

Never-ending saga with Estimation.

Can LeSS help us debunk this?

Presented @ LeSS NYC

Thanks to **Nutanix** (enterprise cloud platform), for offering high capacity Zoom channel

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 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.

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)
- [6/10-12 \(12:00 EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)
- [6/17-19 \(12:00 EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)



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

e.g. metrics, velocities, OKRs, KPIs, RAGs, maturity levels – much less relevant

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

Statistics (For Transparency)

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED WHEN ADOPTING & SCALING AGILE

The top three responses cited as challenges/barriers to adopting and scaling Agile practices indicate that internal culture remains an obstacle for success in many organizations.

Please, note what
the biggest
challenges are ...



*Respondents were able to make multiple selections

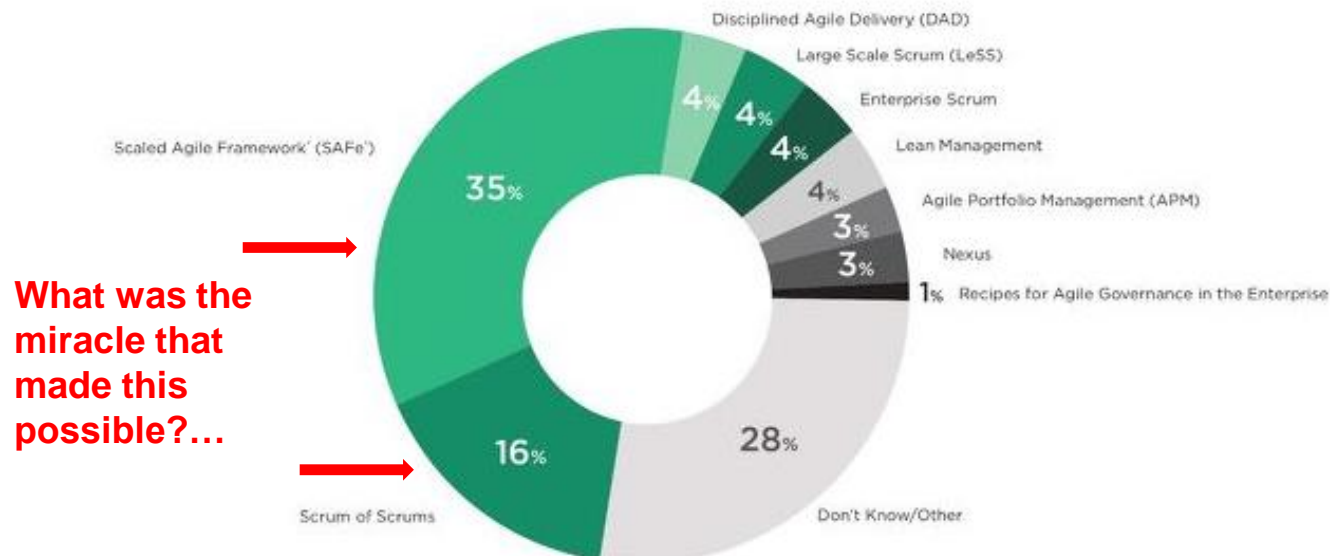
<https://explore.digital.ai/state-of-agile/14th-annual-state-of-agile-report>

Statistics (For Transparency)

SCALING AGILE

SCALING METHODS AND APPROACHES

The Scaled Agile Framework® continues to be the most popular scaling method cited by respondents (35% this year compared to 30% last year). As a percentage of all responses, SAFe® outdistances the next nearest response, Scrum of Scrums, by 19%.



<https://explore.digital.ai/state-of-agile/14th-annual-state-of-agile-report>

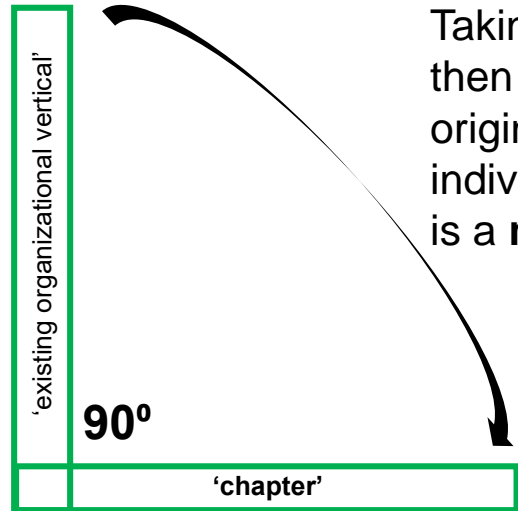
Degree of “framework implementation success” is inversely proportional how it [framework] challenges organizational design problems.

We Need To Dissolve Some Illusions

ILLUSION - 1

“We can relabel existing, loosely coupled, single function/single-skillset specialist groups with fancy terminology, while NOT changing the overall organizational design, and expect these groups, somehow, to function, as if they were real, well-formed & normed teams capable of accurately estimating, individually and on a larger scale.”

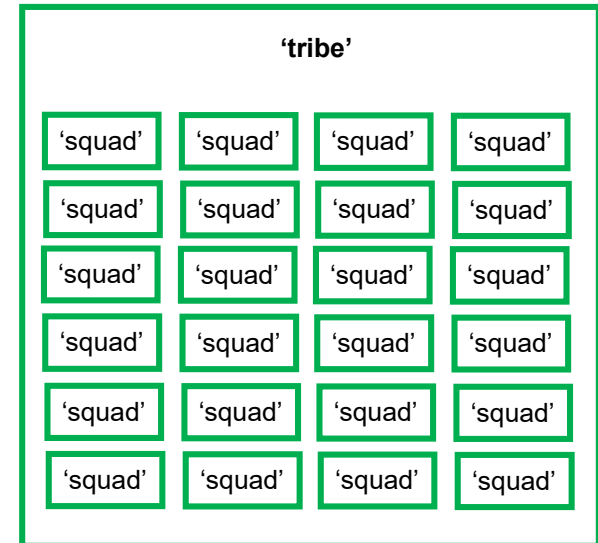
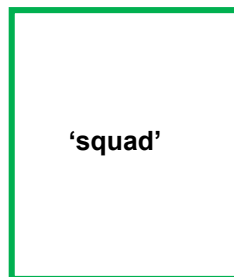
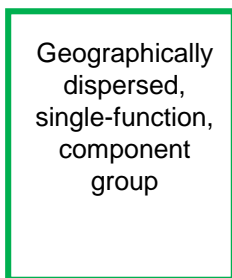
Copy – Pasting Someone Else's Experiment



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**

Re-labeling

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, so called 'squads', while relabeling a portfolio into a 'tribe' - is a **masquerade**

We Need Do Dissolve Some Illusions

ILLUSION - 2

“We can ‘sprint’ by single-function-specialty teams (e.g. BA, Architecture, Dev, QA) that are sequentially scheduled, OR within single-component development effort (e.g. UI, middle-tier, DB) that requires a lot of tail-end integration, with neither approach delivering PSPI, and then expect that cumulative estimations from individual teams can be seamlessly added up.”

Burying Agility Under Layers of Waste

Scrum Anti-Patterns

- separate, phase-specific backlogs or single backlog with phase-specific items
- local optimization by single-skill specialists (e.g., PM, BA, QA, Architect, Developer)
- hand-overs, toll-gates, "internal contracts"
- long periods of down-time by specialists, when it is not "their phase" to work
- "water-scrum" / "scrum-fall"
- Very weak Definition of Ready & Done
- PSPI – takes many sprints to produce



More obvious anti-pattern
Less obvious anti-pattern

- separate, component-specific backlogs or single backlog with component-specific items
- local optimization by component specialists (e.g. UI/UX, middle-tier, back-end, web service, architecture)
- hand-overs, toll-gates, "internal contracts"
- multiple non-development sprints needed to integrate all components and fix bugs
- Weak Definition of Ready & Done
- PSPI – takes many sprints to produce



Try This:

- single, shared, customer-centric backlog
- single, empowered Product Owner
- shared ownership of work, no siloes
- swarming by T-shaped people
- Strong Definition of Ready & Done
- PSPI – every sprint

Brought to you by www.keystepstosuccess.com

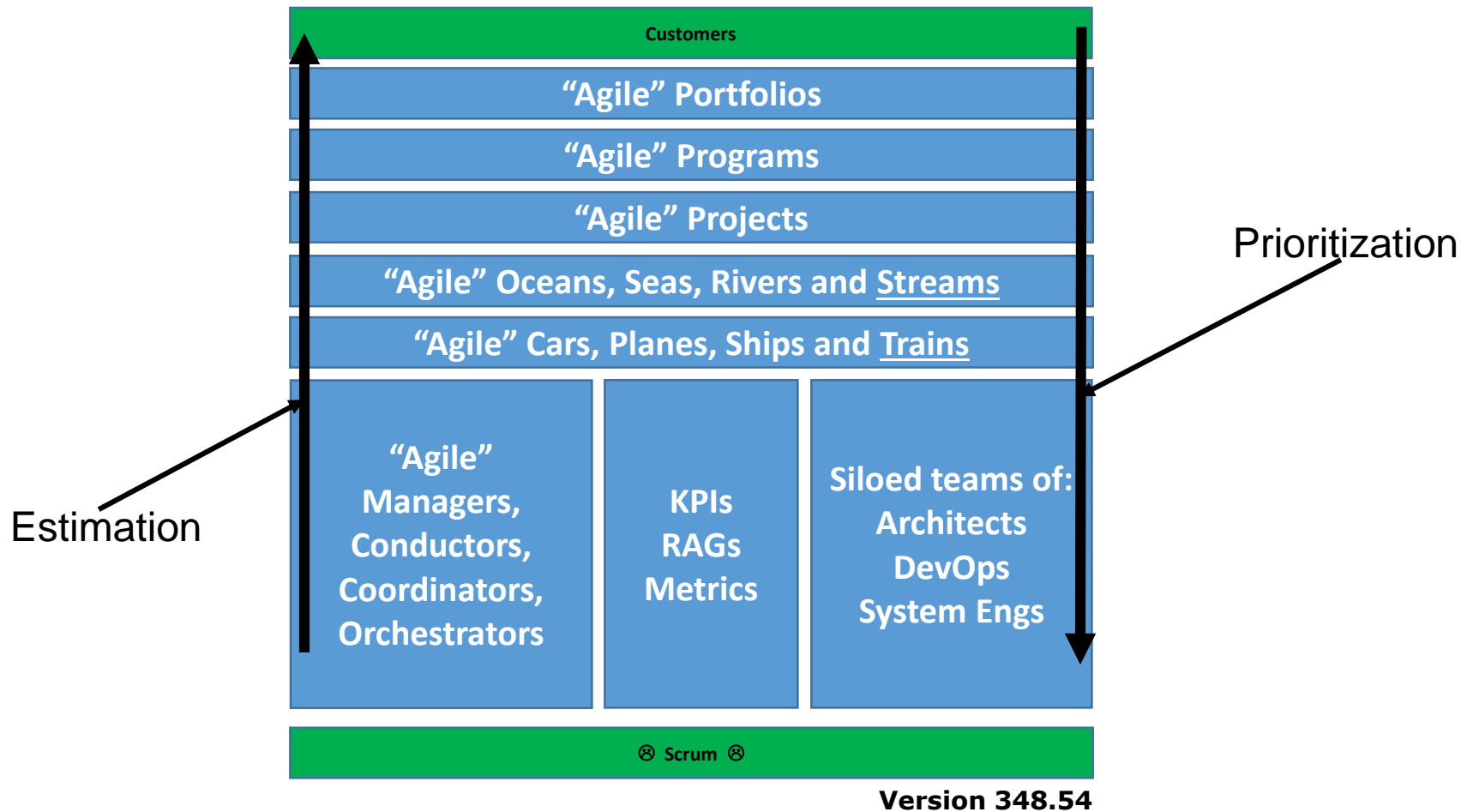
KSTS
Consulting

We Need To Dissolve Some Illusions

ILLUSION - 3

“We can place (literally, burry) development teams very deeply underneath an organizational structure, ask them [teams] to estimate work and then expect that estimates will remain reliable, as they get rolled up a complex organizational structure, going through multiple layers of translation, re-fabrication and padding.”

We Need Do Dissolve Some Illusions



- 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”?

We Need Do Dissolve Some Illusions

Birth Certificate

This Certifies That

| | |
|------------|----------|
| _____ | |
| (Name) | |
| _____ | _____ |
| (Mother) | (Father) |
| _____ | _____ |
| (Weight) | (Length) |
| _____ | |
| (Location) | |
| _____ | _____ |
| (City) | (State) |
| _____ | _____ |
| (Signed) | (Signed) |

(#@&e Certification Number)

(#@&e Version)

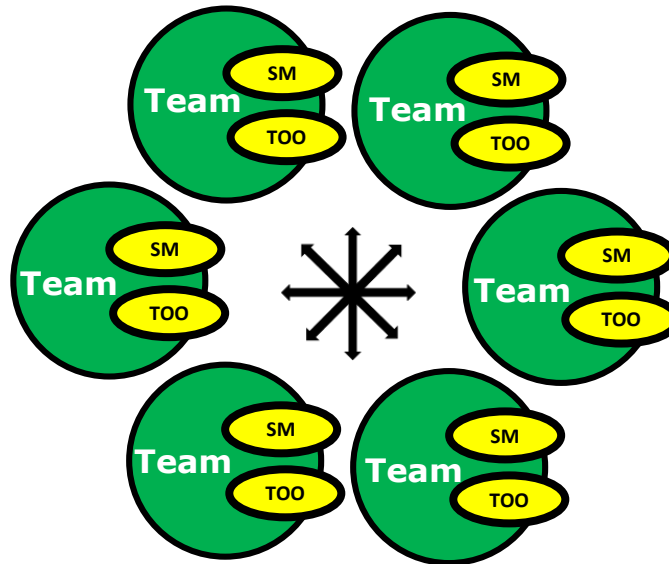
We Need To Dissolve Some Illusions

ILLUSION - 4

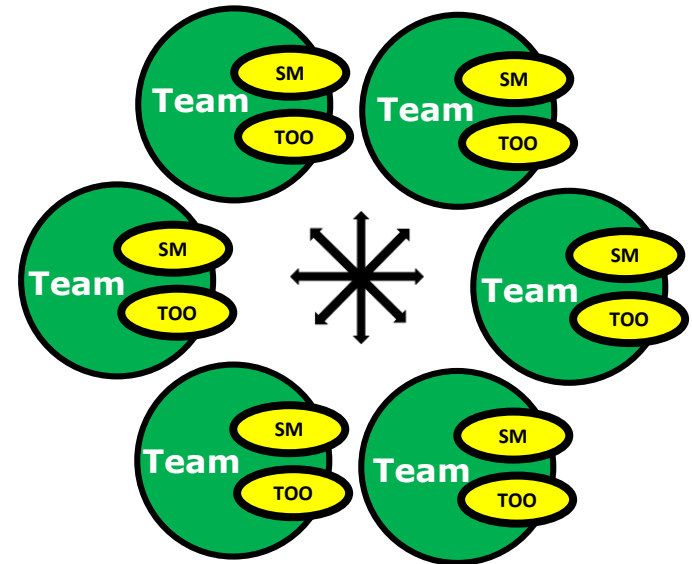
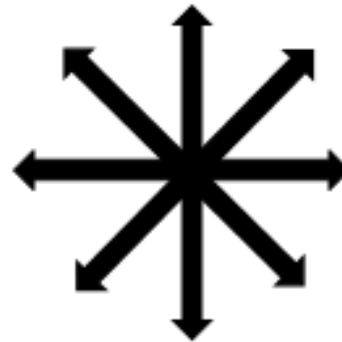
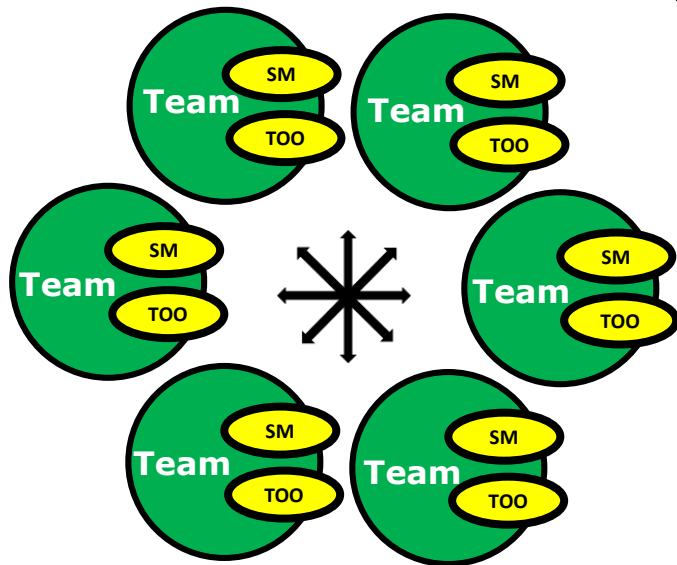
“We can coordinate multiple teams through a complex fractal/kaleidoscope-like schema of ‘Scrum of Scrums’, delegating coordination to Scrum Masters and Team Output Owners (each team has one of each), and then expect that collective estimation by multiple teams can be added up accurately and communicated up reliably”.

Coordination via: SoSoSoSoSoSoSoSoS

**Does
Product
Size
Matter?**

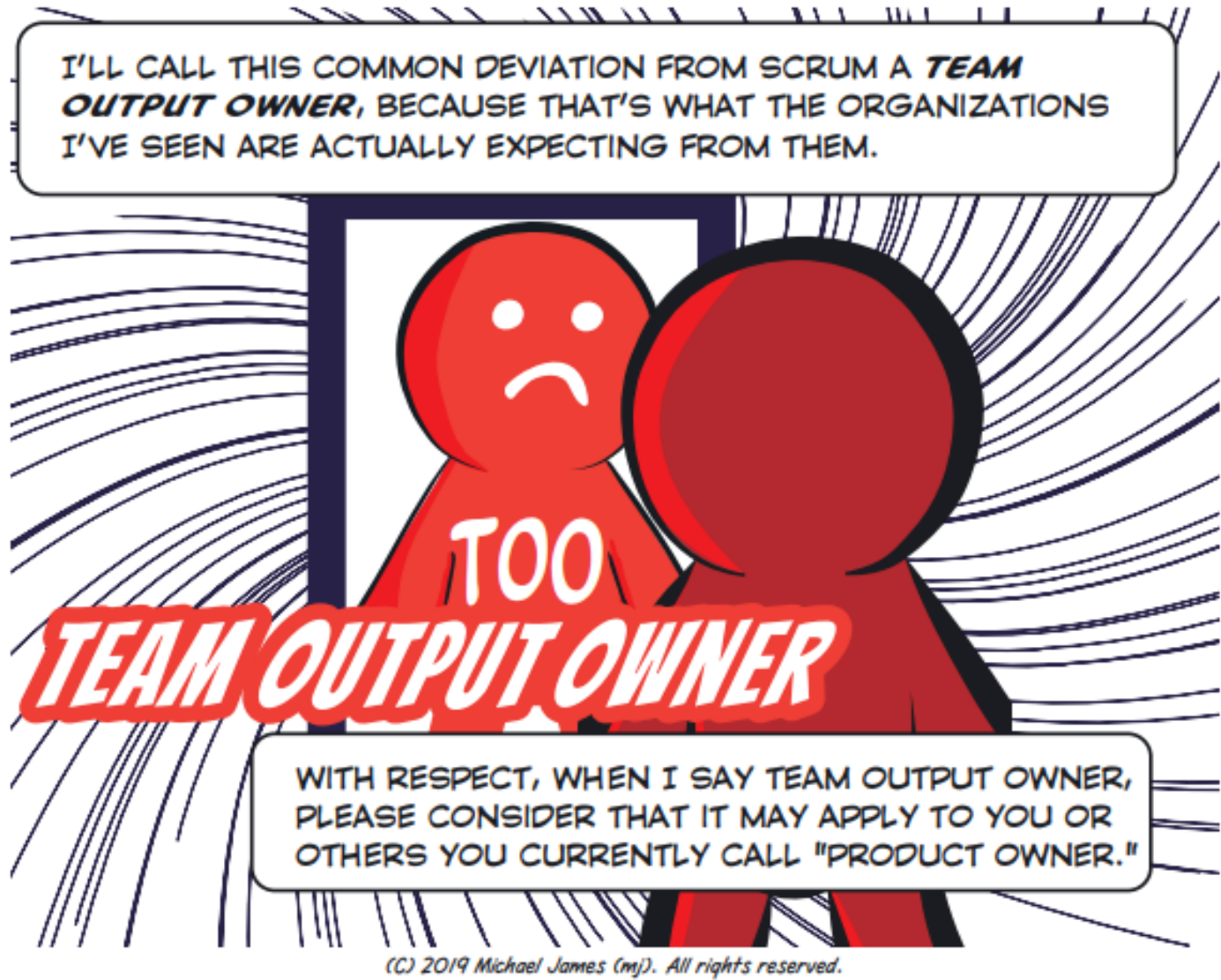


**Btw,
who is
TOO?**



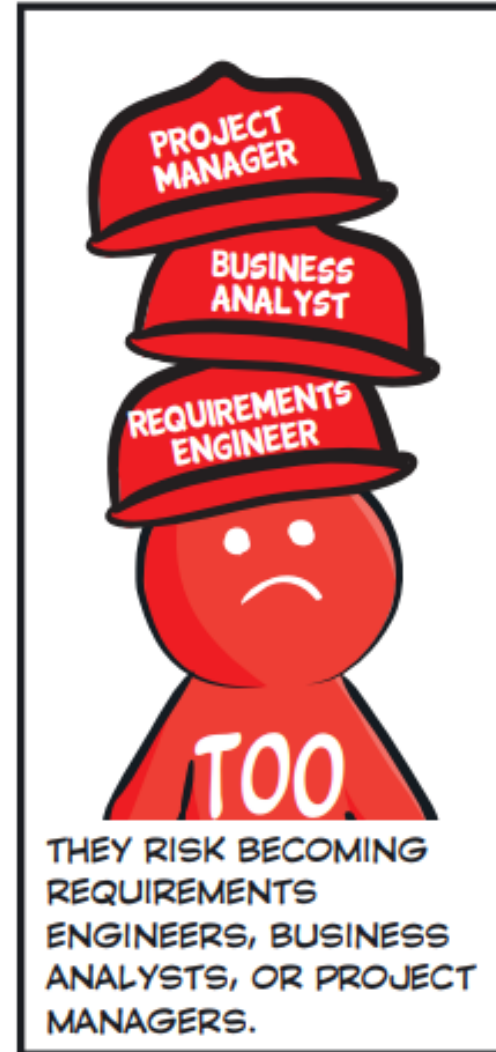
Each team: private backlog, dedicated TOO, SM – estimating in a silo

Who is Team Output Owner (TOO)?



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

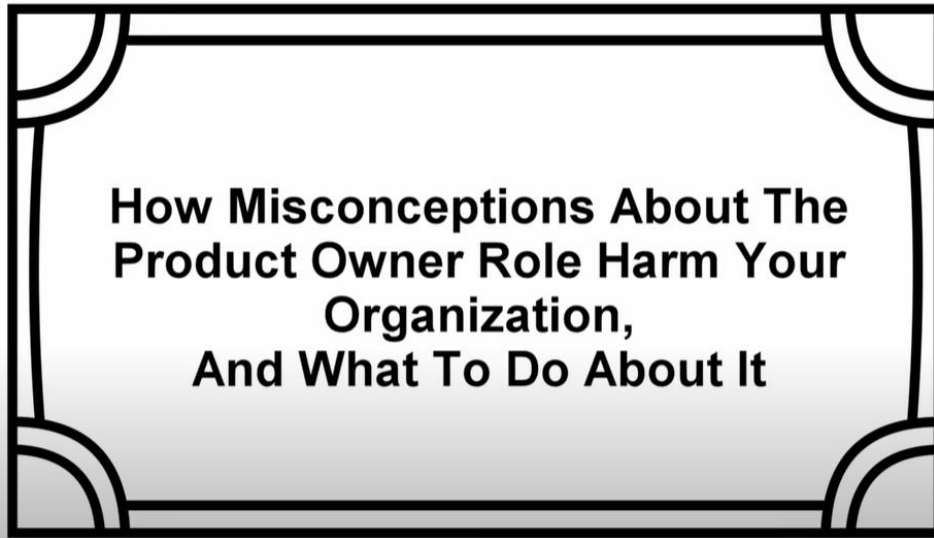
Who is Team Output Owner (TOO)?



(C) 2019 Michael James (mj). All rights reserved.

18

Who is Team Output Owner (TOO)?



Why "Scrum" Isn't Making Your Organization Agile: Harmful Misconceptions About Product Owner Role



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr2rjaGmUzo>

Where Does TOO Come From?

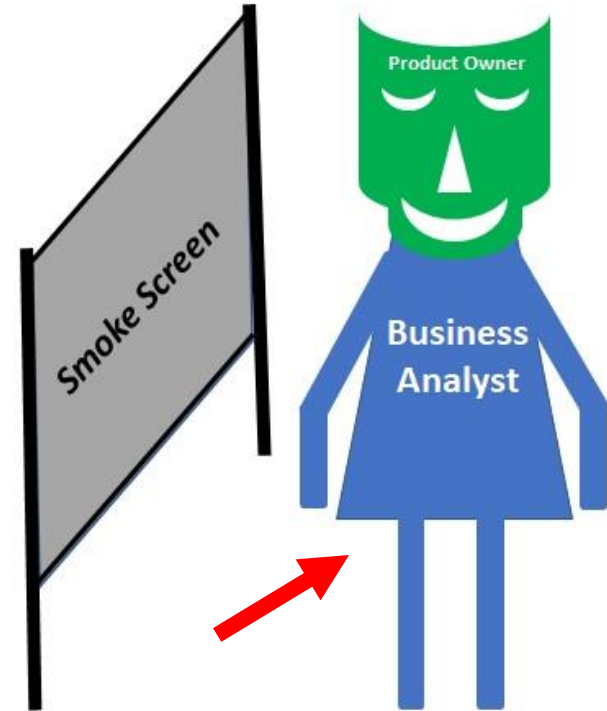
Scrum Blind Date [with Mask Show]



...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)....



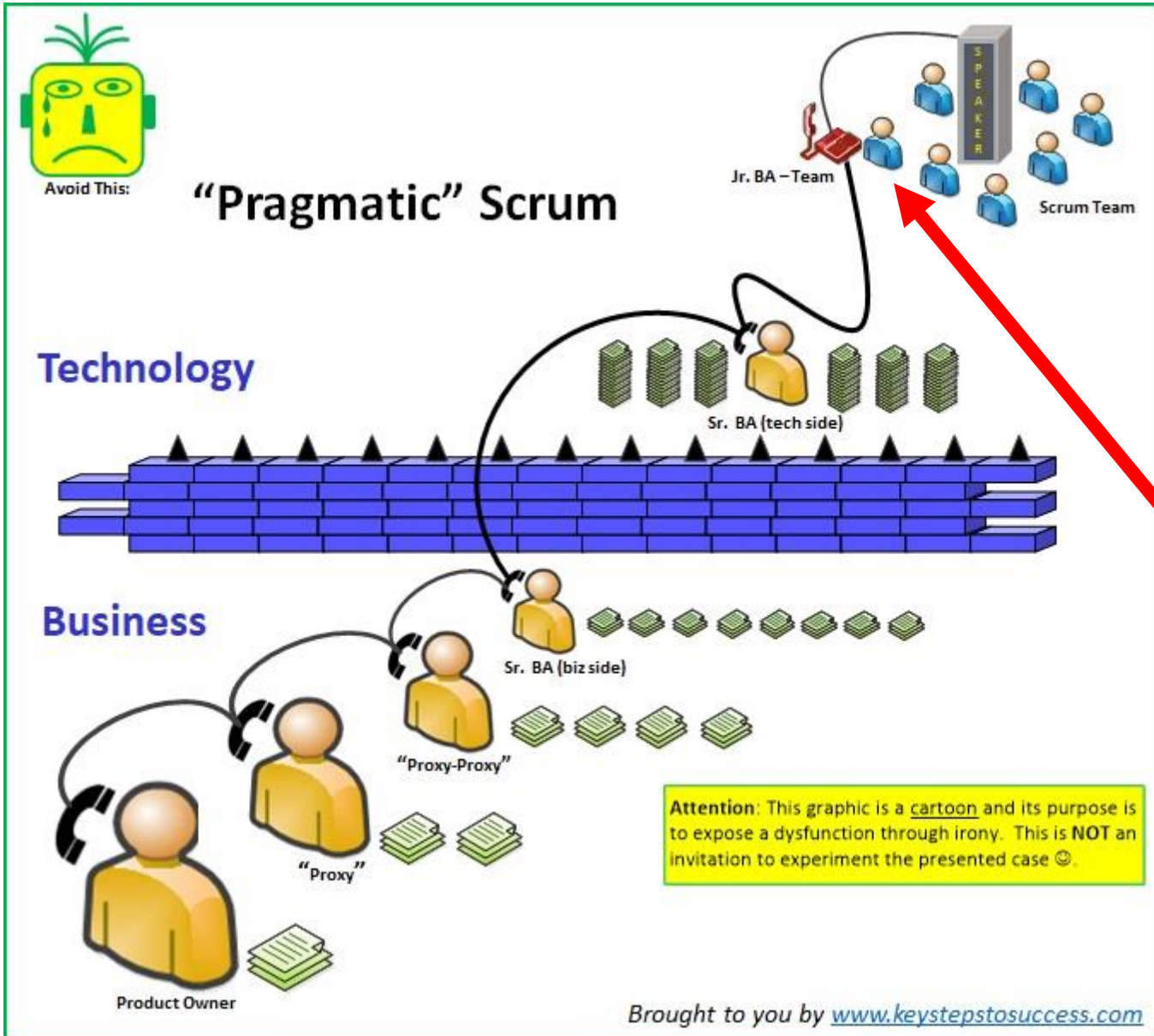
***This is
What
Team
Gets***



...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

Where Is TOO Placed?



We Need Do Dissolve Some Illusions

ILLUSION - 5

***“We can build a good team, made of external vendors-workers: initially, high-quality people, but then quietly substituted by low-quality single-function specialists that cannot work, let alone, estimate independently, and therefore, requiring vendor engagement leads and project coordinators to provide estimates on their behalf, in order to honor fixed-everything SOW/SLA, with many conflicting priorities.*”**

We Need To Dissolve Some Illusions

Client Company

Engagement Lead

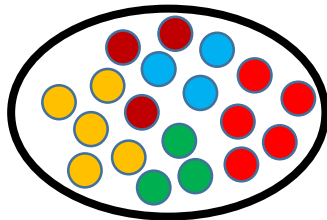
Engagement Lead

Engagement Lead

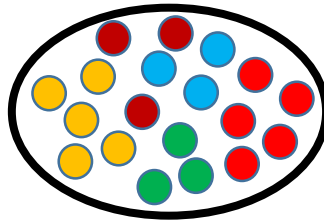
Engagement Lead

Engagement Lead

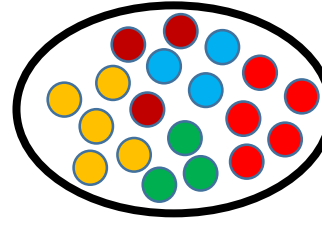
...managing and providing estimates 'on behalf of' their people - to a client company...



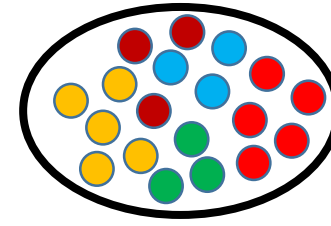
"team"



"team"



"team"



"team"

...somewhere in a cloud, doing mandate laborious work...

Vendor A

Vendor A

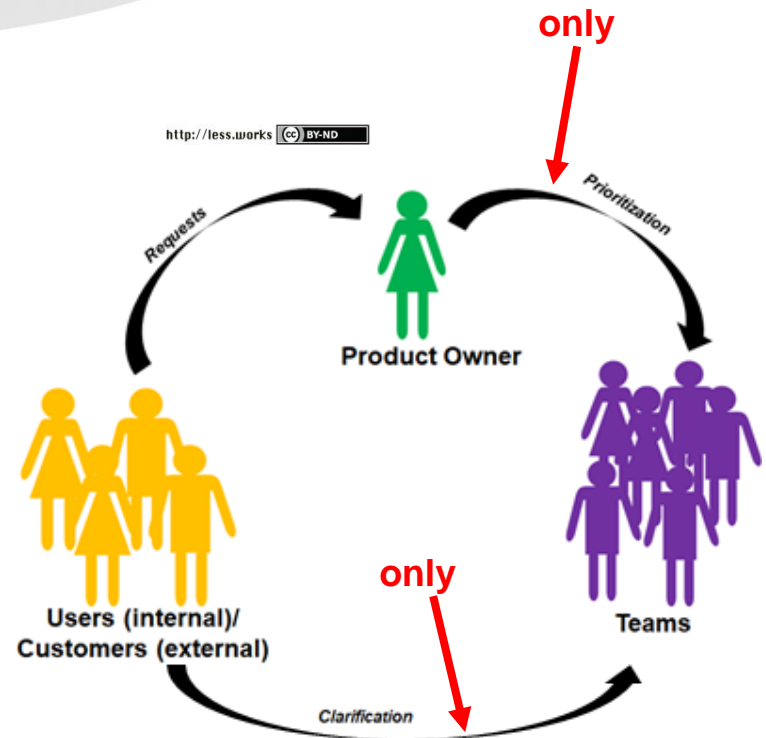
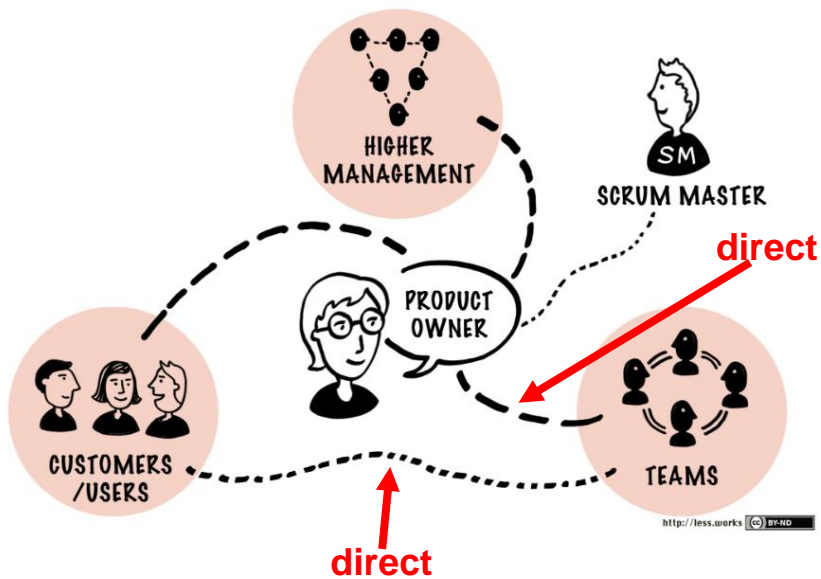
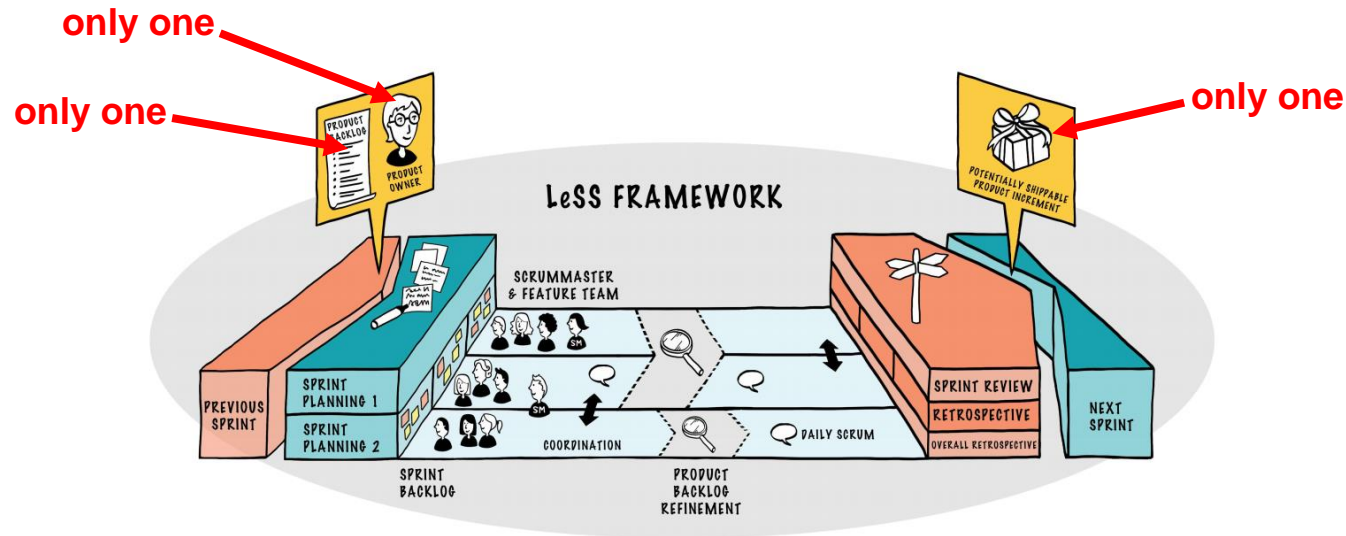
Vendor A

Vendor A

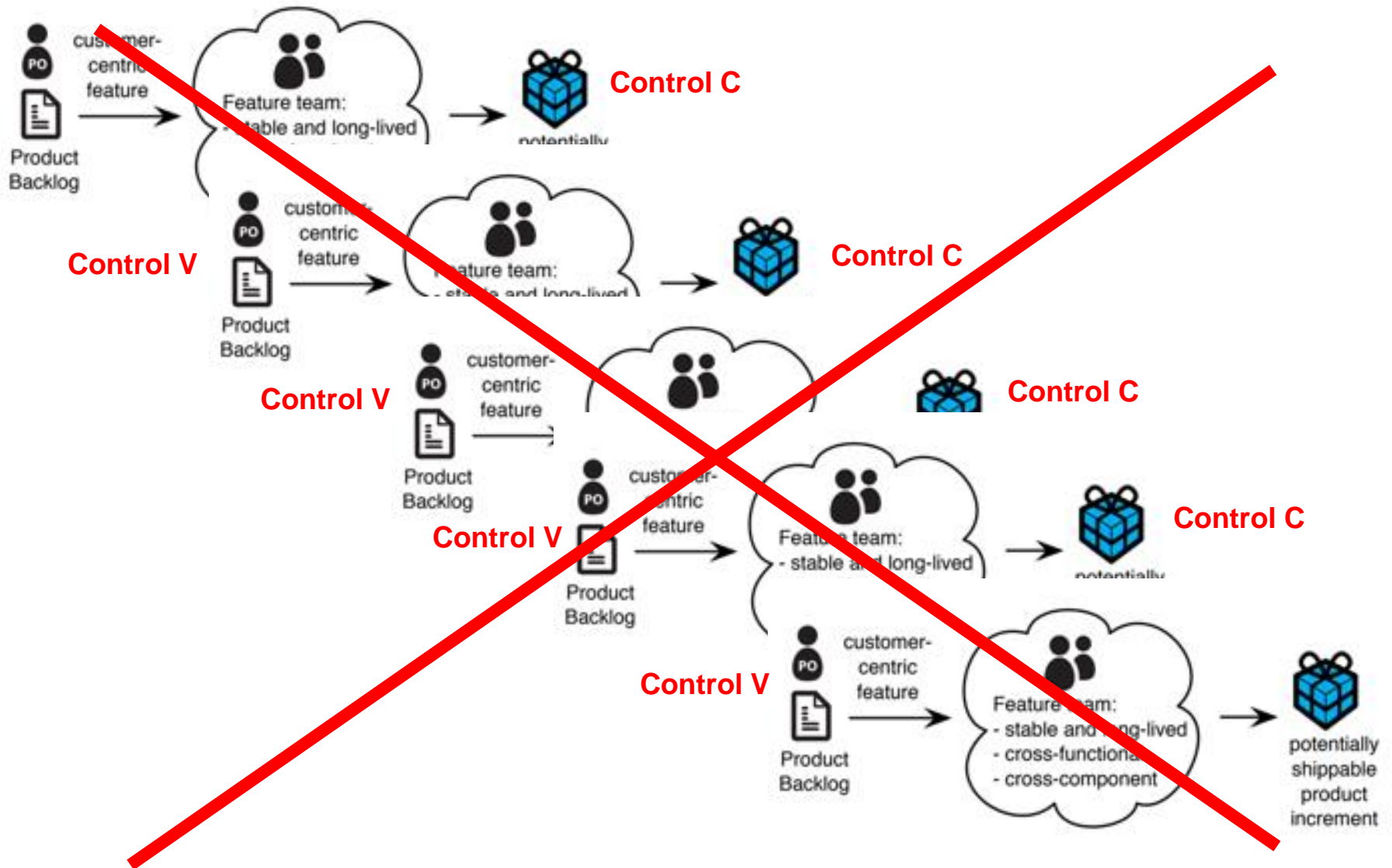
Vendor A

How Is LeSS Different?

Information Flow in LeSS



LeSS is NOT



LeSS Is [Same] Scrum with 2-8 Teams

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

LeSS is not: Many teams doing their own Scrum

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



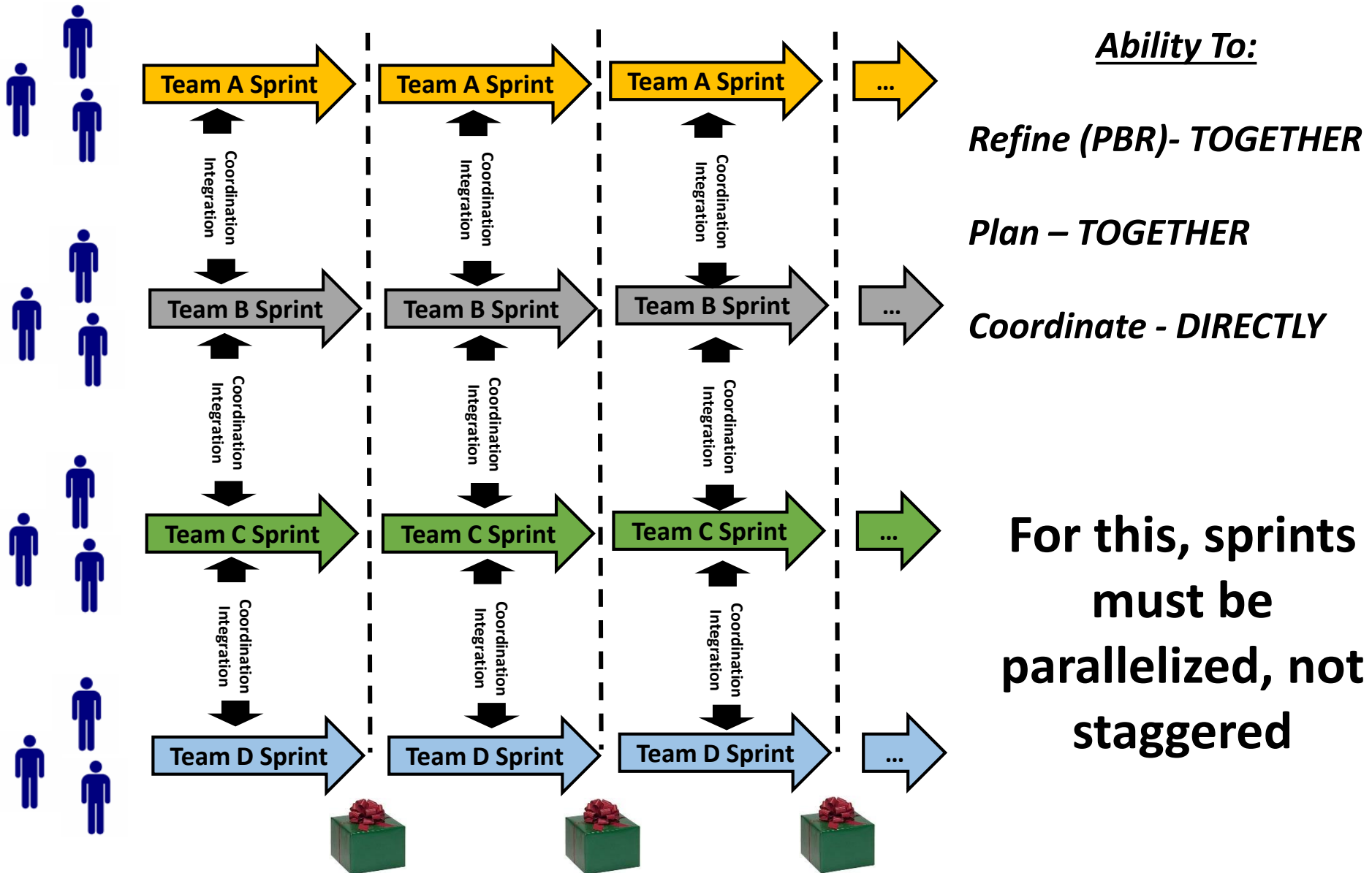
Not Like This

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

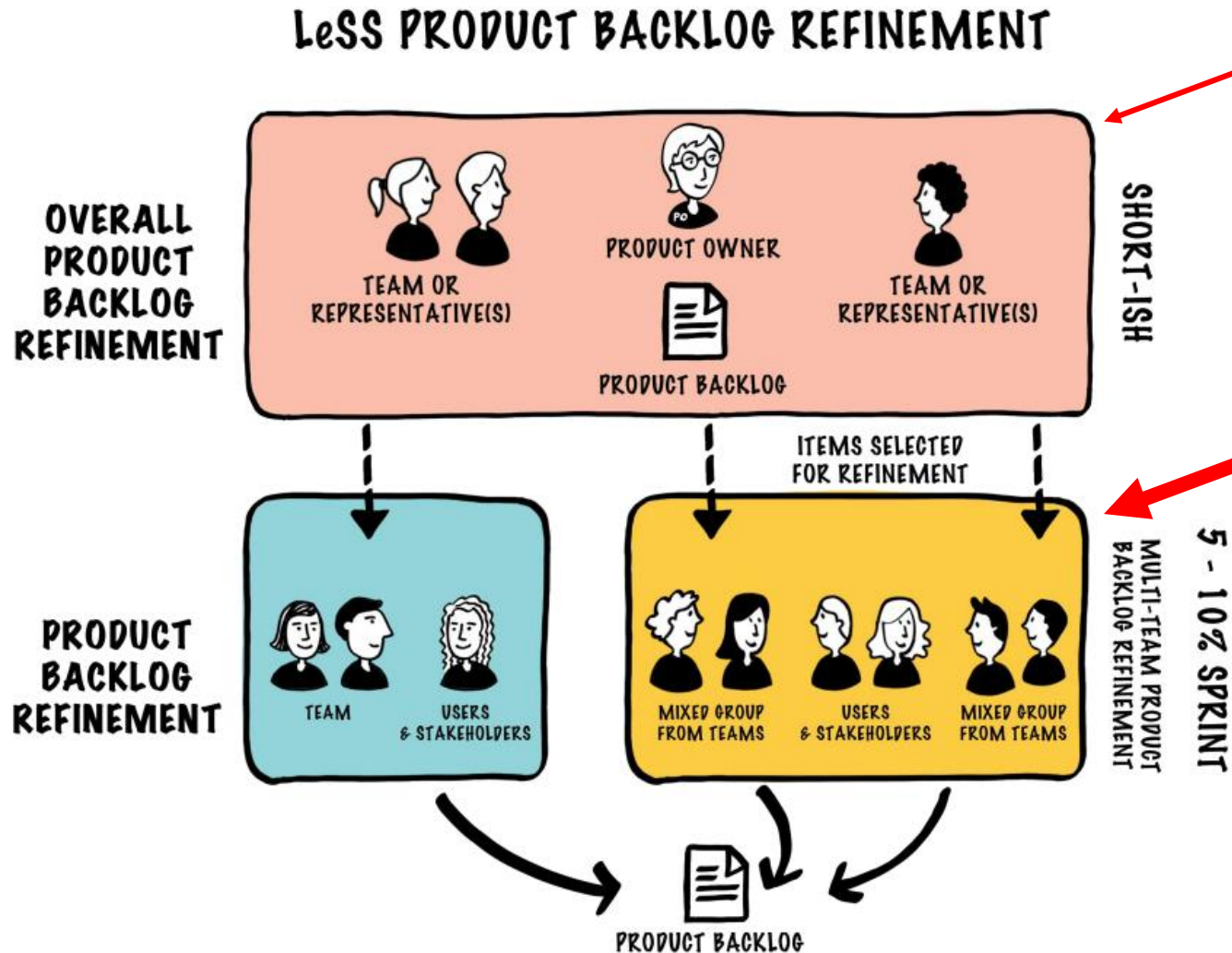


But Like This

Sprint Cadence in LeSS: One LeSS Sprint

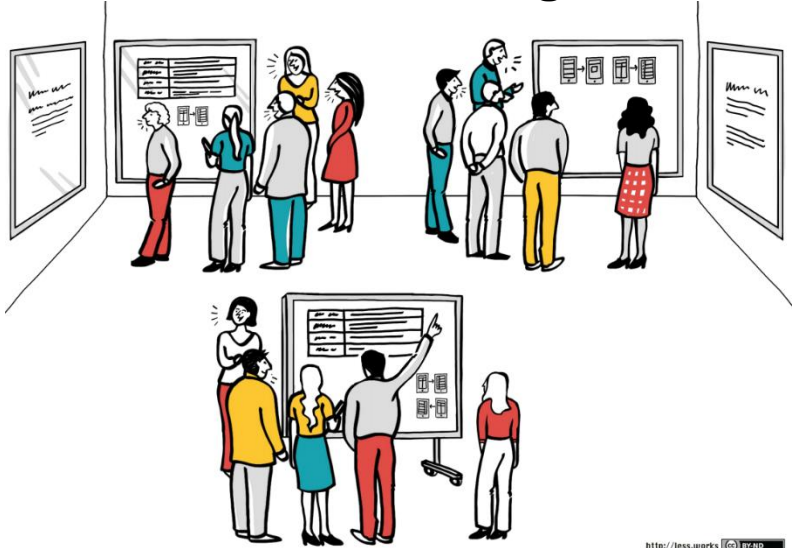


Opportunities For Coordination In LeSS



Opportunities For Coordination In LeSS

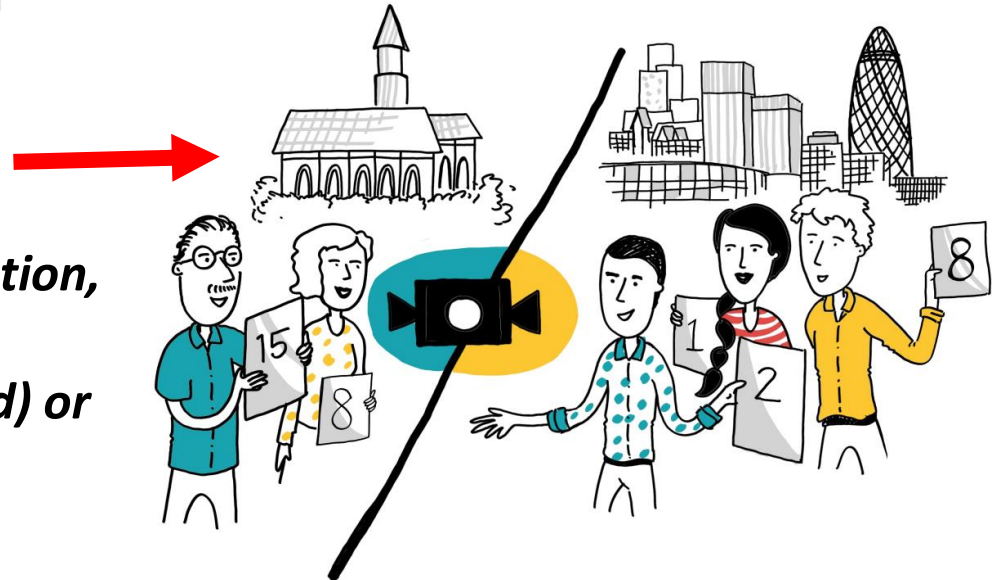
Multi-team Product Backlog Refinement



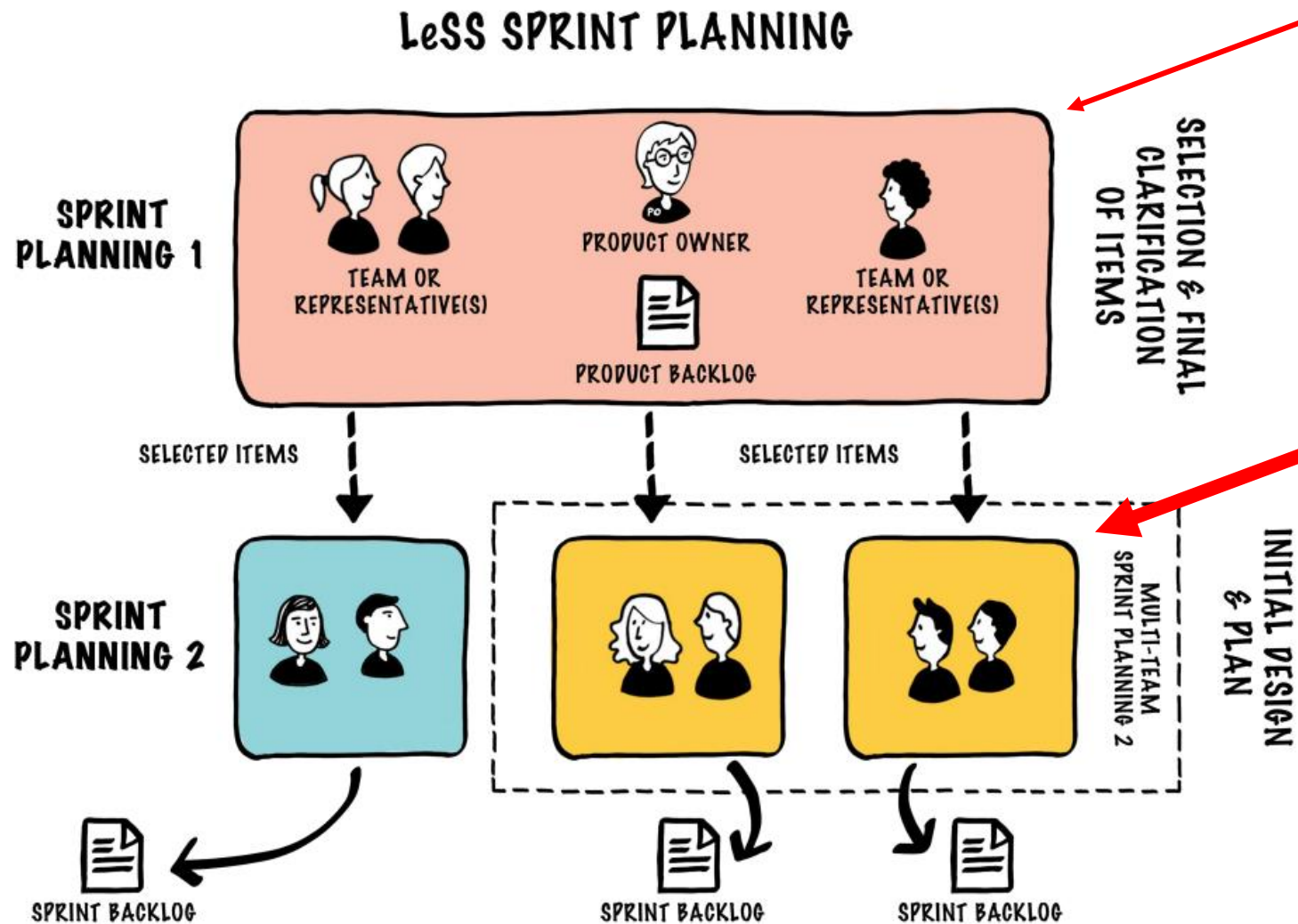
- *Open space (physical or virtual)*
- *“Promiscuous” collaboration*
- *Directly, with users and customers*

Multi-site estimation with Planning Poker

- *By “doers” (team members)*
- *Everyone is involved*
- *The main goal: CCC (Card, Conversation, Confirmation)*
- *No need to be too conservative (pad) or aggressive, while estimating*



Opportunities For Coordination In LeSS



Opportunities For Coordination In LeSS

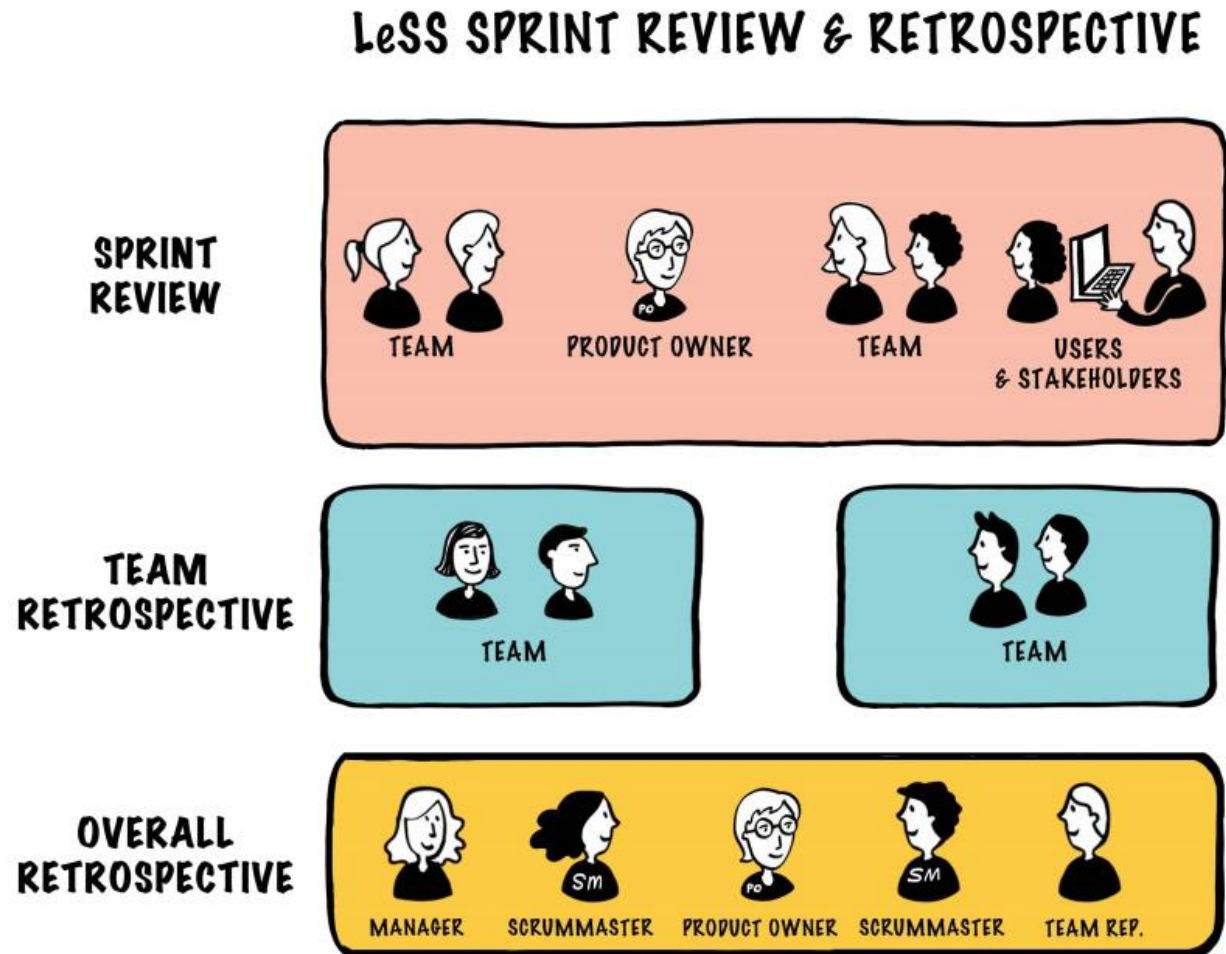
Sprint Planning



<http://less.works> 

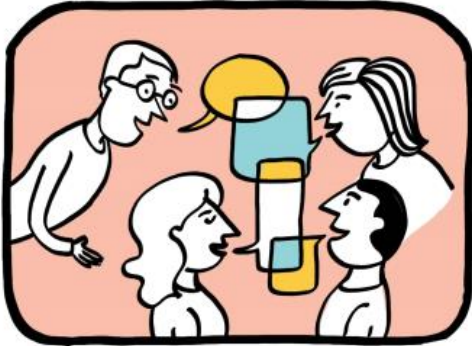
- ***No teams' 'private' product backlogs (only sprint backlogs)***
- ***Breaking down work – together***
- ***Looking for/planning opportunities to work together***
- ***Willing to help each other inside a team and across teams (see additional communication channels in LeSS)***

Opportunities For Coordination In LeSS

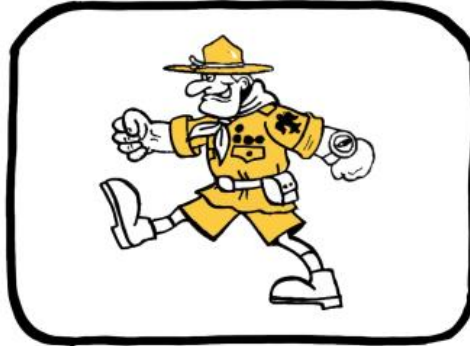


<http://less.works> BY-ND

Informal Communication In LeSS



JUST TALK



SCOUT



OPEN SPACE



TRAVELER



COMMUNITIES



COMPONENT MENTOR

Get Your Priorities Straight

IF

Estimation

AND

Forecasting/Planning

AND

Budgeting

....are important enough to you and your organization

THEN

*Consider improving an overall organizational design
& team structure*

END-IF

Q & A

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)
- [6/10-12 \(12:00 EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)
- [6/17-19 \(12:00 EST\) Certified LeSS Basics](#)



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”.



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**.

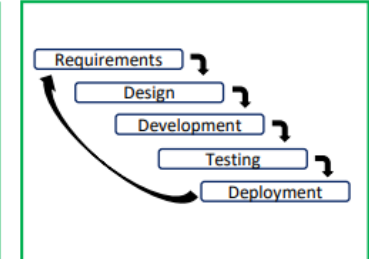
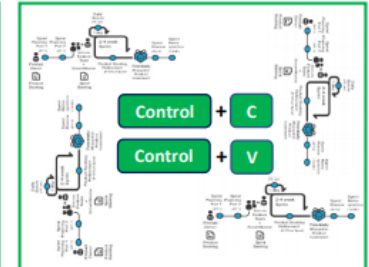
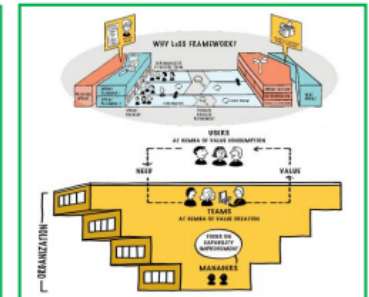
Transition from independent basic Scrum, performed by multiple teams to LeSS, is a desirable approach, when a product is widely defined and real Product Owner is identified

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

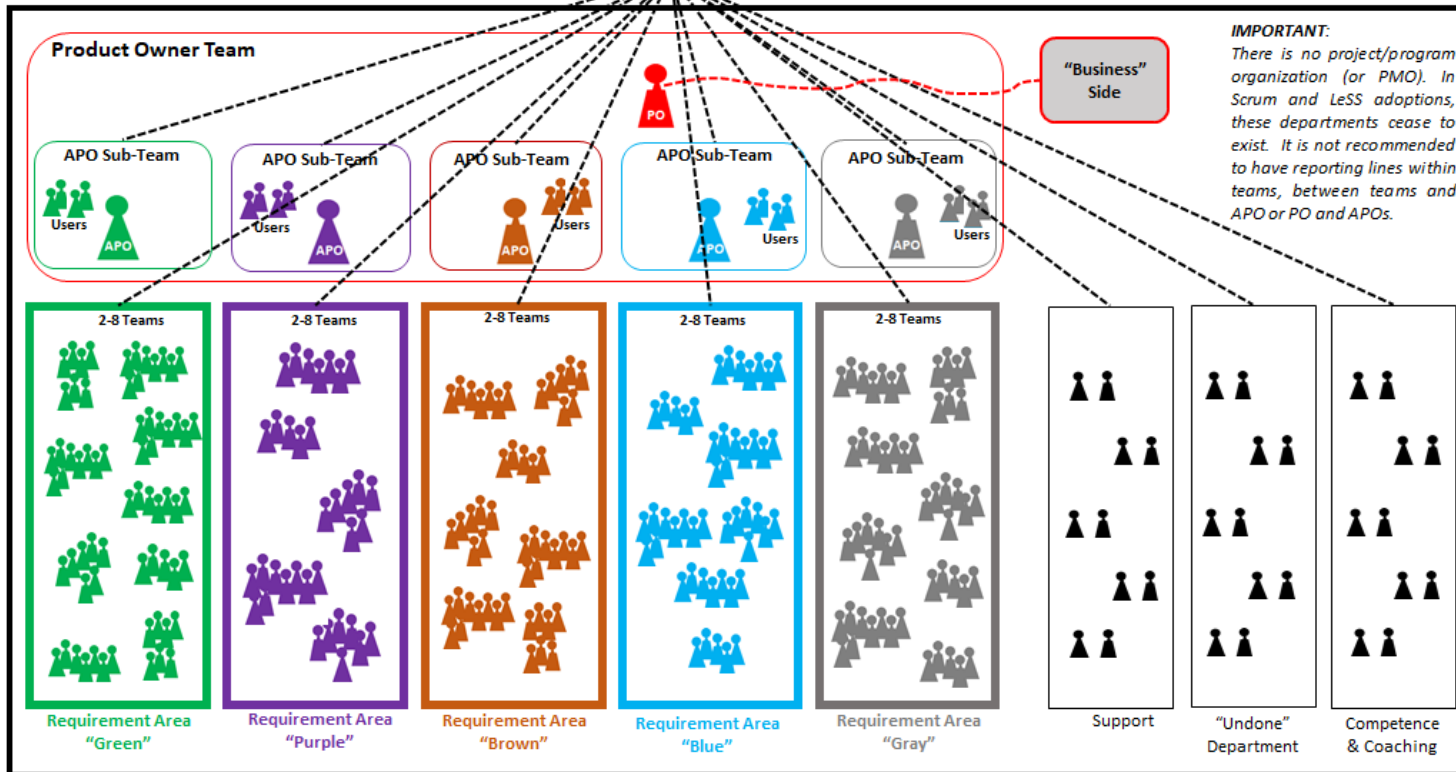
Source: http://www.keystepstosuccess.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/scrum_scaling_org_descaling-1.pdf

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