LET'S RETIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT

AND INTRODUCE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

LUCA MINUDEL

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LUCA MINUDEL

IN PROFESSIONAL
SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY
FROM OVER 20 YEARS

AGILE – LEAN – COMPLEXITY SCIENCE PRACTITIONER

SCUDERIA FERRARI

ThoughtWorks®

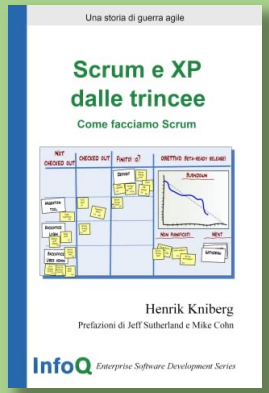
HSBC

LexisNexis®

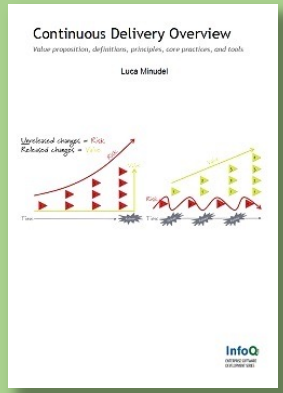
LLOYDS BANKING GROUP

AA

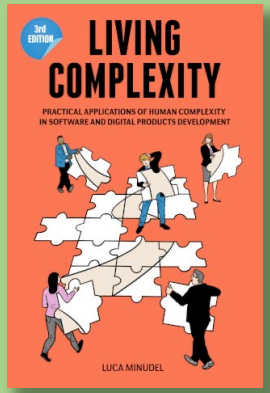
JTI



ITALIAN TRANSLATION:
SCRUM AND XP FROM THE TRENCHES



CONTINUOUS DELIVERY
OVERVIEW



LIVING COMPLEXITY
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF HUMAN COMPLEXITY

PUBLICATIONS

InfoQ

ONLINE ARTICLES

Q: SHOULD WE RETIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT?

THE ANSWERS IN SUMMARY

DAMN
RIGHT

OVER MY
DEAD BODY

MAYBE
I DON’T KNOW
ACCOUNTA-WHAT?!?

THOSE LEAVE US WITH 3 REBUS

1) WHERE DO ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT WORK?

2) WHY DO THEY STOP WORKING AND BECOME TOXIC?

3) WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

QUICK POOL IN THE AUDIENCE=>

SHOULD WE RETIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT?

A

DAMN
RIGHT

B

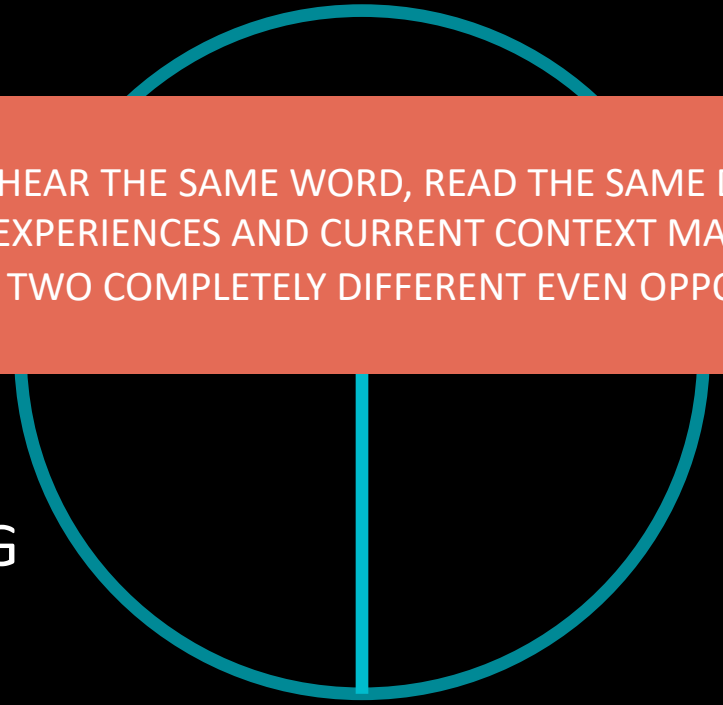
OVER MY
DEAD BODY

C

MAYBE
I DON’T KNOW
ACCOUNTA-WHAT?!?

THE CONTEXT OF ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT

TERMS
DICTIONARY MEANING

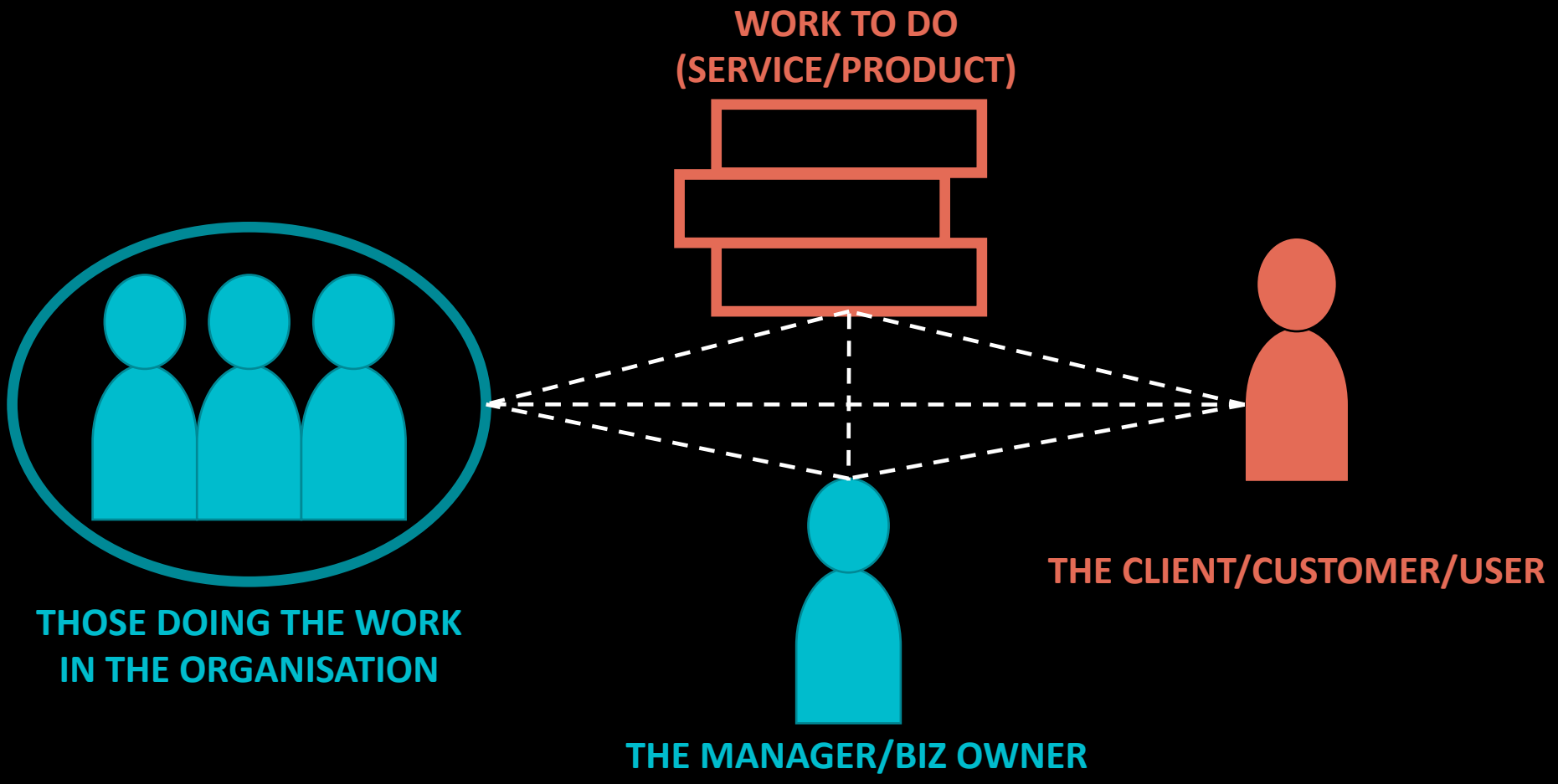


TWO INDIVIDUALS CAN HEAR THE SAME WORD, READ THE SAME DICTIONARY DEFINITION BUT THEIR PREV EXPERIENCES AND CURRENT CONTEXT MAY LEAD THEM TO UNDERSTAND TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT EVEN OPPOSING THINGS

YOUR ORG'S
WAYS OF WORKING

YOUR ORG'S
CULTURE

THE CONTEXT OF ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT



MY LEARNING #1

CLARIFYING OR RE-DEFINING ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT WON'T CHANGE THINGS

BECAUSE =>

IT WON'T CHANGE PEOPLE HISTORY NOR THEIR SURROUNDING CONTEXT, CULTURE OR THE NATURE OF THE WORK TO DO.

LET'S LOOK AT THE NATURE OF THE WORK:

EXAMPLES

BUY ON AMAZON THE SAME T-SHIRT AS YOUR FRIEND

BUY A HEADACHE TABLET

OPEN A FIXED RATE SAVING ACCOUNT

BUY A SPARE PART FOR YOUR CAR

BUY A BESPOKE WEDDING DRESS WITH UNIQUE FABRIC/DESIGN

DISCUSS DENTAL TREATMENT OPTIONS

INVEST ON THE STOCK MARKET

DEVELOP A F1 CAR part

No Ambiguity

No Uncertainty

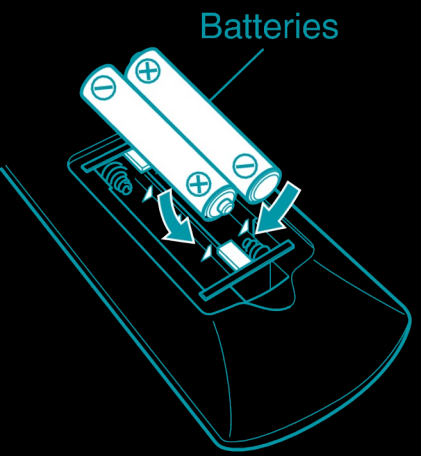
Products/services are standard

Probability of problems & defects can be statistically calculated based on the past

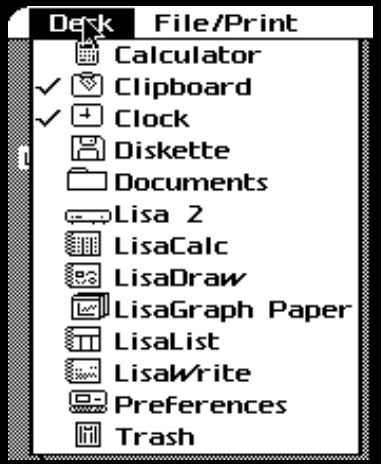
Risks can be absorbed by margins and volume of sales or by the customer

LET'S LOOK AT THE NATURE OF THE WORK:

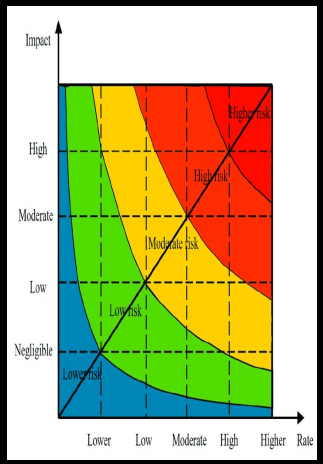
Pretty standard Product / Service



Could be chosen from a menu



Risks & probability inferred from past



Errors costs paid by margins / volume

Money Back (Absolute) Guarantee

Q: CAN YOU ...

- MEET CUSTOMER EXPECTATION
- ABSORB VARIATIONS OR MISTAKES IN THE MARGINS
- DO IT REPEATEDLY, CONSISTENTLY, IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY?

A: YES => THIS IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT SWEET SPOT

A: NO BUT IF YOU CAN ...

- GET BETTER AT FORECASTING & MANAGING RISK
- INCREASE THE MARGINS
- IMPROVE BY WORKING BETTER/HARDER

=> THEN YOU ARE BACK TO THE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT SWEET SPOT

PARTIAL LEARNING (CONTINUE LATER)

ONE **CANNOT EFFECTIVELY** COMMIT & BE ACCOUNTABLE WHEN ONE:

- DOES NOT HAVE THE SKILLS OR ABILITIES NEEDED
- IS NOT READY OR WILLING TO (E.G. IMPROVE OR WORK HARDER)
- DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO TAKE CARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES
- DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH CONTROL ON THE DEPENDENCIES

MY LEARNING #2

THERE IS A TYPE OF WORK (*) WHERE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT AS MOST COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTICED …

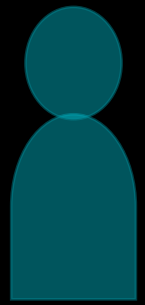
JUST WORKS WELL !!!

(*) I CALL THIS WORK => BAU (REPETITIVE WORK), STANDARD WORK, RED WORK, COMPLICATED WORK

Q: WHAT TO DO WHEN...

- FACING INCREASED UNCERTAINTY & AMBIGUITY
- PAST RISKS AND THEIR PROBABILITY ≠ PRESENT RISKS AND THEIR PROBABILITY
- MARGINS / VOLUME CANNOT MAKE UP FOR VARIATIONS/MISTAKES

THOSE DOING THE WORK
IN THE ORGANISATION



THE MANAGER/BIZ OWNER

THE CLIENT/CUSTOMER/USER

Q: WHAT TO DO WHEN...

- FACING INCREASED UNCERTAINTY & AMBIGUITY
- PAST RISKS AND THEIR PROBABILITY ≠ PRESENT RISKS AND THEIR PROBABILITY
- MARGINS / VOLUME CANNOT MAKE UP FOR VARIATIONS/MISTAKES

CAN YOU COMMIT TO THE FORECAST (COST/TIME) UPFRONT?

DOES ACCOUNTABILITY SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

A: NO => HERE DOUBLING DOWN ON ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT DON'T WORK (CONSEQUENT PRESSURE & MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN TURN THINGS TOXIC)

WHY?

MY LEARNING #3 – IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY !

ONE CANNOT EFFECTIVELY COMMIT & BE ACCOUNTABLE WHEN ONE:

- DOES NOT HAVE THE SKILLS OR ABILITIES NEEDED
- IS NOT READY OR WILLING TO (E.G. IMPROVE OR WORK HARDER)
- DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH AUTHORITY TO TAKE CARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES
- DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH CONTROL ON THE DEPENDENCIES

- DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES NEEDED (E.G. ENOUGH MARGINS)
- DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH CONTROL ON ASSOCIATED RISKS (E.G. LOT OF UNCERTAINTY)
- THERE ARE TOO MANY UNKNOWNS THAT CANNOT BE ELIMINATED OR REDUCED

A DIFFERENT NATURE OF THE WORK:

EXAMPLES

BAU
Standard work
Red Work
Complicated work

BUY ON AMAZON THE SAME T-SHIRT AS YOUR FRIEND

BUY A HEADACHE TABLET

OPEN A FIXED RATE SAVING ACCOUNT

BUY A SPARE PART FOR YOUR CAR

BUY A BESPOKE WEDDING DRESS WITH UNIQUE FABRIC/DESIGN

DISCUSS DENTAL TREATMENT OPTIONS

INVEST ON THE STOCK MARKET

DEVELOP A F1 CAR PART

There is Ambiguity

There is Uncertainty

Products/services are ad-hoc or novel

Possible problems & defects cannot be inferred from past experience

Risks cannot be absorbed by anyone individually

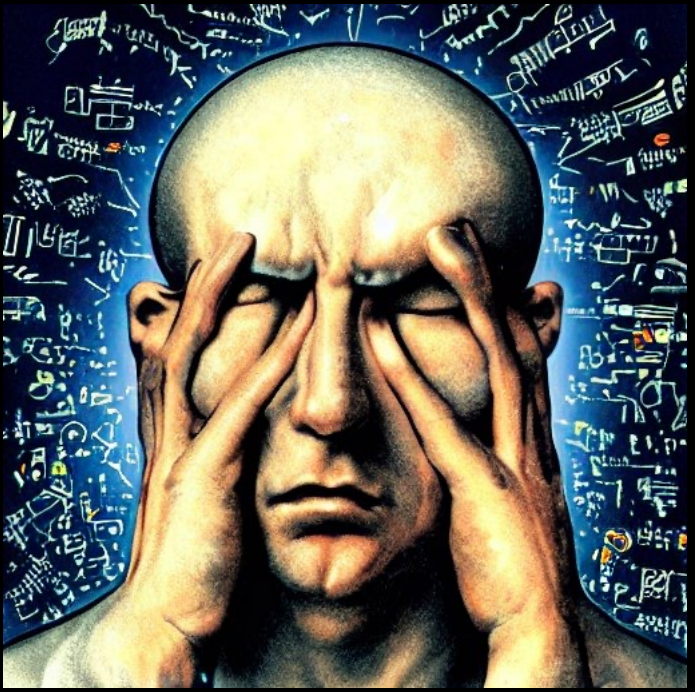
MY LEARNING #4

THERE IS ANOTHER TYPE OF WORK (*) WHERE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT AS MOST COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTICED …

STOP WORKING WELL => LEAVING PEOPLE CONFUSED, CREATING CONFLICT, HURTING THOSE W/ < POWER

(*) I CALL THIS WORK => NOVEL WORK, AD-HOC WORK, BLUE WORK, COMPLEX WORK

FOR THIS WE NEED A DIFFERENT INTEGRATED APPROACH



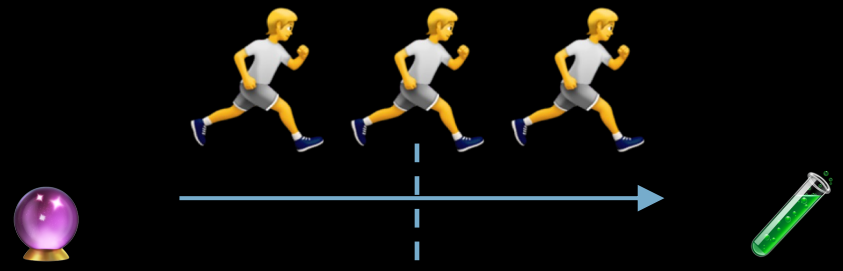
1) RISK MANAGEMENT FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

2) LEAVING BEHIND BLAME GAMES

3) WAY OF WORKING FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

1) A WAY TO MANAGE RISK FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO MANAGE RISK



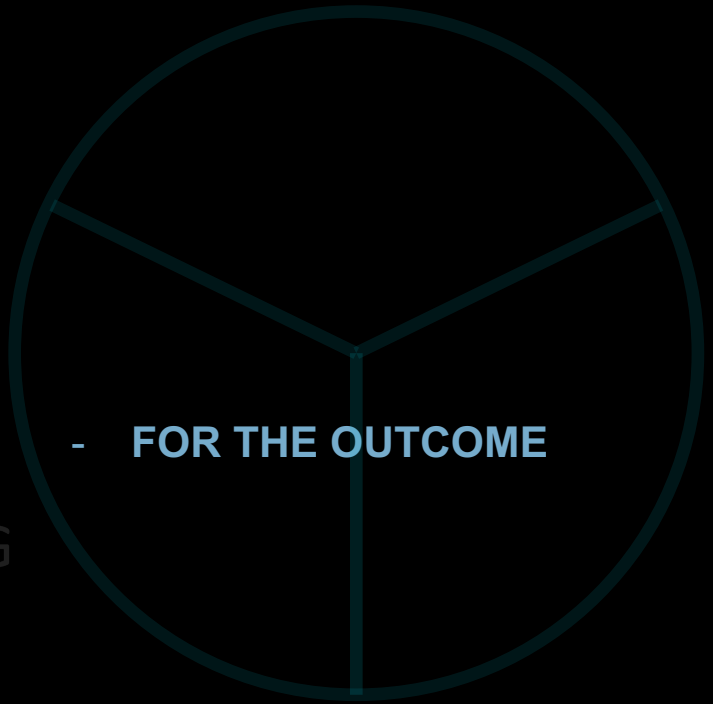
MANAGE RISK THROUGH PREDICTABILITY

MANAGE RISK THROUGH EMPIRICISM

2) LEAVING BLAME GAMES BEHIND *ALIGN EXPECTATIONS*

COMMITTED =>

- **TO THE ESTIMATES & TIMELINES**



ACCOUNTABLE =>

- **FOR THE OUTCOME**

2) LEAVING BLAME GAMES BEHIND *ALIGN EXPECTATIONS*

~~COMMITTED~~ =>

DEPENDABLE

- I SHOW UP AT WORK ON TIME
- I'M COMPETENT, I DO THE WORK AT MY BEST
- I STRIVE TO MAKE UP FOR ANY SHORTCOMING IN MY OWN PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

~~ACCOUNTABLE~~ =>

TRUSTWORTHY

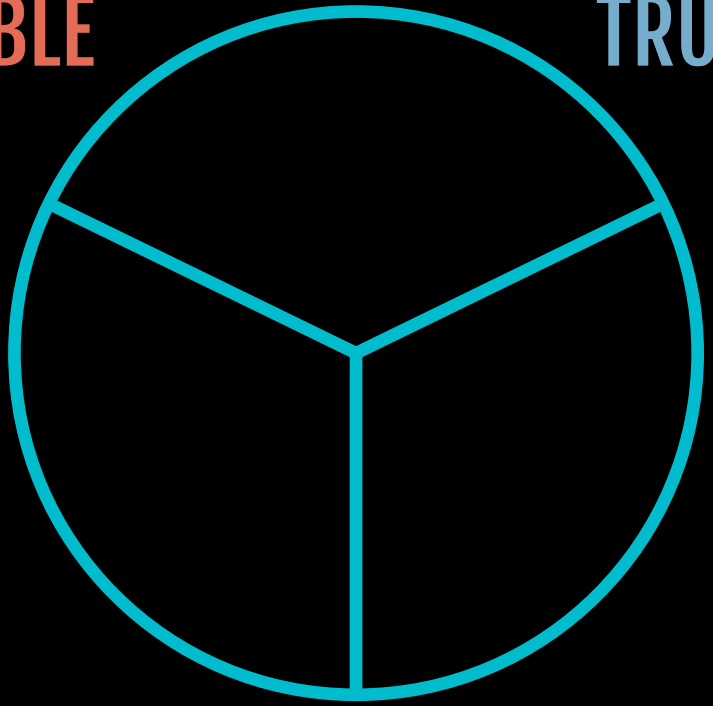
- I WORK AND COLLABORATE WITH A GENUINE INTENT TO HELP
- I FOLLOW THE HIGHEST PROF. STANDARDS
- I RUN THE EXPERIMENTS NEEDED TO PURSUE THE DESIRED OUTCOME

DICTIONARY
MEANING
ORG'S
WAYS OF WORKING
ORG'S
CULTURE

WHY DIFFERENT TERMS?

DEPENDABLE

TRUSTWORTHY



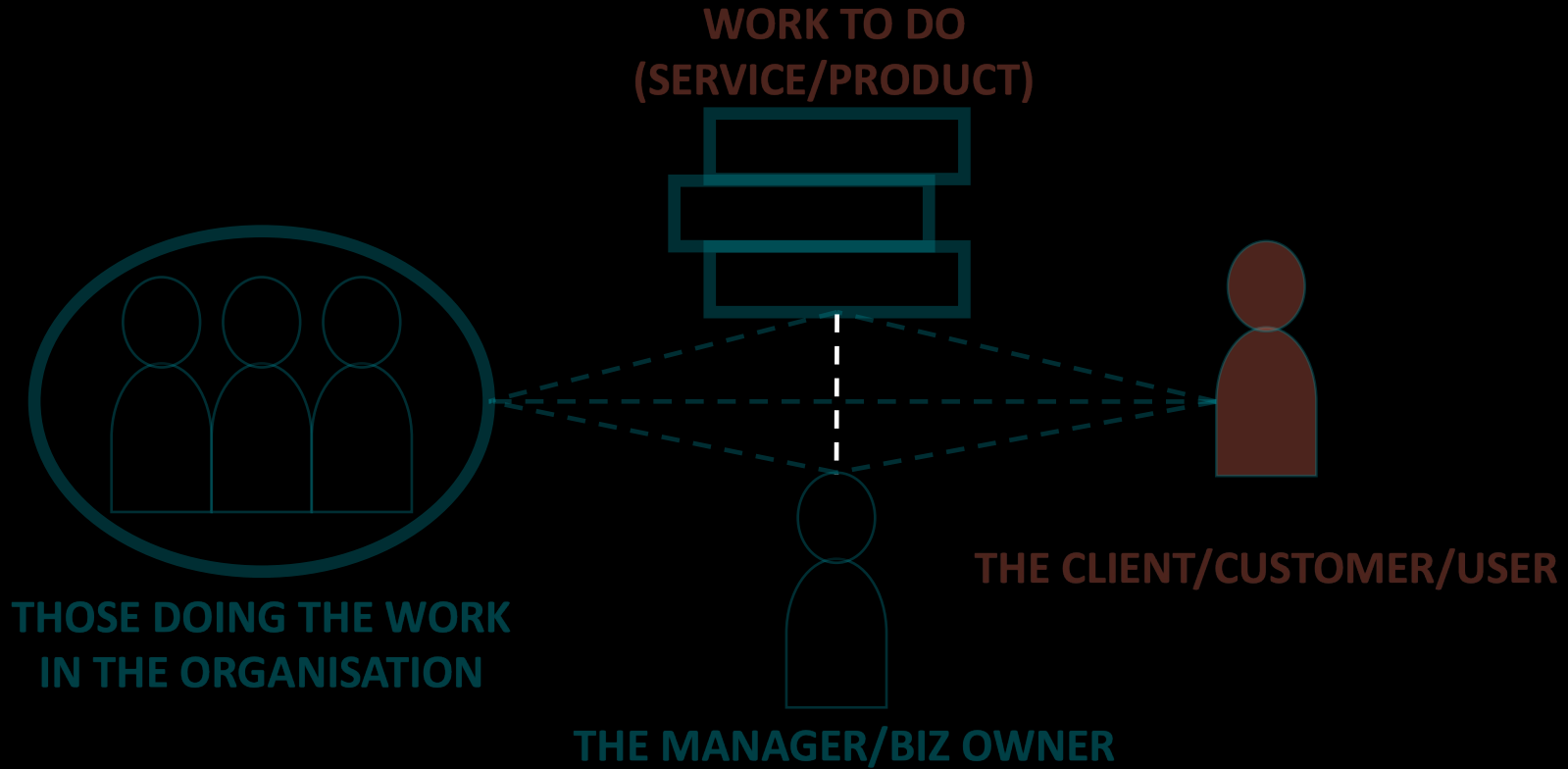
TO HAVE A CONVERSATION AROUND NEW WAYS OF WORKING

TO DISCUSS A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT HOW TO APPROACH THIS

⇒ *ULTIMATELY TO CREATE A NEW SHARED UNDERSTANDING*

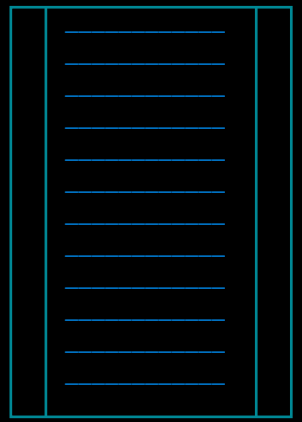
3) A WAY OF WORKING FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

TO TACKLE NOVELTY, UNKNOWNS, UNCERTAINTY

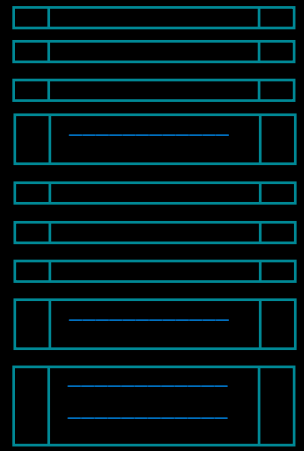


A) AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO ACCELERATE LEARNING

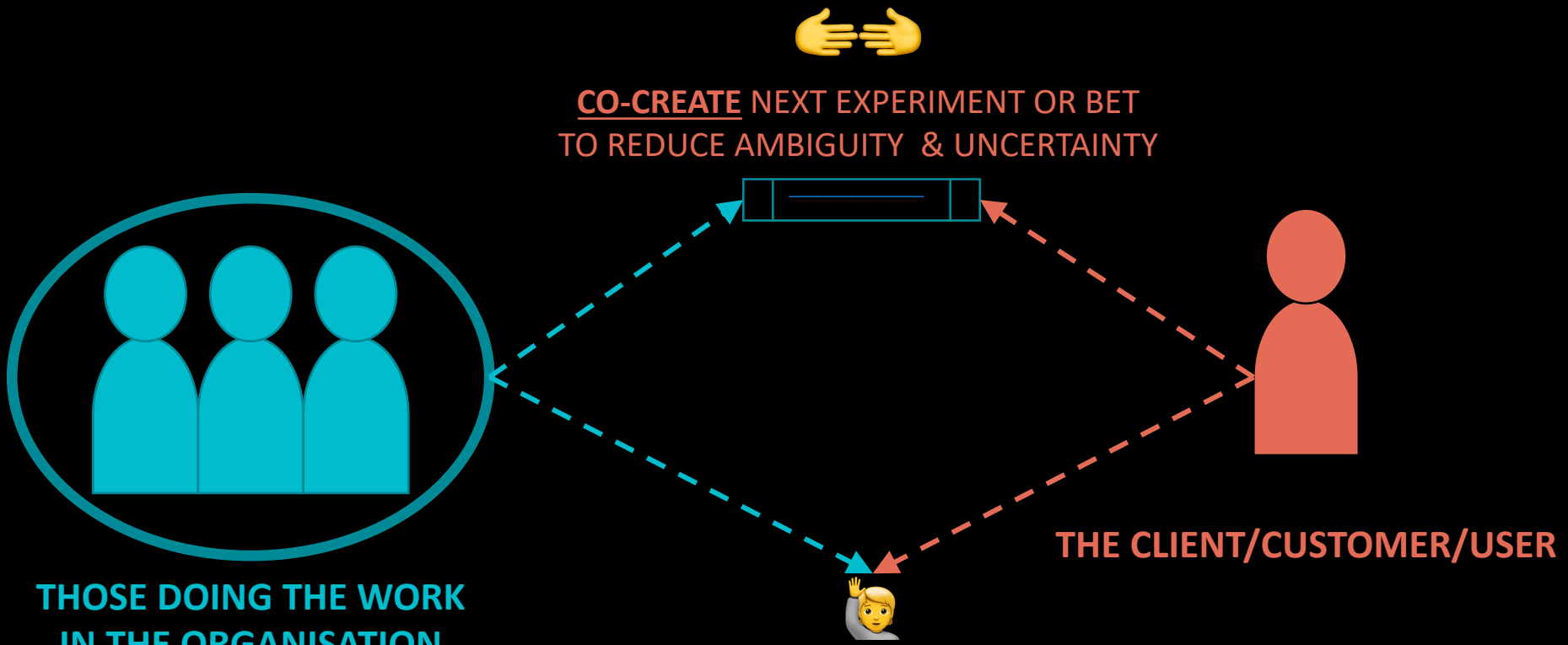
BIG UPFRONT PLAN



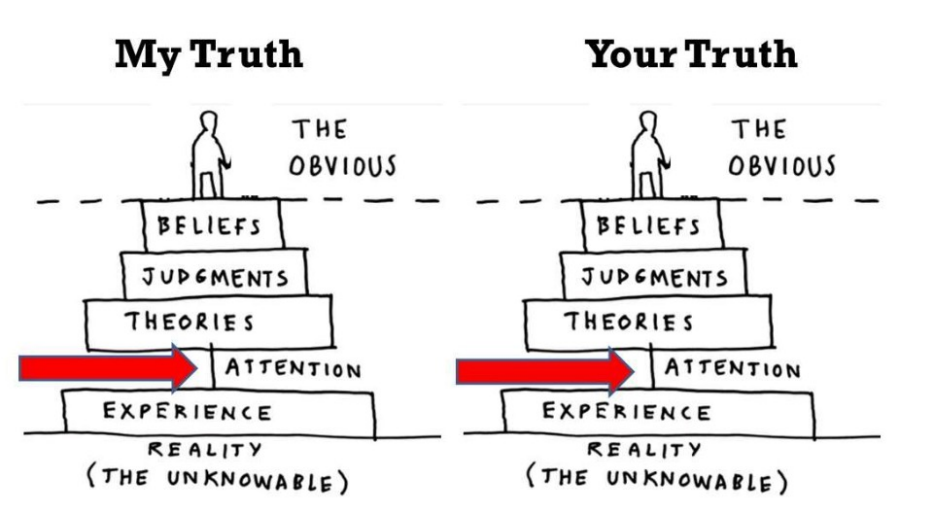
MULTIPLE SMALL
EXPERIMENTS & BETS
DELIVERING LEARNING AND/OR VALUE

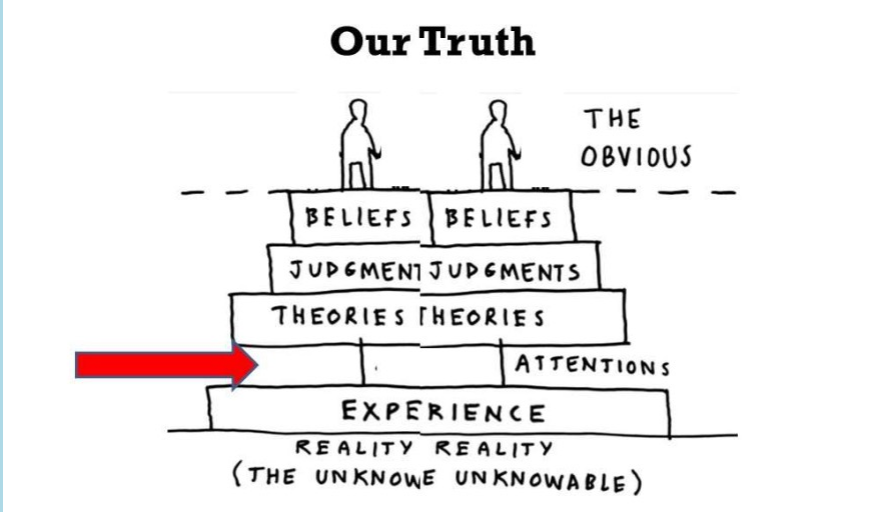


B) CUSTOMER COLLABORATION: CO-CREATION & INVITATION



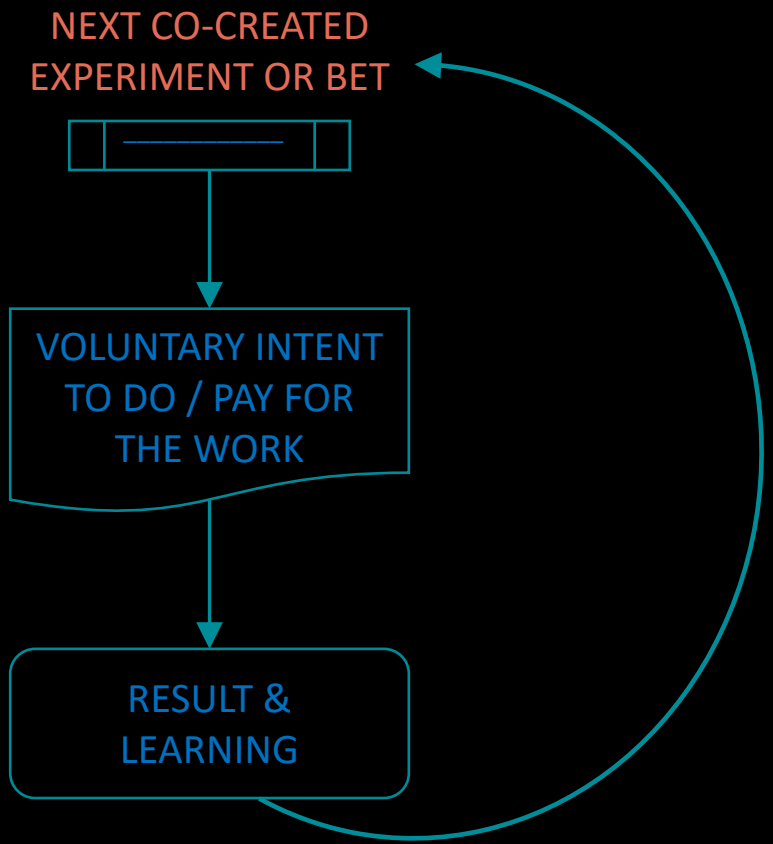
Co-creation is a collaboration pattern particularly effective when dealing with Complexity.





Source Woody Zuill presenting a diagram by Dave Gray

FEEDBACK LOOPS: TEST AND SUSTAIN TRUST



FREQUENT
FEEDBACK-LOOPS
TESTING & SUSTAINING
TEAM-CUSTOMER TRUST

(ARE WE HOMING IN
ON THE DESIRED OUTCOME?)

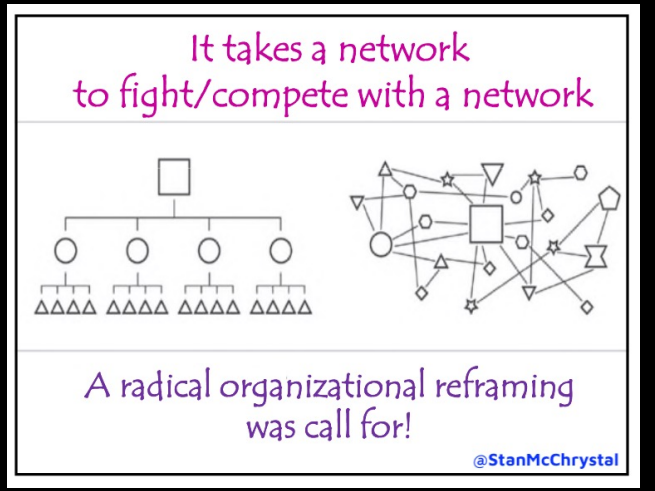
3) A WAY OF WORKING FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS THAT CANNOT BE AN AFTERTHOUGHT

- **CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY** BEFORE STAKEHOLDER-CENTRICITY

- **TEAMWORK** BEFORE OPTIMISING FOR INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

- **CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION** BEFORE INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONS EFFICIENCY



IMPORTANT Q: HOW DO YOU PREPARE TO HANDLE THE SITUATION WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?

1. *FOR THOSE DOING THE WORK (TEAMS, MANAGERS)*
   A LIST OF COLLABORATION & TECHNICAL PRACTICES TO FOLLOW ALWAYS DOES DETAIL THE DEFINITION OF DEPENDABILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

2. *FOR THE CUSTOMER*
   A LIST OF COLLABORATION PRACTICES DETAILS WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE CUSTOMER

3. EVERY COMPLAINT IS INVESTIGATED AGAINST THOSE LISTS AND NORMALLY DEALT WITH DURING A RETROSPECTIVE, DEMO/REVIEW, OR IN ONE AD-HOC MEETING

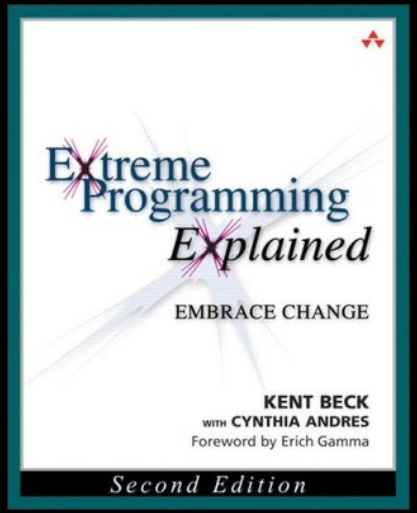
4. EVERY MAJOR INCIDENT IS INVESTIGATED AGAINST THOSE LISTS AND IF THERE IS A BREACH, A PERSON CAN BE FIRED, OR THE CONTRACT CAN BE CANCELLED

SURPRISE:

- THE LIST WAS USEFUL TO THE TEAM TO RESIST CUTTING CORNERS WHEN PUT UNDER PRESSURE
- SOME TEAM MEMBERS FELT IT SAFER TO EXPERIMENT WITHIN THE PERIMETER GIVEN BY THE LIST
- MOST CUSTOMERS WHERE HAPPY FOR THE CLARITY AND THE CONTROL GIVEN BY THE CONTRACT

WHAT WE ALREADY KNEW (AND SOME IS ALREADY DOING)

MOST LARGE TECH COMPANIES' TECH PRACTICES HAVE THEY ROOT IN EXTREME PROGRAMMING, ONE OF THE 1ST AGILE FRAMEWORKS



SEE:

- ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE
- USER STORY SOCIAL ELEMENT
- PLANNING GAME PRACTICE

AGILE RETROSPECTIVE PRIME DIRECTIVE

Regardless of what we discover, we must understand and truly believe that **everyone did the best job he or she could**, given what was known at the time, his or her skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand.

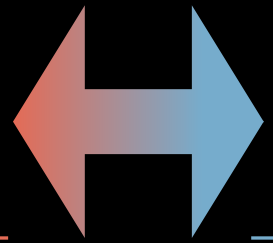
Norm Kerth

IT IS NOT TREE-HUGGING OR NEW AGE CRYSTALS BUT THE RECOGNITION OF THE WORK EMPIRICAL NATURE

AGILE MANIFESTO FOR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

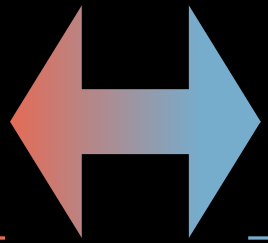
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

SUMMARY: THE NATURE OF THE WORK



BAU Standard work Red Work Complicated work	Novel Ad-hoc work Blue Work Complex work
BUY ON AMAZON THE SAME T-SHIRT AS YOUR FRIEND	BUY A BESPOKE WEDDING DRESS WITH UNIQUE FABRIC/DESIGN
BUY A HEADACHE TABLET	DISCUSS DENTAL TREATMENT OPTIONS
OPEN A FIXED RATE SAVING ACCOUNT	INVEST ON THE STOCK MARKET
BUY A SPARE PART FOR YOUR CAR	DEVELOP A F1 CAR PART

CONCLUSIONS: ALTERNATIVE TO ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT



BAU Standard work Red Work Complicated work	Novel Ad-hoc work Blue Work Complex work
ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT	**DEPENDABILITY & TRUSTWORTHINESS**
MANAGE RISK THROUGH PREDICTABILITY	MANAGE RISK THROUGH EMPIRICISM
TRANSACTIONAL CONTRACT	PARTNERSHIP
RACI MATRIX	CO-CREATION, X-FUNC. COLLAB
OBLIGATION, IMPOSITION	VOLUNTARY PROMISES, INVITATION
ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE	FEEDBACK-LOOPS, TRUST & FREEDOM TO OPT OUT

MY LEARNING #5 – IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY !

THERE IS A TYPE OF WORK (*) WHERE SOMETHING OTHER THAN COMMITMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY IS NEEDED =>

- AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO RISK MANAGEMENT
- THOSE DOING THE WORK BEING TRUSTWORTHY & DEPENDABLE
- A NEW WAY TO COLLABORATE & WORK FIT FOR COMPLEXITY

(*) I CALL THIS WORK => NOVEL WORK, AD-HOC WORK, BLUE WORK, COMPLEX WORK

QUICK POOL IN THE AUDIENCE => HAVE YOU CHANGED IDEA?

SHOULD WE RETIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT?

A

DAMN
RIGHT

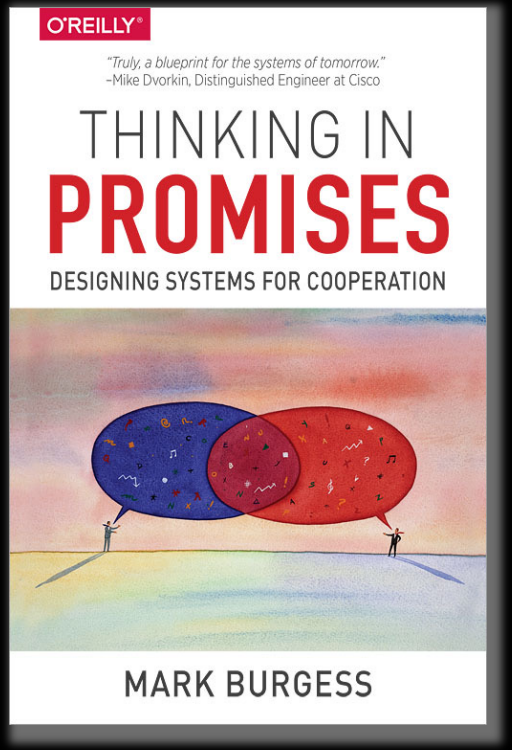
B

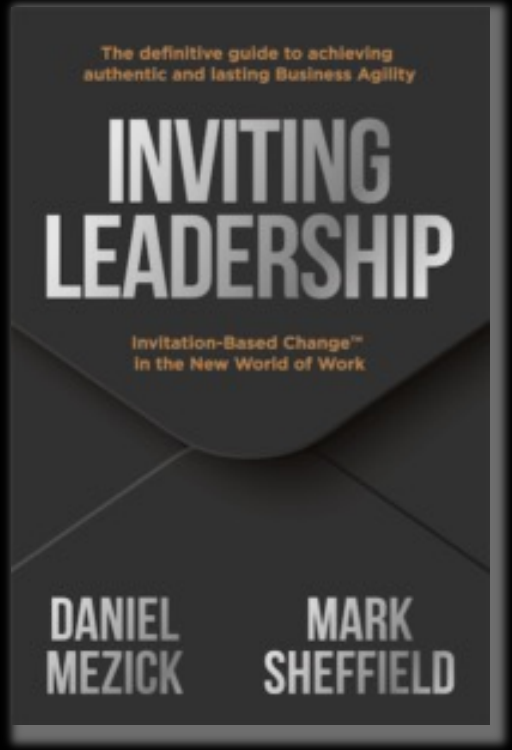
OVER MY
DEAD BODY

C

MAYBE
I DON’T KNOW
ACCOUNTA-WHAT?!?

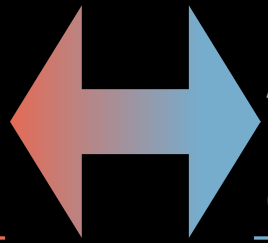
DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE THEORY



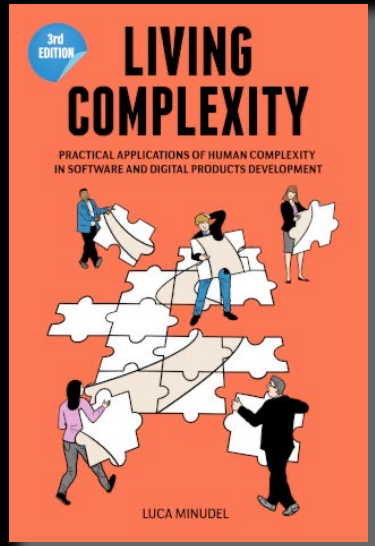


HOW TO ASSESS THE NATURE OF THE WORK AT HAND:

BAU
Standard work
Red Work
Complicated work



Novel
Ad-hoc work
Blue Work
Complex work



SEE REGION 2 FROM THE BOOK:

LIVING COMPLEXITY
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF HUMAN COMPLEXITY IN SOFTWARE AND DIGITAL PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT

ON AMAZON kindle | paperback

ON LEANPUB kindle | pdf

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PROMISE THEORY, BY MARK BURGESS

- PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS http://markburgess.org/promises.html
- VIDEO INTRODUCTION https://www.youtube.com/@PromiseTheoryandApplications

KENT BECK'S TAKE

- https://medium.com/@kentbeck_7670/accountability-in-software-development-375d42932813
- https://tidyfirst.substack.com/p/accountability-is-not-blame

ALLEN HOLUB'S TAKE

- https://holub.com/noaccountability/

TOBIAS MAYER'S TAKE

- https://agileanarchy.wordpress.com/2012/12/20/the-accountability-trap/

EXTREME PROGRAMMING

- ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY PRINCIPLE https://www.cs.odu.edu/~zeil/cs350/f16/Public/xprogram/
- PLANNING GAME http://wiki.c2.com/?PlanningGame

USER STORY & THE CONVERSATION WITH THE CUSTOMER (NEGOTIABLE)

- https://martinfowler.com/bliki/UserStory.html

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PART 2 – OPEN MIC Q&A
=> POST AND VOTE THE QUESTIONS

LET'S RETIRE
ACCOUNTABILITY & COMMITMENT
AND INTRODUCE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE