Leading a 1,000-Person Technical Transformation Without Resistance

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Does Testing Feel Like This?
Does Coding Feel Like This?
Does Your Backlog Look Like This?
Or Maybe Your Problem Is

Release
Case Study

- 104 teams
- Same company
- 3 different products
- A ton of code sharing
Findings

- 500+ distinct problems; most impact 1 team
- Each requires multiple teams to solve
- Worst problem impacted 6 teams
That Breaks Leaders

Leaders...
make decisions,
improve people, and
ensure the right work gets done
The Impossible Situation

No consistent problem was found...

YET...

- Leaders set a consistent direction
- Others go that direction

That won’t work for technical debt.
Leading a 1,000-Person Technical Transformation Without Resistance

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DEEP ROOTS

AGILE FLUENCY PROJECT
What We Do Today

Accountability Loop

Team

Execute

Assess

Leader

Commitment

Direction

Feedback
What Happened:

- 4 years total invested
- 30% dev effort dedicated
- 2 years holding consistent direction

Impact on Technical Debt? — Thumb Down
Metrics-based Solutions
A New Kind of Leadership

Multiple directions with alignment.
What We Could Do Instead

Accountability Loop

Team

- Commitment
- Execute
- Assess

Leader

- Direction
- Feedback
What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Execute

Assess

Leader

Commitment

Direction

Feedback
What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team
- Direction
- Execute
- Assess

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- Commitment
- Feedback
What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Leader

Direction

Commitment

Execute

Assess

Feedback
What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Assess

Execute

Direction

Leader

Feedback
What We Could Do Instead

Ownership Loop

Team

Assess → Execute → Direction

Leader

Mentor

Feedback

Challenge

DEEP ROOTS

AGILE FLUENCY PROJECT
What Happened:

- 2 orgs tried ownership loop
- Measurable progress within 1-2 months on each of ~20 teams
- Each team going after their specific pain

Impact on Technical Debt?
Leader Stance

- You Should...
- Good Strategy!
- What Led You To That?
Team Stance

What should we do next?

We need your approval or next steps...

We tried these strategies...

We made changes because...

We need these resources...

Deep Roots

Agile Fluency Project
No New Ideas

Just specific behaviors to get there
Part of This Complete Breakfast

- Preventing Bugs and Shipping Faster
- Code by Refactoring™
- Safeguarding™
- Growing Responsible Ownership™
Learn by Mirroring Each Other

- (picture of mentoring stance)
- (picture of ownership stance)

Growing Ownership Stance

Ownership Stance
Learn in One Context; Apply Everywhere

• (picture learning a kata)  
• (picture of ownership stance)

Growing Ownership Meeting

Every Day
Practice With One Friendly Team

- 1 implementation team that you can trust to tell you when you err

Each Practice Session Takes 9 Minutes
Growing Ownership Meeting

Logistics
- Meet weekly for 9 min
- Attendees: Executive, Team
- Optional: Other managers or teams under same executive

Intent
- Team: Show current decisions
- Executives: Coach on ownership
Growing Ownership Meeting

1. Exec: Accountability and Ownership Loops
2. Team: What do we understand of current situation?
3. Team: What was learned since last time?
4. Team: How did we change what we measure?
5. Team: Any overall changes in technical strategy?
6. Team: Any resources we need, and on what timeline?

Executive Agenda
Ask what informed any specific decision
Note successful ownership moments
Leading Ownership – Skills Required

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let’s start now!

1. Find the stance handout
2. Find a partner
3. Read the scenario – both roles
Leading Ownership – Skills Required

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let’s start now!

1. Roleplay your role
   
2. Swap roles and roleplay
Leading Ownership – Debriefing

Leader roles, did you find yourself...
• Mistrusting the data?
• Asking for a commitment?

Team roles, did you find yourself...
• Asking about priorities?
• Convincing the leader?
The Empowerment Habit

1. Subordinate gives up power unconsciously.
2. Superior “empowers” subordinate by giving some of it back.

People often try to improve the amount of power given back in step 2.

Instead, let’s change the habit in step 1.
Changing Your Habits - Signaling

You just disempowered yourself
• (image of sign)

You just took authority over me
• (image of sign)
Practice Cards

Team Does
• (picture of team side for 1 card)

Leader Could Respond
• (picture of leader side for same card)
Refusing to Take Offered Power

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let’s start now!

1. Deal 1 card to each person at the table
2. With same partner
3. Read the scenario – both roles
Refusing to Take Offered Power

It just takes practice and intentional awareness ... let’s start now!

1. Roleplay your role, using the Team player’s card

2. Swap roles and roleplay
Discuss

1. As a leader, what actions did you see the Team do to give away power? As the team, what actions did you see the Leader do to try to restore power?

2. How did it feel?

3. What worked? What didn’t?
To Change the Empowerment Habit

1. Catch each other (easier than catching yourself)

2. Pause

3. Get Curious. Ask about:
   - Emotions
   - Intent
   - Pre-existing beliefs

4. Invite them to re-do
Ownership Solves Technical Debt

Multiple directions with alignment.
The Rest is Just Good Engineering

Developers
Code by Refactoring™
Disciplined Design Change without
impacting others

Managers &
Product Owners
Safeguarding™
Use the stream of bugs as data to
choose what to fund

Leaders
Growing Responsible Ownership™

Preventing
Bugs and
Shipping
Faster

DEEP ROOTS
AGILE FLUENCY PROJECT
Learn Together; Apply Everywhere

At a scheduled time each week:
Growing Ownership Meeting
1 Team, then Each Team

In the meeting and as you remember:
Use the Hand Signs
Yes, they will feel silly

At start of meeting and when you remember:
Present Ownership Loop
First Next Step

Who is your First Friendly Team?

How will you invite them?

• (picture of cards)
Address systemic technical problems across your enterprise

Change key behaviors across your organization

Transform one team with a gnarly problem into the most effective team you have

Change whatever that team needs

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