

LeSS - a descaling framework

Presented @ Agile-Lean Ireland MeetUp

May 18, 2020



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.

<http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/>

Assets To Consider

- <https://less.works/>
- gg_nyc@yahoo.com (underscore)
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ggnyc/>
- https://join.slack.com/t/kstsconsulting/shared_invite/zt-dr3bqtxg-HFX6Ke1~AdbIEOIUJY0gEg (You are welcome to Gene's free Slack channel – ask questions about LeSS)
- <https://www.meetup.com/Large-Scale-Scrum-LeSS-in-NYC/>
- **LeSS On-Line Training**
 - [5/20-22 Certified LeSS Basics](#)
 - [5/25-27 \(12 PM EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)
 - [5/25-27 \(7 PM EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)
 - [Summary Page \(list of all upcoming classes\)](#)



Synopsis

Details

Although LeSS is a scaling framework, in reality it requires organizational de-scaling

It is also, organizational design framework that helps to address core elements of organizational design: HR policies, finance/budgeting, vendor management, site strategies - areas that are not too comfortable for many companies to address.

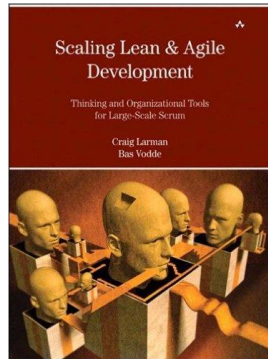
System and Lean thinking drive understanding of LeSS.

LeSS is not about: 'best practices', maturity metrics, RAGs, KPIs, tools, and operating models.

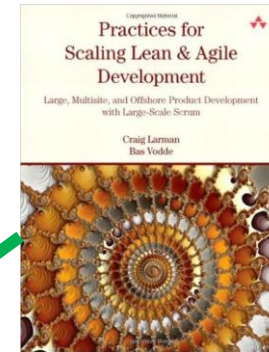
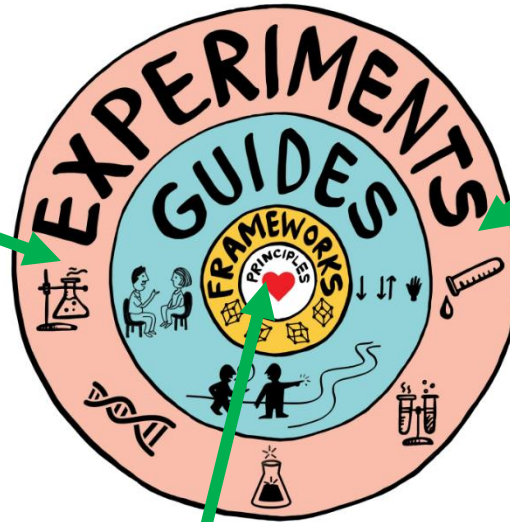
LeSS 3 adoption principles are:

1. Deep and Narrow (not broad and shallow)
2. Top - Bottom + Bottom - Up.
3. By Volunteering only

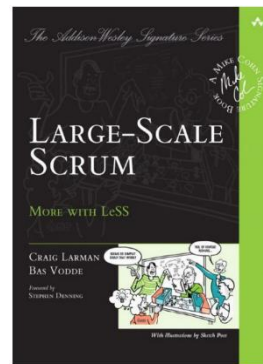
LeSS – The Big & Picture History



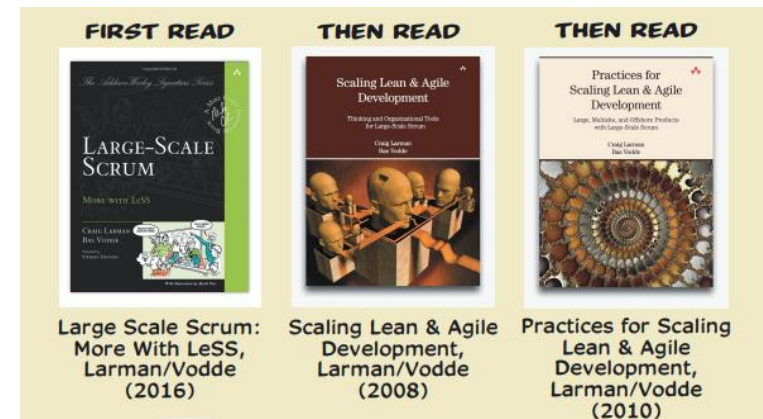
2008



2010



2016



<https://seattlecscrum.com/downloads/Why-Scrum-Isnt-Making-Your-Company-Very-Agile-v2.pdf>

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: culture, mindset, behaviors, norms, values, processes, policies

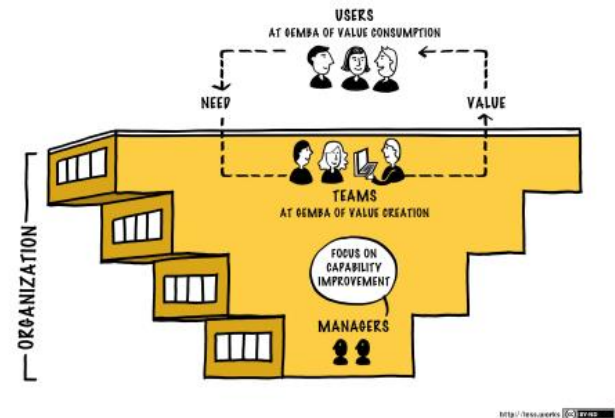
This is what some less experienced agile coaches do not stress, when they coach senior management 😞

Three (3) Adoption Principles of LeSS

➤ Deep and narrow over broad and shallow

➤ Top-down and bottom-up

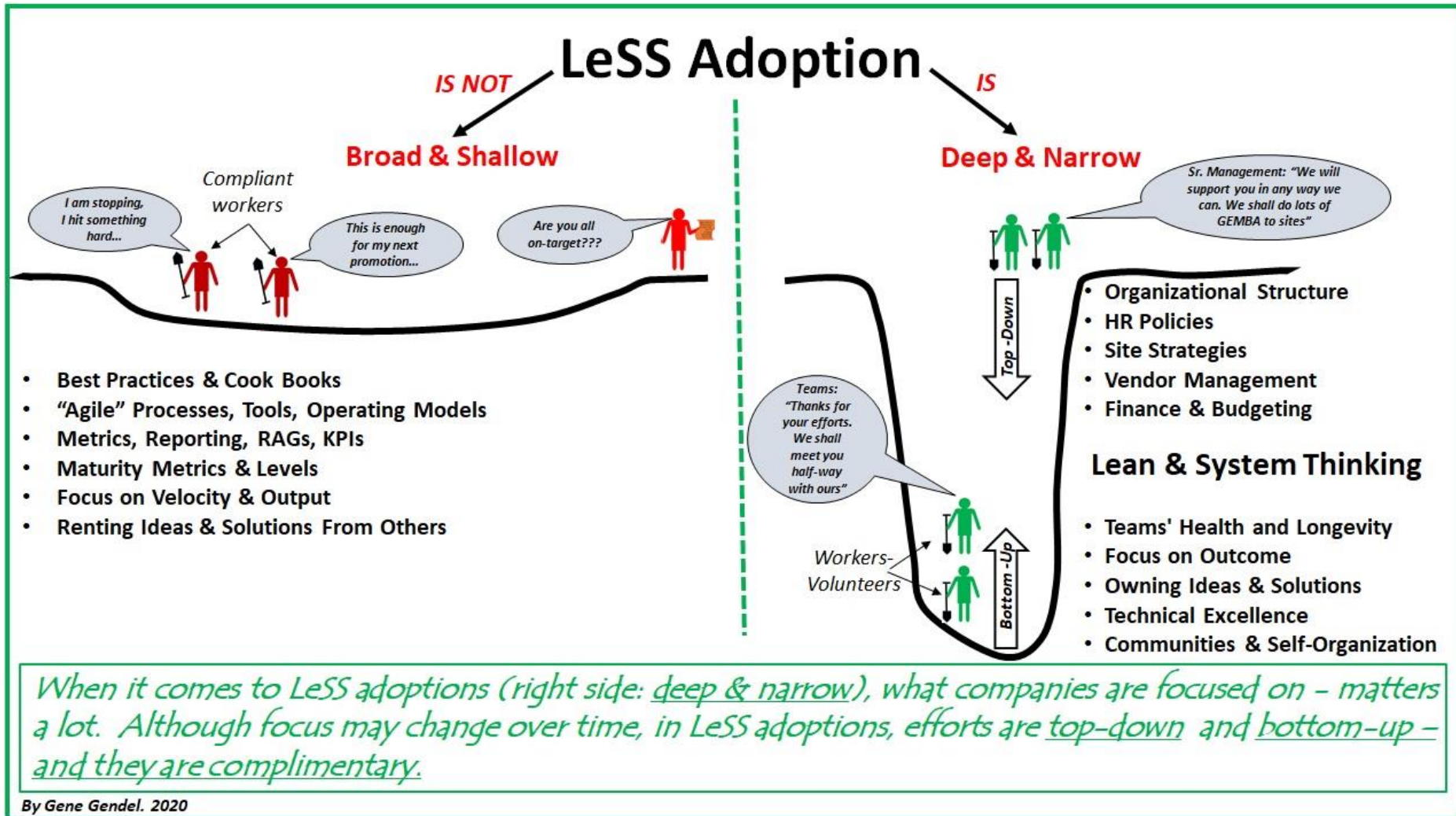
➤ Use volunteering



Deep & Narrow VS. Broad & Shallow

Top → Bottom & Bottom → Up

Superficial



Broad & Shallow

Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com



**Avoid
(Deck – Driven Transformations)**

DDT

Knowledge retention and quality of learning are inversely proportional to thickness of a power point 'agile transformation' deck and directly proportional to font size used in a deck ;)

Broad & Shallow



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... ☹️*

```
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'
```

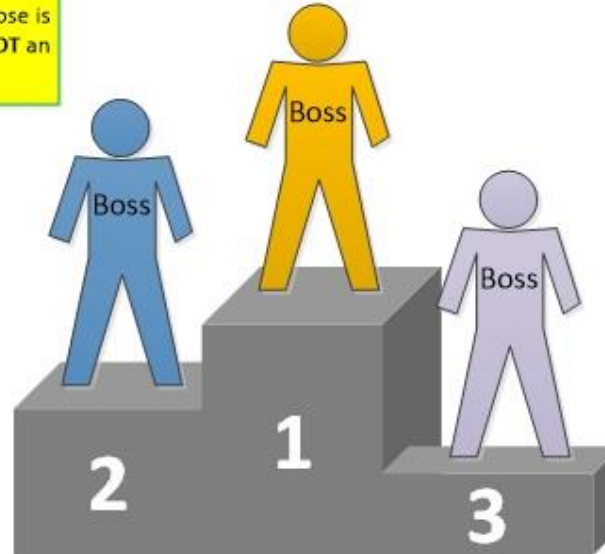
Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Broad & Shallow

Attention: This graphic is a cartoon and its purpose is to expose a dysfunction through irony. This is **NOT** an invitation to experiment with this approach ☹️.



Agile “Semi-Finals” Race



EoY Agility: 45.373% 67.924% 37.184%

Agile Maturity Level: 12.3455 16.9729 7.1223

Rewards:

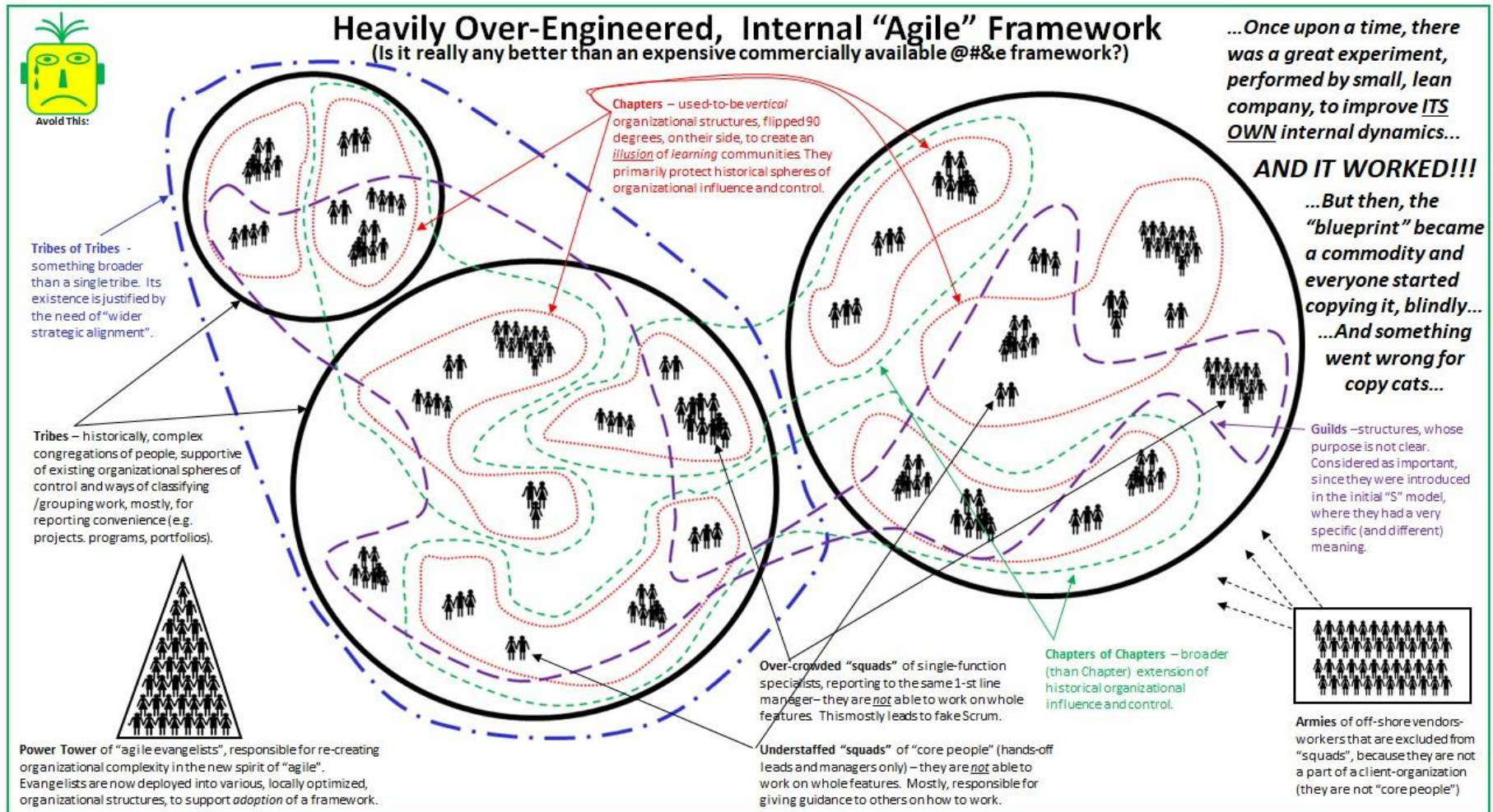


Organizational Agility Meter:

4 5 . 3 7 3 9 9 4 %

Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Broad & Shallow



Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Deep & Narrow | Top ↔ Bottom

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/>

Deep & Narrow | Top ↔ Bottom

AGILE CONTRACTS PRIMER

Derived from the book...

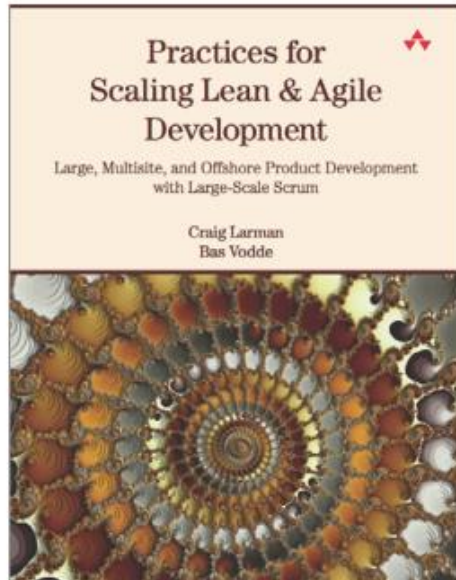
*Practices for Scaling Lean & Agile Development:
Large, Multisite, & Offshore Product Development with Large-Scale Scrum*

by Tom Arbogast, Craig Larman, and Bas Vodde

Version 5

Please send us comments for future versions, at www.agilecontracts.org.

Note: Check website for latest version; share the URL (rather than file) to keep up-to-date.



1	Introduction	1
2	Large-Scale Scrum	9
	Action Tools	
3	Test	23
4	Product Management	99
5	Planning	155
6	Coordination	189
7	Requirements & PBIs	215
8	Design & Architecture	281
9	Legacy Code	333
10	Continuous Integration	351
11	Inspect & Adapt	373
12	Multisite	413
13	Offshore	445
14	Contracts	499 ←

Deep & Narrow | Top ↔ Bottom



- **Book Summaries**

- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2016/08/implementing-beyond-budgeting/>
- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2016/02/quotes-from-get-rid-of-the-performance-review-how-companies-can-stop-intimidating-start-managing-and-focus-on-what-really-matters-by-culbert-samuel-a-laurence-root/>
- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2016/02/quotes-from-punished-by-rewards-the-trouble-with-gold-stars-incentive-plans-as-praise-and-other-bribes-by-alfie-cohn/>

- **Proper Scaling of Scrum and Dynamic Financial Forecasting**

- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/2018/02/proper-scaling-of-scrum-and-dynamic-financial-forecasting/>

- **Gap Between Science and Business**

- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/gap-between-science-and-business/>

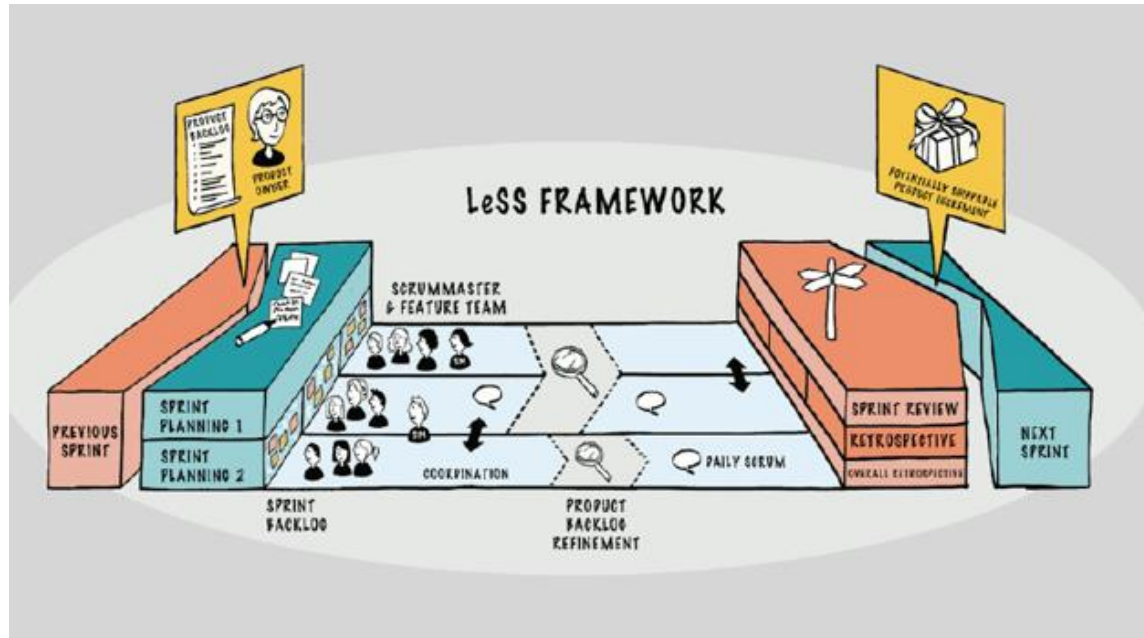
Use Volunteering

- **When selecting a product group for LeSS adoption**
- **When letting people in (product group)**
- **When letting people out of (product group)**
- **When forming teams**
- **When creating Communities**
- **When teams pick up backlog items during PBR**
- **When teams pick up backlog items during Sprint Planning**
- **When team members pick up backlog items during Sprint**



Size of LeSS Adoption

- LeSS adoptions require months of preparation. (LeSS HUGE adoptions are incremental, not “all-at-once”)
- LeSS is no more than 70+/- a few, people: don’t try to bite more than you can swallow
- 2-8 Teams
- One Product. One Product Owner. One Backlog.

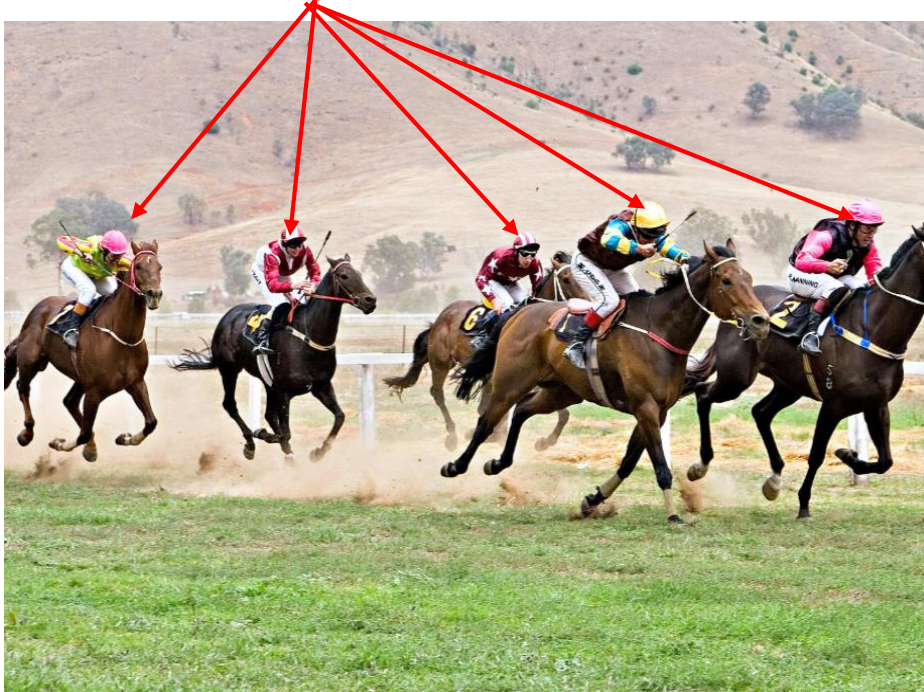


LeSS vs. Not LeSS

LeSS is not: Many teams doing their own Scrum

LeSS is: 2-8 teams scrumping together (on same Product)

Different people with strategy, and vision, setting a different course



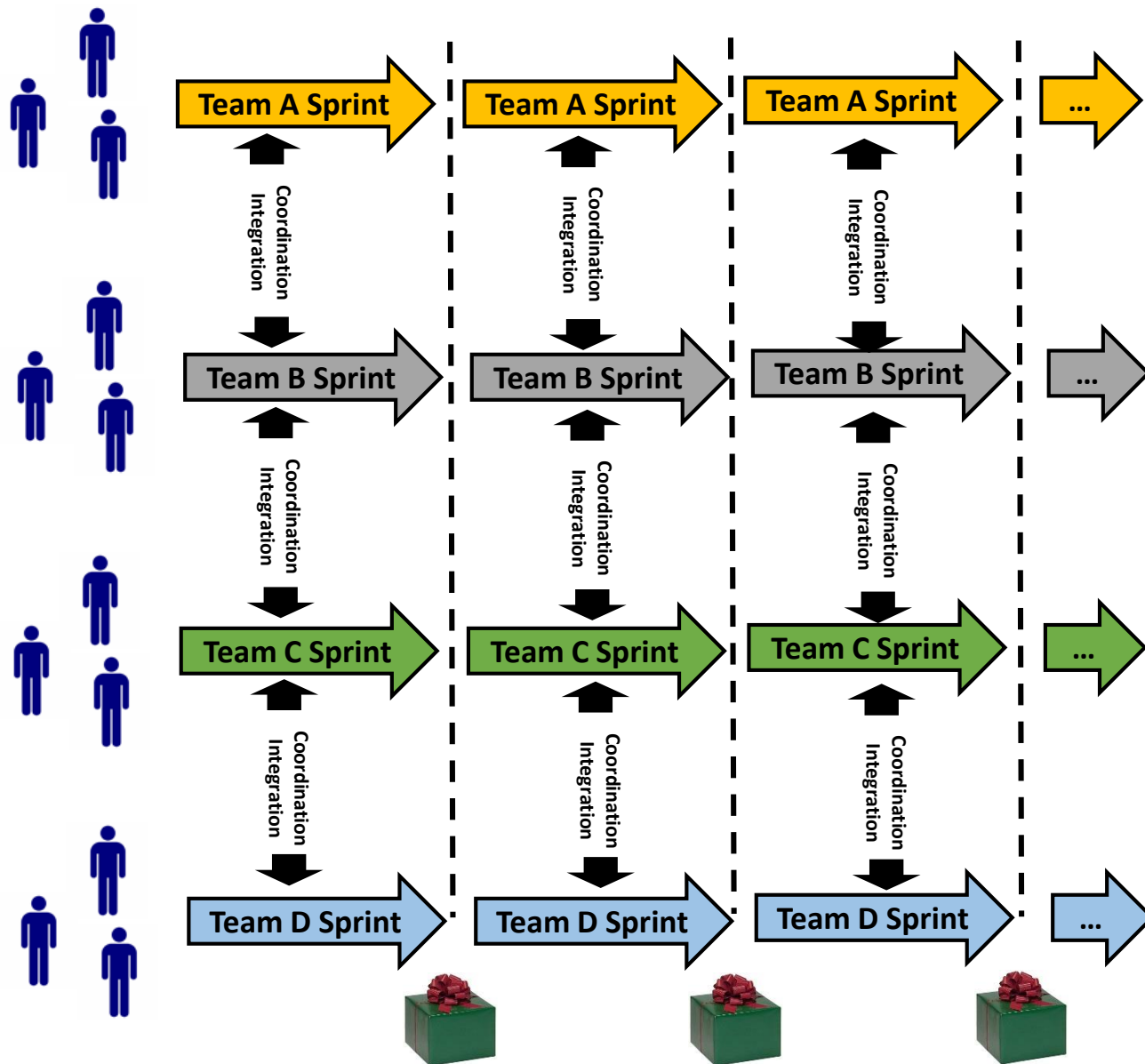
NO

Same person with strategy, and vision, setting a unified course



YES

Sprint Cadence in LeSS: One LeSS Sprint



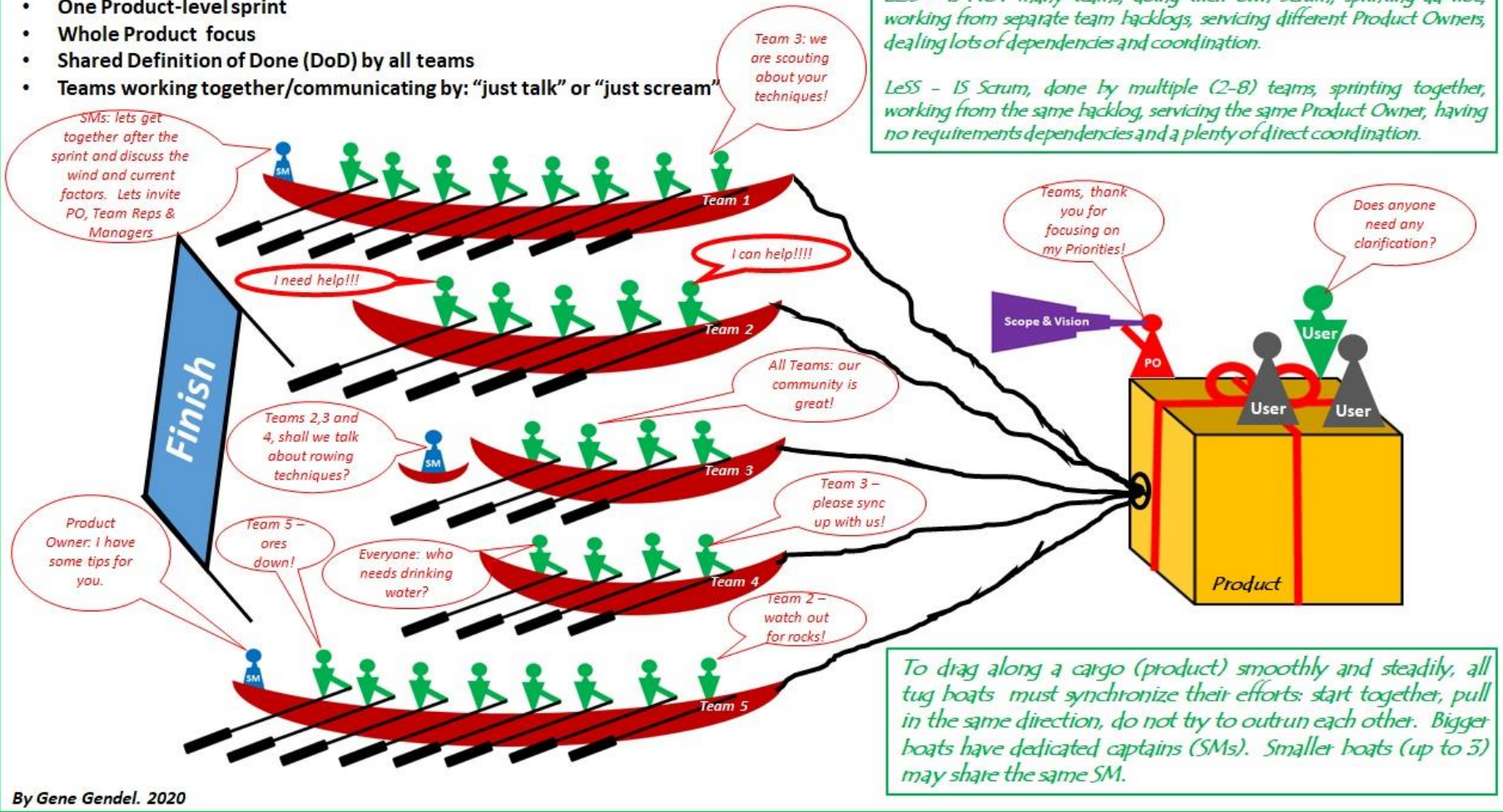
**Sprints are
parallelized,
not staggered**

Sprint Cadence in LeSS

- One Product-level sprint
- Whole Product focus
- Shared Definition of Done (DoD) by all teams
- Teams working together/communicating by: “just talk” or “just scream”

LeSS - is NOT many teams, doing their own Scrum, sprinting ad-hoc, working from separate team backlogs, servicing different Product Owners, dealing lots of dependencies and coordination.

LeSS - IS Scrum, done by multiple (2-8) teams, sprinting together, working from the same backlog, servicing the same Product Owner, having no requirements dependencies and a plenty of direct coordination.



By Gene Gendel. 2020

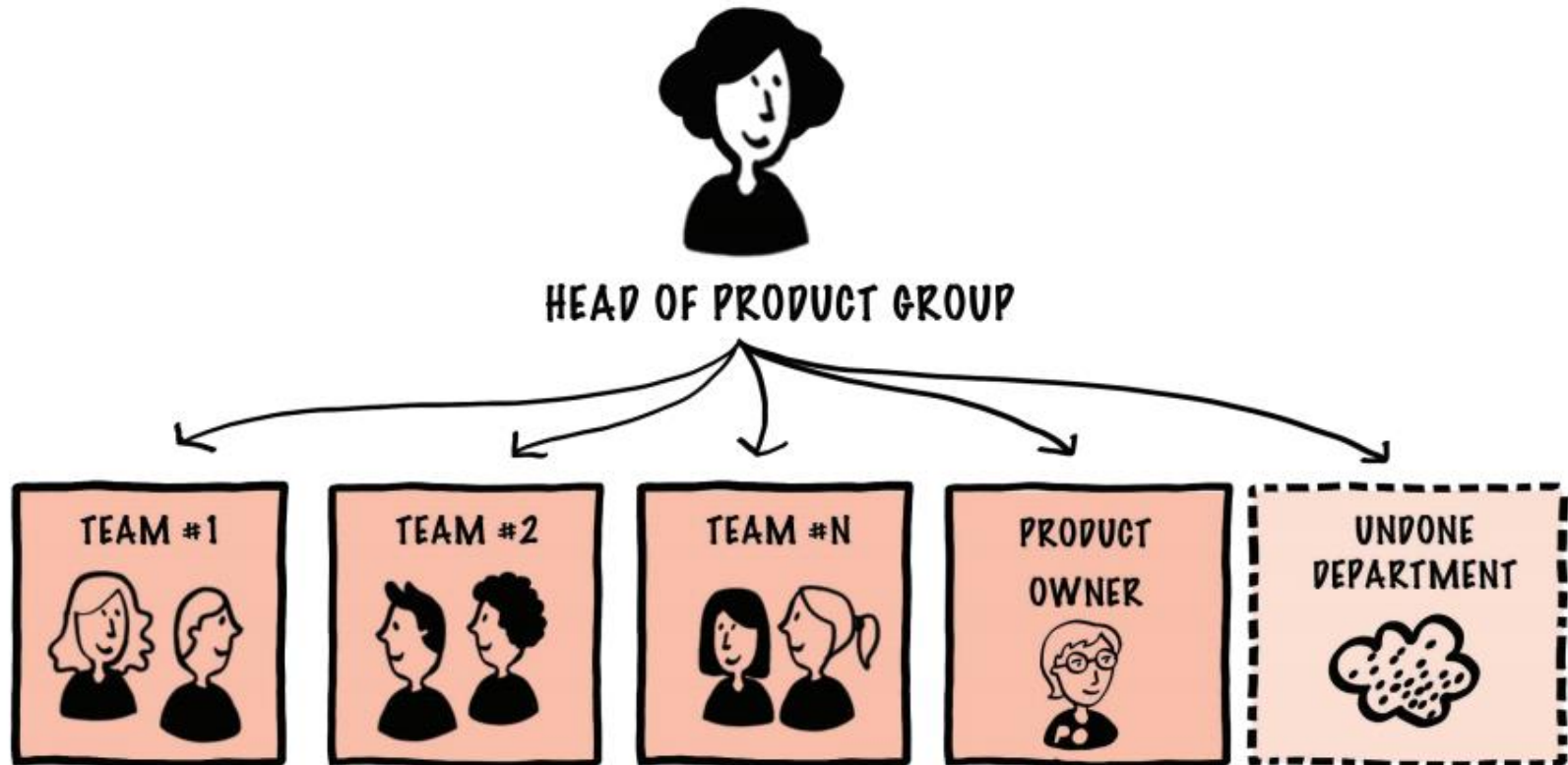
<https://less.works/trainer-graphical-representations/gene-gendel/one-sprint.jpg>

Advice

- **Do NOT expect to have many real LeSS adoptions (at least, not today)**
- **Do NOT “sell” LeSS installations**
- **Do NOT rush with decisions and selections**
- **Do NOT be afraid to experiment**
- **Do NOT take along *implicit* resisters**
- **Do NOT forget about the importance of organizational design**
- **Do NOT proceed without an Informed Consent (Sr. management)**
- **Do NOT proceed without guidance of experienced LeSS coaches**
- **Do NOT forget to have a lot of fun ☺**

APPENDIX

Types of Product Ownership



<http://less.works> CC BY-ND

<https://less.works/img/structure/typical-less-organizational-chart.pdf>

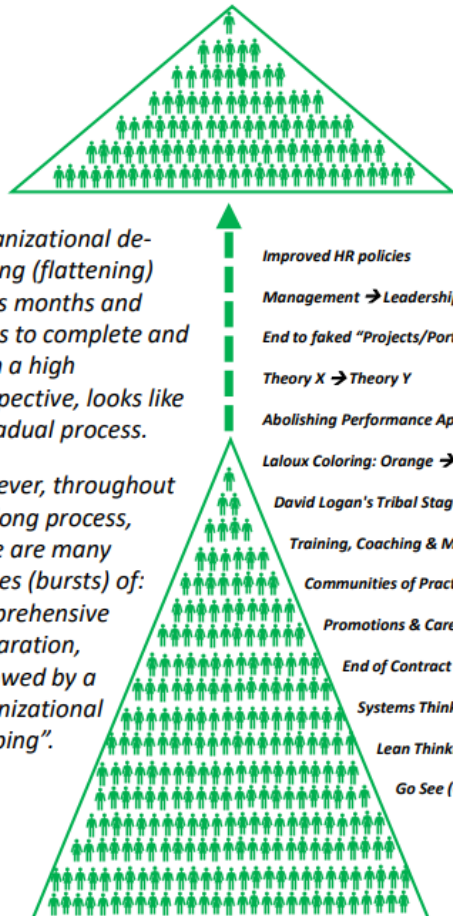
Less is More

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**.

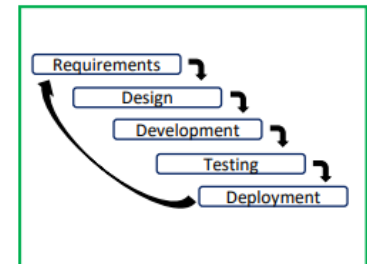
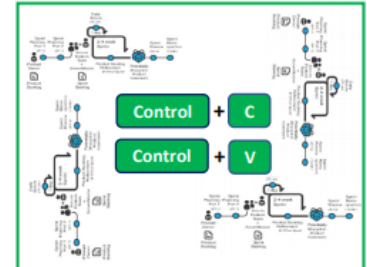
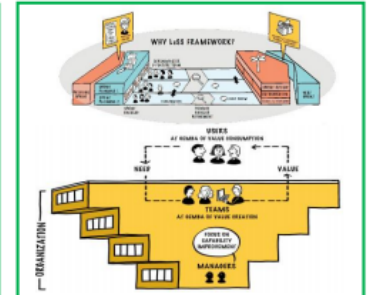
Transition from independent basic Scrum, performed by multiple teams to LeSS, is a desirable approach, when a product is widely defined and real Product Owner is identified

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**.



Graphics are courtesy of <https://less.works>

Scaling Scrum

Waterfall

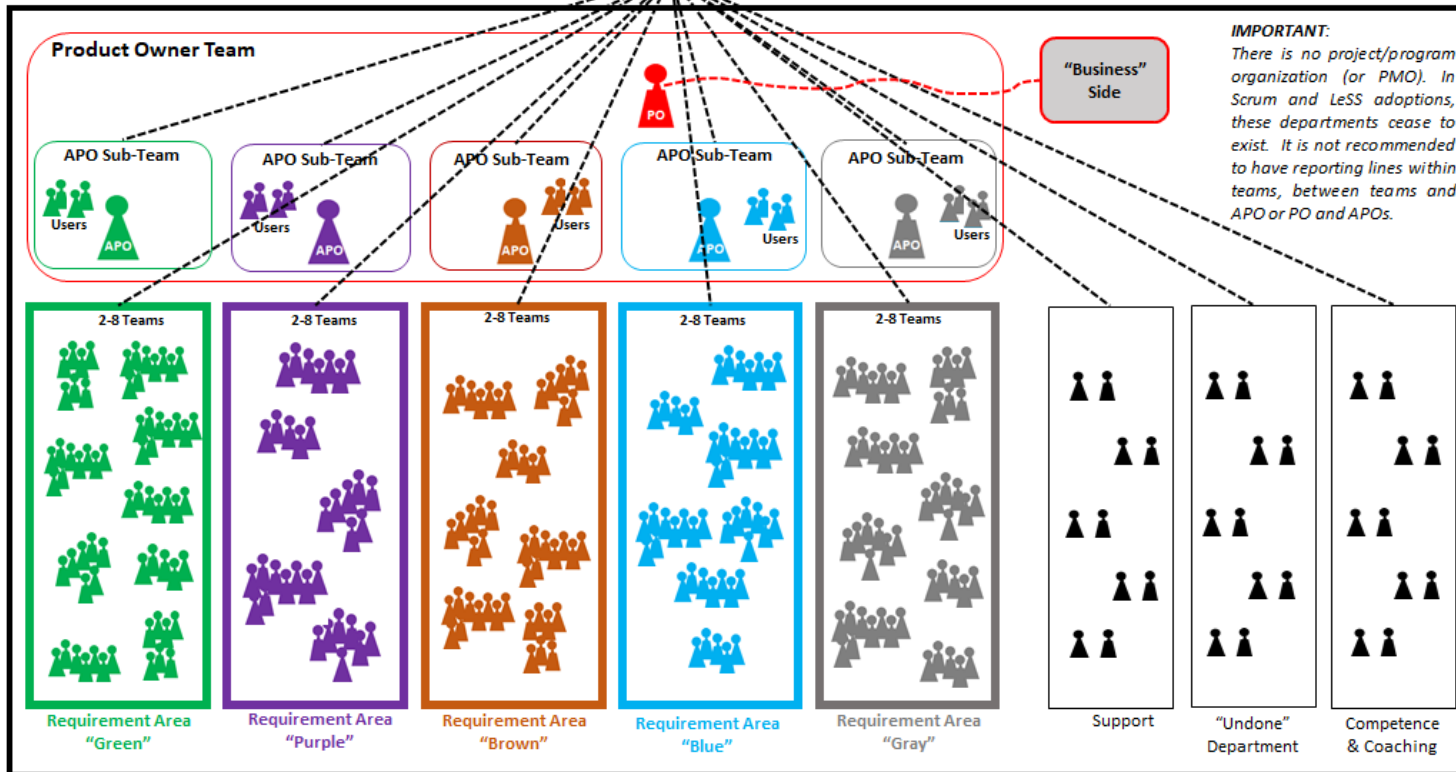
Source: http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/scrum_scaling_org_descaling-1.pdf

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.

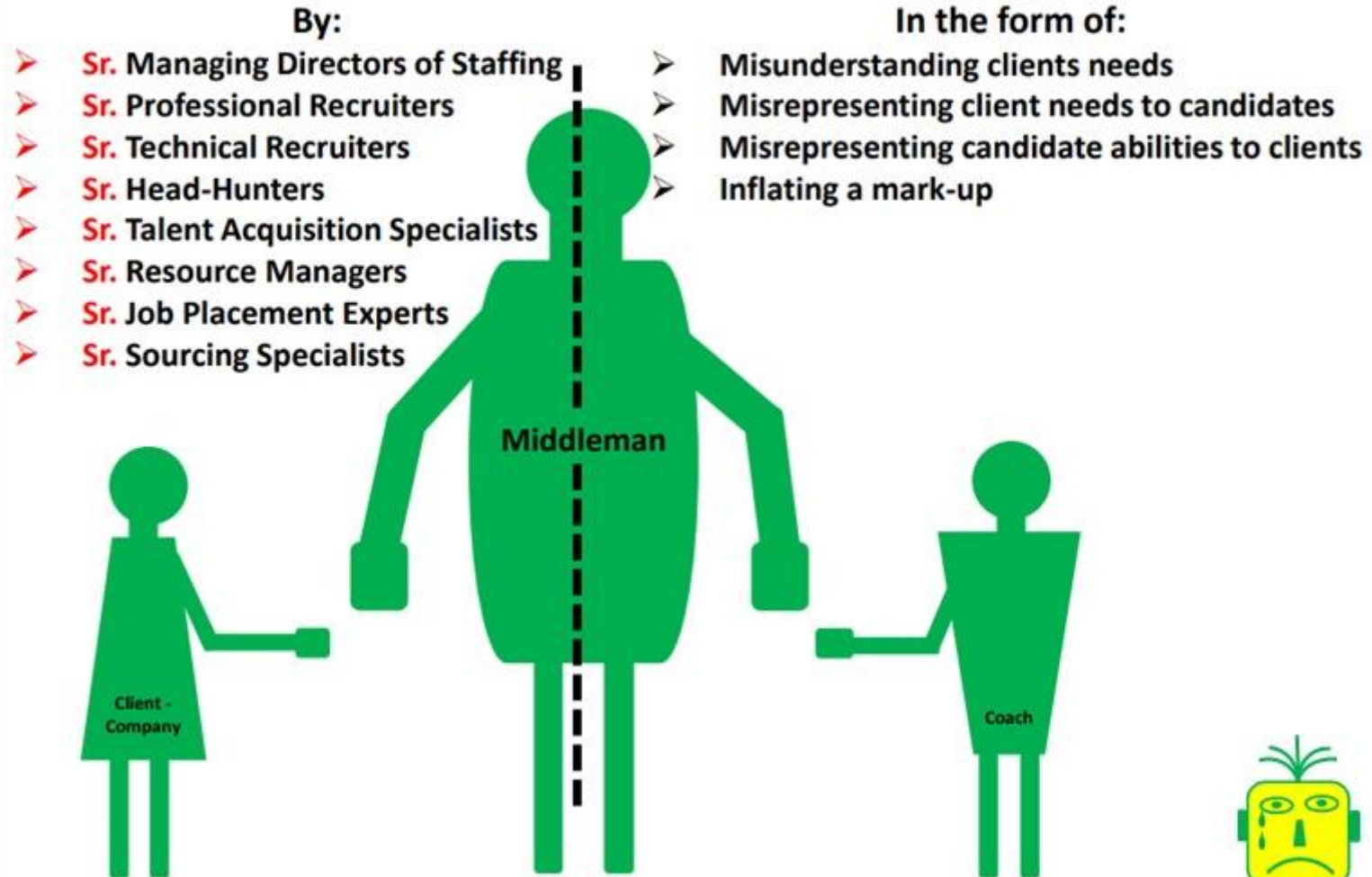
Support - In a LeSS Huge organization, it typically centralizes some support because of the massive volume of work. Still, this department should be as small as possible with the attitude “How can we help?” rather than “Take it this way!” This department is less likely to exist in smaller LeSS organizations, 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

Beware of....

Middleman Problem: Low (very) Value Proposition



Avoid This:

Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Beware of....

“Triple Taxation” on Client Companies

Big Consultancies
(supported by
recruiting agencies),
advising of “Tool +
Framework” Big-Bang
Agile Transformations

“Agile” Tools,
supportive of
Big Bang “Agile
Frameworks”

Large,
Commercially
Successful **“Big-
Bang Agile”
Frameworks”**



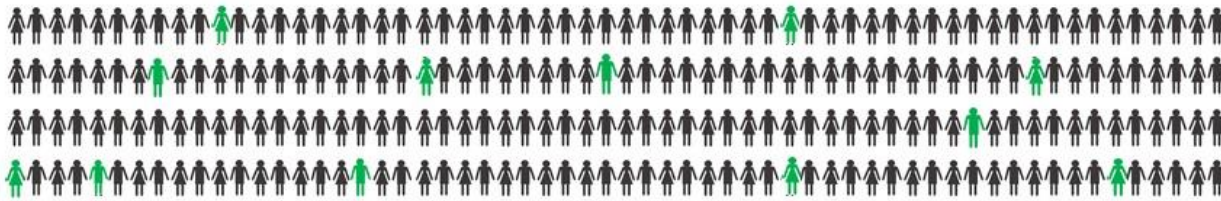
Avoid This:



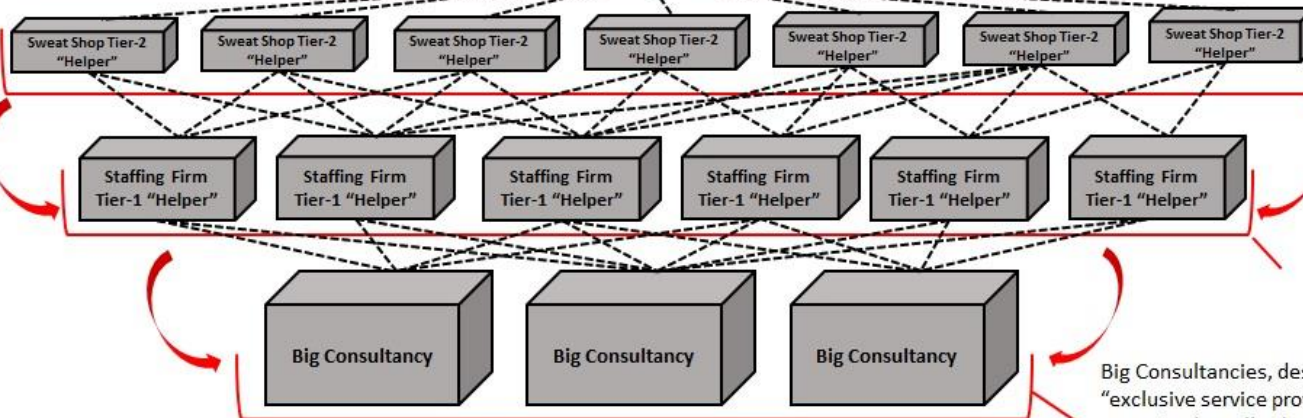
Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Beware of....

"Resource-Processing Food Chain"



A huge pool of workers, with the word "agile", in their public profile. Majority of these people are at risk of being displaced from their traditional roles, now wanting to become agile coaches, as per Larman's Law #4. Amongst them, there is a tiny fraction of **really experienced coaches** that are very hard to find in this huge mix.



Remote site-based, "boiler room" - "sweat-shop" style companies, full of VOIP cold-callers that call, text and email every person, whose public profile contains the word "agile" - this is an "agile leads" generation factory.
People work for an extremely low pay.

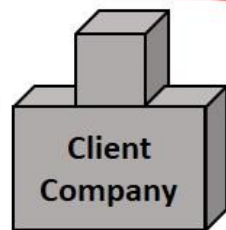
Staffing firms, aggressively trying to hunt for resources, while using primitive (border-line unethical) screening techniques, to submit a heavy volume of profiles to Big Consultancies.
People work for a very small mark-up fee.

Big Consultancies, desperately fighting for an opportunity to become an "exclusive service provider" to Client. While not having their own internal expertise (usually, their consultants are *not* coaches), to meet Client's needs, they now have to hunt for additional resources to fill a gap.
Big Consultancies charge Client Companies a lot of money.

Client Companies that have a shortage of their own internal agile expertise to meet demand for quality training, coaching and organizational design advisory. They naively rely on "best practices" and thick power point decks, presented by Large Consultancies - long time preferred vendors that are great at traditional staffing and cookie-cutting "installations" of heavy frameworks.

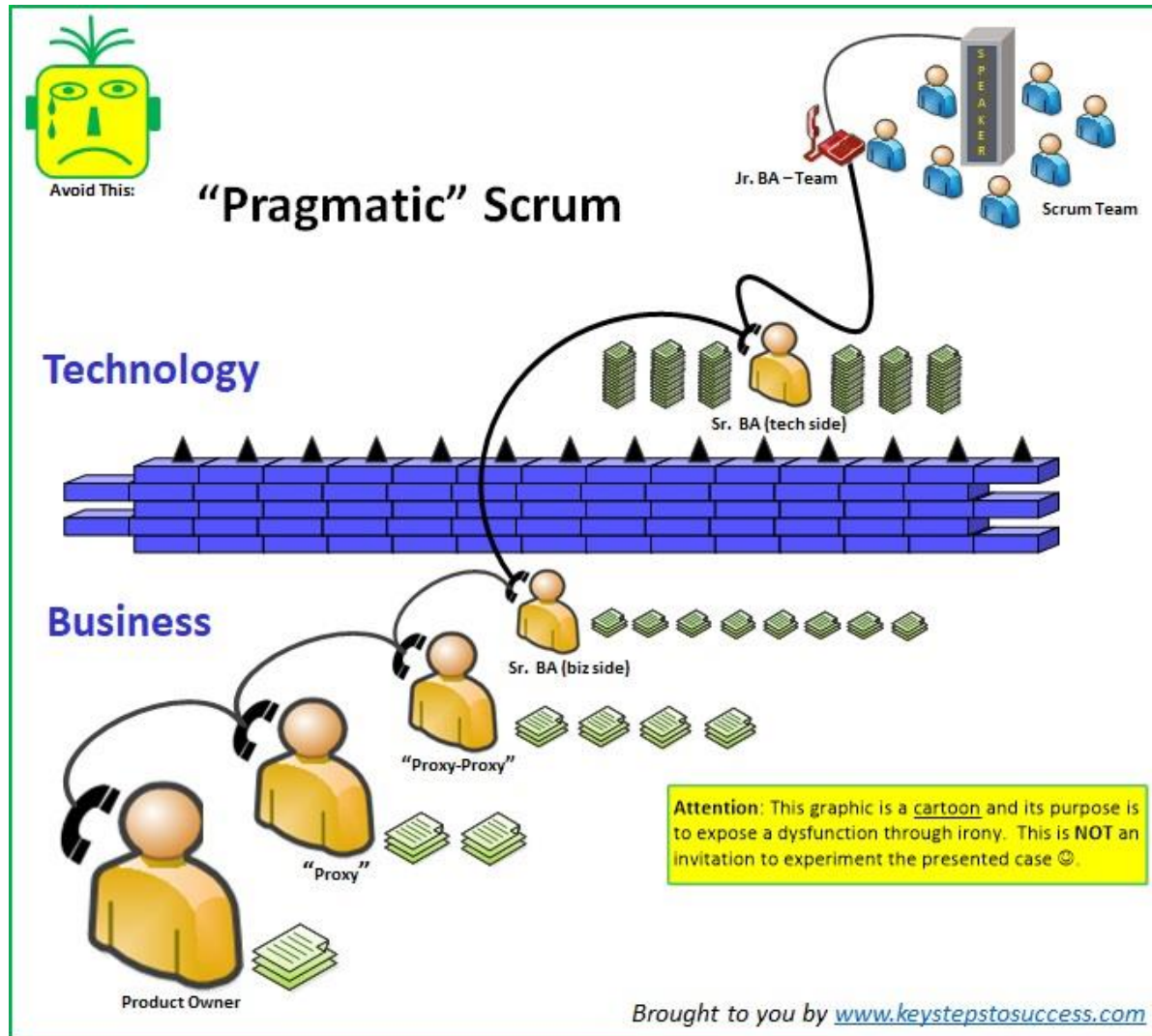


Avoid This:



Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Client-Companies Suffer From



Client-Companies Suffer From

Scrum Blind Date [with Mask Show]

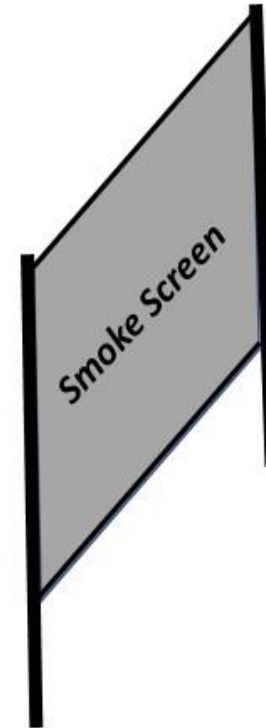


Scrum Team

...while **Team** wishes to have a real **Scrum Master** (servant-leader, promoter and supporter of Scrum process), AND 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...

Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

Client-Companies Suffer From

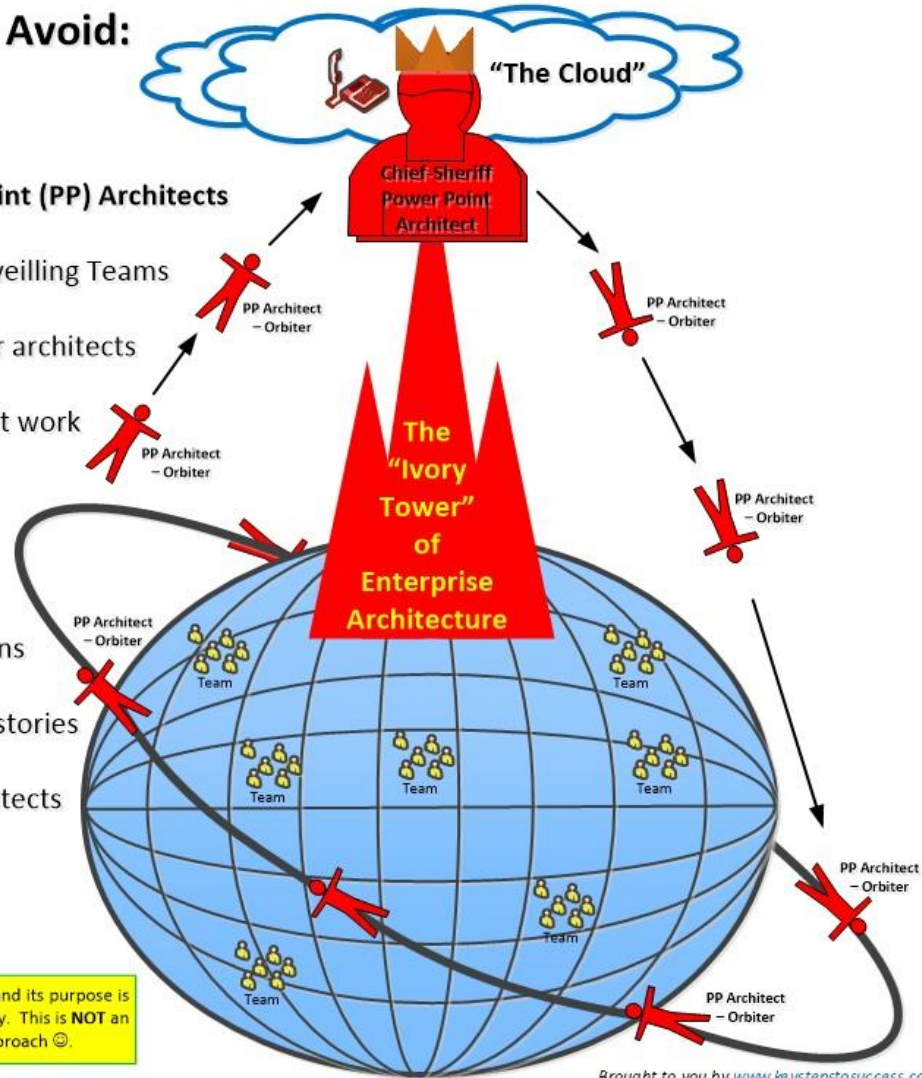
Typical Problems to Avoid:

- Building architecture 'towers'/silos
- Reliance on **Chiefs-Sheriffs Power Point (PP) Architects**
- Squads of **PP Architects-Orbiters**, surveilling Teams
- Separate reporting structures, just for architects
- Architects, not doing any development work
- Local Optimization in architecture
- Architecture "away" from Business
- "One-size-fits-all" architecture solutions
- Architecture work streams, backlogs, stories
- Reliance on expensive vendors - architects



Avoid This:

Attention: This graphic is a cartoon and its purpose is to expose a dysfunction through irony. This is **NOT** an invitation to experiment with this approach ☹️



Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com