

LeSS Adoption, Principles and

Conditions for Success

Presented @ Adelaide - Agile Community



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.

Pessimism vs. Realism



Not Me



Not Me



Me

...and hopefully...



Me

Today's Presentation Is Based On

- **This deck**
- +
- <https://less.works/resources/graphics/index>
- +
- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/coach-tools/>
- +
- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/agile-anti-patterns-with-irony-and-satire/>
- +
- **Gene's personal stories**

Assets To Consider

- gg_nyc@yahoo.com (underscore)
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ggnyc/>
- <http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/contact-us/>
- <https://www.meetup.com/Large-Scale-Scrum-LeSS-in-NYC/>
- https://join.slack.com/t/kstsconsulting/shared_invite/zt-ege93ww2-h_IAPArcR8CyujNi2umlKw (Gene's free Slack channel – ask questions about LeSS)
- [6/03-05 \(14:30 EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)



LeSS – The Big & Picture History



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

Important

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 😞

Important

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.*”

Condition For Success

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/>

Condition For Success



Different Ways To Teach

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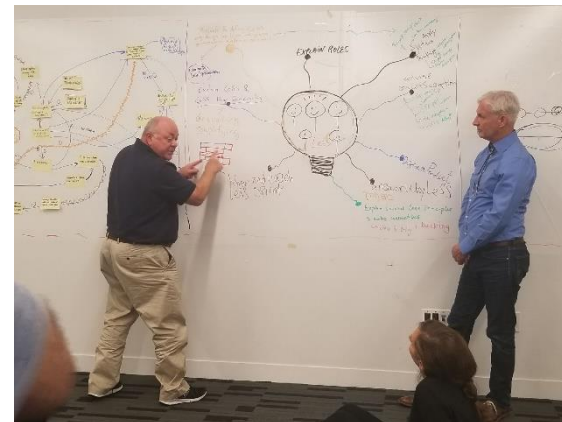
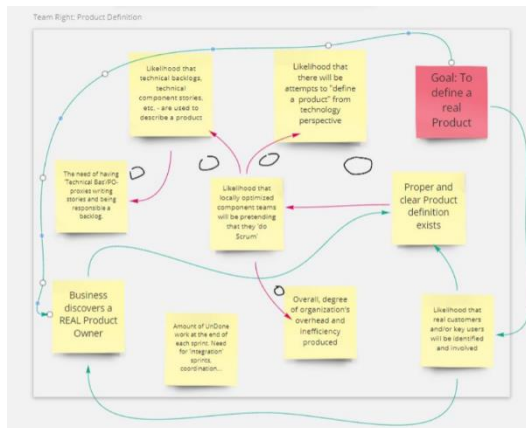
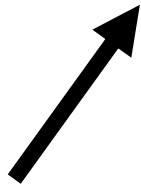
Avoid
(Deck – Driven Transformations)

DDT

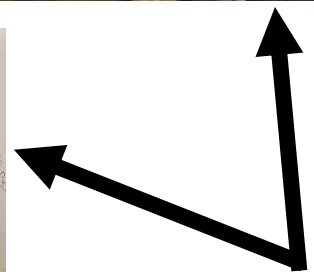
Knowledge retention and quality of learning are inversely proportional to thickness of a power point 'agile transformation' deck and directly proportional to font size used in a deck ;)



NO



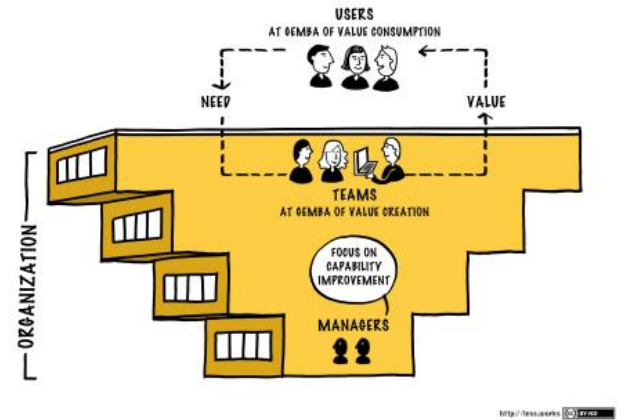
YES



Three (3) Adoption Principles of LeSS

➤ Deep and narrow over broad and shallow

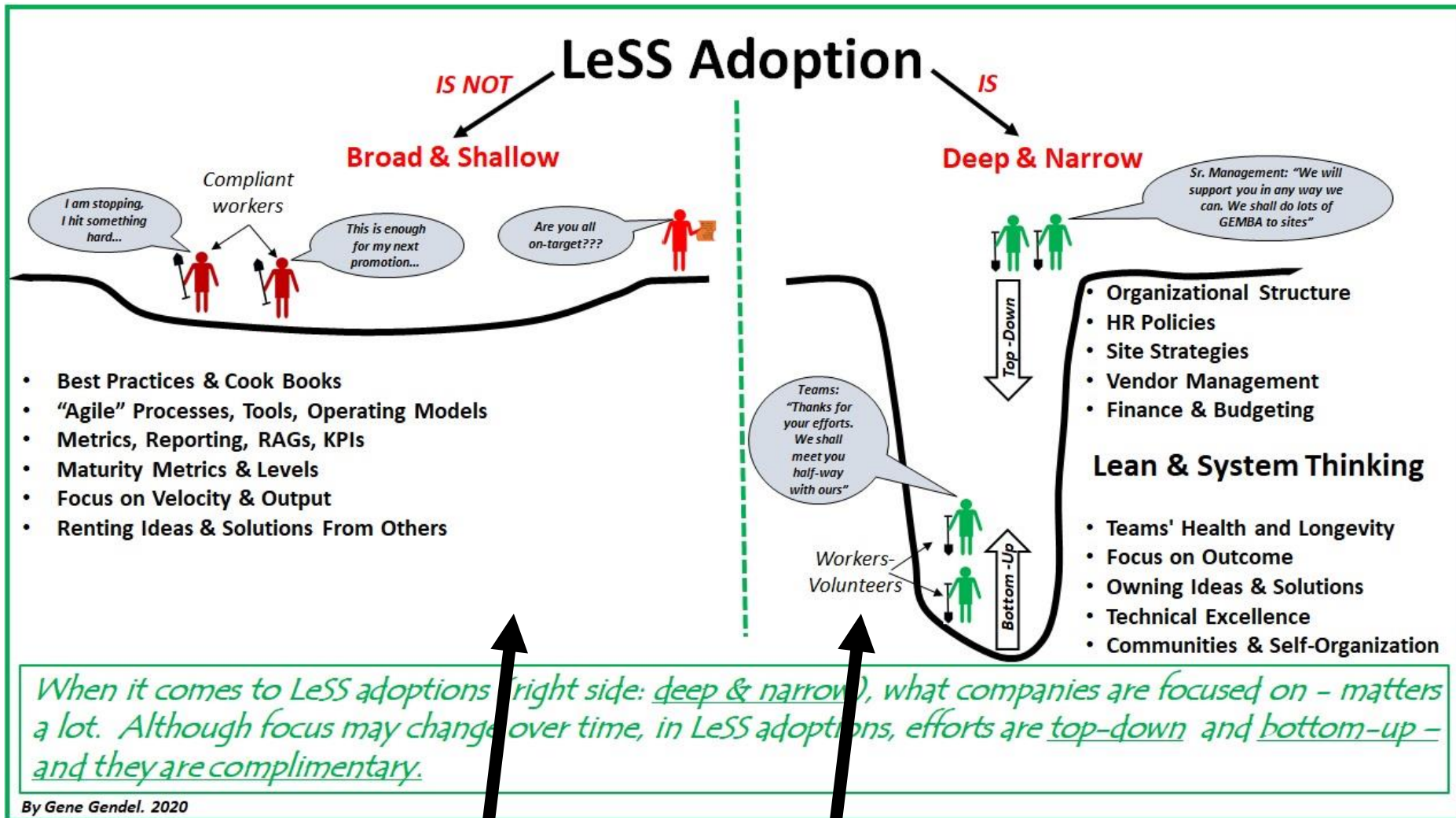
➤ Top-down and bottom-up



➤ Use volunteering



Three (3) Adoption Principles of LeSS



NO

YES

Condition For Success



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'
```

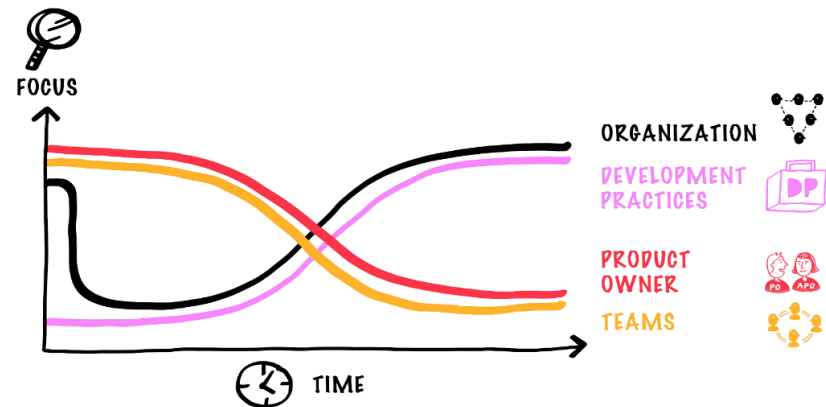
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NO

YES

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.

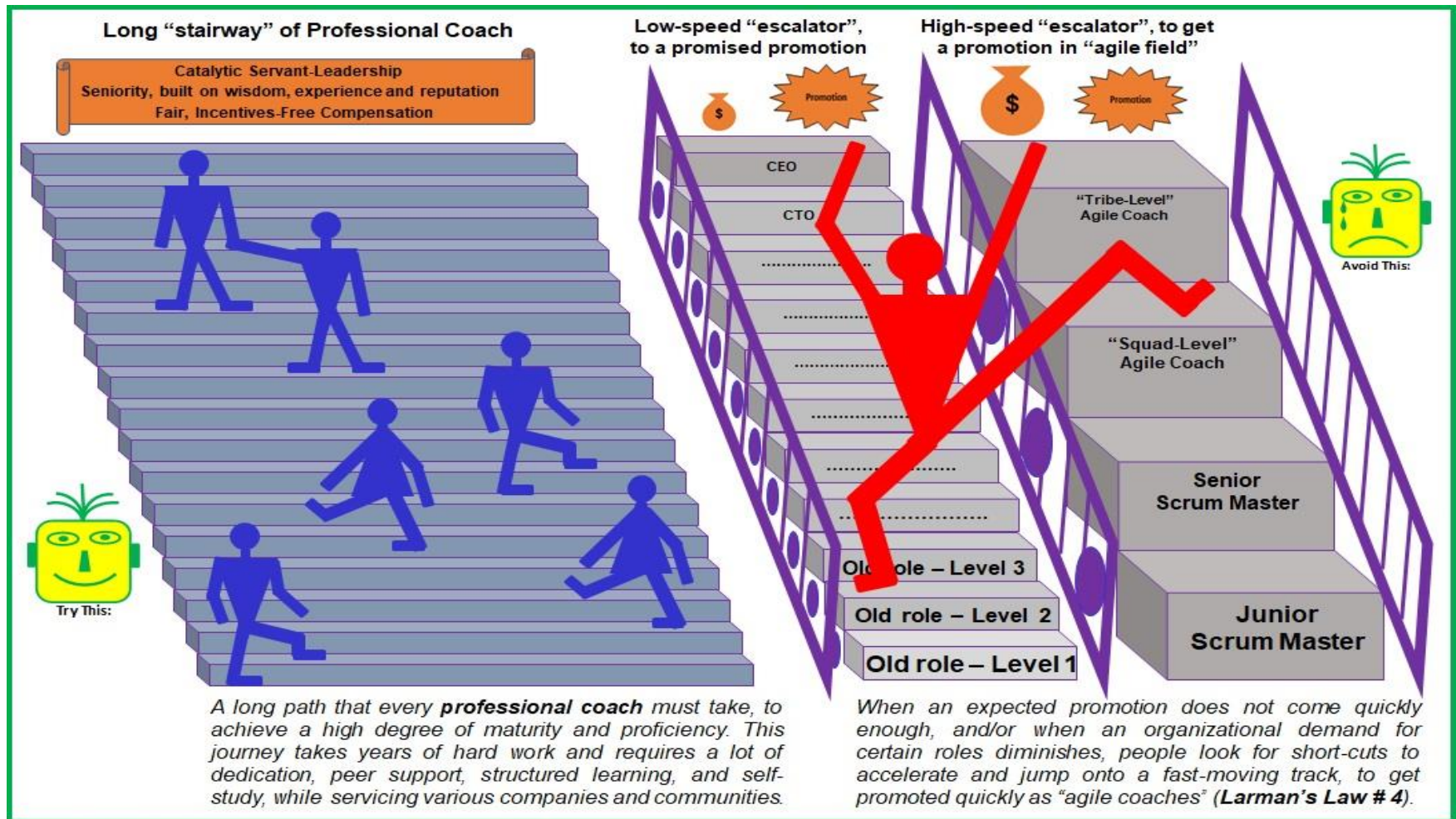


<http://less.works> CC BY-ND

A Few Tough Questions

- Why NOT too many trainers and coaches truly understand LeSS and teach it to clients?
- Why large consultancies DON'T bother mentioning LeSS to their clients?
- Why LeSS adoptions are NOT so widespread?

Agile Fast-Trackers

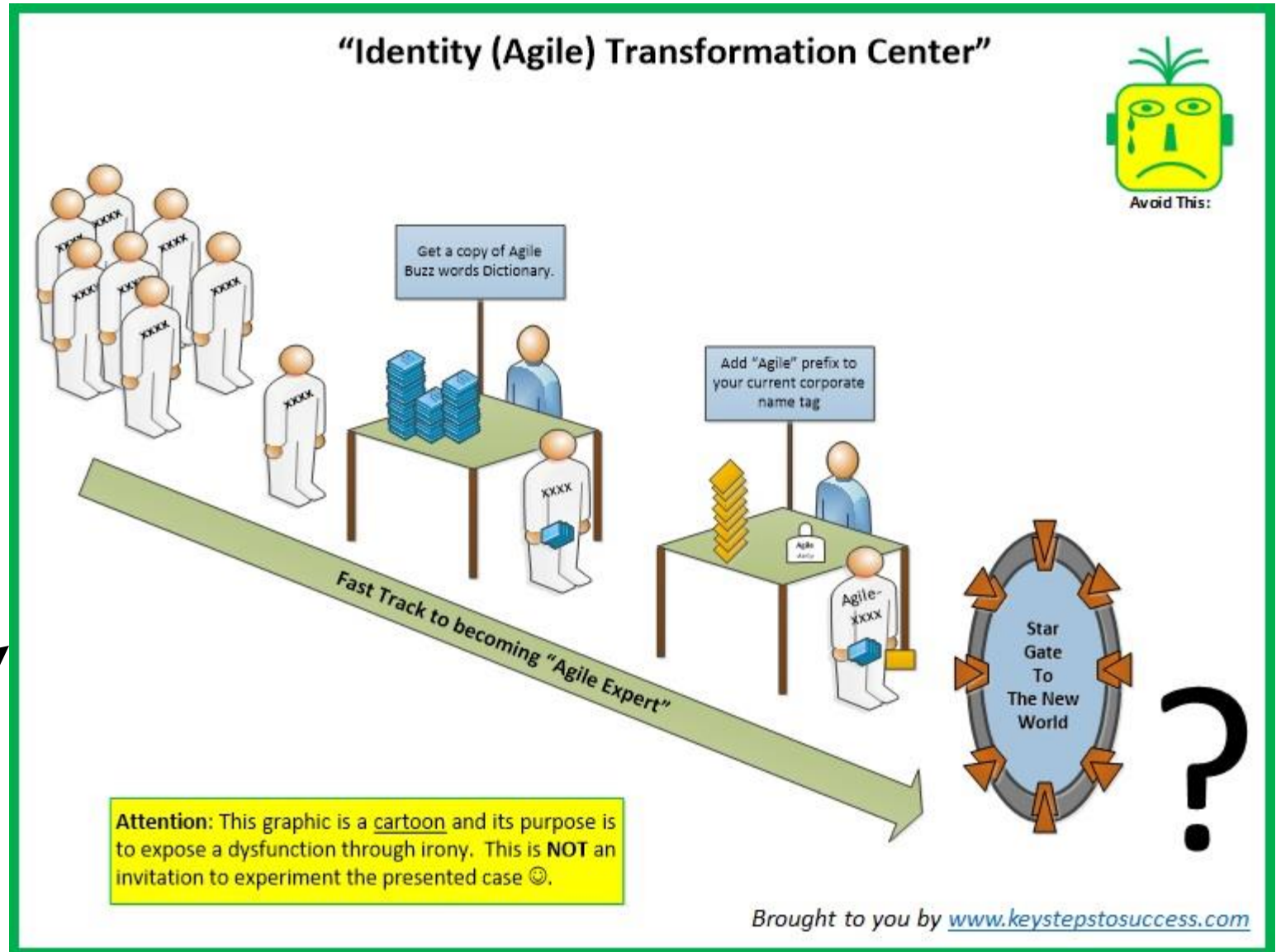


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↑
YES

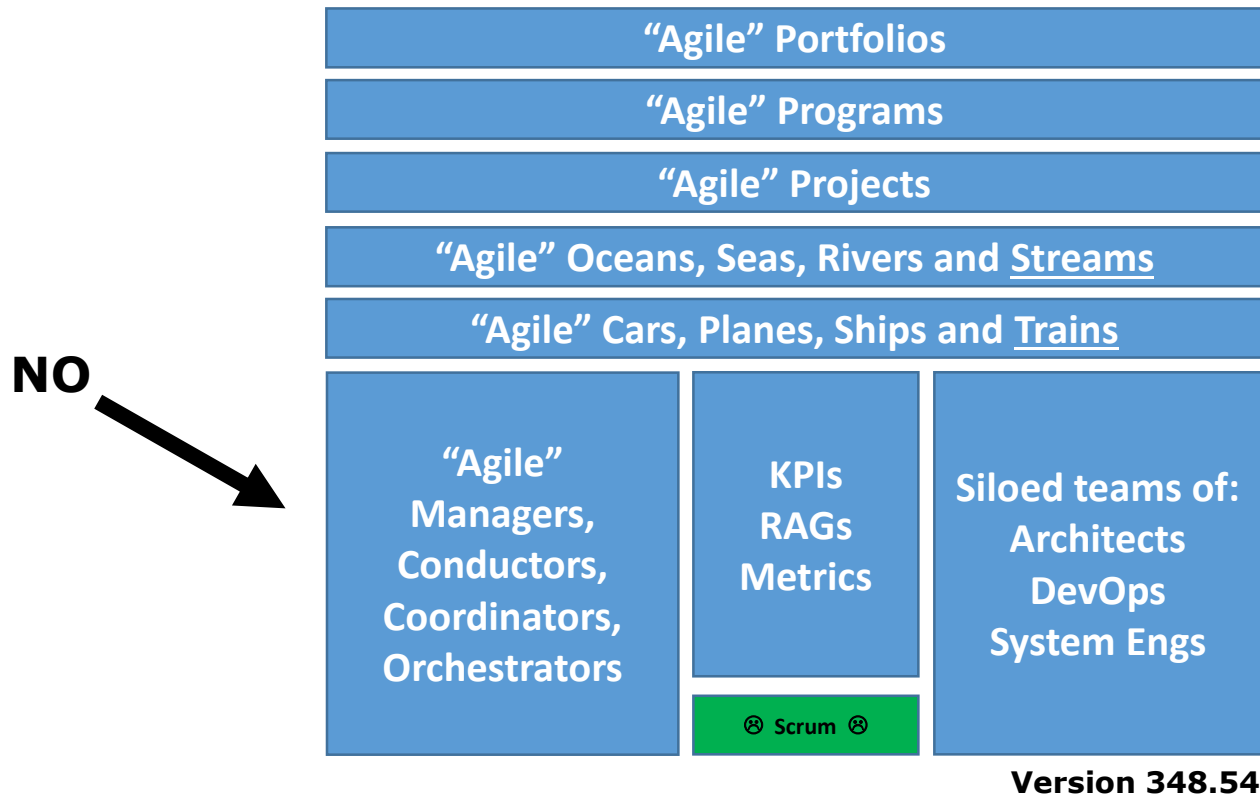
↑
NO

Agile Fast-Trackers



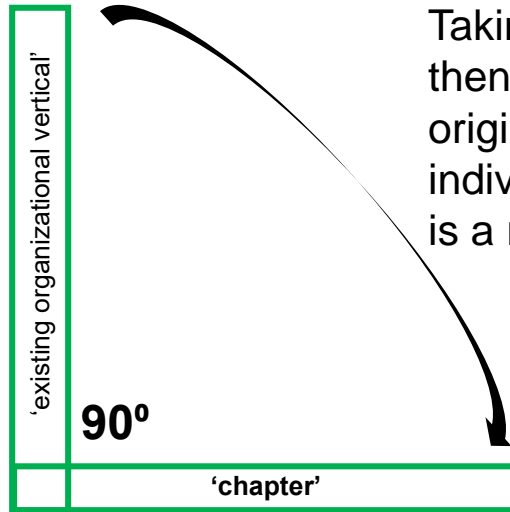
NO

Burying Agility Under Layers of Waste



- Where is customer – centricity?
- Where is a feedback loop between customers and developers?
- Where is real organizational agility/adaptiveness?
- What has changed from what you saw prior to “installation”?

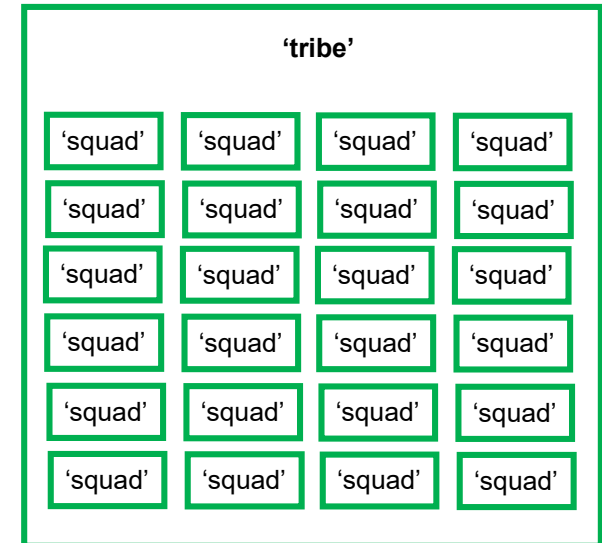
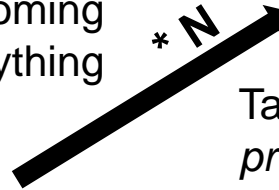
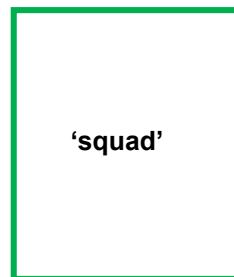
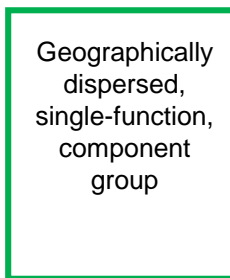
Re-Labeling Existing Organizational Elements



Taking an existing organizational vertical, flipping it on its side, and then calling it a 'chapter', while preserving all elements of the original structure (reporting lines, management relationships, individual performance by 'chapter leads', mandatory participation) - is a **masquerade**

NO!!!

Relabeling large, geographically dispersed, single-function specialist/component group, managed by engagement managers and technical leads (with groups, frequently coming from external vendors, bound by fixed-everything SOWs) into a 'squad' - is a **masquerade**



Taking an existing *portfolio* of *programs* and *projects* (usually, they weakly support customer-centric products) that are worked upon by used-to-be component groups and now 'squads', while relabeling it into a 'tribe' - is a **masquerade**

Copy & Pasting Someone Else's Experiment



Heavily Over-Engineered, Internal "Agile" Framework (Is it really any better than an expensive commercially available @#&e framework?)

...Once upon a time, there was a great experiment, performed by small, lean company, to improve ITS OWN internal dynamics...

AND IT WORKED!!!

...But then, the "blueprint" became a commodity and everyone started copying it, blindly...
...And something went wrong for copy cats...

Tribes of Tribes - something broader than a single tribe. Its existence is justified by the need of "wider strategic alignment".

Tribes - historically, complex congregations of people, supportive of existing organizational spheres of control and ways of classifying /grouping work, mostly, for reporting convenience (e.g. projects, programs, portfolios).



Power Tower of "agile evangelists", responsible for re-creating organizational complexity in the new spirit of "agile". Evangelists are now deployed into various, locally optimized, organizational structures, to support *adoption* of a framework.

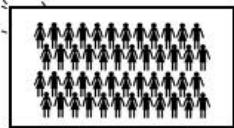
Chapters - used-to-be vertical organizational structures, flipped 90 degrees, on their side, to create an *illusion* of learning communities. They primarily protect historical spheres of organizational influence and control.

Chapters of Chapters - broader (than Chapter) extension of historical organizational influence and control.

Over-crowded "squads" of single-function specialists, reporting to the same 1-st line manager - they are not able to work on whole features. This mostly leads to fake Scrum.

Understaffed "squads" of "core people" (hands-off leads and managers only) - they are not able to work on whole features. Mostly, responsible for giving guidance to others on how to work.

Guilds - structures, whose purpose is not clear. Considered as important, since they were introduced in the initial "S" model, where they had a very specific (and different) meaning.

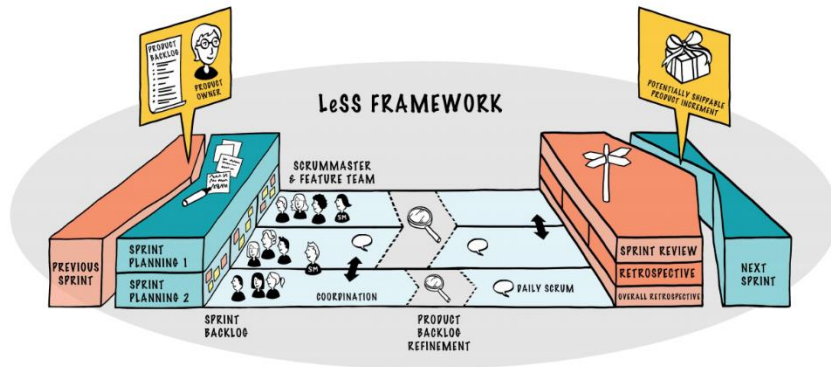


Armies of off-shore vendors-workers that are excluded from "squads", because they are not a part of a client-organization (they are not "core people")

NO

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Much Better Alternative To Copy & Pasting



Real Product Group

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



Real Team (Feature)



COMMUNITIES



Real Community (for functional learning)

“Milking” Clients. “Great Business”

“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”**



NO



Avoid This:



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Not To Get Too Political, But...



@americastheme



Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.
Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

Kent Beck	James Grenning	Robert C. Martin
Mike Beedle	Jim Highsmith	Steve Mellor
Arie van Bennekum	Andrew Hunt	Ken Schwaber
Alistair Cockburn	Ron Jeffries	Jeff Sutherland
Ward Cunningham	Jon Kern	Dave Thomas
Martin Fowler	Brian Marick	

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<http://agilemanifesto.org/>

Q & A

APPENDIX

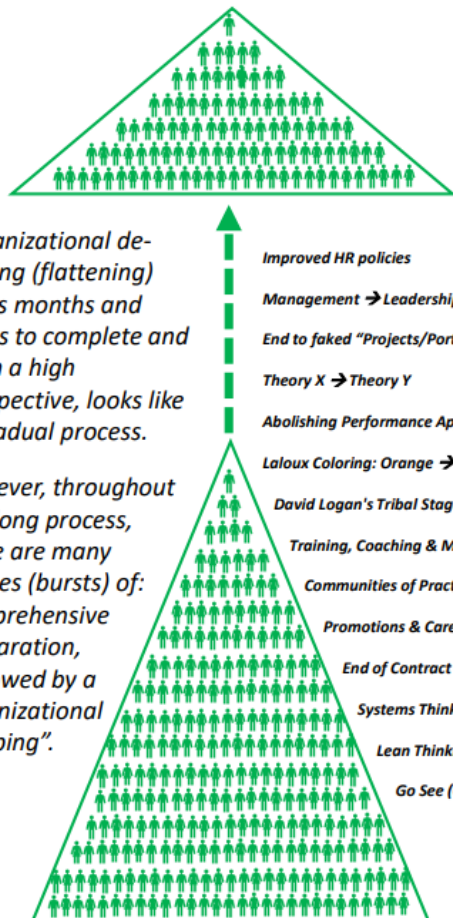
Less is More

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**.

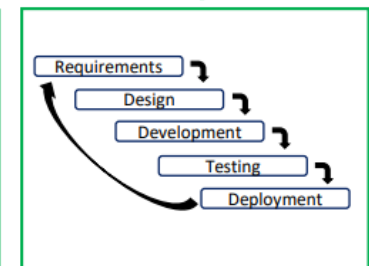
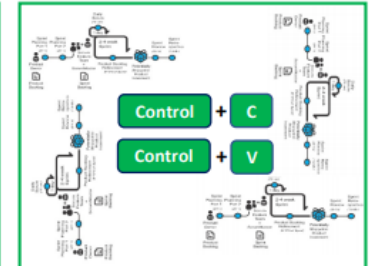
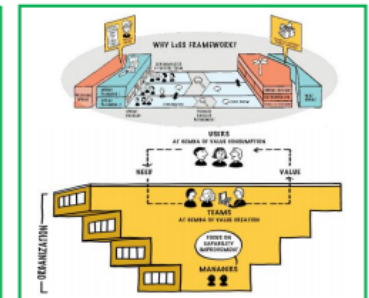
Transition from independent basic Scrum, performed by multiple teams to LeSS, is a desirable approach, when a product is widely defined and real Product Owner is identified

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

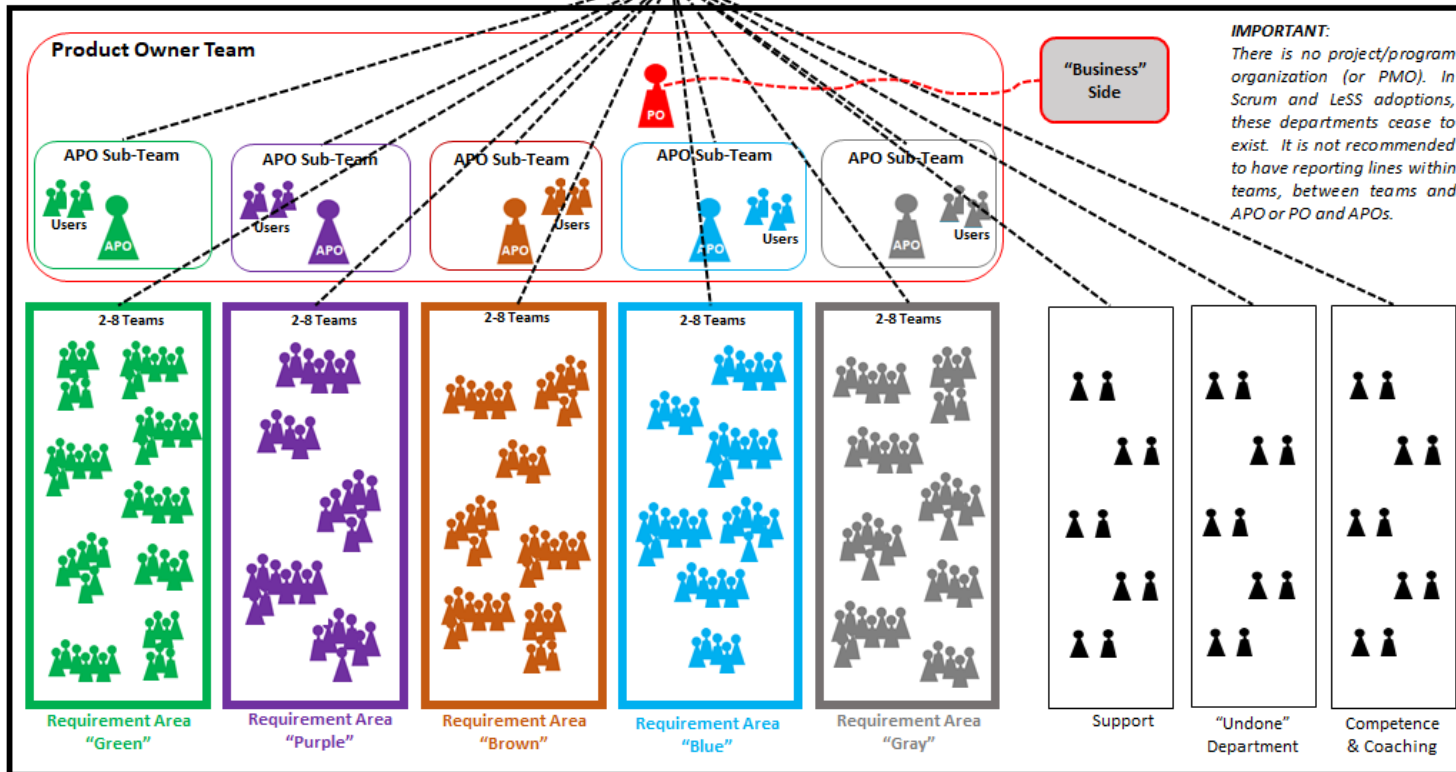
Source: http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/scrum_scaling_org_descaling-1.pdf

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.



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