

If I Only Knew Then What I Know Now

5 Lessons Learned from my experiences leading agile transformations

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Who is SkyTouch?

- Marketing-leading provider of property management systems to hospitality
- Headquartered in Phoenix, AZ
- Growing like crazy (We're hiring!)

What to expect today

- **5 Lessons Learned** from my own experience with transitioning to an **agile** approach to writing software
- Things for you to consider as you begin or continue your agile journey
- Stick around if:
 - You are thinking about agile and want to learn from others' experiences
 - You've started your first agile project
 - You've been doing this agile thing for a while and am looking for ideas on how to do it better
 - You're an agile expert and enjoy heckling speakers

What *not* to expect today

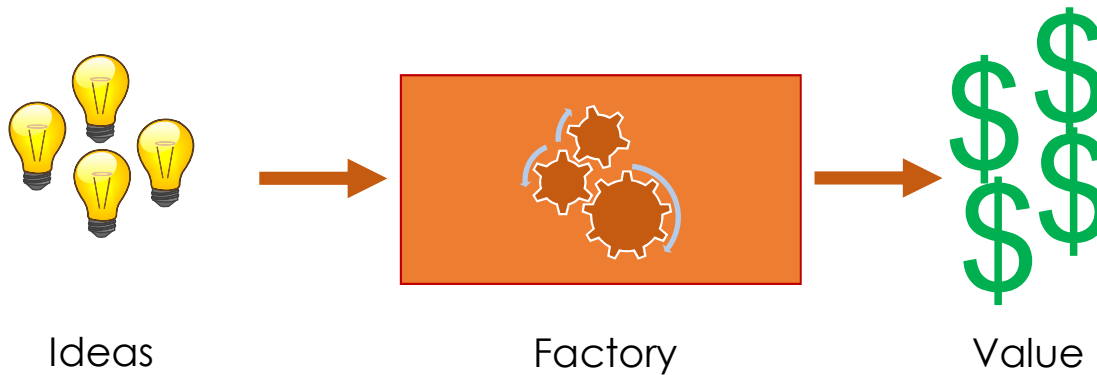
- **How-to** of specific agile practices

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Agile is a lifestyle.

- Analogy: Losing weight with a fitness program
- Everyone needs to understand WHY
- Accountability – establish goals, measure and share progress, focus on the few critical items

1 Agile is a lifestyle.



Focus on outcomes, not activities

- Throughput – how many features are deployed to production in a given period of time?
- Cycle time – how long does it take a feature to go from idea to production?
- Quality – a weighted count of known defects in production (a snapshot)

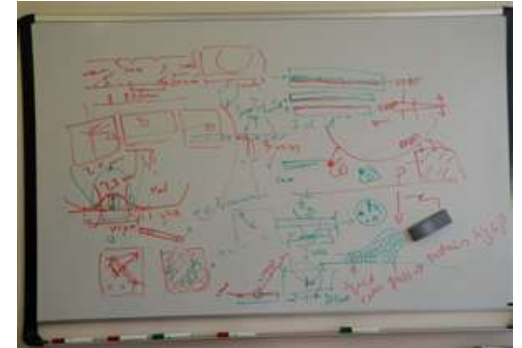
Trend in values (are we getting better or worse?) is more important than actual values

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- My advice on using agile coaches
- My advice on buying a bunch of agile tools

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Tools:

- Primary focus should be on learning the agile practices and principles
- Getting tools upfront tends to shift the focus to learning about the tool instead of agile practices
- You might make better tool choices if you understand your needs first

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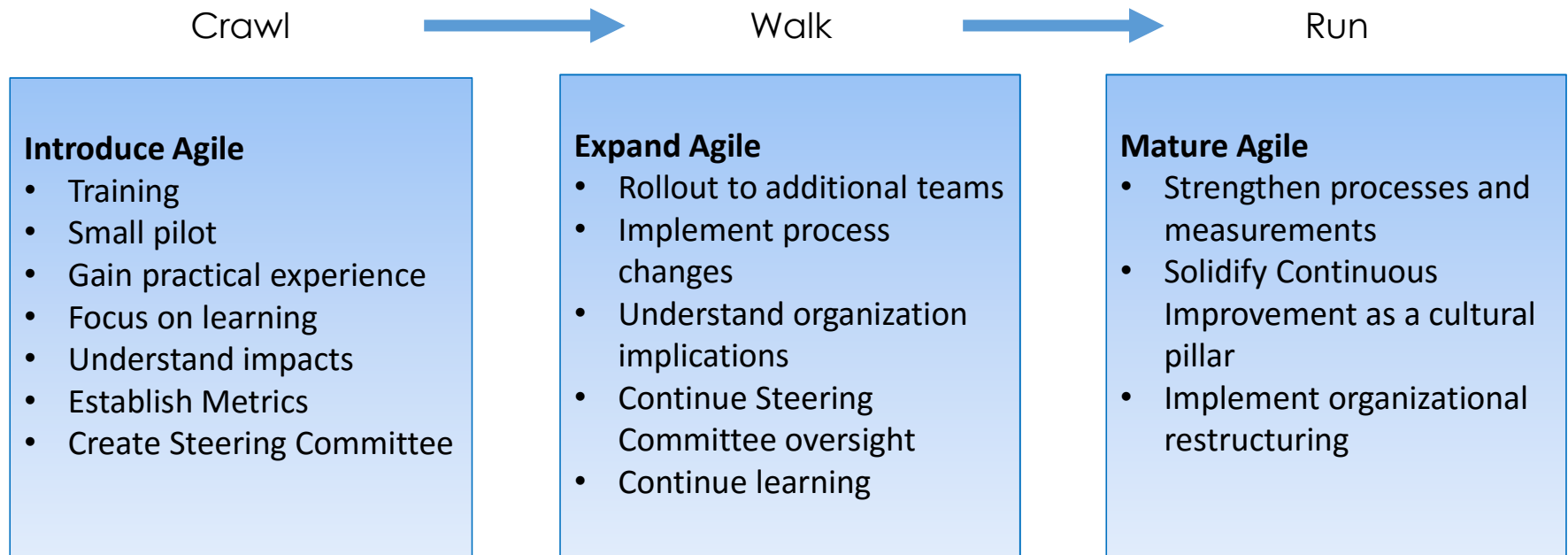
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- Accountability – establish goals, measure and share progress, focus on the few critical items
- My advice on using agile coaches
- My advice on buying a bunch of agile tools
- Introducing new processes is hard. Changing a culture is really hard. So...

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- Analogy: the flywheel
- The Agile Champion gets the wheel turning:
 - Strong communication plan

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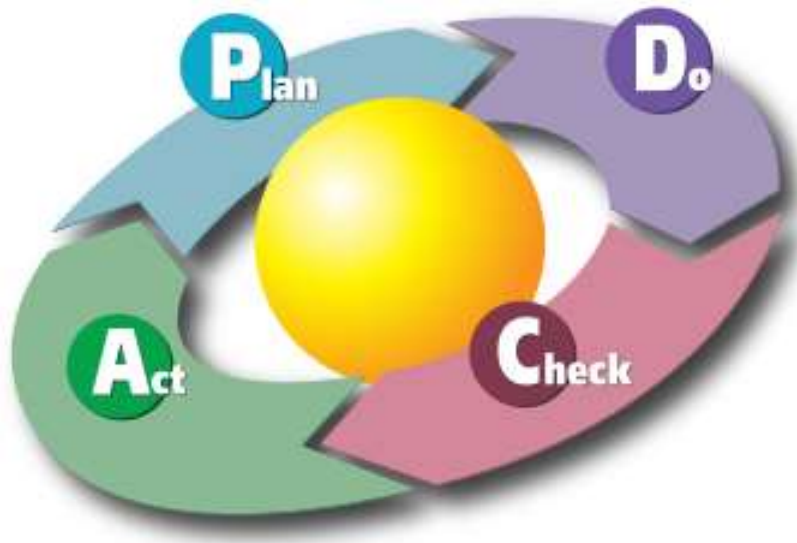
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- Analogy: the flywheel
- The Agile Champion gets the wheel turning:
 - Strong communication plan
 - Crawl / Walk / Run approach
 - Agile Steering Committee
 - “Plans are worthless, but planning is indispensable” - Eisenhower*
- *HBR’s 10 Must Reads on Change Management*
- The Agile Champion is too high up the food chain to know all the details of the agile transition. So....

3 Agile is best done “Bottom Up”.

- Example: Toyota assembly line: “Stop the Line!”
- Collaboration, self-organization, and empowerment – oh my!

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The heart of a bottom-up approach to agile development: The Continuous Improvement Loop

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- Strong communications plan to set expectations
 - Some patience is needed as people learn
 - Accountability is key.
 - HR needs to be involved on day one

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Formula for work: $W = F * d$

where F = Force
d = displacement (or distance)

Team Responsibilities:

- Be accountable for results.
- Learn from failure so you can improve. Fail often so you can succeed sooner.
- Remember the Yoda Principle.



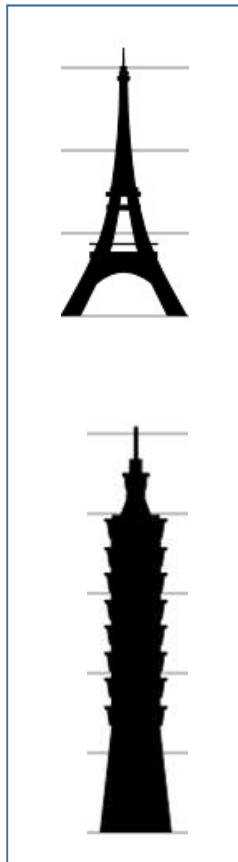
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 - Accountability is key.
 - HR needs to be involved on day one
- A strong Scrum Master compensates for a lot of dysfunction. A weak Scrum Master gives agile a bad name.
- Book: *The Professional ScrumMaster’s Handbook*, by Stacia Viscardi
- Good product owners are hard to find

4 Agile is counter-intuitive.

- Requirements: detailed documentation versus working software
- Estimating: How long versus relative bigness

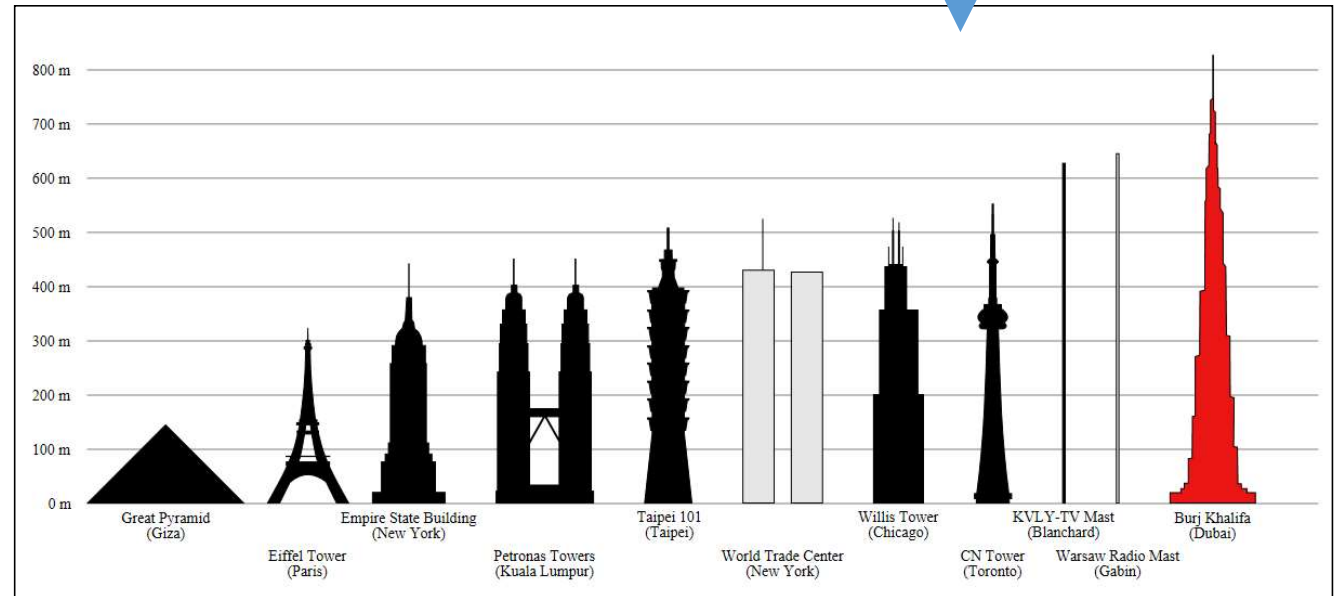
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How tall are these buildings?



Which building is taller?



4 Agile is counter-intuitive.

- Requirements: detailed documentation versus working software
- Estimating: How long versus relative bigness
- Focus on business value and not on features. The YAGNI principle applies here
- Measuring team throughput instead of individual capacity
- Failure is not an option! Or maybe fail often so you can succeed sooner
- It's okay to change your mind after the project starts

Book: *Leading Lean Software Development: Results are Not the Point*, by Mary and Tom Poppendieck

5 Agile is love.

- Be kind, not nice.
 - Book: *Crucial Conversations*, by Kerry Patterson.
- Talk about your problems: the sprint retrospective
 - Book: *Agile Retrospectives*, by Esther Derby and Diana Larsen.
- Show your commitment: improvement communities
 - Book: *Kanban Change Leadership: Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement*, by Klaus Leopold
- Don't go solo: we are a team
 - DevOps
 - Business vs. IT

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