NAVIGATING POLITICS
In Agile/Lean Initiatives

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Intro: Evil Coach

- ## Katherine Kirk (@kkirk)
  - Over 10 years contracting and freelancing in a variety of roles within the IT and Media industries

  - Coach, PM, Delivery Improvement Specialist, DBA, Web Admin etc etc

  - Specialise working with really "troubled" projects, where simplistic solutions don't quite cut it

- ## Tribal upbringing
  - Different perspective

Intro: Evil Salesguy

- ## Olav Maassen (@OlavMaassen)
  - Over 10 years consulting in a variety of roles within the IT and Financial industries

  - Agile Consultant, Scrum Master, Author, Team Lead, Programmer, Trainer, Director of Sales, etc etc

- ## Dutch upbringing

  - Options Thinking

Why 'Navigating Politics'

Over and over we have seen

Agile/Lean initiatives

Not fully succeeding

- This is a perspective from both our experience
- It's not based on theory but points to theory

- You will see inconsistencies and things that need correction

- AIM: to generate awareness and discussion

Agenda

- Introduction to Politics
- Waterfall
- Technology
- Agile/Lean
- Hierarchical Structure
- Summary
- How we deal with it

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Politics has been around
a lot longer than Agile/Lean

2,400 years ago

Aristotle wrote about Politics

(http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/)

Don't underestimate politics' power to Kryptonite your Agile/Lean application!

- "Take down that portfolio board …. transfer it to a spreadsheet … its forcing people to be open about their priorities… causing conflicts in the executive team"

- Being open about priorities disrupts current status quo and politics have to be expressed openly.

Politics is a symptom

- An activity which results from emotion
  - Frustration, pain, fear

Politics is natural

- Completely not using politics:
  - Helpless
  - No influence
- Politics seems bad, yet we want its result as well (influence the organization)

Research on power by Paul Piff

- We rationalize advantage by convincing ourselves we deserve it
  - Skewed Monopoly
- Those with less are better at reading facial expressions
  - But if those in better position imagine being in a lower position it boosted their ability

Paul Piff

- Words mean things
- Matthew Effect
  - Observed tendency for initial advantages to accumulate through time
  - In some systems initial advantages are self-amplifying

TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

- Technology attracts Psychopathic Leadership
  - "Many of the jobs attractive to psychopaths – such as CEO's, salespeople and media types – are often found in the tech industry", Forbes – 2013 (http://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyclay/2013/01/05/the-top-10-jobs-that-attract-psychopaths/)

  - Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work, by Paul Babiak, Ph.D., and Robert Hare, Ph.D., published in 2006

What is psychopathic behavior

- Hare Checklist:
  - Superficially Charming
  - Manipulative
  - Lack of empathy
  - Lack of guilt
  - Impulsive

Today - historical legal and financial structure encourages psychopathic/old style management behaviour

Compassion can be turned off

- Although psychopaths can't become compassionate, normal people can turn off compassion and think like a psychopath – Huffington Post, 2010 (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcella-mroczkowski/danger-empathy-and-psycho_b_667637.html)

- Studied 203 people deemed as having 'management potential' (Paul Babiak, Robert Hare and Craig Neumann) – found that this group had a much higher rate of psychopaths than in the normal population (http://www.forbes.com/sites/victorlipman/2013/04/25/the-disturbing-link-between-psychopathy-and-leadership/)

Introverts

- Technology industry has a large bunch of introverts which don't like interacting that much (yes, I'm stereotyping here)

- 'Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking' Susan Cain, 2012
http://www.idgconnect.com/blog-abstract/7541/introverts-vs-extroverts-tech

- (Now introverts are becoming very popular – e.g. Big Bang Theory)

WATERFALL

WATERFALL METHOD WAS A STARTING POINT

Dr. Winston W. Royce wrote:

I believe in this concept, but the implementation described above is risky and invites failure

The remainder of this discussion presents five additional features that must be added to this basic approach to eliminate most of the development risks

And made the following recommendations:

1: PROGRAM DESIGN COMES FIRST

2: DOCUMENT THE DESIGN

3: DO IT TWICE

4: PLAN, CONTROL AND MONITOR TESTING

5: INVOLVE THE CUSTOMER

Waterfall

- Managers liked it – power/plan
- Introverts, avoid interaction and document everything

Technology Industry liked Waterfall

- Back then...
  - Psychopaths didn't have to collaborate – they can make a plan and exert their power
  - Introverts didn't have to interact that much – they can document the hell out of everything and apportion blame rather than be in a confrontation

- Aaaaah!

But one BIG problem

- Technology Industry consists of
  - people working with people to make tools that help people interact
- There was a LOT of interaction, whatever the ideal structure they chose
- Even Waterfall had to try to 'make interaction work'

- Rapid change

AGILE / LEAN STRUCTURE LIKE TRIBES

Agile/Lean isn't a tribe,
but it DOES have a tribal way of working

My tribe: Desert

- Lots of space, limited resources, harsh context
- Whoever was best to lead at that time, did

- We had specialists
  - Hunters– spear throwing competitions –skill and strength
  - Foragers– knowledge sharing get-togethers –knowledge and experience
  - Elders – decision making 'conferences' –strategic thinking, compassion and wisdom
  - Facilitator/Healer (daily tribal life) - family connections – respected for compassion, organization skills

Family Group

- But lived and collaborated as a 'family group'
  - 1 hunter, 1 forager, 1 elder, 1 facilitator/healer (daily tribal life) etc.
  - Collaborating /leading interchangeably
    - When critical could be very dictatorial – life was on the line
    - Experiential

- This is what I call a: Rotational hierarchy

Peers to compare/ share with
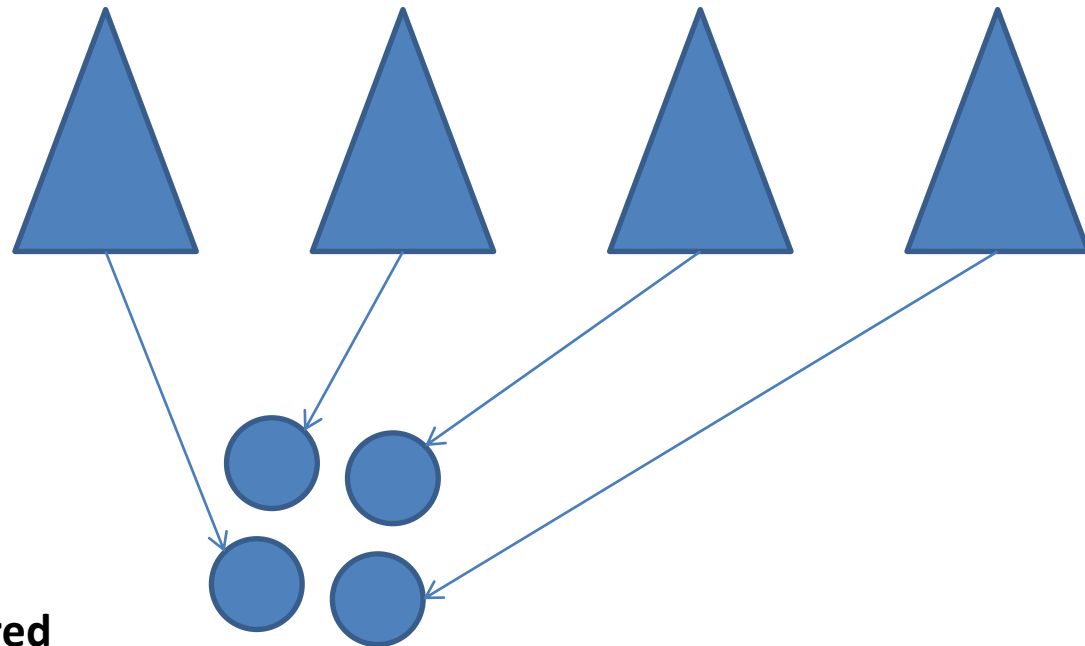
Family Group – collaborate to survive -Lead when required

Search & Rescue Dog Teams

- Similar structure in SAR

- Team has one Commander

- Diverse group:
  - Police, fireman, nurse, structural engineer

- Role of the commander is to make sure the right person leads.

Agile/Lean:
# Contextual Collaborating/Leading

- Success = 1 tech, 1 design, 1 facilitator etc
  - Not competing or comparing against each other
  - Sense of mastery/value from their external 'peer group'

  - collaborating to get something they deem valuable
    - which elevates their position or gains them acceptance in their chosen, external hierarchy/peer group
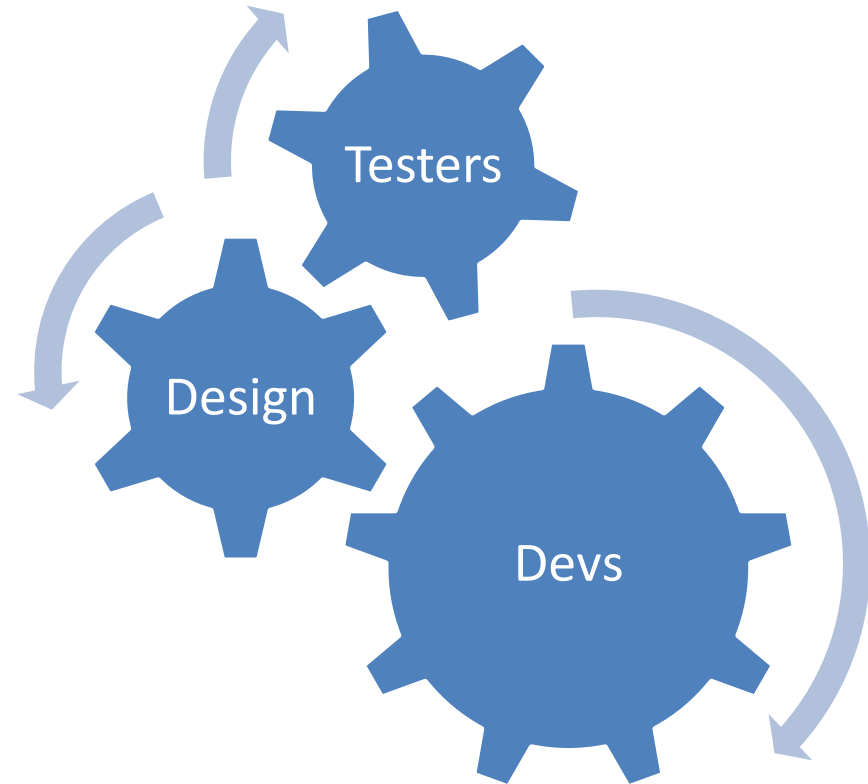
Similar!

- Specialists collaborating to innovatively succeed in a harsh environment
  - Tech – knowledge peer group
  - Design– ideas peer group
  - Facilitator – collaboration peer group

Clashing structures

Static

CEO	JD
Managers	MN GC
Supervisors	PT LF MW

Rotational

Testers

Design

Devs
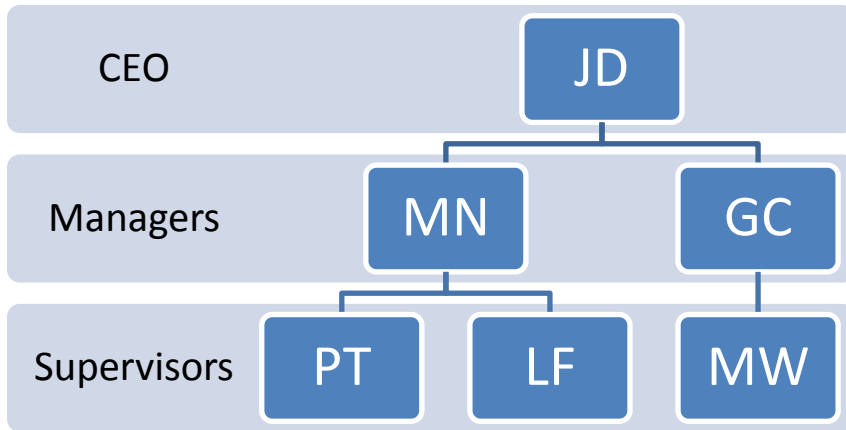
Conflicting structure

- SO: this flexible Agile/Lean working structure
  - Rotational hierarchies
- Encased in a traditional, static structure
  - a deep rooted legacy from the past
  - think: class systems & old-style factories

SO WHY DOES POLITICS INCREASE AFTER AGILE/LEAN?

Here is a hint…

	Traditional	**Agile/Lean**
Introvert's fear	Fortnightly meetings 1	Fortnightly meetings 13
Boss's horror	Do what the boss says? YES	Do what the boss says? Maybe

Simple, really….

Psychopathic self interested behaviour

+ introvert avoidance tendencies

+ high pressure change

+ plus collaborative, interactive Agile/Lean

+ pressure from traditional static hierarchical power structure…

All sqeezed together = potential hotbed of politics

HOW WE'VE DEALT WITH IT

Agile/Lean has Awesome Tools

- These already help
  - BDD, TDD, User Story formats, Story Mapping, System Mapping, Kanban Boards, Graphs, Charts, Meetings etc etc

Simplified Strategy?

- We still need a simplified 'strategy' sometimes
  - To help on how and when to apply them

Without strategy…
  - We invent more structure / rules
  - But more structure / rules = less innovation & less adaptability to rapid change

- In a rapidly changing industry which relies on
  - innovation
  - deals with tricky technical and people problems
- We need help
  - Getting insight and
  - Dealing with people

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN WORK

Investigated Eastern Philosophy

- I study Buddhism to find ways to eliminate suffering in the workplace
  - Buddhism generally focuses a lot on caring about people

- Particularly useful – Mahasi Vipassana
  - Vipassana is about facilitating Insight
  - Mahasi was a guy that tried to simplify Buddhist practices right down to what's essential

Use Agile/Lean tools & practices

- Continually reference the Agile/Lean toolbox
  - find tools that you can pull out in this strategy format
  - Respond contextually – every political situation is different
- WARNING: Tools can have MULTIPLE effects (e.g. Kanban board)
  - So your <u>approach</u> becomes key to adoption

The 'Strategy' Overview

- Equanimity – clarity
  - We need to see the situation as it is clearly so we can act appropriately WITH reality- to get effective actions
- Insight – right understanding
  - We need to be effective in our response – to focus on the right things (e.g. Jeff Patton's eternal quest of building the right thing versus building a thing right)
- Compassion – generate effective action
  - establish likelihood of success with a system of people interacting with and for people
  - Whatever we 'see', however we act, it will impact PEOPLE
- Grit – create sustainable actions and pace

Equanimity: "I see I eat a lot of junk food,

Insight: I understand why, and know I shouldn't eat junk food

Compassion: I feel how much this affects my body, my family and my future – so I'm going to ..."

Compassion–cognitive neuroscience

- Professor Singer – book/research
  - Others say: This area of science could be 'flawed'
    - BUT: Her view seems to map directly to eastern philosophy
  - Empathy can lead to burnout – compassion motivates
  - She claims:
    - "Compassion] … increased activation in brain networks associated with affiliation and reward"

A psychopaths view

"I tell them [CEOs], get rid of the empathy.
Focus on what you've got to do. The most
important thing is the mission," he says. "Ask
yourself what am I here to achieve?"
And "empathy," he concludes, "doesn't help
you get there.“

Andy McNab, 2014

http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/29/business/psychopath-andy-mcnab/

- Here is where psychopathic behaviour fails us
  - psychopaths are not able to access that 'database' of compassion in order to understand what a people orientated solution or initiative might be like to experience…
  - they cannot use compassion tools to increase the likelihood of success of a people orientated solution

Options Thinking

- Being aware of options

- Deliberately managing options

- Provides a vocabulary to communicate about Agile in another way

Real Options

- Options have value

- Options expire

- Never commit early unless you know why

Become better at politics

- There is always politics

- Not playing is not an option?

vs

- Harmonizing reality?

Learn the game of power

- Master your emotions
- Distance yourself from present
  - Think about past and future
- Appearance matters
- Patience
- See circumstances, not good/evil
- Social game
- Be indirect

"The 48 Laws of Power" – Robert Green

SUMMARY

- In this ever changing technology industry, be always aware that
  - People are interacting with People to make software for People to Interact

Consider the bigger picture

Psychopathic self interested behaviour

+ introvert avoidance tendencies

+ high pressure change

+ plus collaborative, interactive Agile/Lean

+ pressure from traditional static hierarchical power structure...

All sqeezed together = potential hotbed of politics

The 'Strategy' Overview

- Equanimity – clarity
- Insight – right understanding
- Compassion – generate effective action
- Grit – create sustainable actions and pace

- Options
- Game of Power

Finally….

- Perhaps this is a different perspective?
- Hope: open things up for discussion

- And encourage you to research the power of Compassion and…
- … develop compassion for power ?

Thank you!

- Love to get your feedback
  - Please vote with the conference app

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