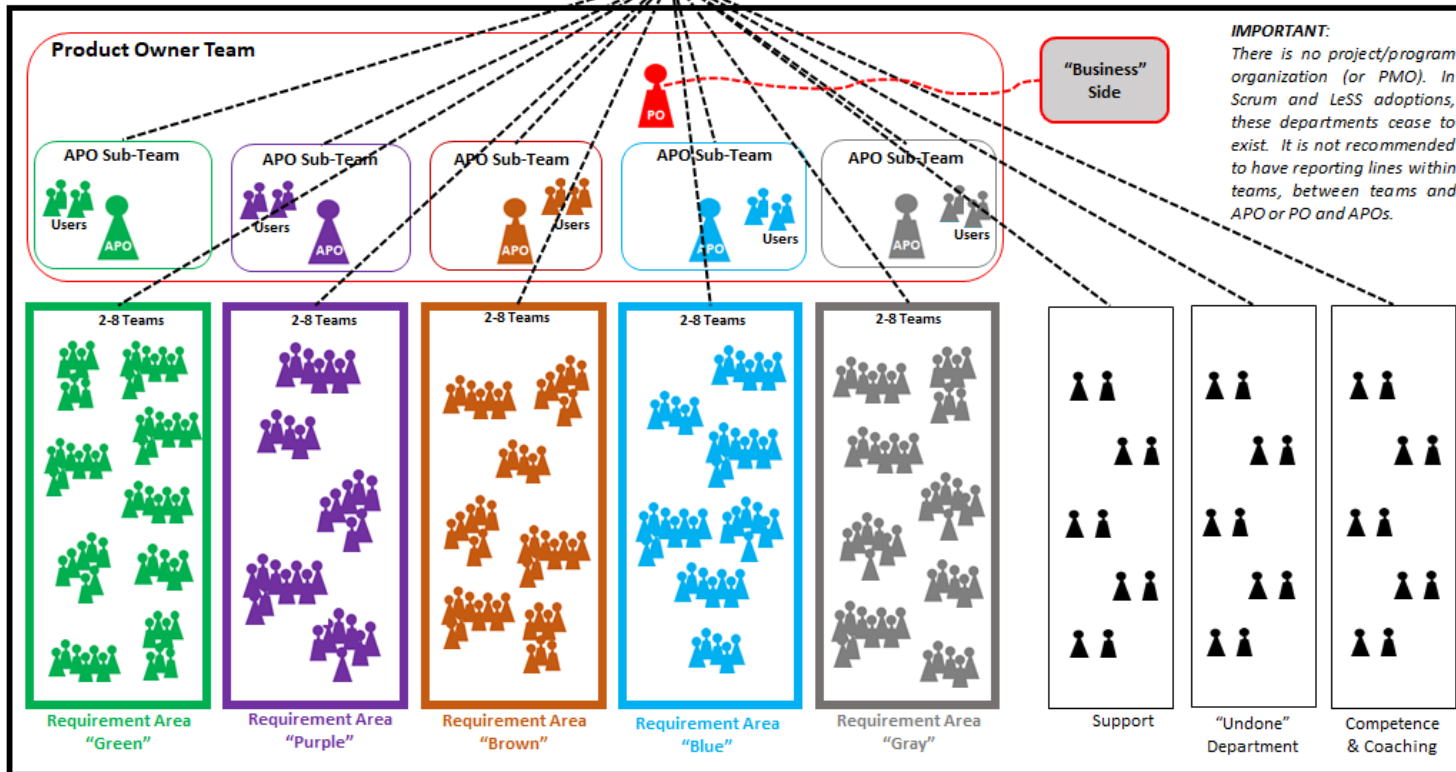
IMPORTANT:
There is no project/program organization (or PMO). In Scrum and LeSS adoptions, these departments cease to exist. It is not recommended to have reporting lines within teams, between teams and APO or PO and APOs.

Undone department - e.g. test, QA, architecture, or business analysts - they should not exist in the smaller LeSS framework groups; rather, they should be integrated into the teams. Undone department is still frequently seen, in some LeSS adoptions, as they often cross organizational boundaries. A goal in every LeSS adoption should be to remove an undone department.

Support - In a LeSS Huge organization, it typically centralizes some support because of the massive volume of work. Still, this department should be as small as possible with the attitude *"How can we help?"* rather than *"Take it this way!"* This department is less likely to exist in smaller LeSS organizations, where teams support each other without the need for a separate, centralized group.

Competence and Coaching (technical, organizational) - group consists of skillful practitioner-experts who actively Go See and observe how people work. They pair up and work with people to discover their training and coaching needs.

By Gene Gendel. 2020

Less is More

Scaling Organizational Adaptiveness (a.k.a. "Agility") with Large Scale Scrum (LeSS)

Organizational De-Scaling / Flattening

Organizational de-scaling (flattening) takes months and years to complete and from a high perspective, looks like a gradual process.

However, throughout this long process, there are many phases (bursts) of: comprehensive preparation, followed by a organizational "flipping".
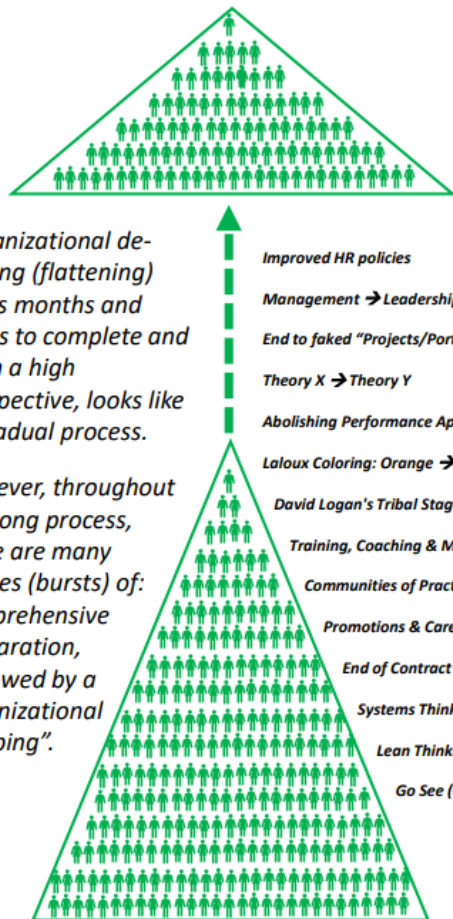
- Improved HR policies
- Management → Leadership
- End to faked "Projects/Portfolios"
- Theory X → Theory Y
- Abolishing Performance Appraisals
- Laloux Coloring: Orange → Green
- David Logan's Tribal Stage: 3 → 4
- Training, Coaching & Mentoring
- Communities of Practice
- Promotions & Career Paths
- End of Contract Game
- Systems Thinking
- Lean Thinking
- Go See (Gemba)

Diagram created by Gene Gendel

LeSS

Simplified (flatter) and **inverted** (senior leadership is in supportive function) **organizational design. System Optimization.** Reduction of: silos, hand-overs. Scrum is implemented by coordinated, feature-centric teams (2-8), building the same, widely defined Product/serving the same Product Owner. Scrum is the main building block of IT org. structure. Teams are collocated. Teams strive to 'own' their decisions, not 'rent' from others. Adoption of LeSS is "deep & narrow", not "broad and shallow"; no Big Bang transformation attempts.
Multi-site development - used for multiple locations. Reliance of technical **Mentoring** and **Communities.** No subsystem code ownership. Reduction of 'undone' work. Focus on **Customer value.** Support of Senior Leadership. **Involvement of HR,** supporting the concept of **job security, not role security.**

Transition from independent basic Scrum, performed by multiple teams to LeSS, is a desirable approach, when a product is widely defined and real Product Owner is identified

Scrum

Copy-paste scaling (no conscious scaling strategy) of Scrum throughout an organization: many teams doing their 'own' Scrum. Frequently manifested, when there is an internal competition between departments or company areas, on e.g. "who is going to have more scrum teams by e.g. end-of-year". True product definition is weak. Cases of using **Scrum for component-centric development** are frequent (often, the result of trying to meet goals of agile transformation (% annually), set at enterprise level. This results in massive integration problems that need to be resolved by adding "integration/stabilization" sprints. Importance of **Scrum dynamics and roles is viewed as secondary,** to existing organizational structures and blueprints. Too many single-specialty experts and very few T-shaped workers. **No meaningful HR changes.**

Waterfall

Complex organizational design. Domains of single-function expertise, ownership and control. Numerous silos, hand-offs and translational layers between component teams, single-function specialty groups, and technology and business, overall. **Internal contracts and blame-shifting** strongly prevail. Long cycle "from concept to cash". **Local optimization** by single-specialty workers/departments. **Theory X management** – is the primary way to manage/treat individuals. **HR** – putting a lot of emphasis on performance appraisals and individual ownership; manipulating workers with **subjective bonuses;** fostering an environment of **internal competition** and **"I am the best and you are not"** attitude. Weak definition of product value, from a stand-point of a paying customer. Manifestation of Larman's Laws of Organizational Behavior.

Scaling Scrum

Waterfall:
Requirements → Design → Development → Testing → Deployment
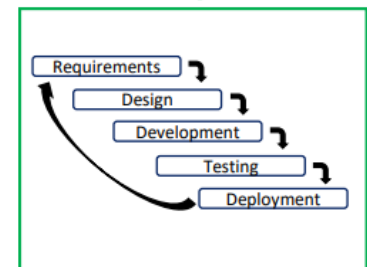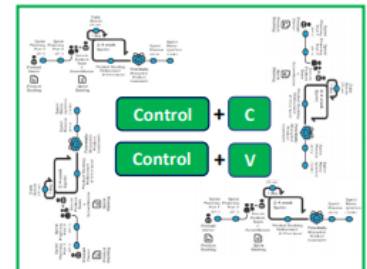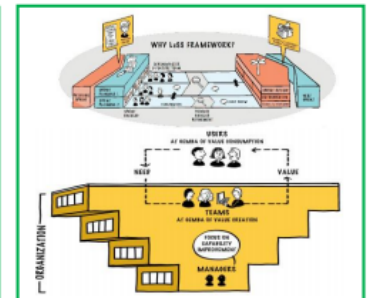
Graphics are courtesy of https://less.works

Source: http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/scrum_scaling_org_descaling-1.pdf

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