# Brian Milner & Mike Cohn

Elements of Agile: Becoming Agile at an Atomic Level



Agile Alliance PRESENTS | Agile ORLANDO JULY 24–28 2023

#AGILE2023

Agile Readiness Assessments Around 2003

- People
- Culture
- Product
- Technology

Agile Readiness Assessments Around 2003

- People
- Culture
- ~~Product~~
- ~~Technology~~

Brian Milner
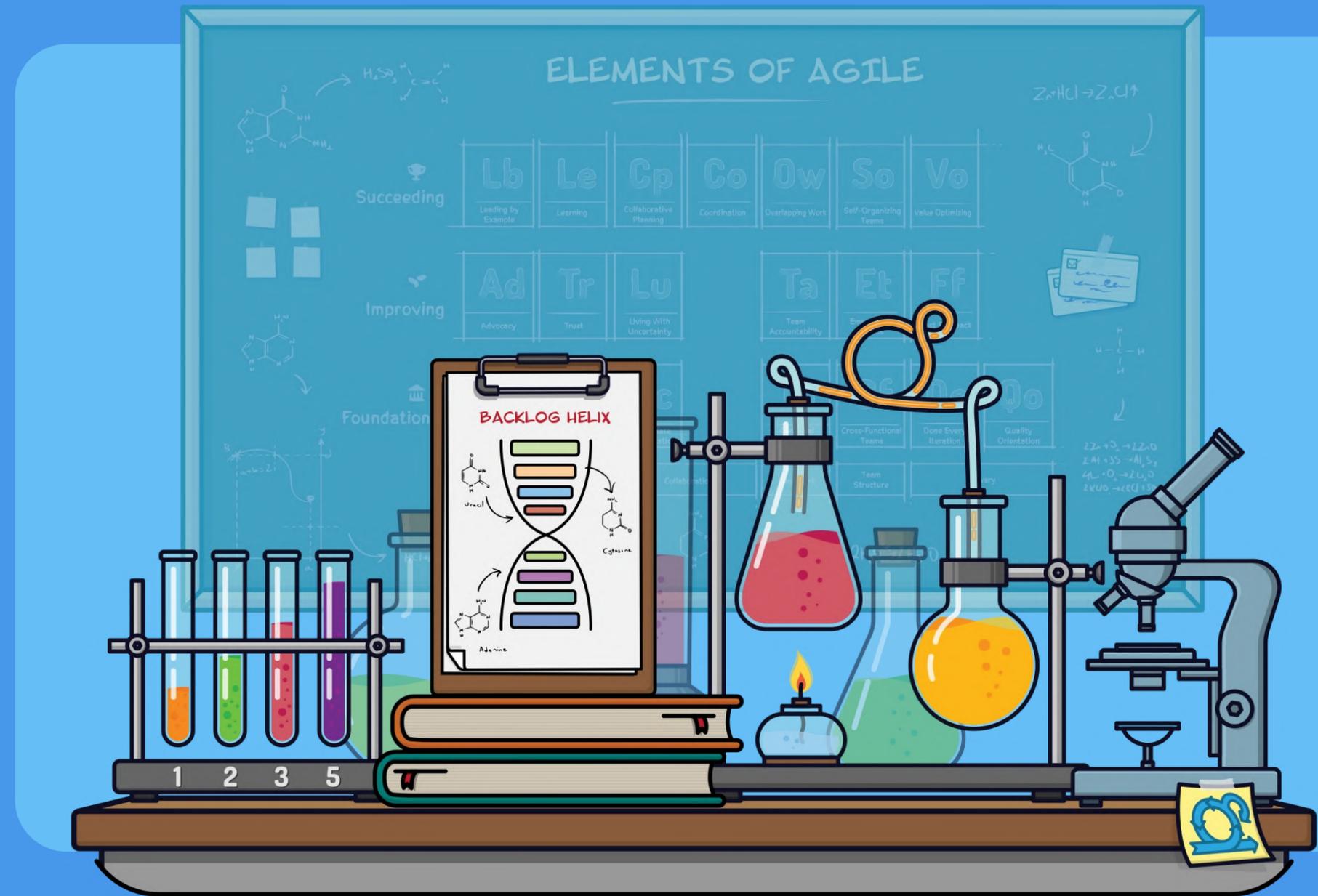
Mike Cohn

MOUNTAIN GOAT
SOFTWARE

From Object Oriented to Agile
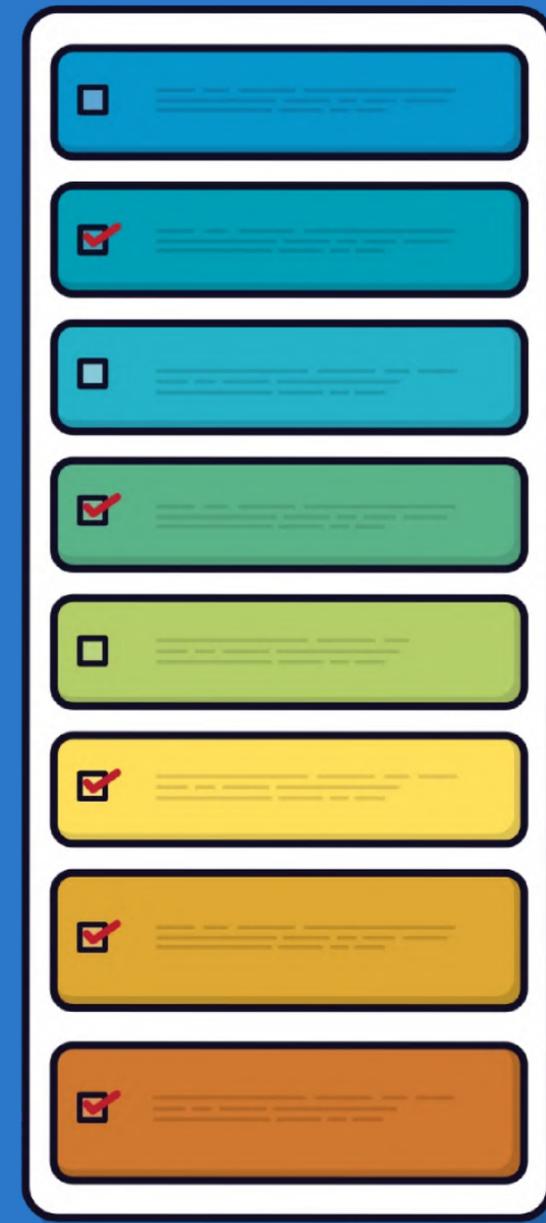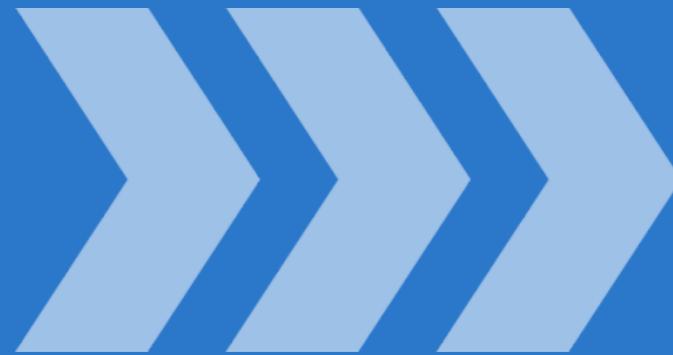
# Improvement Backlogs

- There are enough successful agile transitions by now that we can distill what they have in common

- These can form the basis of new transition or improvement efforts
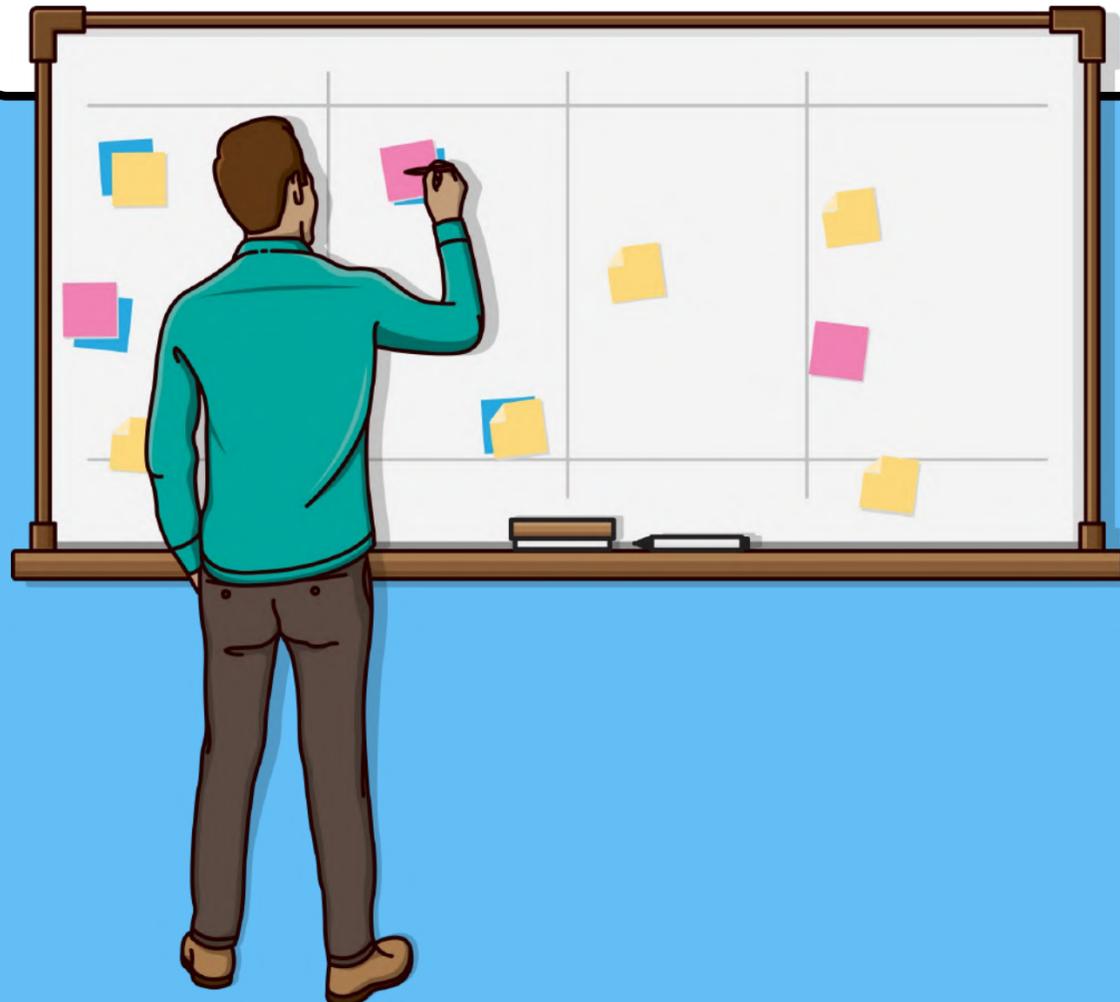
# Where Do You Start?

# What Problem Are You Trying to Solve?

- Practices are designed to address problems.
- Identifying the problem is the first step in solving it

# Foundational Elements

**Aw** — AWARENESS

**Pe** — PERSONAL EXCELLENCE

**Ci** — CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

**De** — DONE EVERY ITERATION

**Cf** — CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

**Ac** — APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION

**Qo** — QUALITY ORIENTATION

# Awareness

# Description

An awareness of what it means to be agile. Teams need a solid understanding of agile and how it differs from their current way of working. Without clear, widespread awareness of agile, teams oen adopt partially agile processes—which fail.
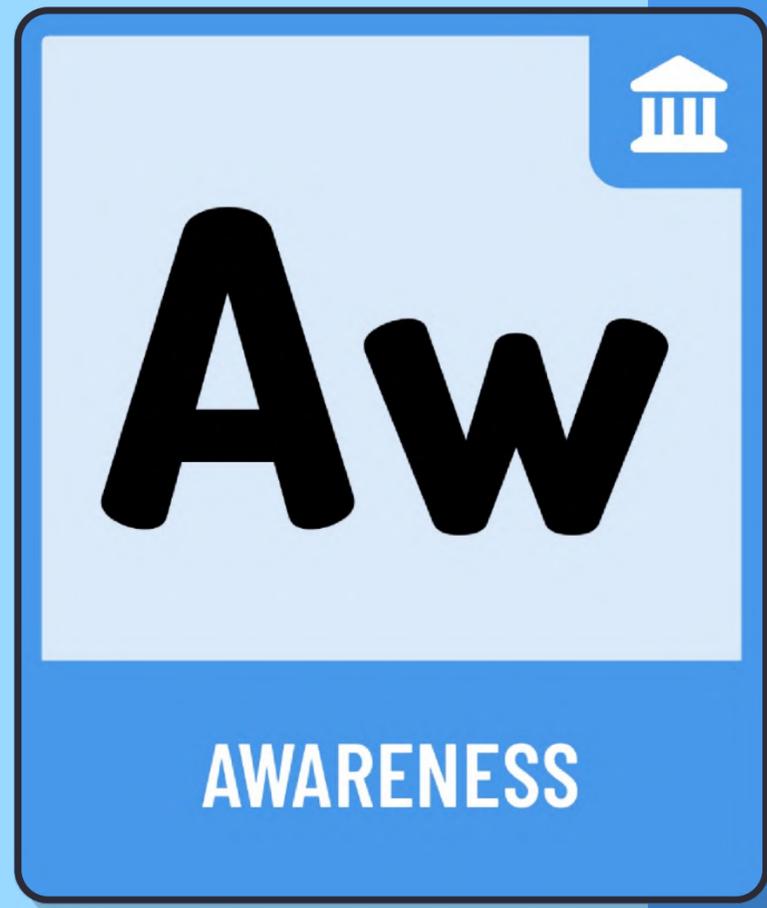
# Questions

1. All agile team members have received basic training on agile concepts.

2. People in new key roles such as Scrum Master, product owner, agile coach, and so on, have received appropriate training in those roles.

3. Outside groups that partner with the team are aware of how this new way of working may affect their interactions.

# Symptoms

- Disagreements arise as to the meaning of various process-related terms.

- People don't know how to perform their role on the team or what is expected from them.

- People in new or modified roles-such as Scrum Master, product owner, or agile coach - are often either tentative in their new roles or fall back into old habits detrimental to agility.

**Aw**

AWARENESS

# Sample Responses—Awareness

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scrum Masters** | | | 0.7 | |
| **Product Owners** | | | 0.5 | |
| **Developers** | | | 0.4 | |
| **Quality Assurance** | | −0.4 | | |
| **Engineers** | | −0.3 | | |
| **Product Managers** | −1.2 | | | |

## Pe
### PERSONAL EXCELLENCE
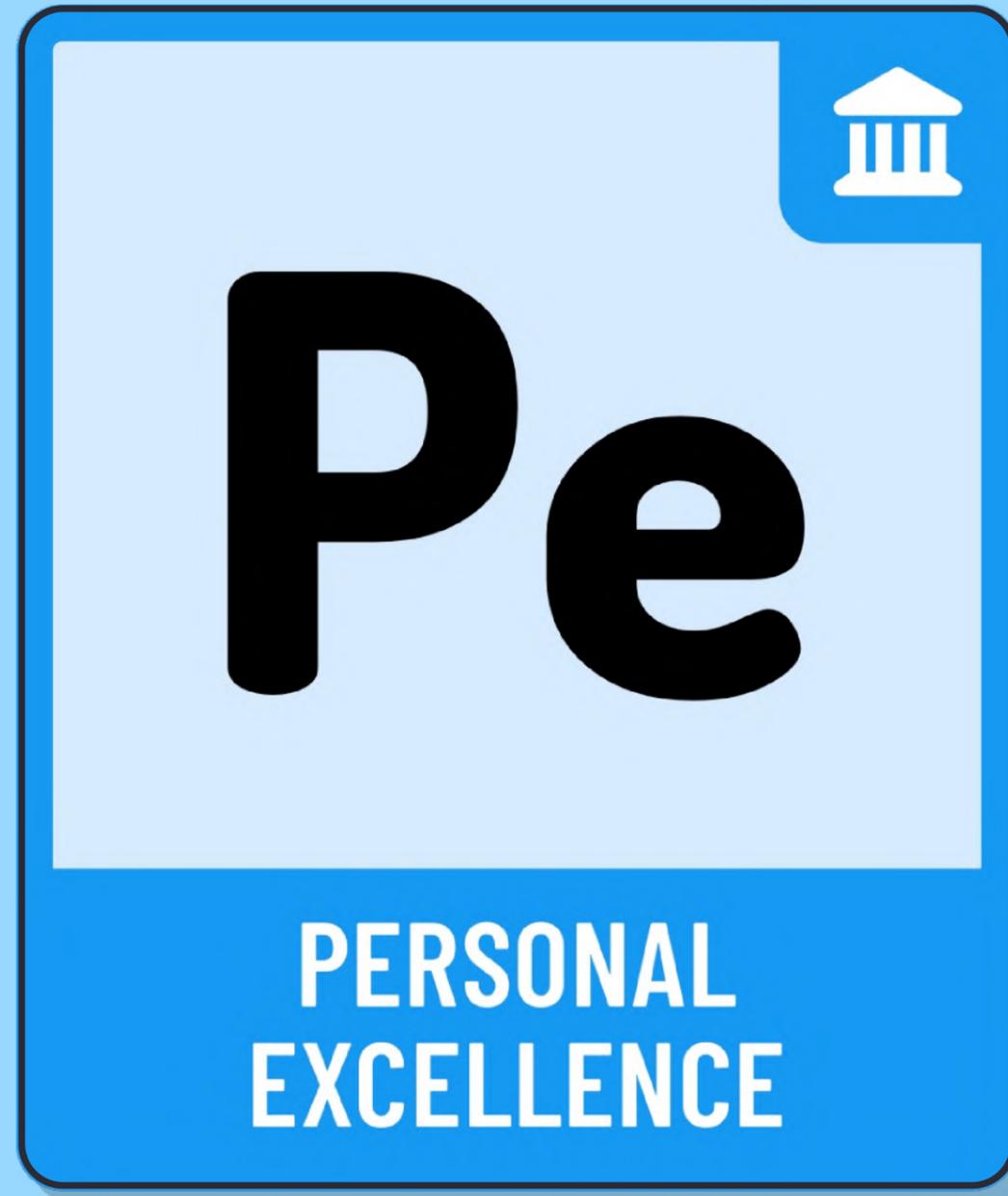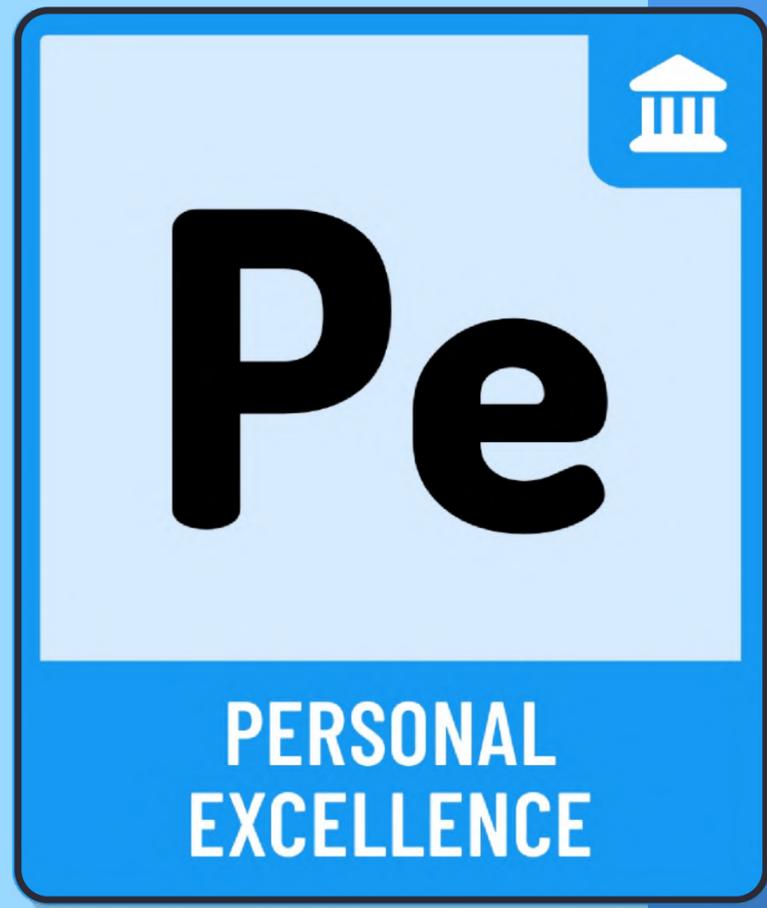
## Description

Taking pride in a job well done & continually seeking to improve. Members of a good agile team seek to deepen current skills and learn new ones. Leaders of agile teams understand that time spent learning a new skill or deepening an existing one is an investment in future productivity.

**Pe**

**PERSONAL EXCELLENCE**
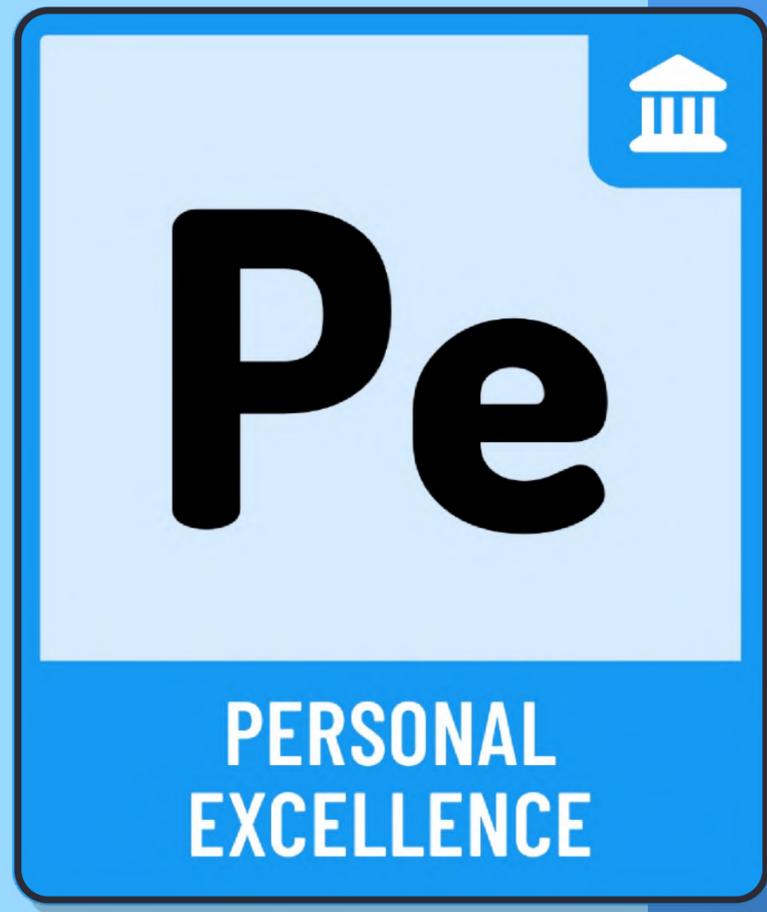
# Questions

1. Team members seek to learn relevant, new skills.

2. All individuals take pride in doing a job well done.

3. Team members continue to learn and improve a skill they've already mastered.
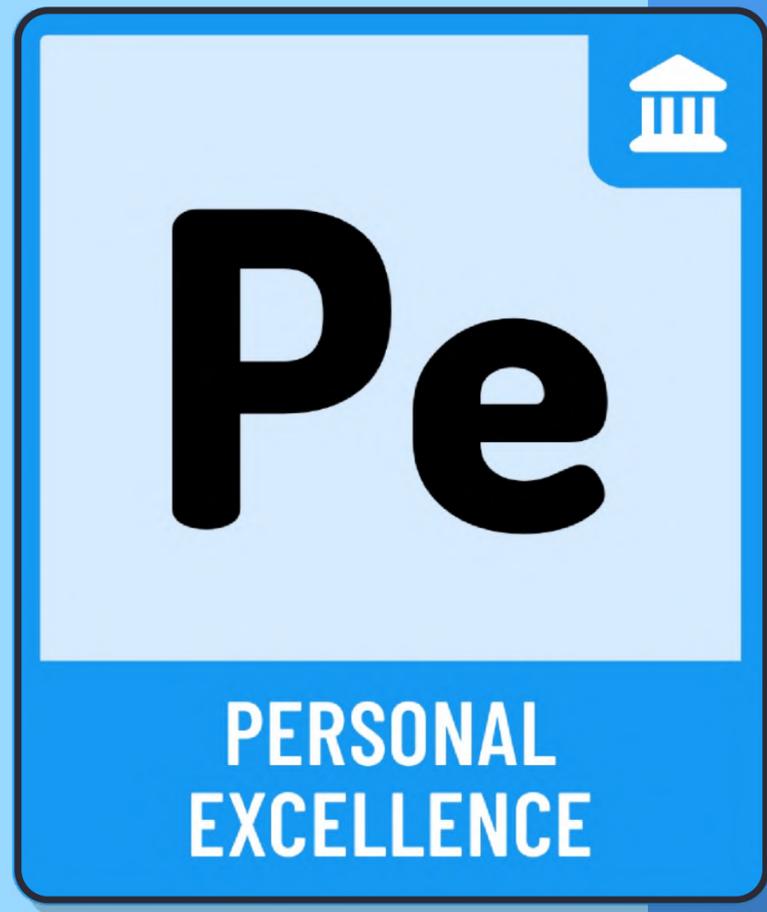
# Symptoms

- Individuals are content with their current skills, neither seeking to deepen nor expand them.

- New technologies or practices are rarely introduced by team members.

- Team members see their work as "just a job" and have little motivation to create better products or solutions.

# Sample Responses—Appropriate Communication

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Scrum Masters** | | 1.6 |
| **Product Owners** | | 1.7 |
| **Developers** | | 1.6 |
| **Quality Assurance** | | 1.8 |
| **Engineers** | | 1.5 |
| **Product Managers** | | 2.0 |

# Appropriate Communication



Ac

APPROPRIATE
COMMUNICATION

# Ac
## APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION

# Description

Setting expectations and protocols for appropriate communication, and finding the right balance between documentation and conversation.

# Questions

1. Although formal documentation may exist, it is supplemented by conversations to the extent possible.

2. In general, team members communicate with each other daily.

3. Team members appropriately choose and use different ways of communicating such as email, voice call, video chat, document, messaging, and so on.

# Symptoms

- Misunderstandings are common.

- Team members rarely talk to one another.

- The team creates almost no documents.

# Sample Responses—Appropriate Communication

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scrum Masters** | | | | 1.6 | |
| **Product Owners** | | | | 1.7 | |
| **Developers** | | | | 1.6 | |
| **Quality Assurance** | | | | | 1.8 |
| **Engineers** | | | | 1.5 | |
| **Product Managers** | | | | | 2.0 |

# Continual Improvement

# Description

Pursuing improvements even when they grow smaller and less obvious over time. A willingness to try new things. Prioritizing process inspection and experimenting with solutions each and every iteration.

# Questions

1. Teams adopt appropriate practices and improve them over time.

2. Leaders support teams in experimenting - by not punishing an unsuccessful experiment.

3. Team members actively seek ways to improve how they work and collaborate.

**Ci**

CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

# Symptoms

- Team members feel stuck in a rut.

- Recurring issues are difficult to resolve.

- Team members are resistant to changing the process.

# Sample Responses—Continual Improvement

| Scrum Masters | | | | 1.0 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Product Owners | | | | 1.1 | |
| Developers | | | | 1.2 | |
| Quality Assurance | | | | 1.1 | |
| Engineers | | | | 0.8 | |
| Product Managers | | | | 1.0 | |

# Cross-Functional Teams



Cf

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL
TEAMS

# Cf

## CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

# Description

A team that encompasses all skills needed to fully implement an idea from its product backlog. Cross functional does not mean each person must have each skill.

# Questions

1. The team is rarely delayed waiting for work to be completed by another team.

2. Most people are assigned to only one team.

3. The team has all the skills required to fully implement a feature or capability.

**Cf**

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

# Symptoms

- Rather than finishing features or functionality, teams turn their partially implemented features or functionality over to other teams to finish.

- Dependencies between teams delay time to value.

- Little opportunity exists for team members to learn new skills.

Cf

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

# Sample Responses—Cross-Functional Teams

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scrum Masters** | | | | 0.8 |
| **Product Owners** | | | | 0.9 |
| **Developers** | | | | 0.9 |
| **Quality Assurance** | | | | 0.4 |
| **Engineers** | | | | 1.1 |
| **Product Managers** | | | | 1.0 |

# Done Every Iteration



**De**

DONE EVERY
ITERATION

# De

## DONE EVERY ITERATION
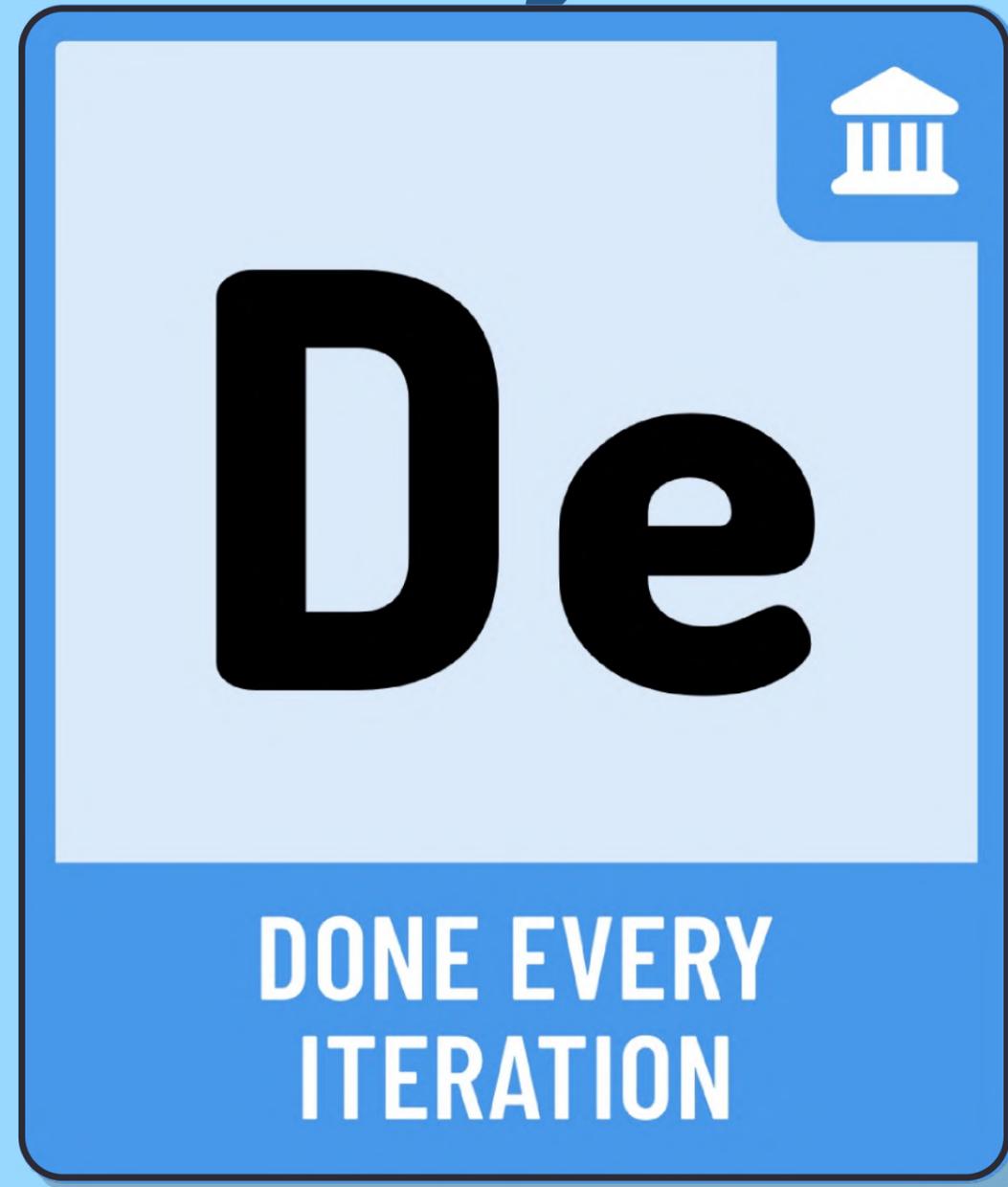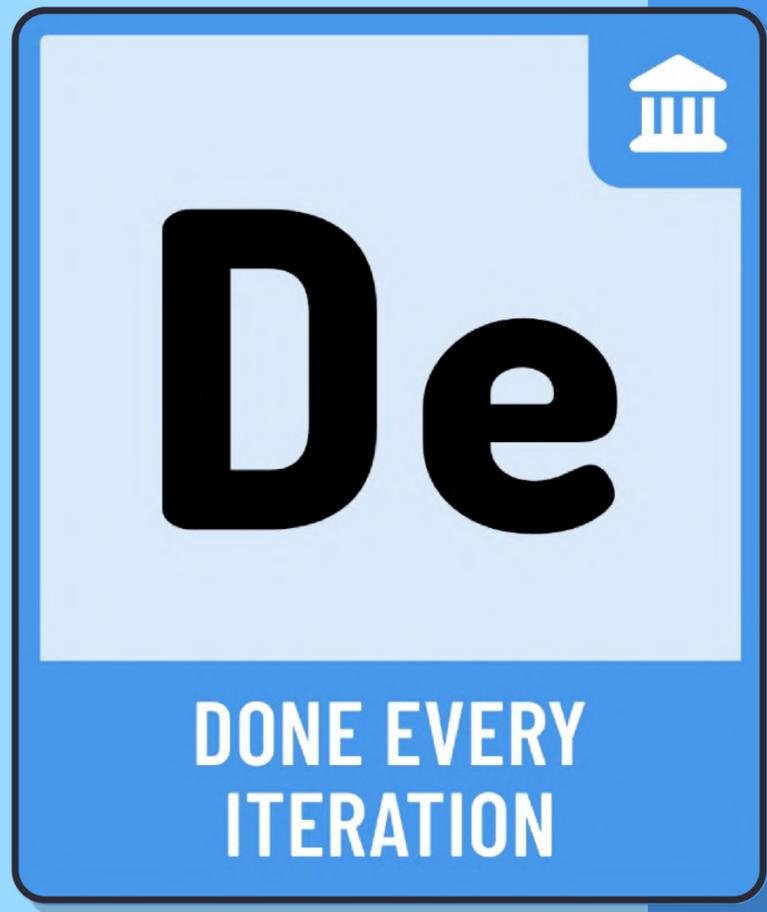
## Description

Placing a high value on fully implementing new ideas, features, or functionality each iteration. Rather than being partially done with a large number of things, agile teams seek to be really done with a smaller number.
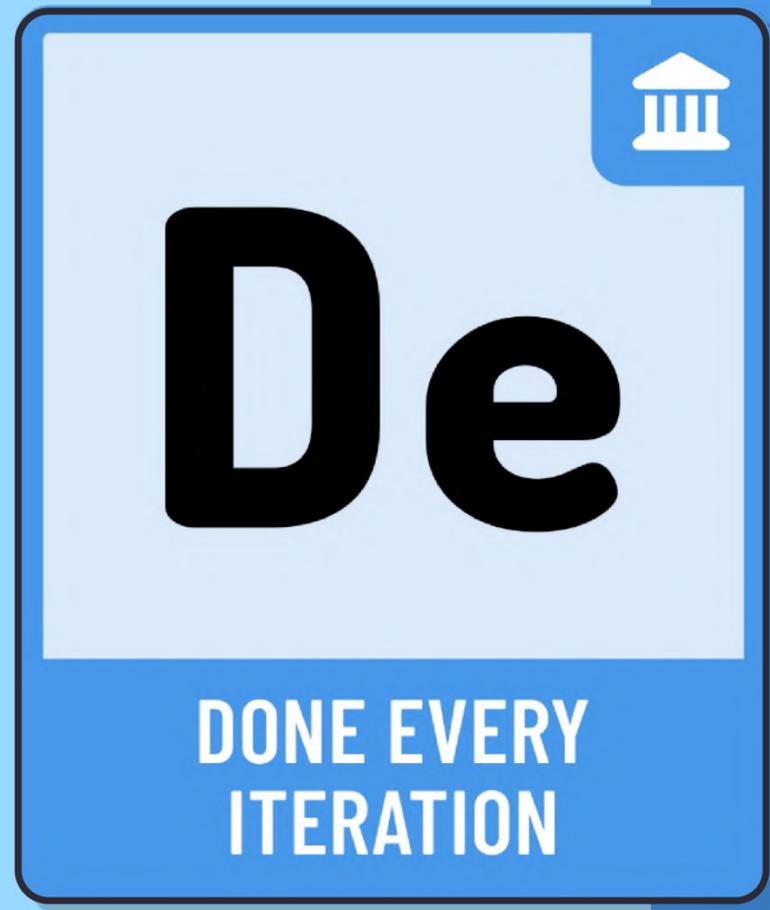
# Questions

1. The team takes iteration plans seriously and makes every effort to fully complete all planned work.

2. The organization places a higher value on finished work than it does on the number of work items in process.

3. The team rarely has unfinished items that must be carried over to the next iteration.
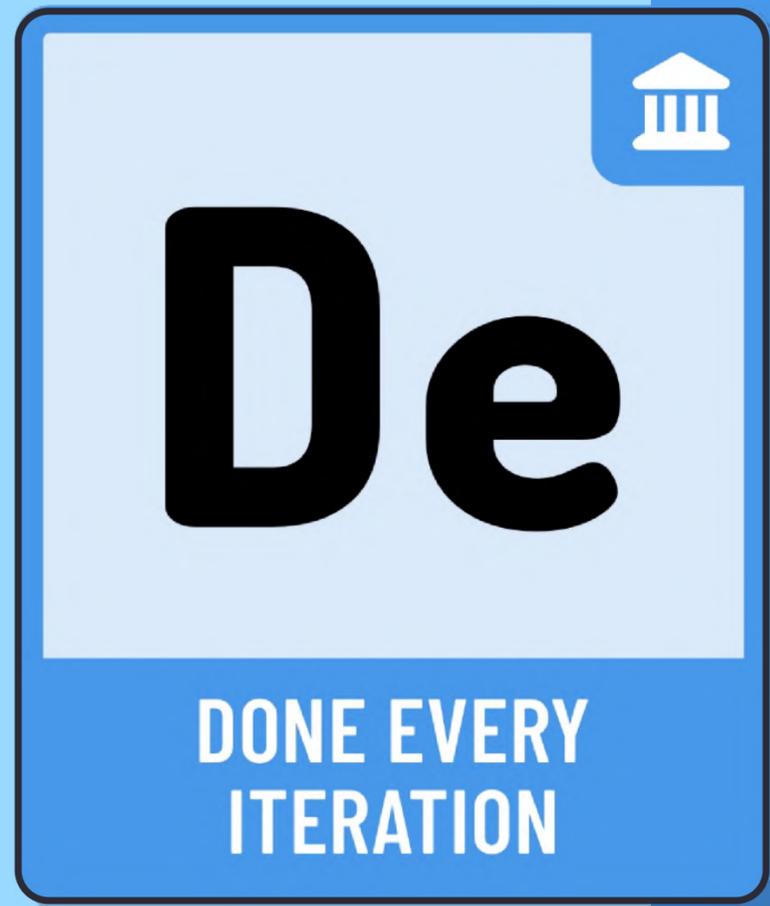
# Symptoms

- Teams are leaving a lot of work unfinished at the end of iterations.

- Teams show little concern for the amount of unfinished work at the end of iterations.

- Teams try to look busy by having a lot of items in process.

- Rather than helping teammates finish an item that is already in process, new work is started that is unlikely to be finished within the iteration.

# Sample Responses—Done Every Iteration

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scrum Masters** | | | | 0.1 | |
| **Product Owners** | | | | 0.2 | |
| **Developers** | | | | 0.5 | |
| **Quality Assurance** | | | −0.6 | | |
| **Engineers** | | | | 0.6 | |
| **Product Managers** | | | | 0.0 | |

# Quality Orientation

## Qo

### QUALITY ORIENTATION

## Description

Embracing the idea that the best way to go fast is to go well. Setting high expectations for quality in each iteration. Quality is never an afterthought to an agile team. It is rarely, if ever, sacrificed to meet a deadline. Team members exhibit pride in the quality of their work, even in parts of their work that will only be visible to other team members.

# Questions

1. Teams take pride in their craft.

2. Quality is rarely, if ever, sacrificed to meet a deadline.

3. The team feels a responsibility to deliver high quality work. Leaders see quality as a right that the team has and they respect it.


QUALITY ORIENTATION

# Symptoms

- Quality is viewed as an afterthought that can be added into a product later.

- Quality assurance or test personnel are added to teams after the start of projects.

- Teams spend a large portion of their time reworking items they had previously claimed were finished.

- Customers become frustrated with the product's lack of quality, possibly even stopping use in favor of a different product or solution.

**Qo**

**QUALITY ORIENTATION**

# Sample Responses—Quality Orientation

| | Value |
|---|---|
| Scrum Masters | 1.0 |
| Product Owners | 0.9 |
| Developers | 1.1 |
| Quality Assurance | 0.4 |
| Engineers | 0.1 |
| Product Managers | 1.7 |

# Element Table

| | SUCCEEDING | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Lb** LEADING BY EXAMPLE | **Le** LEARNING | **Cp** COLLABORATIVE PLANNING | **Co** COORDINATION | **Ow** OVERLAPPING WORK | **So** SELF-ORGANIZING TEAMS | **Vo** VALUE OPTIMIZING | |
| IMPROVING | **Ad** ADVOCACY | **Tr** TRUST | **Lu** LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY | | **Ta** TEAM ACCOUNTABILITY | **Et** EMPOWERED TEAMS | **Ff** FAST FEEDBACK | |
| FOUNDATIONAL | **Aw** AWARENESS | **Pe** PERSONAL EXCELLENCE | **Ac** APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION | | **Ci** CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT | **Cf** CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS | **De** DONE EVERY ITERATION | **Qo** QUALITY ORIENTATION |

| TRANSITION MANAGEMENT | CULTURE | COLLABORATION | TEAMWORK | TEAM STRUCTURE | DELIVERY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Discussion Exercise

Aw — AWARENESS
Pe — PERSONAL EXCELLENCE
Ci — CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT
De — DONE EVERY ITERATION
Cf — CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS
Ac — APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION
Qo — QUALITY ORIENTATION
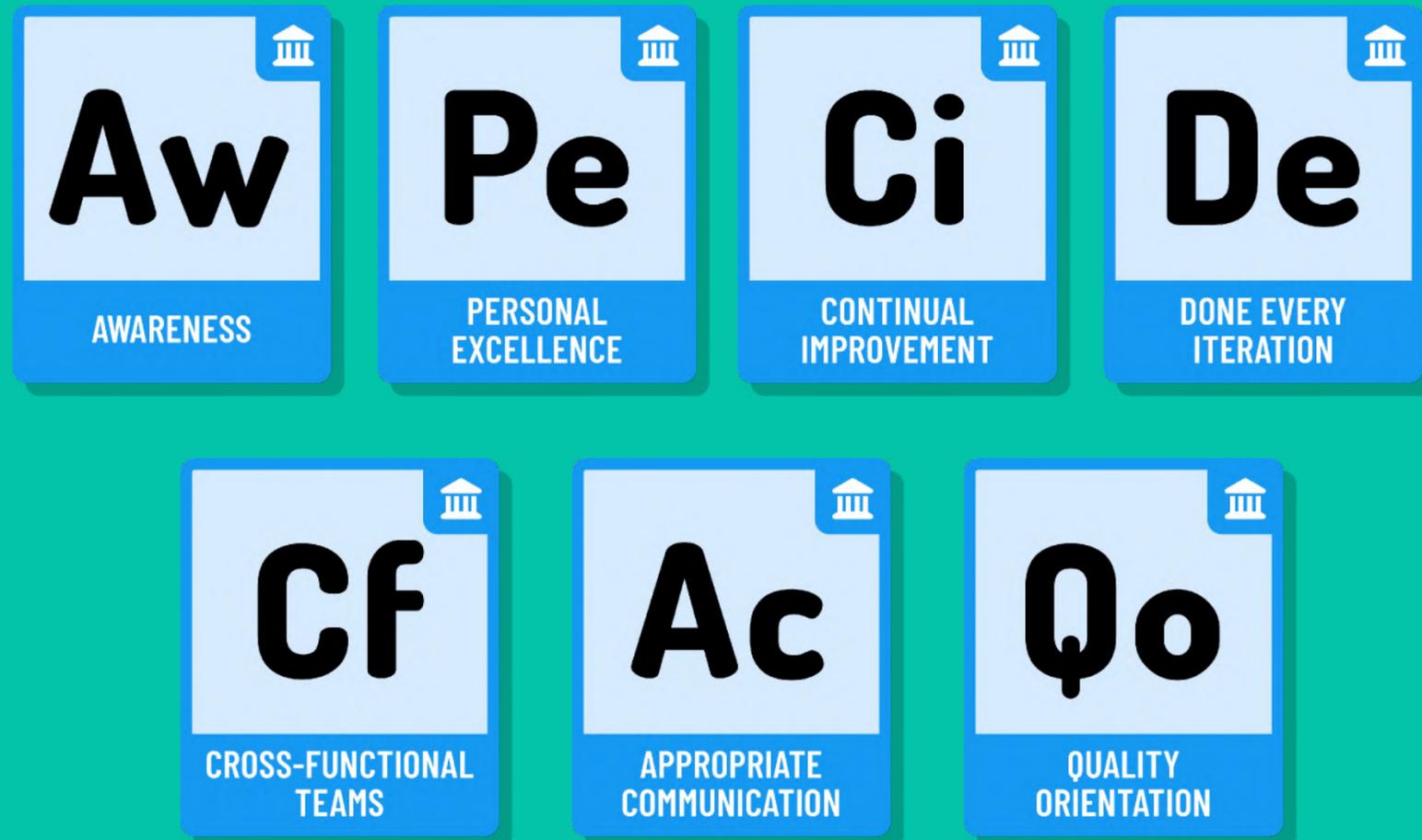
On each table is a Foundational Element. Discuss at your tables what recommendations you would give to a team struggling with that element.

# Methodology
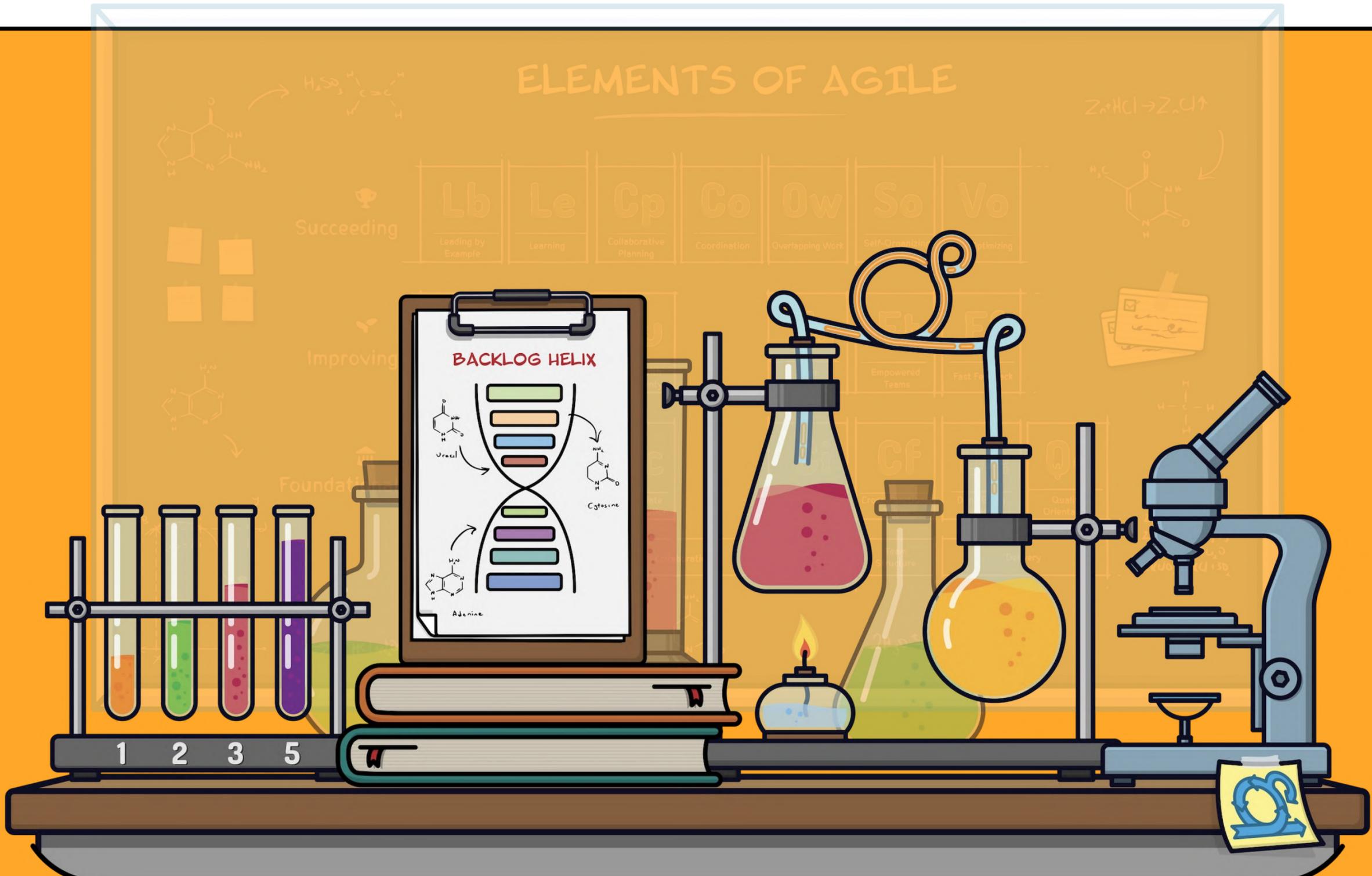
# Survey
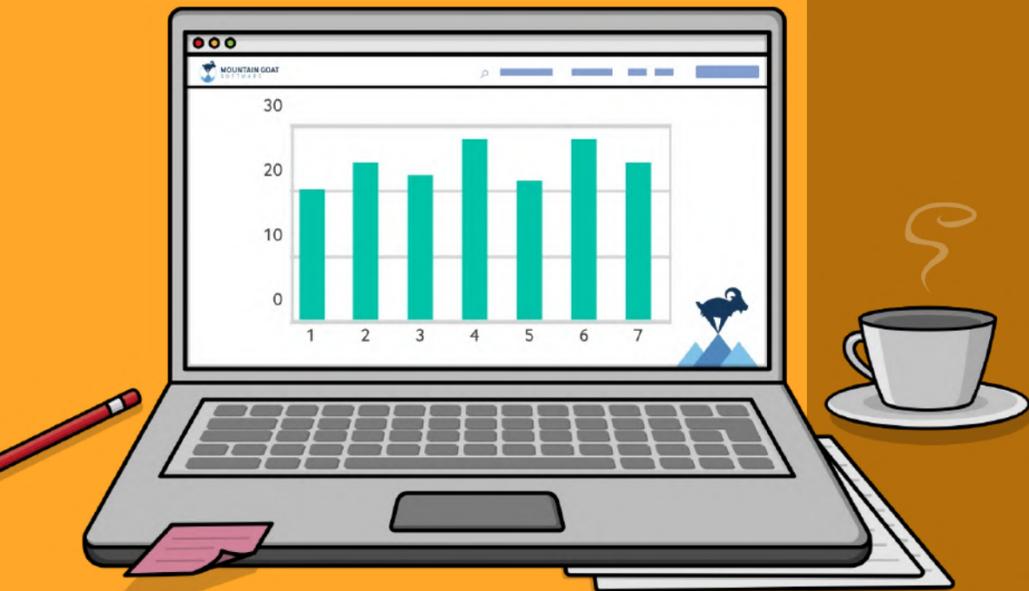
- We survey the organization

- A red / yellow / green score is created for each element

- Segments are shown by department and by role

# Interviews

- Conducted with key individuals
- Used to dig deeper into some survey results
- Provides a more complete view

# Expert Analysis

- Coaches analyze both survey and interview data

- Some element's scores are changed to reflect interview responses

- A final report is generated

# Client Example
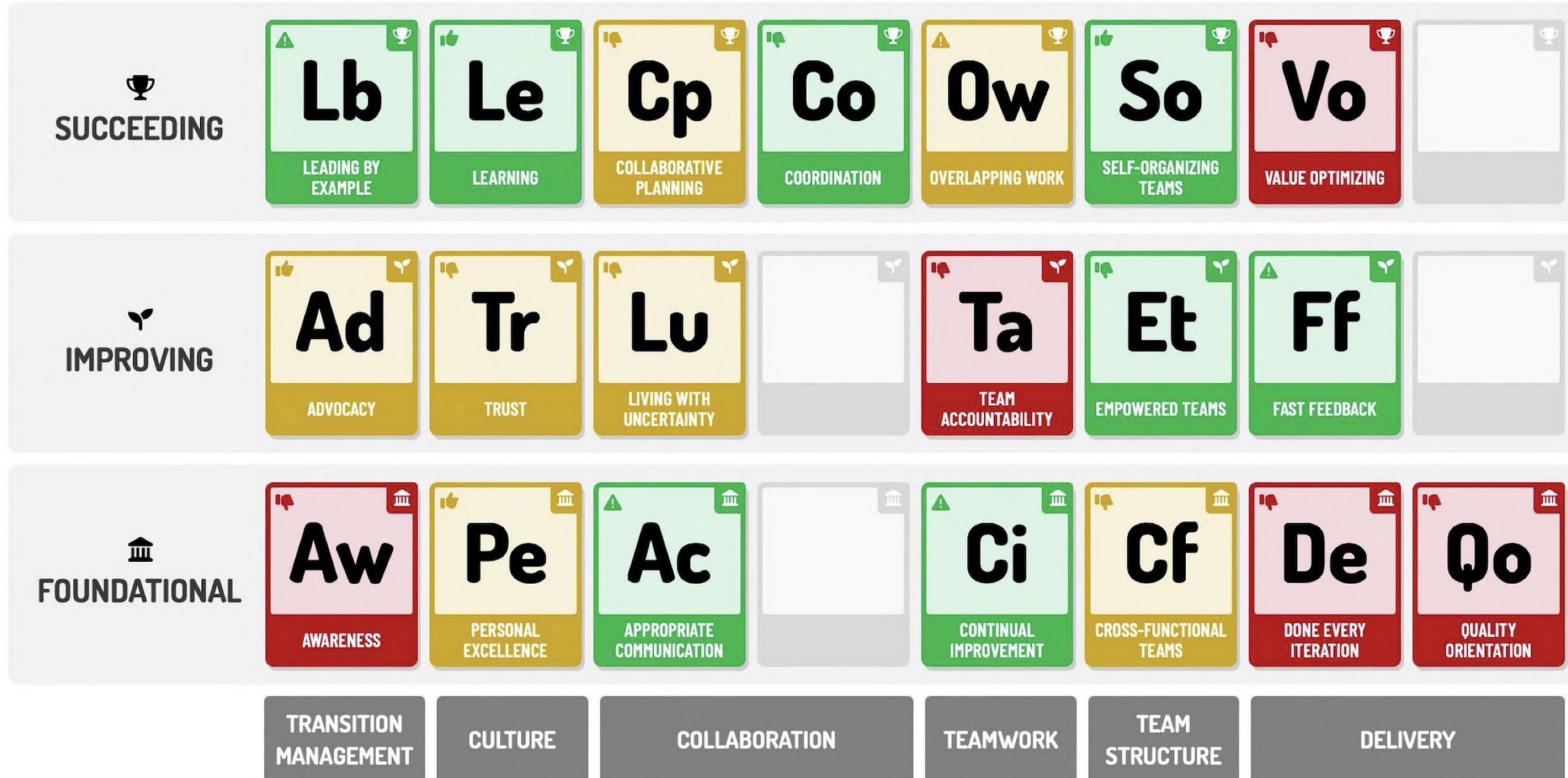
**Take a Deep Breath**

- Get agile using agile
  - Incrementally
- Start with
  - 1 important Element
  - 1 quick win Element

# Enterprise Transition Community

- John Kotter's "guiding coalition"

- Provides energy & direction

- Does *not* do the work

Improvement Communities

- Communities of Practice
- Each focused on improving one broad area in the organization
  - e.g., testing, developing Scrum Masters,