From Projects to Products:
Aligning Strategy and Execution

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Scaled Agile, Inc.

@richardknaster
Agenda

- Define a SAFe Portfolio
- Connect the portfolio to enterprise strategy
- Maintain the portfolio vision
- Establish portfolio flow
- Fund value streams
- Support Agile Portfolio Operations
- Apply Lean governance
Purpose of the Lean Portfolio Management (LPM) function

The LPM function governs each SAFe Portfolio, providing three essential collaborations to realize its responsibilities:

- Strategy and Investment Funding
- Agile Portfolio Operations
- Lean Governance
Lean Portfolio Management empowers the portfolio

- Connect the portfolio to enterprise strategy
- Maintain portfolio vision
- Fund Value Streams
- Establish portfolio flow

- Forecast and budget dynamically
- Measure portfolio performance
- Coordinate continuous compliance

- Coordinate Value Streams
- Support program execution
- Drive operational excellence

Strategy & Investment Funding

Lean Governance

Agile Portfolio Operations

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And it enables moving from a traditional to a Lean-Agile approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Approach</th>
<th>Lean-Agile Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People organized in functional silos and temporary project teams</td>
<td>People organized in stable, value streams/ARTs; continuous value flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding projects and project-cost accounting</td>
<td>Funding value streams, Lean budgets and guardrails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big up-front, top-down, annual planning and budgeting</td>
<td>Value stream budgets adjusted dynamically; participatory budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralized, unlimited work intake; project overload</td>
<td>Strategic demand managed by Portfolio Kanban; decentralized intake by value Streams and ARTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly detailed business cases based on speculative ROI</td>
<td>Lean business cases with MVP, business outcome hypothesis, agile forecasting and estimating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects governed by phase gates; waterfall milestones, progress measured by task completion</td>
<td>Products and services governed by self-managing ARTS; objective measures and milestones based on working solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At your table, discuss the following:

- **Step 1:** What problems are the use of projects having on delivery execution?
- **Step 2:** What would be required to make the change from managing projects to executing with a product and service development approach?
Define a SAFe portfolio
What is a SAFe Portfolio?

- A SAFe Portfolio manages multiple development Value Streams, each of which is dedicated to develop and support a set of solutions for a particular business domain or government agency.

- A portfolio typically represents a specific area of the Enterprise (e.g., business unit, division).
Small Enterprises may have a single SAFe Portfolio
Large Enterprises will have multiple portfolios
Development value streams create technical solutions for the business

1. Operational Value Streams
   Used to deliver end customer value

2. Development Value Streams
   Used to build the systems and capabilities that enable operational Value Streams

‘An area of the business’

‘An area of R&D or IT’
Organize the portfolio around value
Value doesn’t follow functional silos

Value delivery in silos is inhibited by hand-offs and delays.

Political boundaries can prevent cooperation across silos.

Communication across silos is difficult.

Management challenge: Connect the silos
Instead, organize the portfolio around the flow of value

Organizing the portfolio around value requires the Enterprise to:

- **Move from projects to products (and services)**
- **Understand what the Value Streams deliver and how; understand how to do Value Stream Mapping**
- **Focus on achieving business outcomes rather completing tasks**
What is a Value Stream?

It contains all the people who do the work, the systems, and the flow of information and materials.

The sequence of steps used to deliver value (products, services, and applications) to the customer.
Key benefits of organizing the portfolio around value

- Enables long-lived, stable teams who focus on value delivery and business outcomes
- Enables faster learning and shorter time-to-market
- Contributes to higher quality and more productivity
- Supports leaner budgeting mechanisms
Connect the portfolio to enterprise strategy
Strategy and investment funding is a collaboration

- Key stakeholders collaborate, developing and communicating the portfolio strategy
- They provide Lean budgeting and funding to the Value Streams that develop and maintain the portfolio products and services
- They build a Portfolio Kanban system to establish flow

Connect the portfolio to enterprise strategy
- Maintain portfolio vision
- Fund Value Streams
- Establish portfolio flow
Strategic Themes are differentiating business objectives that:

- Drive the future state of a portfolio
- Connect the Portfolio to the Enterprise Strategy
- Provide context for the Portfolio Vision and Lean Budgeting

**Good examples of Strategic Themes**

(Retail eCommerce):
- Appeal to a younger demographic (18-29)
- Reduce warehousing cost by 35%

**Bad examples of Strategic Themes**

- Increase shareholder wealth
- Maximize corporate value
**Exercise: Establish Strategic Themes**

- **Objectives** – represents the Strategic Themes (differentiating business objectives) that drives the future state of a portfolio.

- **Key results** – must be measurable. Two to five key results per Strategic Theme is recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives (Strategic Themes)</th>
<th>Key Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Improve Net Promoter Score (NPS) by 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce average Feature cycle time by 40%</td>
<td>Reduce production defects by 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More information on OKRs: [bit.ly/What-are-OKRs]
Strategic Themes influence what gets built

Strategic Themes are differentiating, specific, and itemized business objectives that connect a portfolio to the strategy of the enterprise.

- Context for decision-making, inputs to the vision, budget, and backlogs
- Adjust ART and Value Stream funding to track changing strategic priorities
- Assist with Epic evaluation and decision-making
- Influence each Program Vision and Roadmap
Maintain the portfolio vision
Maintain the Portfolio Vision

- The Portfolio Canvas is a template for defining a specific SAFe Portfolio
- It defines the domain of the portfolio and other key elements
- It contains the development value streams and the solutions for the operational value streams that it supports
The Portfolio Canvas is an adaptation of the BMC

- Documents business models of existing or new products
- Aligns business and technology to a common language
- Provides a shared language to describe and visualize the current and future business model

There is a large body of knowledge about how to use the Business Model Canvas. You can refer to: Osterwalder, Alexander; Pigneur, Yves. Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers Wiley. Kindle Edition
Envision the future state

- The Portfolio Canvas captured current state
- Use SWOT opportunities to brainstorm potential future states
- Evaluate your options, and pick a future state
- Identify the Epics that will get you there
Identify opportunities for the portfolio’s future state with SWOT

- Establishes an understanding of your organization’s strengths and weaknesses
- Identifies the most significant opportunities and potential threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWOT Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal origin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>External origin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Image of SWOT analysis chart with green sticky notes]
Express the portfolio future state as a vision

Vision provides a basis for action:

- How will our future solution solve the larger customer problems?
- How will it differentiate us?
- What is the future context that our solutions will operate in?
- What is our current business context, and how must we evolve to meet this future state?

Vision: A postcard from the future

- Aspirational, yet realistic and achievable
- Motivational enough to engage others on the journey

Result: The teams start thinking about how to apply their strengths in order to get there.

Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard, Heath and Heath, Broadway Books, 2010
Balance spending in solutions by investment horizon

- Horizon 3: Evaluating
- Horizon 2: Emerging
- Horizon 1: Investing
- Horizon 0: Extracting, Retiring

Decommission
Establish portfolio flow
Establish epic flow with the Portfolio Kanban

- Makes largest business initiatives visible
- Brings structure to analysis and decision-making
- Provides WIP limits to ensure the teams analyze responsibly
- Helps prevent unrealistic expectations
- Helps drive collaboration amongst the key stakeholders
- Provides a transparent and quantitative basis for economic decision-making
Portfolio Kanban benefits

Provides a transparent and quantitative basis for economic decision-making.

- **Makes largest business initiatives visible**
- **Helps drive collaboration amongst key stakeholders**
- **Provides WIP limits to ensure that teams analyze responsibly and prevent unrealistic expectations**
- **Brings structure to analysis and go/no-go decision**
- **Anticipated outcome hypothesis is evaluated and pivot, persevere or stop decision is made**

Sci-Box explains Portfolio Kanban benefits.
Portfolio Kanban

Funnel

- New business opportunities
- Cost savings
- Marketplace changes
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Problems with existing solutions

All big ideas are welcome here!

Review

- Epic Hypothesis Statement
- Refine understanding
- Calculate WSJF
- WIP limited

Analyzing

- Solution alternatives
- Refine WSJF
- Cost estimate
- Identify MVP
- Lean business case
- WIP limited
- Go/ no-go decision

Portfolio Backlog

Implementing

Done

SAFe Lean Startup Cycle

Create new epic and hypothesis

Build and evaluate MVP

Hypothesis proven?

Yes

No

Epic

Approved Lean business case with a defined MVP and business outcome hypothesis

Program Kanban systems

Local features and other input

Development continues.

Development stops.

Yes

No

Yes

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Feeding the portfolio funnel
MVPs foster innovation and control scope
### Epic Hypothesis Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For</th>
<th>&lt;customers&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td>&lt;do something&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>&lt;solution&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a</td>
<td>&lt;something – the “how”&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>&lt;provides this value&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlike</td>
<td>&lt;competitor, current solution, or non-existing solution&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>our solution</td>
<td>&lt;does something better – the “why”&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Business Outcome Hypothesis**: 
- **Leading Indicators**: (early innovation accounting measures)
- **NFRs**: 

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Exercise: Describe Portfolio Epics

Using the *Epic Hypothesis Statement* format:

- **Step 1:** On a flip chart describe one or more Epics for your portfolio in the Epic hypothesis statement format.

- **Step 2:** Be prepared to share.

---

**Epic Hypothesis Statement**

- For: `<customers>`
- who: `<do something>`
- the: `<solution>`
- is a: `<something – the “how”>`
- that: `<provides this value>`
- Unlike: `<competitor, current solution, or non-existing solution>`
- our solution: `<does something better – the “why”>`

**Business**
- *
- **Outcome**
- *
- **Hypothesis**
- *
- **Leading Indicators**
- (early innovation accounting measures)
- *
- **NFRs**
- *

**Prepare** 5 min  |  **Share** 5 min
Epics are not projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Epics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implemented by temporary teams which disband after work is completed</td>
<td>Implemented by stable, cross-functional Value Streams and ARTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitive start and end date; Scope is fixed. All scope must be</td>
<td>No definitive start and end date; Scope is variable. Continue until WSJF says otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress is measured based on task completion</td>
<td>Progress is measured as outcomes against the benefit hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overly detailed business case, based on speculative ROI</td>
<td>Lean Business Case, based on benefit hypothesis and definition of an MVP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation typically follows phase-gated, sequential (waterfall)</td>
<td>Implementation follows the Lean Startup Build – Measure - Learn cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After business case is approved, up-front commitment is made to the</td>
<td>After Lean Business Case is approved, commitment is to the evaluation of the MVP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entire project scope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5 Fund Value Streams
Problem: Cost-center budgeting

Traditional project-based, cost-center budgeting creates overhead and friction, lowers velocity.

Result:
- Slow, complex budgeting process
- Leads to utilization-based planning and execution
- Low program throughput
- *Moves the people to the work*
Problem: ‘projects’ increase Cost of Delay

When overruns happen, project accounting and re-budgeting increases Cost of Delay and impacts culture.

What/who do we blame?
- Technology challenge?
- Change in scope?
- The team?

Does it matter?

Result:
- Wait for new budget approval; increase Cost of Delay (CoD)
- Costly variance analysis; blame game; threatens transparency
- Resource scramble and reassignments
Solution: Fund value streams not projects

Funding Value Streams provides for full control of spend, with:

- No costly and delay-inducing project cost variance analyses
- No resource reassignments
- No blame game for project overruns

Lean Budgets → Guardrails → Value Streams
Control costs with increased flexibility

ART budgets and resources are unaffected by Feature cost overruns or changing priorities.

Planned: Feature 1, Feature 2
Actual: Feature 1, Feature 2

Keep people working on the right Feature for the right reasons.

Fixed cost per PI

Delay this Feature as necessary.
Value Stream funding comes from the total portfolio budget

- The Enterprise provides the total budget for the portfolio
- The portfolio allocates the budget for each Value Stream
- Value Stream budgets are supported by Guardrails that define the spending policies, guidelines, and practices for a specific portfolio
Establish Lean Budget Guardrails to maintain strategic alignment

Guardrails help balance near-term opportunities with long-term strategy, ensuring that large investments are approved, and that investments in technology, infrastructure, and maintenance aren't routinely ignored.

There are 4 Lean Budget Guardrails:

1. Guide solutions investments by horizons
2. Apply capacity allocation to optimize value and solution integrity
3. Approve significant initiatives
4. Continuous business owner engagement
Guide investments in solutions by horizon

- **Horizon 3 (Evaluating):** Investment for new potential solutions
- **Horizon 2 (Emerging):** Solutions that have emerged from horizon three
- **Horizon 1:** Desired state where solutions deliver more value than their cost:
  - **Investing:** Solutions that require significant ongoing investment
  - **Extracting:** Stable solutions that deliver great value with minimal new investment
- **Horizon 0 (Retiring):** Investment to decommission solutions

The example allocations shown in this figure were suggested in the Harvard Business Review article located at https://hbr.org/2012/05/managing-your-innovation-portfolio
Apply capacity allocation

- Determine what percentage of the ARTs total capacity can be allocated for new features, enablers and technical debt for an upcoming PI.

- Each value stream should develop explicit policies for managing capacity allocation.

- The amount of capacity allocated will change periodically based on the context.

Example Capacity Allocation categories: Adapt these categories or add new ones as needed.
Approve significant investments

Each significant initiative is tested against the portfolio epic threshold, which is established by LPM:

- **Below threshold**: Epic goes into the funnel of the appropriate program or solution Kanban systems
- **Above threshold**: Epic enters the portfolio Kanban system for review and approval

All Epics require a Lean Business Case.

The Portfolio Epic threshold is defined by the LPM function to determine which Epics are a portfolio concern. Examples: Forecasted cost, number of PIs, strategic importance to the portfolio or a combination of these.
Continuous Business Owner engagement

- Business Owners ensure that the priorities of the ARTs and Solution Trains are in alignment with the Portfolio
- Verify that investments are spent on the right things at the right time
- Business Owners actively engage by:
  - Communicating the Portfolio Vision
  - Assisting in the preparation for the upcoming PI
  - Attending PI Planning
  - Attending Inspect and Adapt

Business Owners are a small group of stakeholders who have the primary business and technical responsibility for governance, compliance, and return on investment for the ART’s solution.
Self-assessment: Strategy and Investment Funding

1. **Sit**  
   Project-based funding; Strategy is not formally communicated

2. **Crawl**  
   Executives trained in Lean Portfolio Management

3. **Walk**  
   Portfolio prioritization and epic flow are in place

4. **Run**  
   Value stream funding and guardrails in effect

5. **Fly**  
   Lean, rolling-wave strategy and budgets support operations and innovation

*Place a dot on the Lean Enterprise Health Radar*
Support Agile Portfolio Operations
Agile Portfolio Operations is a collaboration

- Support SAFe implementation, relentless improvement and Agile practices to achieve business goals
- Enable continuous flow of value through coordination of Value Streams and ARTs

![Diagram showing Agile Portfolio Operations](image)

- Coordinate Value Streams
- Support program execution
- Drive operational excellence
Cross-Value Stream coordination

1. Coordination Roles
   - Enterprise Architect
   - Solution Portfolio Mgmt
   - APMO
   - Epic Owners

2. Apply cadence and synchronization

3. Introducing new portfolio work

4. Ensured integration points

5. Portfolio Roadmap

6. Release on Demand
Support program execution across the portfolio

- APMO facilitates the portfolio sync
- Works with the LACE to develop, harvest, and apply successful program execution patterns across the portfolio
- Facilitates Lean budgeting and coordinates portfolio governance
- Fosters decentralized PI Planning and operational excellence
- Foster more Agile contracts and leaner Supplier and Customer partnerships
Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a common concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

— Étienne Wenger, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity
# Self-assessment: Agile Portfolio Operations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Sit</th>
<th>Centralized planning and project overload; traditional PMO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Crawl</td>
<td>PMO engaged in Lean-Agile transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Walk</td>
<td>Decentralized planning and execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Run</td>
<td>Value streams coordinated effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fly</td>
<td>Relentlessly improving Lean-Agile operational excellence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Place a dot on the Lean Enterprise Health Radar*
7.7 Apply Lean Governance
Lean governance is a collaboration

- Collaborate on forecasting and dynamic budgeting with an Agile approach
- Establish the minimum Lean portfolio metrics necessary to assure strategy is being implemented

**Enterprise Architect**

**Business Owners**

**APMO**

- Forecast and budget dynamically
- Measure Lean portfolio performance
- Coordinate continuous compliance
Value Stream budgets must be adjusted over time

- Typically, Value Stream budgets are adjusted twice annually.
- Less frequently and spending is fixed for too long, and it may limit agility.
- More frequently and planning may be more challenging.

Adjust Value Stream budgets to adapt to changing priorities at PI Boundaries.
Most organizations will generate more good ideas than they can fund, resulting in a portfolio prioritization challenge.

Fiduciaries and participants from different Value Streams use Participatory Budgeting to collaboratively determine which Epics should be chosen and prioritized.

These choices determine how the Value Stream budgets will be adjusted over time.
Measure Lean Portfolio Management performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Expected Result</th>
<th>Metric Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee engagement</td>
<td>Improved employee satisfaction; lower turnover</td>
<td>Employ survey; HR statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Improved Net Promoter Score</td>
<td>Net promoter score survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Reduced average Feature cycle time</td>
<td>Feature cycle time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-assessments</td>
<td>Continuous improvement in team and program measures</td>
<td>Self-assessments for each level of the Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-to-market</td>
<td>More frequent releases</td>
<td>Number of releases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Reduced defect counts and support call volume</td>
<td>Defect data and support call volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner health</td>
<td>Improved ecosystem relationships</td>
<td>Partner and vendor surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Themes</td>
<td>Measurements against key results</td>
<td>Objectives and key results (OKRs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Self-assessment: Lean Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Sit</strong></td>
<td>Stage-gated milestones and reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Crawl</strong></td>
<td>Lean measures established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Walk</strong></td>
<td>Lean, objective measurements and Agile forecasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Run</strong></td>
<td>Lean Budgets and Guardrails are dynamically adjusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Fly</strong></td>
<td>Lean governance facilitates innovation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Place a dot on the Lean Enterprise Health Radar*
Take an LPM Course

Learn more and register here:
https://www.scaledagile.com/certification/courses/lean-portfolio-management/
Learn more about SAFe and LPM

The ideal study companions for your exam!
Ultimate guides to continue your SAFe® journey.

- SAFe® Distilled breaks down the complexity of the Framework into easily digestible explanations and actionable guidance
- Unlike the SAFe knowledge base, it’s designed to tell a story of why and how SAFe works, including many short stories from the trenches
- A must-have resource for becoming certified in SAFe

Learn more and order yours today!
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