

Agile Leadership Patterns

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Agenda



- Introductions
- Chaos Theory, Agility, Pattern Languages
- Agile Base Patterns
- Are We Agile? (Or Is It Agile?)

Introductions: Dan Greening



- **Current**
 - Certified Scrum Coach
 - CS PhD (parallel complex adaptive systems)
- **Former**
 - Citrix Online Agile Program Office Director
 - Skype head of agile coaching
 - Startup veteran
 - IBM Research nerd

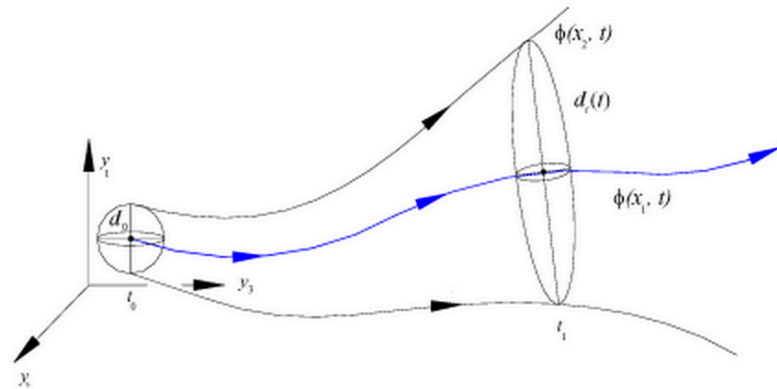
Introductions: You



Show of hands

- Level of Agile experience?
- Existing challenges with agile?
- Are you using Lean Startup, XP, Kanban, Scrum, GTD, Inbox Zero?

Chaos Creates Opportunities



Everyone's ability to predict the future degrades exponentially with time
So create a company that exploits this chaos better than competitors

Agility Defined

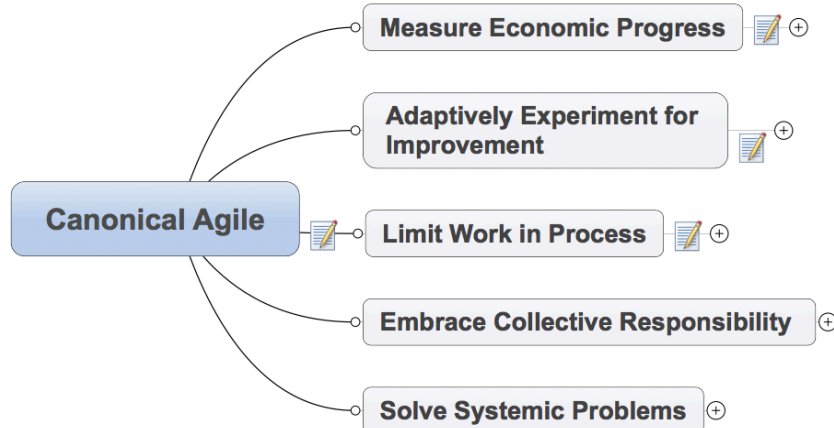


Agile organizations can

- Sense
- Adapt
- Create

faster than their chaotic economies change

Agile Base Patterns: A journey



1: Plans can't guarantee success ...

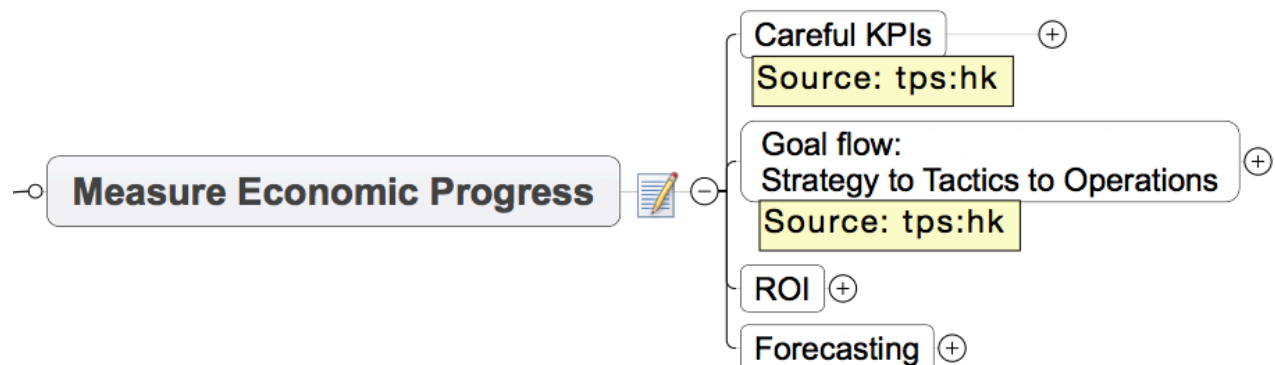


- Forces
 - Economic: Different economies. Economic goals. Passive bosses get divergent employees.
 - Metrics: Success metrics lag the work. Risk is often missing. Perversity. Cognitive bias. Progress metrics temporary. Creativity generates variation.
 - Rewards: Money vs Mastery, Autonomy, Purpose. Gaming.

...therefore, measure economic progress

- Identify desired outcomes
- Identify relevant metrics
- Create a forecasting discipline
- Embrace objectivity
- Evolve metrics over time

Measure Economic Progress



Result (measure economic progress)

- Coherent mission, vision and goals
- Handful of evolving metrics
- Learn from both failure and success
- Forecast better

Are we agile now?

2: Reacting is not enough to succeed...

- Complacency lulls us
- Loss of control scares us
- Can easily measure operational work
- Uncertainty confuses

... therefore, adaptively experiment



- Improvement experiments (Retrospection)
- Evolution vs Revolution: greedy vs optimal
- Brainstorm
- Test a hypothesis!
- Control the experiment!
- Beware controlling variability (and creativity)

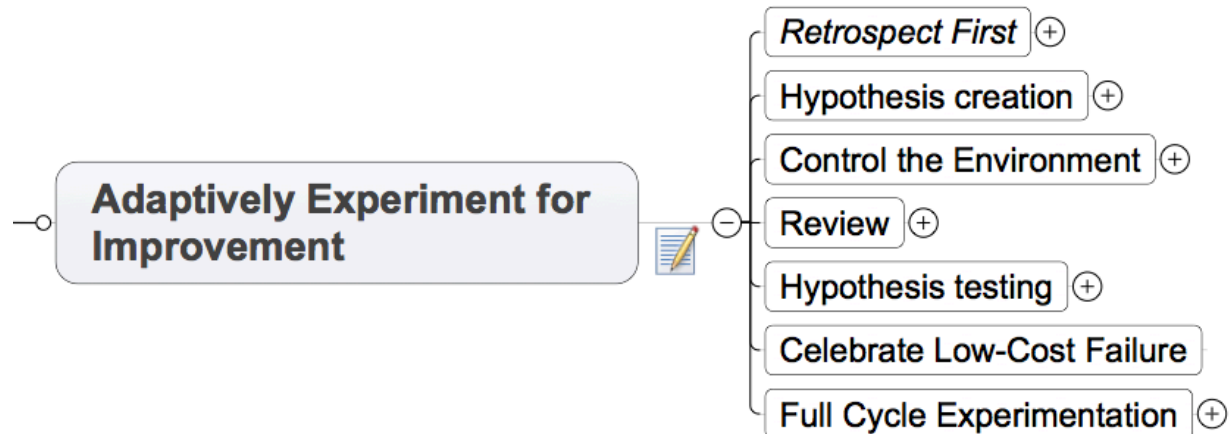
Scrum Retrospection Redefined



- Assemble economic progress history
- Validate hypothesis of the last experiment
- Brainstorm and identify process changes
- Hypothesize how new process affects metrics
- Commit to process rules for the next experiment

What does the ScrumMaster do in Scrum?

Experiment for Improvement



Results (Adaptively Experiment)



- Hyperproductive teams [jako2009]
- Organizations “disrupt themselves”

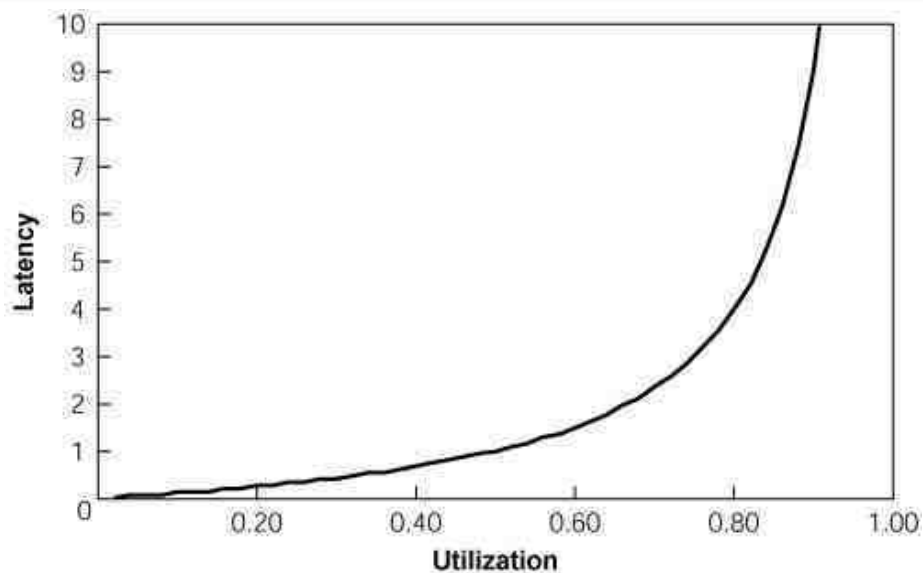
Are we agile now?

3: Planning worsens delay...



- Non-fungible assets
- Detailed planning
- Sunk cost fallacy
- Congestion (slide)
- Cognition (slide)

Congestion



Cognition



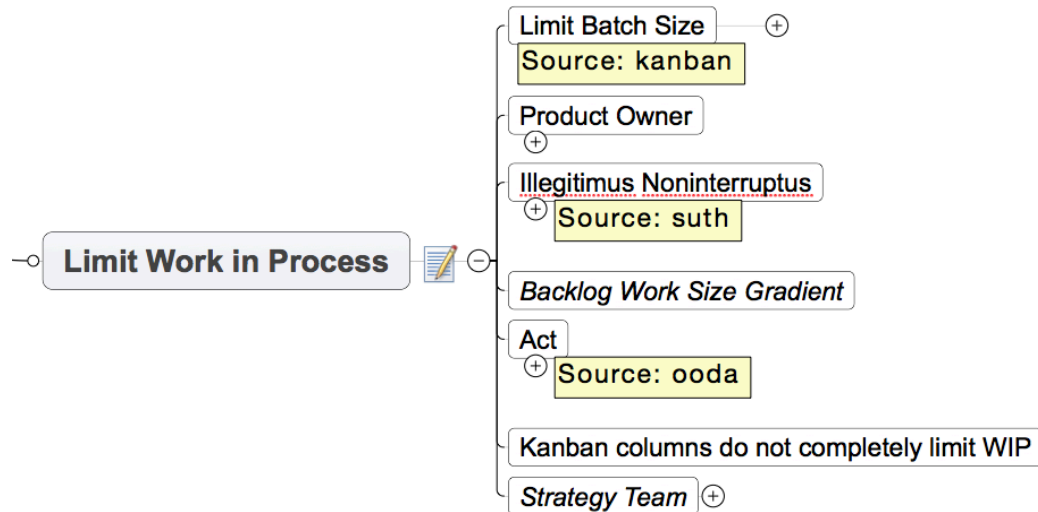
- Most valuable now: creative time and attention
- 7 ± 2 maximum ordered concepts
- Late day decisions suck
- Lack of sleep degrades creativity
- Interruptions degrade creativity

...therefore, limit work-in-process



- ≤ 7 items in Sprint Backlogs
- Geometric Product Backlogs
- Inbox Zero
- Collaborative focus
- Value Stream Optimization
- Incremental work

Limit work-in-process



Result (Limit WIP)



- Rapidly deliver small increments of value
- Possibility of rapid feedback
- Cancellable work (sunk cost is low)
- Learn faster than chaotic economy changes

Are we agile?

4: People create delay by avoiding responsibility...



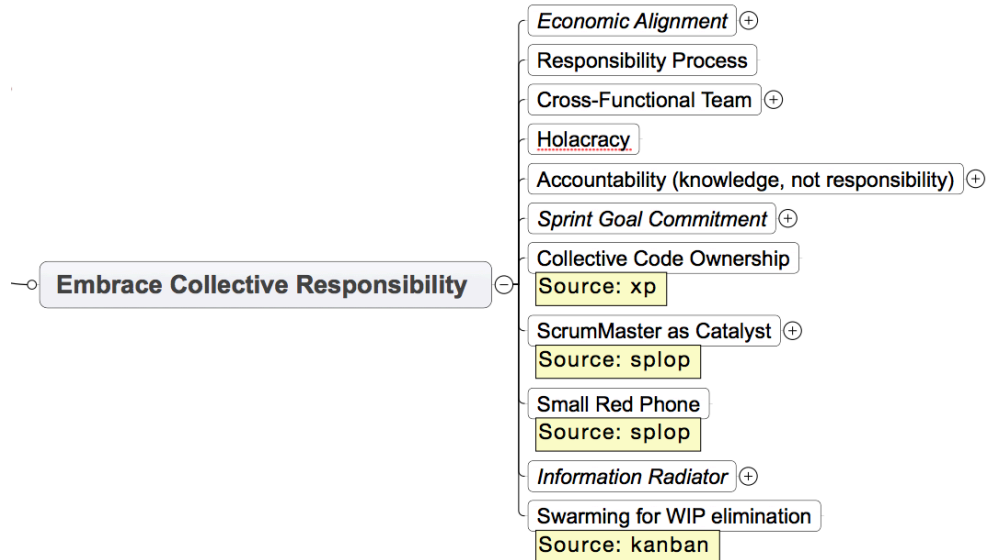
- No problem claiming responsibility for success
- Insufficient agency limits responsibility
- Persistence is a function of self-perception, not objective agency
- Deny→Blame→Justify→Guilt→Obligation→Quit→Responsibility
- People can learn new skills

...therefore, embrace collective responsibility



- Provide autonomy, understanding, authority
 - Information radiators
- Teach the Responsibility Process
- Tit-for-Tat trust building
- Collaborative root cause mapping
- Redefine *accountable*: knows what's happening

Collective Responsibility



Result (collective responsibility)



- Collaborative problem solving
- Increased teaching and learning
- Greater elasticity

How does this affect our agility?

External factors limit our agility...



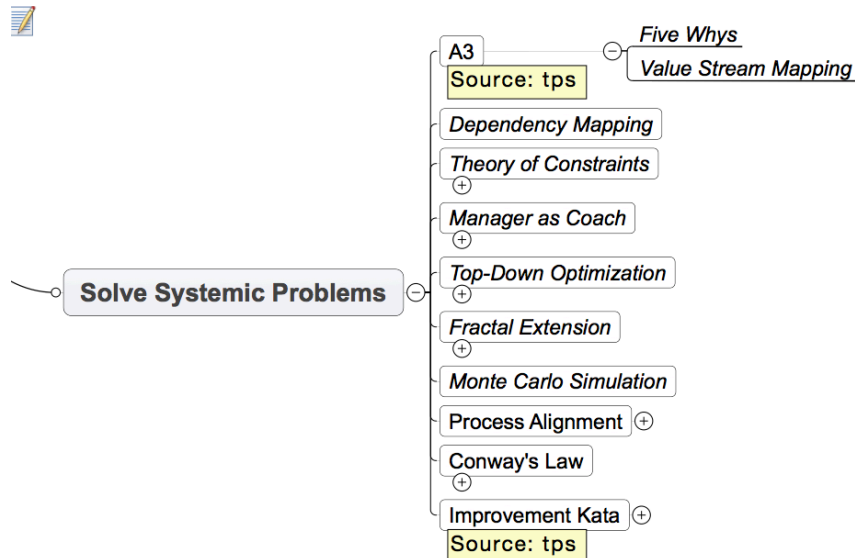
- Dependency delays
- Dependency quality
- Handoff interference

...therefore, solve systemic problems



- Leaders: Build collaborative teams of peers
 - *Avery, Team-building is an individual skill*
- Ritualize and celebrate problem solving
- Big room planning
- Convert bosses to (not just support) agile
- Change structural systems:
hiring, comp, review...

Solve Systemic Problems



Agile Base Patterns

fragile agile



Measure economic progress

- Well-chosen key performance indicators
- Propagated wisely down the hierarchy

Adaptively experiment for improvement

- Use the KPIs to sense, adapt and create
- Process changes tried frequently

Limit work-in-process

- To maximize the success of high profit efforts
- Reserving powder for things you might invent

Agile Base Patterns sustained and expansive agile



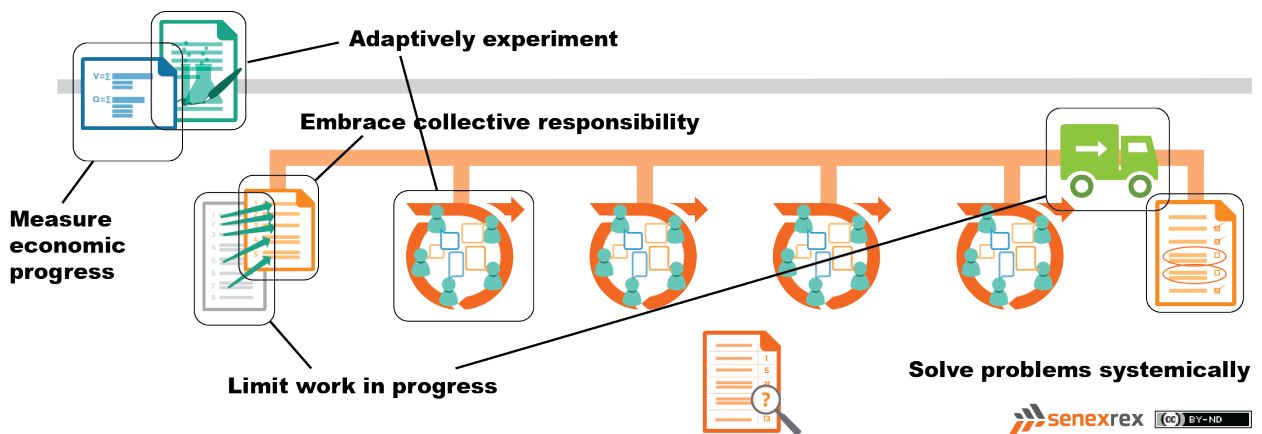
Embrace collective responsibility

- Every person feels personally responsible for team and company results

Solve systemic problems

- Broad authority to explore problems impeding agility
- There is a well-understood and respected process

Is Scrum Agile?



Agile Is Fragile



Natural evolution can degrade or destroy agile

- Adopting departmental silos blindly
- Control-centric manager job descriptions and performance management
- Variance control (Six Sigma) can destroy creativity
- Executives who don't understand agile squelch agile
- Accountability/blame cultures creating fear

Conclusion: Agile is Fragile



- Walmart
 - Yahoo
 - Others
- Why?
- Bottom-up agility is extremely vulnerable

Non-agile executives



- Fighting fires all the time
 - Strategic work (more valuable long-term) gets deferred
- Don't collaborate on strategic work
 - Doesn't get done if one person busy
- Don't run short-term experiments on strategy
 - Recruiting, Business development, Performance management, Product portfolio, marketing

Answer: Top-Down Agile



Executives use agile to manage their

- Strategic activities
- Marketing
- Recruiting practices
- Sales processes
- Contract review
- Product Management and Engineering

... from the CEO on down

What is the value of agility?



- Faster, more profitable strategic decisions
- Faster, more profitable delivery
- Better solutions
 - measurement and adaption during strategy development and tactical deployment
- More organizational focus
- How much is that worth?

Corporate Exploration



How does your company?

- Measure economic progress?
- Adaptively experiment for improvement?
- Limit work-in-process?
- Embrace collective responsibility?
- Solve systemic problems?

Senex Rex Organizational Agility Research



Making organizations agile and antifragile

<http://senexrex.com/blog>

Emerging book content

Senex Rex mindmap (available from Dan)

All known patterns from all agile practices

Coaching and Training on request

Dan Greening, PhD, Certified Scrum Coach

Contact Us

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