Bringing Teams to the Work

Jeff Holman

Director of Engineering

Cristian Fuentes

Engineering Manager

@cristianfuentes

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Agenda

- Where We Started

- Growing Pains

- The Journey

- The Process

- Results

- No Silver Bullets

- Questions

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Doing things "by the book"

We were bringing work to a handful of static teams
working within a standard scrum framework

- All teams using agile/scrum processes

- Trained scrum masters for each team

- Static teams with stable membership

- Tracking basic agile metrics (velocity, burndowns, etc.)

Growing out of our process

- We more than **doubled the size** of the engineering team and the number of scrum teams

- Our projects became **more complex** and environment **more dynamic**

- We were tackling a **more diverse** backlog of projects

- We attempted to keep the same processes and way of doing things throughout this growth

Growing Pains

We're a team! Or are we?

We grew as a team but still had issues

- Team autonomy and empowerment felt low

- Teams were not aligned to the top business priorities

- Team size and skillsets did not always match the work

- Cross-team pollination was low

- Consistent velocity did not guarantee value delivered

- Distractions at all time high

- Struggling with throughput and focus

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Our realizations

- Empowerment and Trust drive motivation which drives quality

- We should seek high alignment and high autonomy

- Team skills should match the work

- We need to allow for flexibility and adjustment

- Value impact is more important than velocity

- Focus drives speed

- Iterate, measure, change

The Journey

Looking Back – Moving Forward

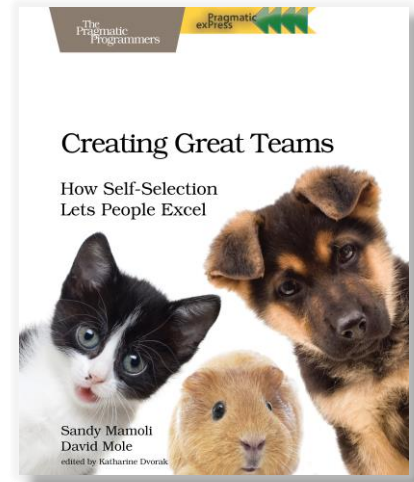- We realized we were under-utilizing our biggest asset: our team

Instead of forcing work into teams, we enable teams to form around work.

But how?

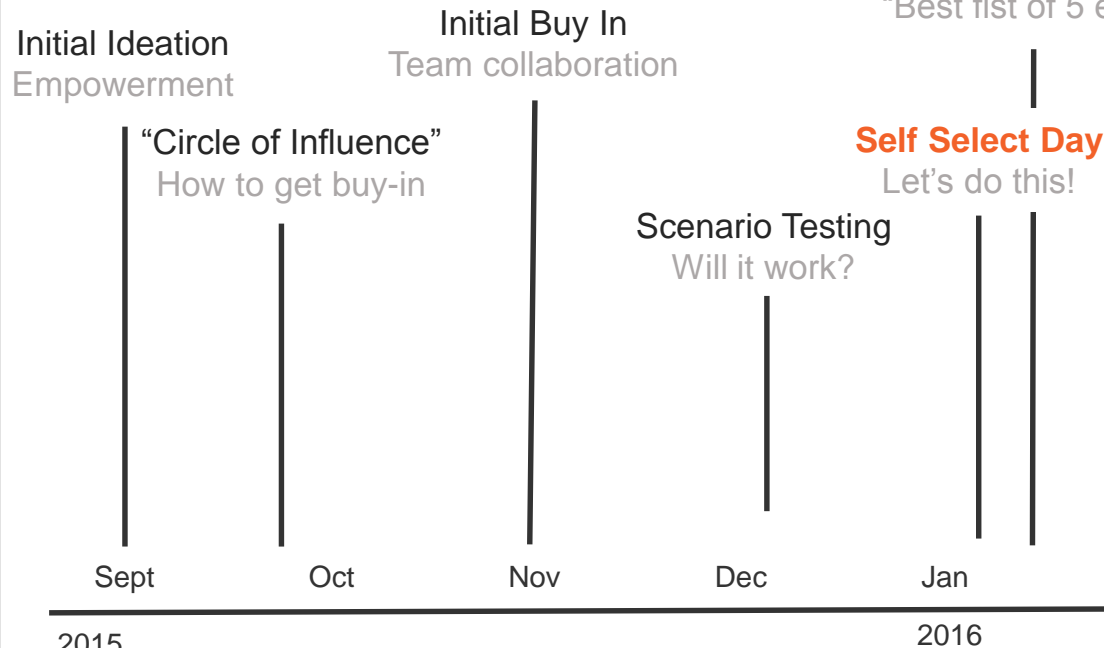**This is a simple concept but implies several assumptions:**

- Team members must understand the context and the big picture

- Priorities must be objective and understood by all

- We need to have a high level of trust

- We must be focused on the entire system

We were not alone!

Getting there

First 8-week planning
"Best fist of 5 ever!"

Initial Buy In
Team collaboration

Initial Ideation
Empowerment

"Circle of Influence"
How to get buy-in

Self Select Day
Let's do this!

Scenario Testing
Will it work?

| Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan |

2015

2016

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The Process

The Details

- We utilize the **Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF)** method to objectively prioritize work

- Projects are presented to teams in a **Science Fair** format

- Each team member receives 3 votes (1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice)

- After voting, teams evaluate how projects were staffed and discuss potential moves

- Before projects begin they must be **staffed to succeed**

- Teams are assembled and planning begins for the next 8-weeks

How it works
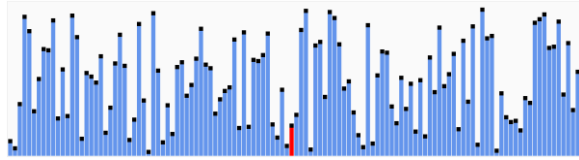
1. Prioritize the Work

2. Science Fair

3. Team Members Vote

4. Staffed to Succeed?

5. Liftoff!

The Science Fair!

- Present the highest priority projects to the team

- An opportunity to truly communicate the value and context around each project

- Allows us as a team to understand business and efficiency drivers for every project

Science Fair

Science Fair

Is your team ready?

- A question is asked for every project that gets picked up and team formed around it:

Is your project staffed to succeed?

Results

What we have observed

- Top priorities are being selected

- Teams are more aligned, understand priorities and are empowered

- Cross-pollination is happening – process, tech & app experience

- Variability in team size creates more staffing liquidity & responsiveness

- Teams are empowered to help other teams succeed

Metrics – How We Measure Success

We don't measure the world and instead focus on a few key metrics

- **Epic Lead Time** – The time between the start and end of a Project/Epic (still finding best way to measure)

- **Releases** – Since starting this new process we have not missed a single release!

- **Engagement**– We take "happiness surveys" and evaluate the data

- **Velocity** – We value this, but not at the beginning of the process

Survey Results

Positive changes in a few key areas

- Department's ability to execute

  ✓ **+19% increase**

- Happiness at work over past 12 months

  ✓ **+16% increase**

- Ability to use my strengths at work every day

  ✓ **+6% increase**

No Silver Bullets

No Silver Bullets

- The model has exposed capacity limitations

- We are still evaluating effective measurements

- Teams own the success of the model, without their commitment it fails

- We continue to tweak the model to optimize results

- There is more rigor up-front when preparing projects

- Some team members may not get their first, second or third selection due to skill limitations

Where are we at today?

In Engineering we plan 8-week cycles of work. We are now in our 4th 8-week cycle of self organizing teams

- We still have questions but work through them as they come
- We are attempting to measure effectiveness through team surveys and retrospectives
- We are tracking project cycle times and quality metrics
- Teams continue to grow with the process and make adjustments
- There is a high level of ownership by team members over the projects we take on

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Takeaways

- Self-selecting teams are more engaged, happier and more productive

- When it comes to solving complex problems, many companies under-utilize their biggest asset: their team

- Given the right context and trust, teams will make better decisions in the interest of the organization

- Trust plays a big part in the success of this model

Questions?

Thank you.