

# Go Beyond Your Gut: Grow a Culture of Data-Driven Continuous Improvement

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# Why focus on Continuous Improvement?

# How do teams approach Continuous Improvement?

# Sprint Retrospective



# Metrics can drive harmful behaviors

**Goodhart's Law:** “When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.”

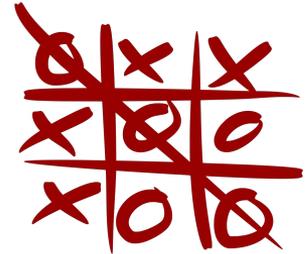
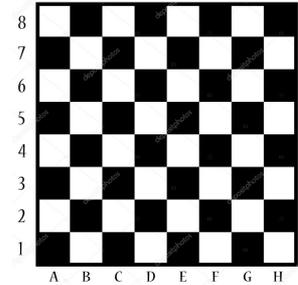
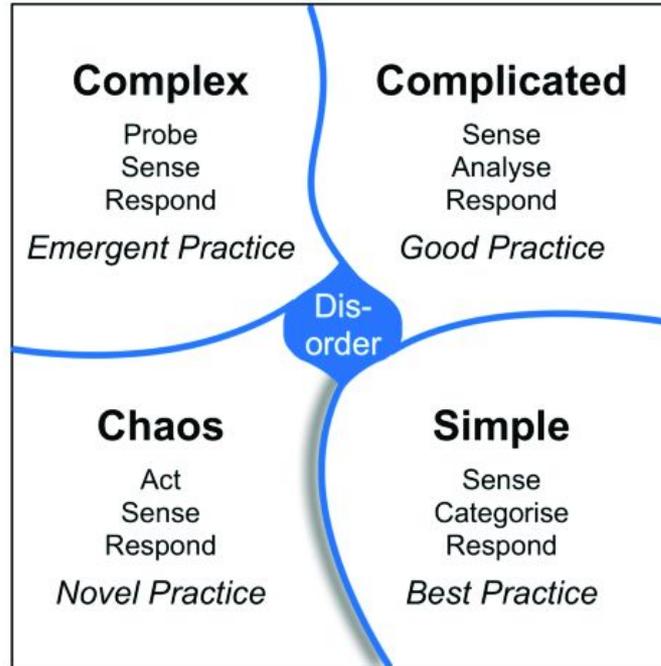


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**What are some harmful effects of metrics?**

# Organizations are Complex Adaptive Systems



# Creativity and innovation are not found in the answers...



*Laura Linney, Oscar-nominated actor*

*Q: What's a red flag for you whether a show is going to be successful, as an actor?*

*Linney: When the director answers questions too quickly...it's already stunted. It's already done. There's no sense of discovery. There is no room for contribution.*

<https://www.vulture.com/article/laura-linney-ozark-in-conversation.html>

# Fundamental Assumption: Feeling Safe to Express Oneself

Psych Safety is crucial in order to have meaningful conversations where teams can confront impediments and thrive in a complex adaptive system.

“Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.”

– Dr. Amy Edmondson  
Professor, Harvard Business School



# Project Aristotle - Google's Quest to Build the Perfect Team

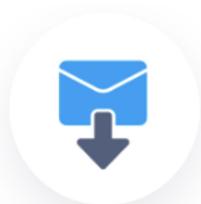
- After looking at over a hundred groups for more than a year, Project Aristotle researchers concluded that **understanding and influencing group norms were the keys** to improving Google's teams.
- What distinguished the “good” teams from the dysfunctional groups was **how teammates treated one another**
- The right norms, in other words, could **raise a group's collective intelligence**, whereas the wrong norms could hobble a team, even if, individually, all the members were exceptionally bright.



# In a nutshell...

## Collect Data

Use Comparative Agility to collect data at the team, program, and organization level



## Understand Context

Conduct modified Open Space sessions with target groups to consider the data context:

**What?** What impediments do we observe?

**So What?** What is the impact of the impediments?

**Now What?** What actions are we taking to address the impediments?



## Find the Narrative

Analyze the data to understand strengths and weaknesses

Who's struggling? Who's succeeding? How can those areas who are struggling benefit from showing strength?

# Overview of the Group Exercise

Your table will be your group.

1. Choose a “**What**” to focus on
2. As a group, examine the “**So What**” of the 1-2 issues you identified
3. As a group, identify the “**Now What**” of the most important issues and how we can address them

Identify a volunteer and provide a brief overview of what your group learned from the discussion and what concrete actions they recommend taking in their organization.

## Choose a “What”

- Each table will be a group
- At your table, select 1 or 2 topics from the Psychological Safety analysis that are of most interest to your group to explore



# So What: Reflect Individually

1. Individually, identify the impact of the “Whats” you chose. Write each So What on a sticky note; place this on the flipchart. Consider:
  - a. Immediate impacts
  - b. Downstream implications



# So What: Collaborate as a Group

1. Individually, identify the impact of the “Whats” you chose
2. As a group, affinity group the So Whats. Identify any themes that emerge.

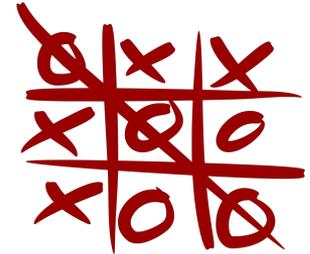
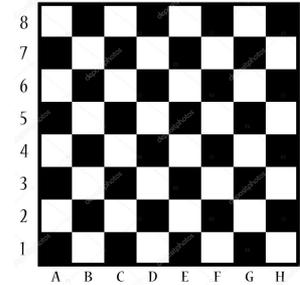
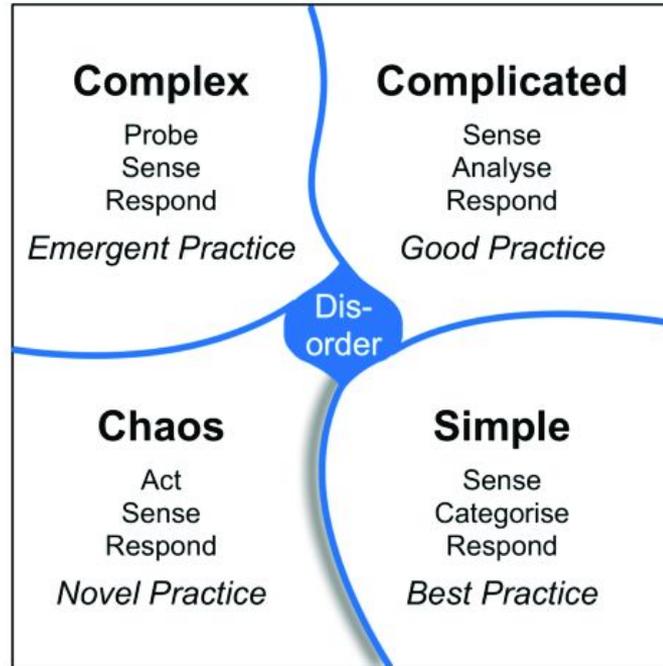


# So What: Determine Focus

1. Individually, identify the impact of the “Whats” you chose
2. As a group, affinity group the issues. Identify any:
3. What is the most important “So What” to address?



# Let's talk about actions...



# Now What?

## How might we address the “What?”

Brainstorm experiments, initiatives, changes that might address the main concerns.

- Each experiment has:
  - A hypothesis
  - A way to measure to prove or disprove our hypothesis
- Which experiments would you run first, second, and third?

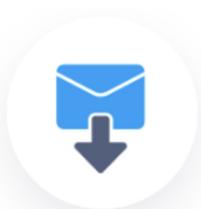


# Let's Debrief

# Making it Real

## Collect Data

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## Understand Context

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## Gather Objective Metrics

Complement your analysis with objective, context-specific metrics, focusing on trends over time, i.e., average lead time to recovery, defects in production, etc.



## Find the Narrative

Analyze the data to understand strengths and weaknesses

Who's struggling? Who's succeeding? How can those areas who are struggling benefit from showing strength?

## Go One on One

Gain insight via one-on-one interviews with a few group members - in a safe and confidential environment.

Focus on listening and asking open-ended questions to better appreciate some of the unspoken issues.



## Take Action

Based on your analysis, identify the top couple of items you can address, and communicate broadly what you're doing.

Plan to demonstrate results and repeat every 3-6 months to gain credibility and continual improvement..



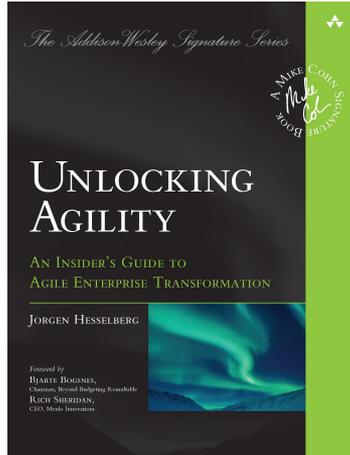
# Wrap-Up

- Data and metrics are an essential part of improving how we work
- But in the wrong context, data can drive harmful behaviors
- In complex adaptive systems, causal relationships are multifaceted, so data does not necessarily give us easy answers
- Having Psychological Safety ensures we encourage honesty, “hard truths” and transparency
- **Data and metrics therefore needs to be seen as an invitation to a conversation; not a source of answers and easy conclusions**
- Embracing a culture of data-driven continuous improvement is therefore not about finding the answers, but asking better questions.
- It’s about turbo-charging “individuals and interactions over processes and tools”

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Email  
[Dan@SendYourSlides.com](mailto:Dan@SendYourSlides.com)  
With Subject  
“Improve” (no quotes)  
For the Presentation

