

Innovation Elegance

What A People-Centric Methodology Looks Like

meetmeatbacon



Robert Snyder

March 8, 2024

Why This & Why Now

Project success rates are poor

Employee experience is poor

Incumbent methodologies have not solved VUCA



Acronyms

V	Volatile	B	Brittle
U	Uncertain	A	Anxious
C	Complex	N	Nonlinear
A	Ambiguous	I	Incomprehensible

“We are in a VUCA environment.”

“Innovate how we innovate.”

Why Transition?

A poor

methodology

hurts

ruins

Projects

Jobs

A good

helps

nourishes

Relationships

Mental health.

A poor

methodology is difficult for

good

leaders and managers to

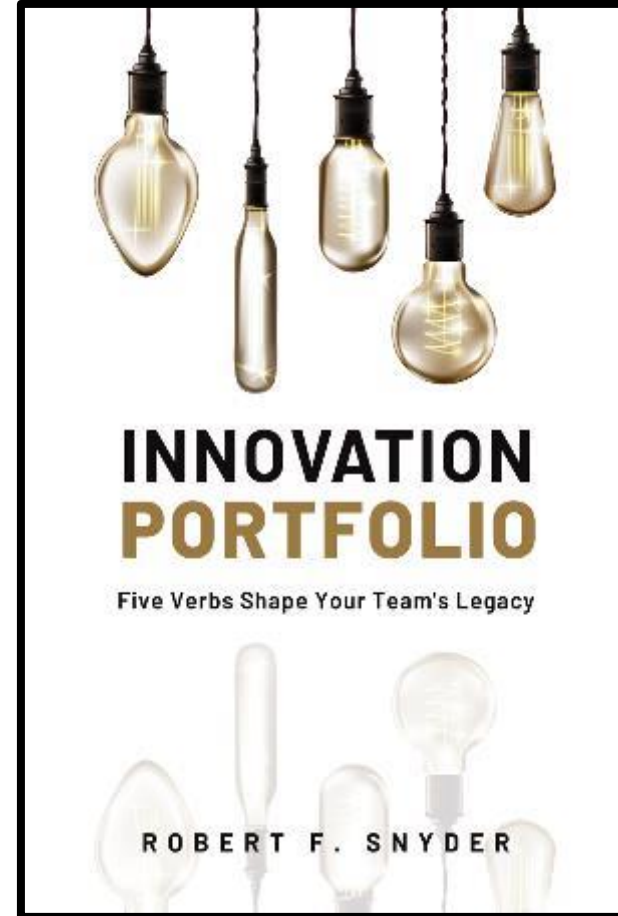
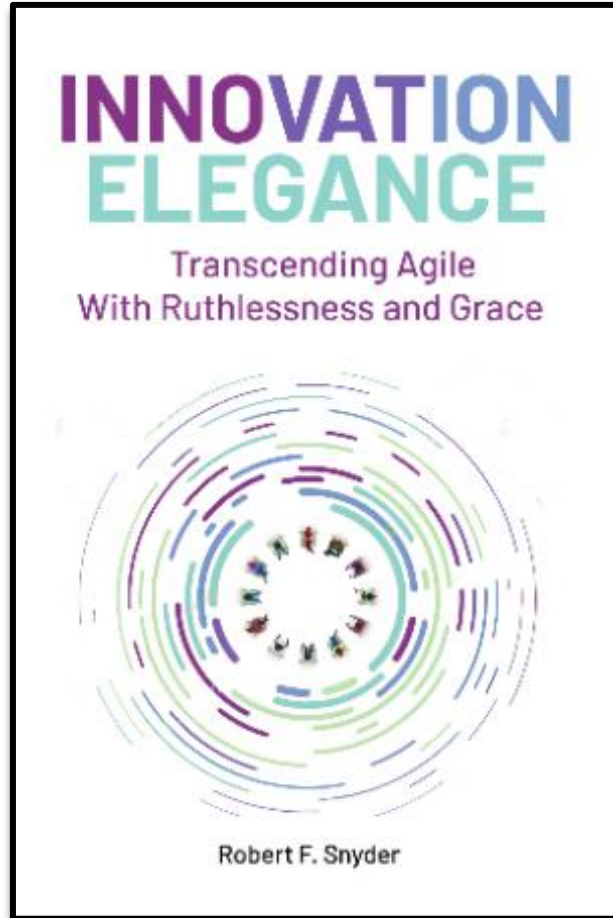
rescue.

A good

poor

ruin.

Books



Books

Innovation Elegance: Transcending Agile With Ruthlessness and Grace January 1

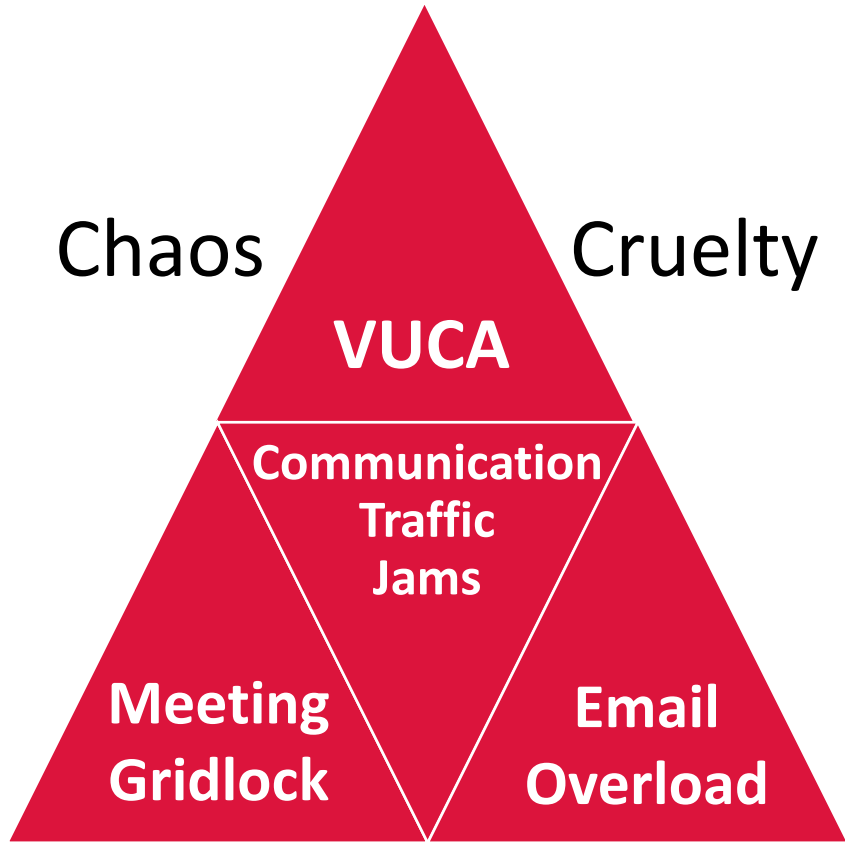
Innovation Portfolio: Five Verbs Shape Your Team's Legacy ~ April

Elegant Leadership: Distinguishing the Good, the Bad, and the False 2025

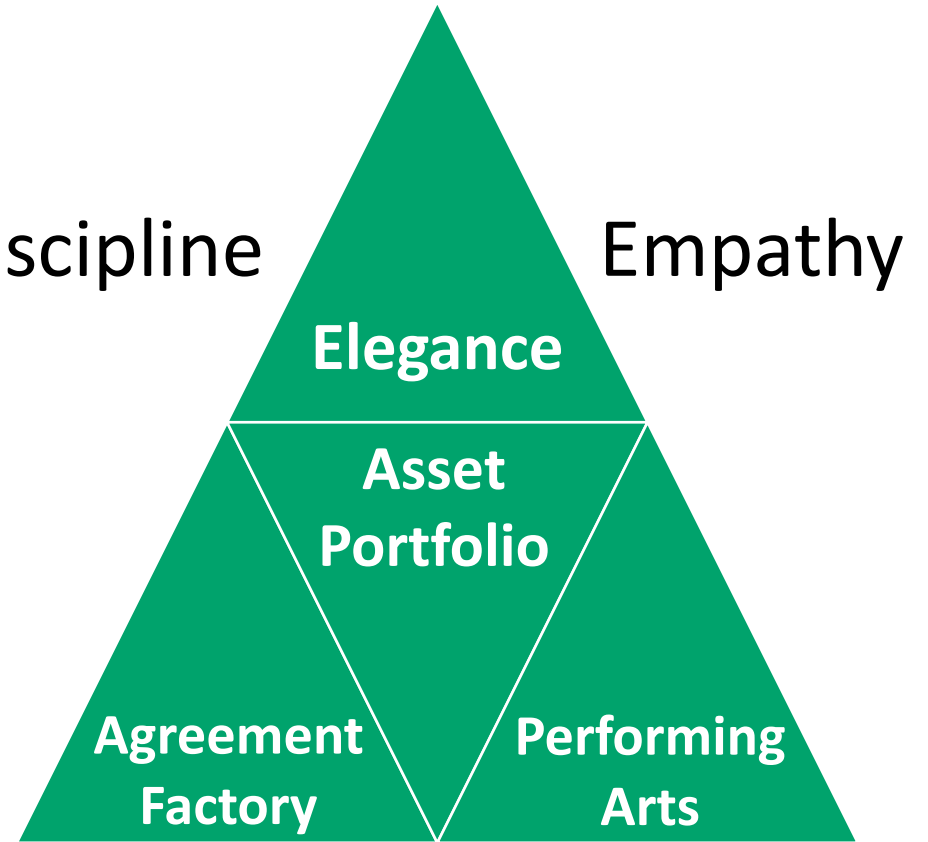
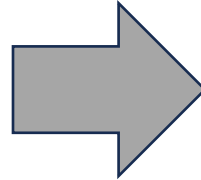
People-centric Methodology

	Rational	Emotional	Culture
Good	Discipline	Empathy	Elegance
Bad	Chaos	Cruelty	VUCA

Framework: What Good & Bad Communication Looks Like

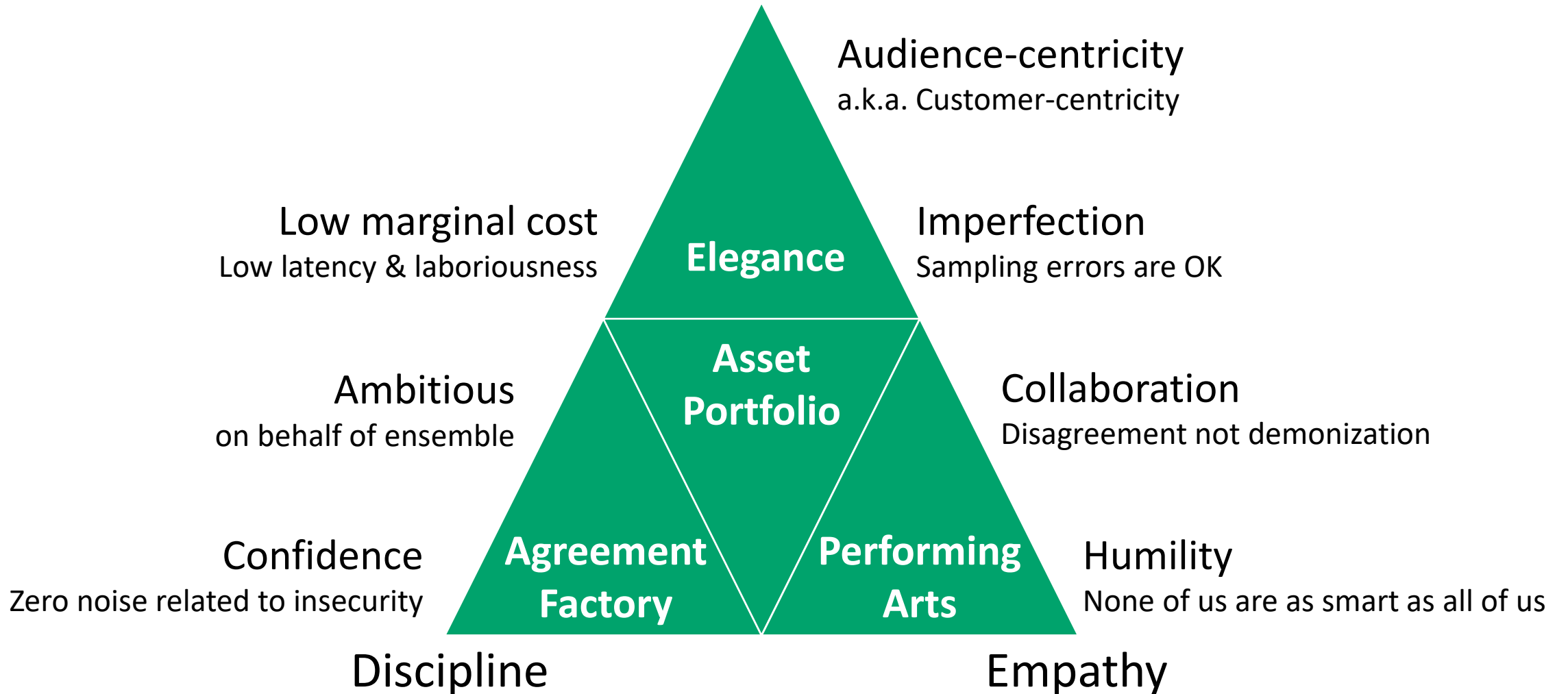


Companies resemble
Frustration Factories

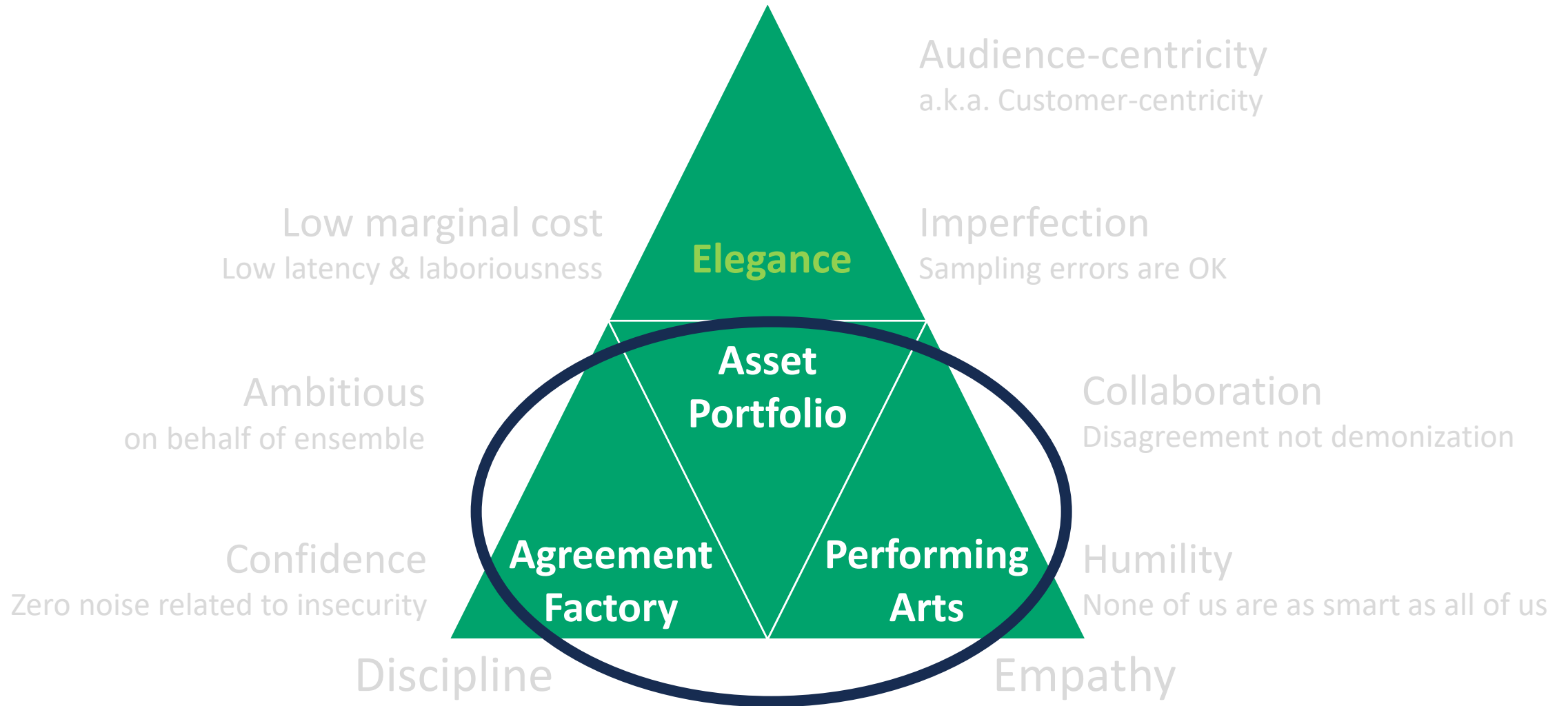


Sustainable innovation
looks like this

Framework: Not Paradoxical ... *Robust* Appendix



Agenda



Takeaways

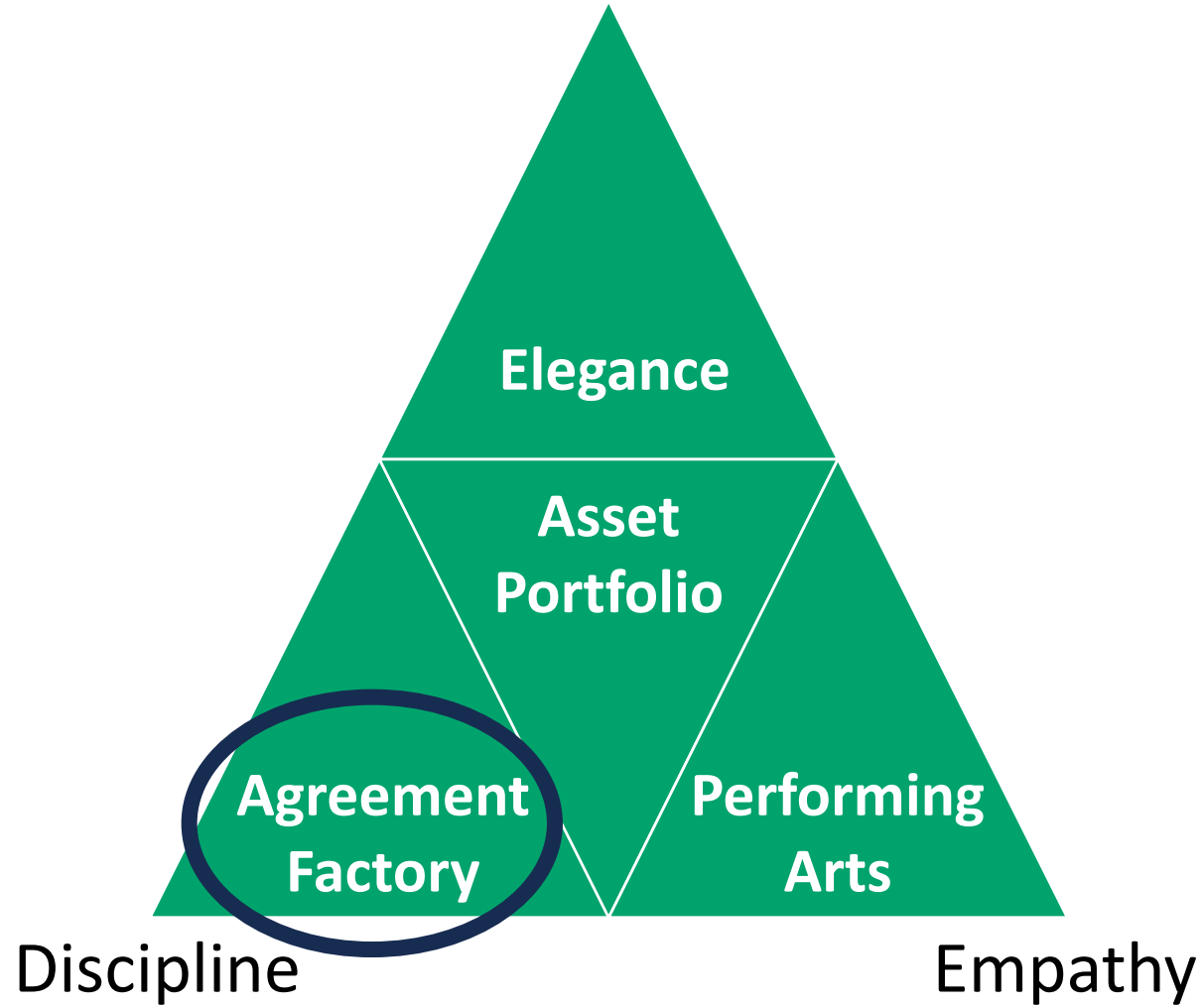
Improving the RACI matrix to shape a rhythmic factory

Good templates are small hinges that swing large doors

The performing arts give you a collaborative advantage



Agenda



An Expectation Setting Factory

Project-independent

roadmap
parking lot
voice of the customer
customer experience hierarchy
market forces/pestle
change log
lessons learned
scorecard

Quarterly, monthly or weekly rhythm

Project-specific

gui design
process flows
project charter
training materials
logical data model
training approach
ddl/dml/sql
storyboards
test approach
adkar materials

Sequential or parallel

Culture Disguised as a Factory

Factory Traits

balance
elasticity
autonomy
speed variability waste
sustainability
tempo straightforward
vigilance transparency ease
fidelity scalability
automation quality
economics



Work Culture Traits

bottlenecks
bureaucracy
fear dependability order taker
friction integrity
competence ignored
humility perfectionism clarity
psychological safety
fatigue interchangeability trust
courage interruptions ego silos
benevolence complexity
surprises insecurity
buried ambiguity

RACI Refresher

Responsible
Accountable
Consulted
Informed

Deliverable	Project Charter	Design	Testing
Employees			
Tracy	R	C	I
Val	C	A	I
Will	C	C	R
Xin	C	C	I
Yolanda	A	I	C
Zach	I	R	A

- Teams reference casually
- No sustained discipline
- Harbors ambiguity
- Lacks teeth
- Project success rates remain poor



Govern With Five Verbs®

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Assignments	Duration	Percent Complete
Draft	█					Tracy	1 day	100%
Review		█				Va, Will, Xin	1 day	50%
Revise			█			Tracy	1 day	
Approve				█		Yolanda	1 day	
Distribute					█	Zach	1 day	

Formal governance
Sustained discipline
Zero ambiguity
A RACI with teeth



“Execution’s two best friends are simplicity and transparency.”

- Chris McChesney (b. 1971), American author of the book The 4 Disciplines of Execution

Project-Specific Slice

Appendix

Task	Predecessors	Assigned To	Duration	Start Date	End Date	Status	Timeline					
							Dec 30	Jan 6	Jan 13	Jan 20	Jan 27	Feb 3
1 Project Alpha			27d	01/01/30	02/06/30		Project Alpha					
2 Project Charter			10d	01/01/30	01/14/30		Project Charter					
3 Draft		Avery	4d	01/01/30	01/04/30	Complete	Draft					
4 Review & Revise	3	Bailey, Casey	3d	01/07/30	01/09/30	Complete	Review & Revise					
5 Approve	4	Dakota	2d	01/10/30	01/11/30	In Progress	Approve					
6 Distribute	5	Avery	1d	01/14/30	01/14/30		Distribute					
7 Training Approach	2		6d	01/15/30	01/22/30		Training Approach					
8 Draft		Easton	1d	01/15/30	01/15/30		Draft					
9 Review & Revise	8	Finley, Gabriel	3d	01/16/30	01/18/30		Review & Revise					
10 Approve	9	Harper	1d	01/21/30	01/21/30		Approve					
11 Distribute	10	Jordan	1d	01/22/30	01/22/30		Distribute					
12 Training Materials	7		11d	01/23/30	02/06/30		Training Materials					
13 Draft		Kerry	3d	01/23/30	01/25/30		Draft					
14 Review & Revise	13	Lou, Maxine	2d	01/28/30	01/29/30		Review & Revise					
15 Review & Revise	14	Noel, Oakley	3d	01/30/30	02/01/30		Review & Revise					
16 Approve	15	Paris	2d	02/04/30	02/05/30		Approve					
17 Distribute	16	Kerry	1d	02/06/30	02/06/30		Distribute					

American football analogy: ruthlessly keep the chains moving

Moving the Chains



American football analogy: ruthlessly keep the chains moving

Asset Portfolio

Project Independent

Lens of the Market	Lens of the Team	Lens of the Individual	Current State
Market Forces Matrix	Change Log	Individual Status Report	Scorecard
Voice of the Customer and Seller	Parking Lot	Stoplight Report	Current State Inventory
Decisions Unknowns Outcomes	Lessons Learned	I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder Report	System Actor Inventory
Roadmap	Approachability Menu	Workload Report	Current State Scripts
Crisis Communication Script		ORS Report	Current State Process Flows
Crisis Resolution Checklist		Pie Chart	Customer Experience Hierarchy
			Use Case Assessment

Appendix

Project Specific

Project Management	Process	People
Project Charter	Customer Lifecycle Model	Awareness Blast
Business Case	Future State Scripts	Elevator Pitch
Project Plan	Future State Process Flows	Training Approach
Workstream Status Report	Use Case Definition	Training Materials
Traceability Matrices		Go-Live Announcement
		Closure Report

Technology

High-level Design	Detailed Design	Build	Test
Technology Architecture	Code Module Inventory	Code	Test Approach
Storyboards	Data Definition Language	Migration Script	Test Conditions
Data Flow Diagram	Data Manipulation Language	Data Conversion Script	Test Cycles
Data Model / ERD	Report Inventory	Deployment Plan	Test Scripts
User Interface	Report Detail		Test Data
			Actual Results
			Defect Log

Speed

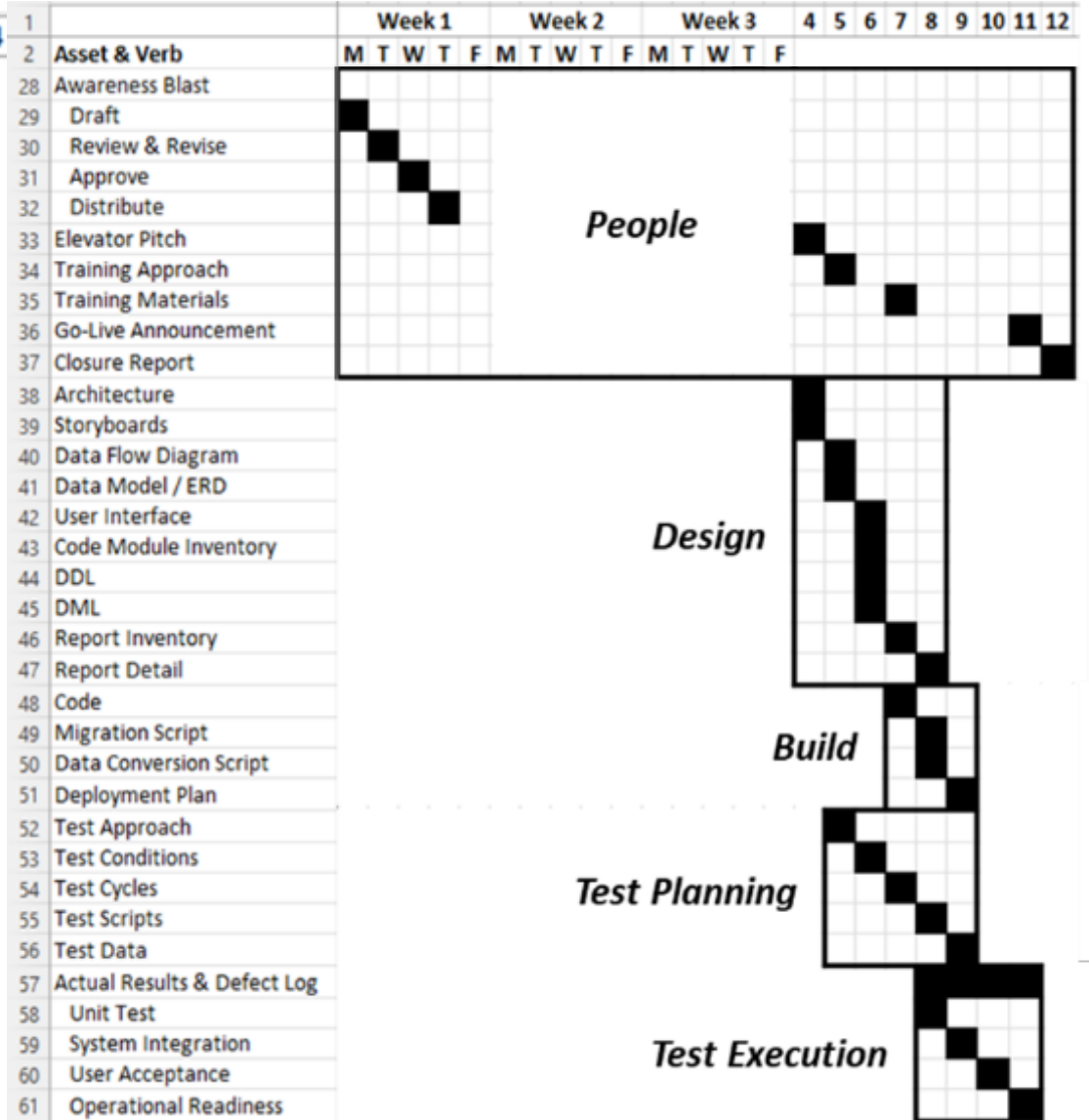
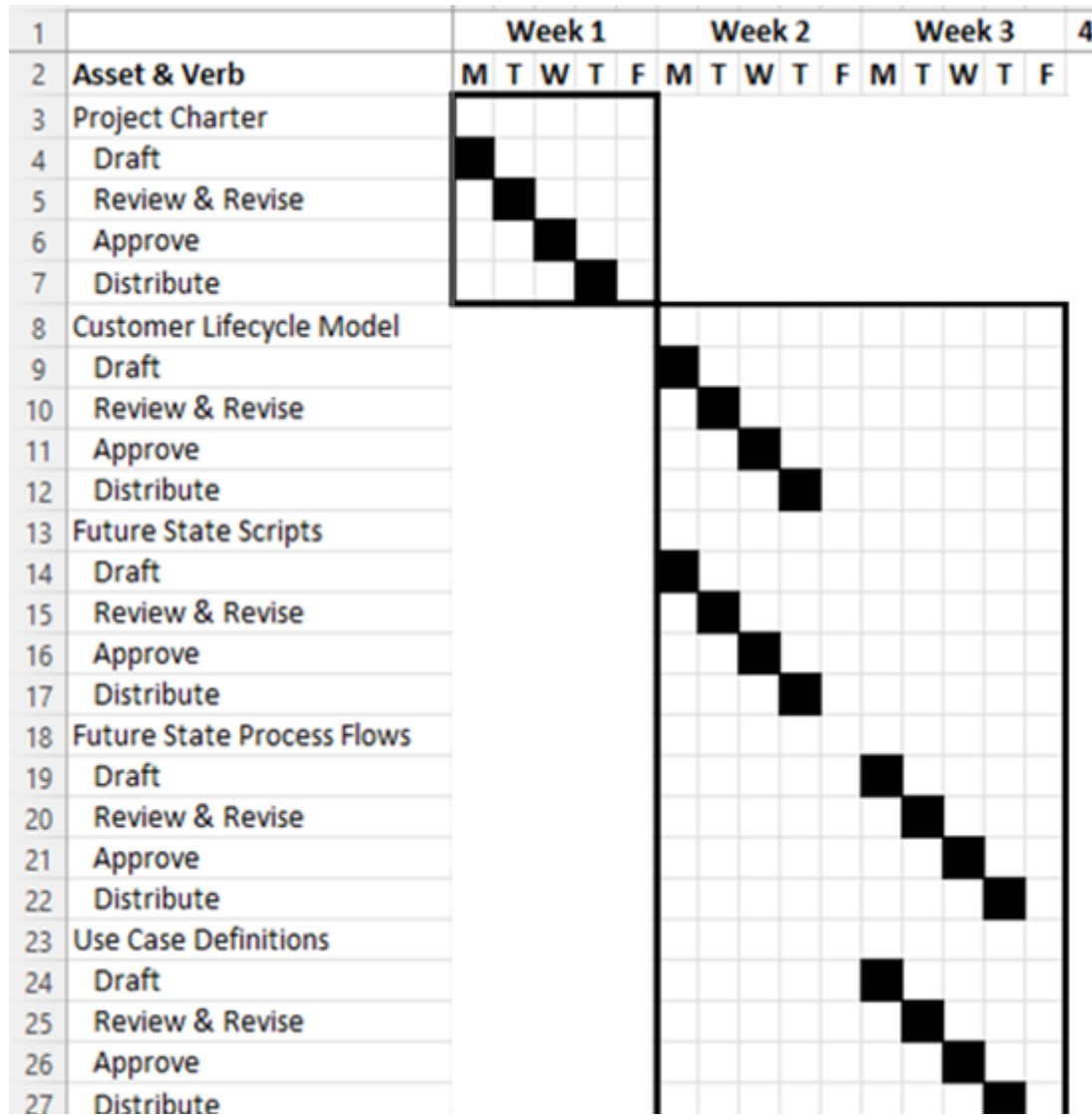
“The speed of the boss is the speed of the team.”

- Lee Iacocca, American automobile executive

“The *synchronization skill* of the boss is the speed of the team.”

- Amateur musicians everywhere

Project-Specific Rhythm

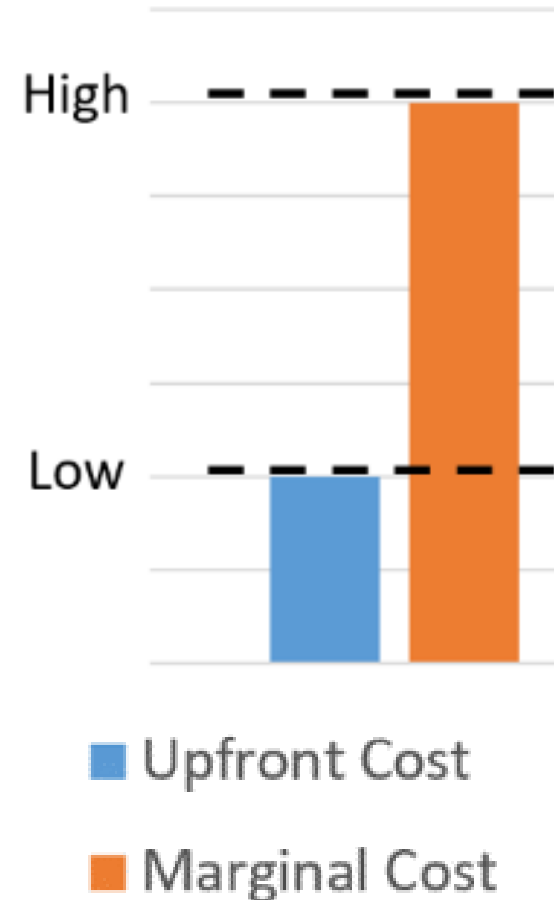


Skeptics

Culture Traits



Cost Profile

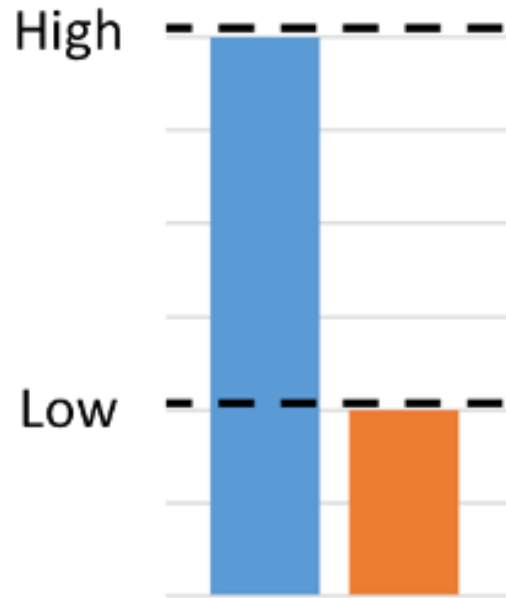


Compare Cost Profiles

Lead with documentation
Follow with meetings & email

Lead with meetings & email
Follow with documentation

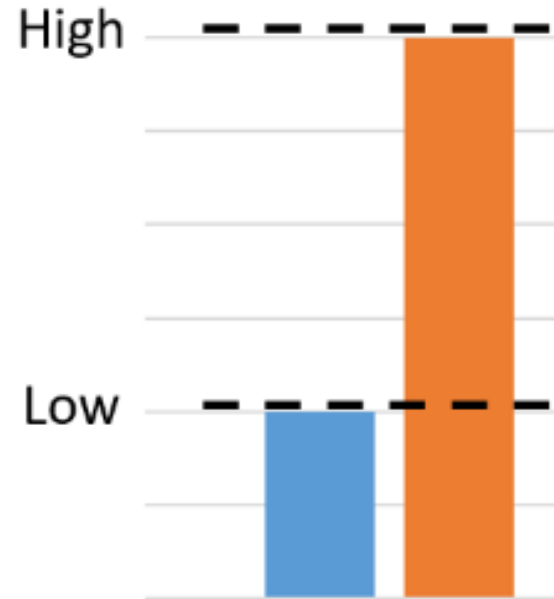
Durable
Muscle Memory
Low Latency
High Expectations



■ Upfront Cost
■ Marginal Cost



Disposable
Laborious
Latency
Low Expectations



■ Upfront Cost
■ Marginal Cost

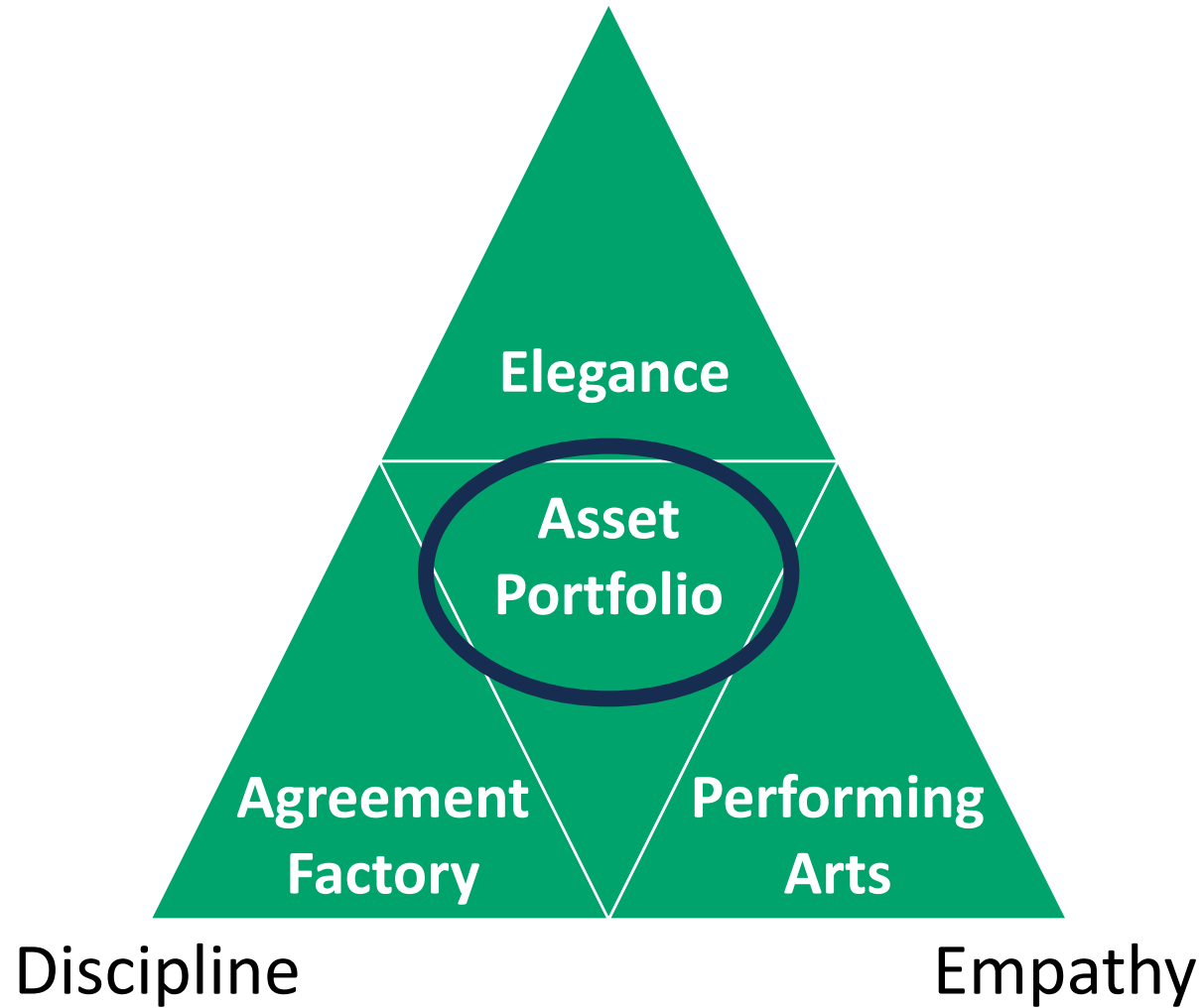


Quotation Related To Cost Profile & Laboriousness

*“Do what is easy and your life will become hard.
Do what is hard and your life will become easy.”*

- Les Brown (b. 1945), American politician and motivational speaker

Agenda



Empathy Disguised As A Template

Prompt

Individual Status Report

Workload Report

I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder

Lessons Learned

Approachability Menu

Individual Status Report

Workstream	Accomplishments and Highlights of Past Week	Plans and Goals for Next Week
Task A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed W	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start Z
Monthly Process B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued X	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete X
Project C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Started Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue Y

Weekly

Accountability, Alignment, Momentum

“Manage up without kissing up”

Workload Report

5 = Workload is too high and not sustainable
I'm a bottleneck for a workstream
Idle work exists
I recommend reducing my workload

4 = Workload is full
Increasing workload might create a bottleneck

3 = Workload feels healthy and sustainable
Short burst of additional work is OK

2 = Workload can handle additional new workstream
Idle worker

1 = Workload is very low
Idle worker
I am concerned about my job security

Weekly

Sustainability, Balance, Inclusivity

Keep levels of idle work and idle workers modest

I Like I Wish I Hope I Wonder (For Individual)

“I like the enthusiasm I saw among the testers.”

“I like the thoroughness and tough decisions I see in the Project Charter.”

“I wish the webpage we designed wasn’t so busy.”

“I wish this code didn’t feel throwaway knowing what’s coming up on the Roadmap.”

“I hope our Test Data is ready in time for the start of test execution.”

“I hope training sessions will include all offices.”

“I wonder if training sessions will be in-person, online-only, or hybrid.”

“I wonder if we have to purge data related to the divestiture.”

Weekly

Stylish, Morale, Psychological Safety

Low footprint engagement survey

Approachability Menu

Appendix

Communication Channel	More	Less	Color Commentary
Meeting Etiquette			
Punctuality	✓		
Participation	✓		
Multi-tasking		✓	
Email Etiquette & Usage			
Responsiveness	✓		
Overuse of "Reply All"		✓	
Belongs in doc		✓	
Documentation Contribution			
Draft		✓	
Review & Revise	✓		
Approve / Signoff			

Monthly

Two-way accountability

Psychological safety

Morale

Subtitled

*"I know you hate me
but what do you
want me to do differently?"*

Authored by Innovation Elegance, LLC

Lessons Learned (For Team)

Appendix

Area	I Like	I Wish I Hope	I Wonder
Safety Inclusivity Belonging			
Transparency			
Simple and Straightforward			
Accountability			
Alignment			
Momentum			
Morale			
Sustainability			
Scalability			
Stylish			
Learning			
Emphasis			
Balance			
Success Is Inevitable			

Monthly

Self-awareness

Self-confidence

Humility

Anticipates

“Pattern in the Problems”

Dream Team

Appendix

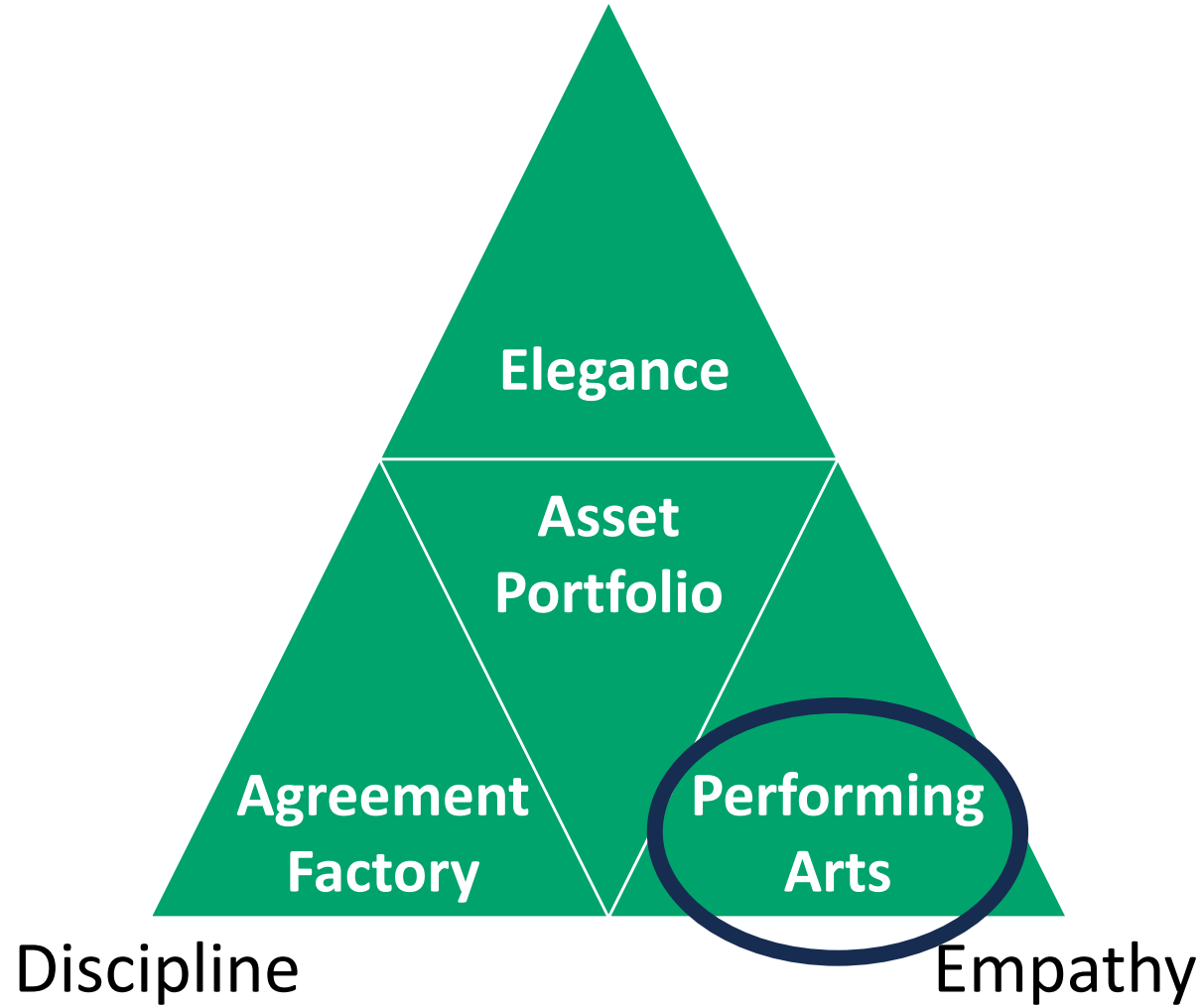
Area	I Like
Safety Inclusivity Belonging	I like that no one is shy on this team. I like that the team seems comfortable around one another. I like that my team has very different people eager to work together.
Transparency	I like our frequent comment, "Our future team will appreciate this documentation!" I like that no one is surprised about their assignments.
Simple and Straightforward	I like that we scrutinize processes when they're difficult to draw. I like that nothing about the project or operations feels convoluted or burdensome.
Accountability	I like how visible and clean our Project Plan is. Everyone knows their lane.
Alignment	I like that we minimize silent dissent. People speak up! I like that we use our tiebreakers to resolve task conflicts. Personality conflict is low.
Momentum	I like that we rarely feel too fast or too slow.
Morale	I like our combination of seriousness and playfulness. Feedback is constructive.
Sustainability	I like that no one is working themselves toward burnout. We've had no crisis.
Scalability	I like that we re-engineer and automate laborious work.
Stylish	I like putting this work on my resume / LinkedIn profile.
Learning	I like that none of this work feels old, and a lot of it feels new.
Emphasis	I like that we emphasize customers & employees rather than technology or data. I like that we have attention to detail but not overboard.
Balance	I like that the skills across the team feel like a good fit. I like our balance across meetings, email, and documentation outside email.
Success Is Inevitable	I like that everyone's confidence and pride in the project are so high. I like that the team feels our project success rate from now on will be really high.

Doomed Team

Appendix

Area	I Wish I Hope
Safety Inclusivity Belonging	I wish I wasn't afraid of my boss. I wish I didn't despise my coworkers. I wish everything wasn't CYA. I wish I could reject their lunch invitation, but I'd have to be invited first.
Transparency	I wish I knew what was going on with the project. I wish I understood the bigger picture.
Simple and Straightforward	I wish every meeting didn't have a surprise. I wish the process wasn't so complicated and locked inside a few people's heads.
Accountability	I wish people knew their job, actually did their job, only their job, or just got another job.
Alignment	I hope my coworker isn't suppressing their concerns. I hope our other lines of business were consulted.
Momentum	I hope our work won't always seem too fast (siloed, frantic) or too slow (bureaucracy and interruptions).
Morale	I wish we didn't have so much nervousness around the team.
Sustainability	I wish my coworkers weren't always on the edge of burnout. I wish we didn't have so many fire drills.
Scalability	I wish we weren't so dependent on so few people.
Stylish	I hope this project will look good on my LinkedIn profile.
Learning	I hope this work feels applicable to other positions, teams, or companies. I wish I was learning something new.
Emphasis	I wish I wasn't always fixing data.
Balance	I wish I wasn't in meeting gridlock and email hell.
Success Is Inevitable	I wish I had some confidence in any of our projects, their true value propositions, or our methodology. I hope this project wasn't doomed before it started.

Agenda



Empathy In The Arts

Collaboration

rehearse
listen safety
authenticity
bring out their best
join a team
practice
trust

Competition

resilience
vigilance
receiving rejection
giving rejection
failure
balance

Enforced collaboration
Acknowledge competitive energy
Convert energy to ambition
Pursue collaborative advantage

Artist-Audience Intersection

portfolio
legacy
intimate or distant
performance
picky & forgiving
positive & negative reactions
audience experience
pays the bills
moments that matter
get no glamour
celebration

Empathy In The Arts

simulation
not reinventing the wheel
feedback transparency
integration
story
context

Theater

hackathon
sheet music
tension diversity
jam session
synchronization
harmony
positivity
tuning
tempo

Music

Improv

Appendix

rotation
vulnerable
mechanics style
civility variability clarity
rest learning never stops
lead self-management
poser boundaries
retention self-awareness ease
poise elasticity steward
follow humility reset
mistakes
minimalism

Partner Dance

The New Hybrid

*on-script
or
off-script?*

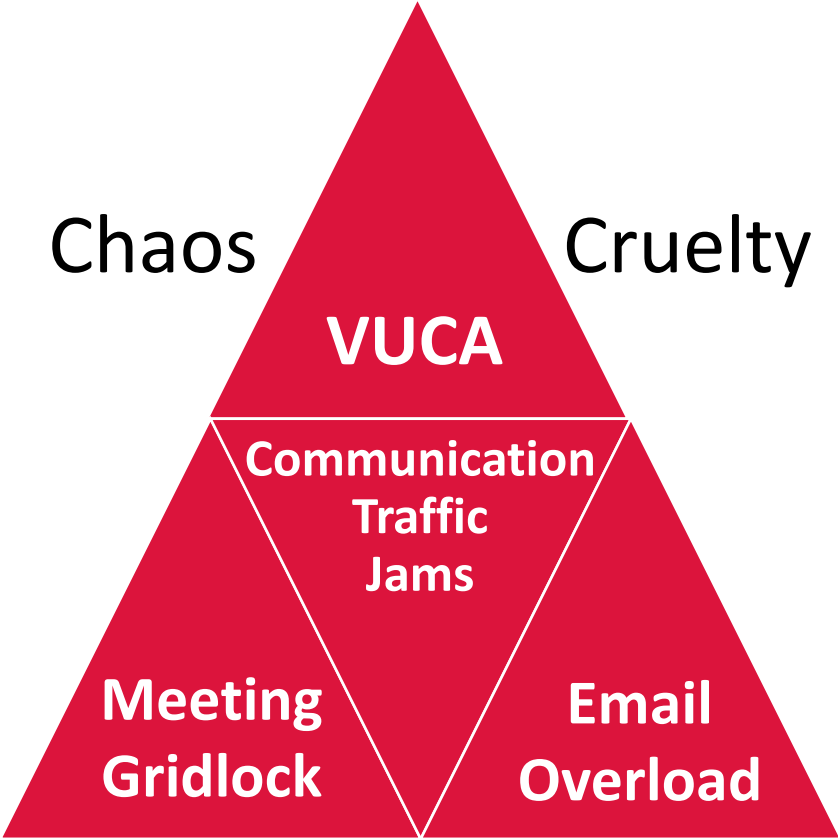
stageworthy
got your back
bloopers are fun authenticity
self-consciousness
thinking on your feet
yes and thank you because
no single point of failure
bring a brick not a cathedral
co-creation collaboration space
momentum campfire of ideas
no preparation
theater for vuca world
follow the follower

“Nothing will change until the status quo is more painful than the transition.”

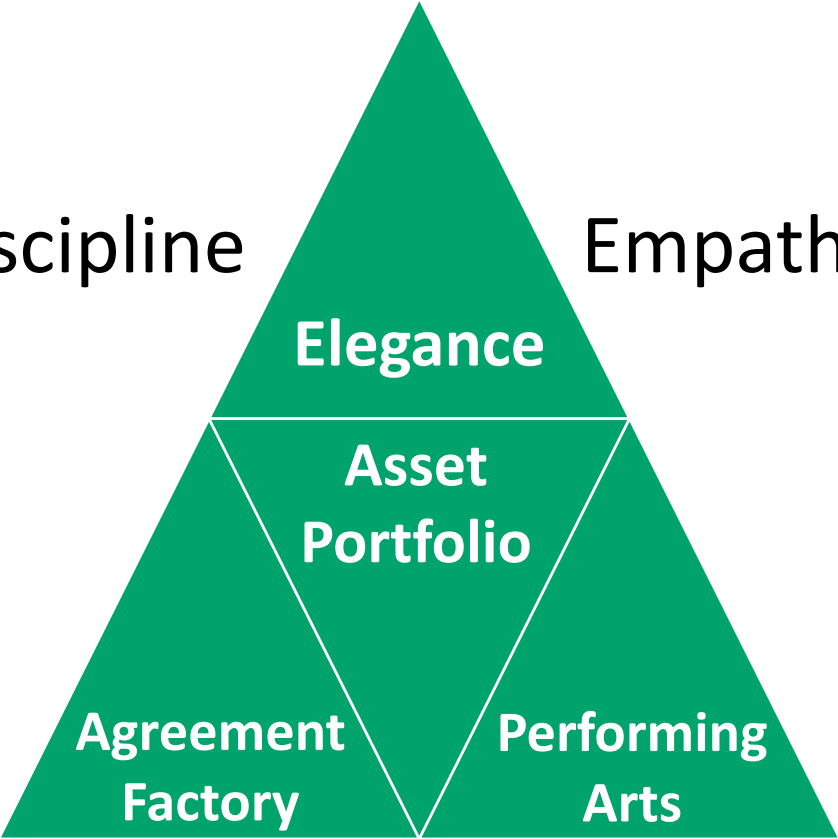
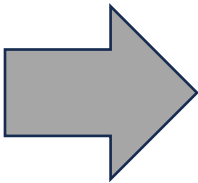
*– Professor Laurence J. Peter,
Professor of Education, University of
Southern California*

- Improving the RACI matrix to shape a rhythmic factory
- Good templates are small hinges that swing large doors
- The performing arts give you a collaborative advantage

Summary 1 of 2

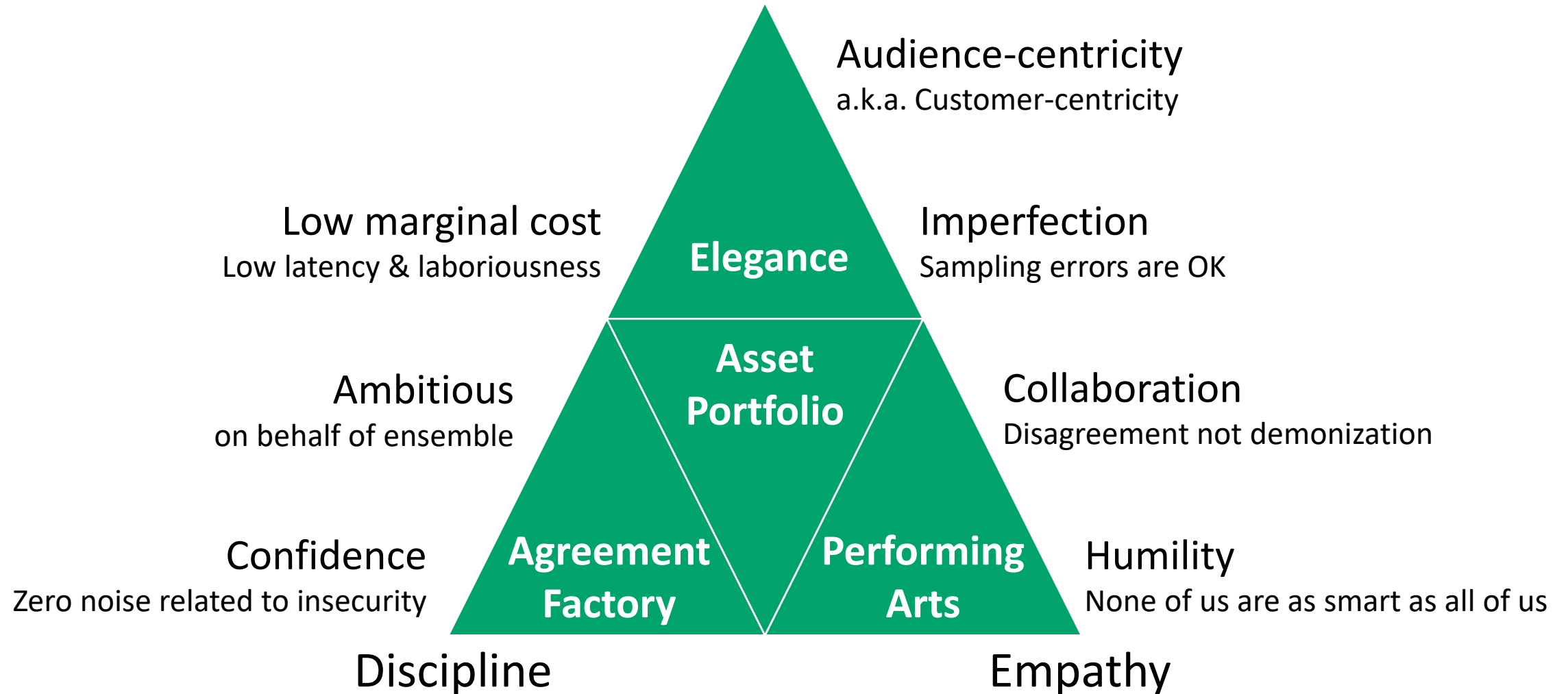


Frustration Factories



Sustainable innovation looks like this

Summary 2 of 2



Call To Action

Crawl
Walk
Run

To a
People-
Centric
methodology



Choose Five Verbs over Verb Sprawl
Choose Durability over Disposability
Choose Synchronization over Traffic Jams
Reduce laboriousness (cost) and latency
of information sharing
Disguise empathy through templates
Choose ambition over competition
Imitate the arts to build a collaborative
advantage
Good documentation is a kind of love
letter to your future team

Thank You!

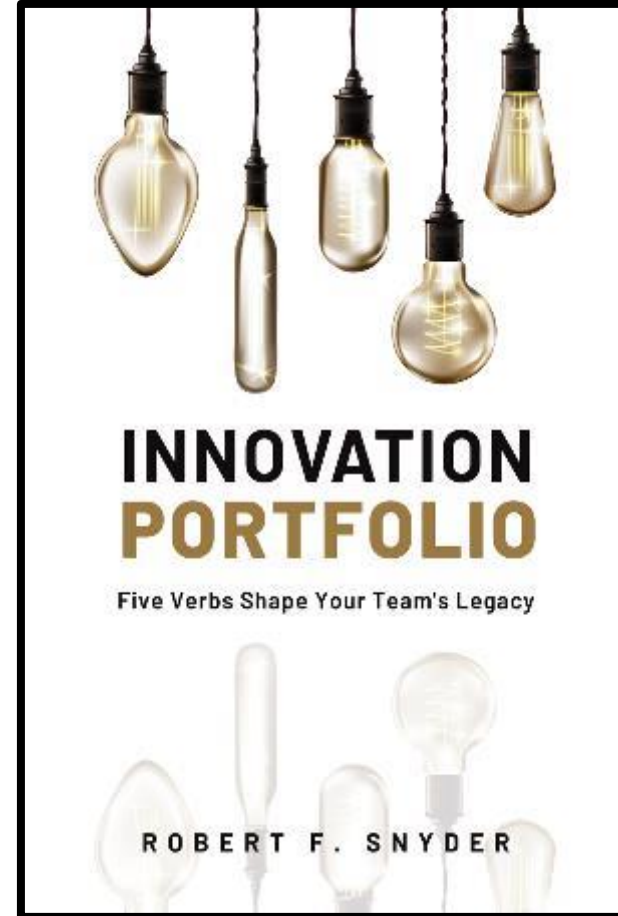
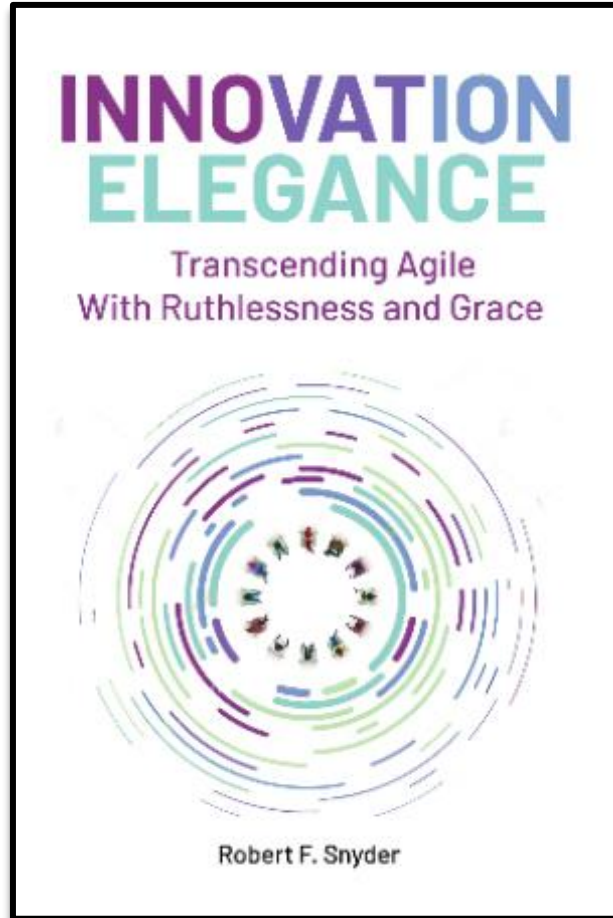


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Books



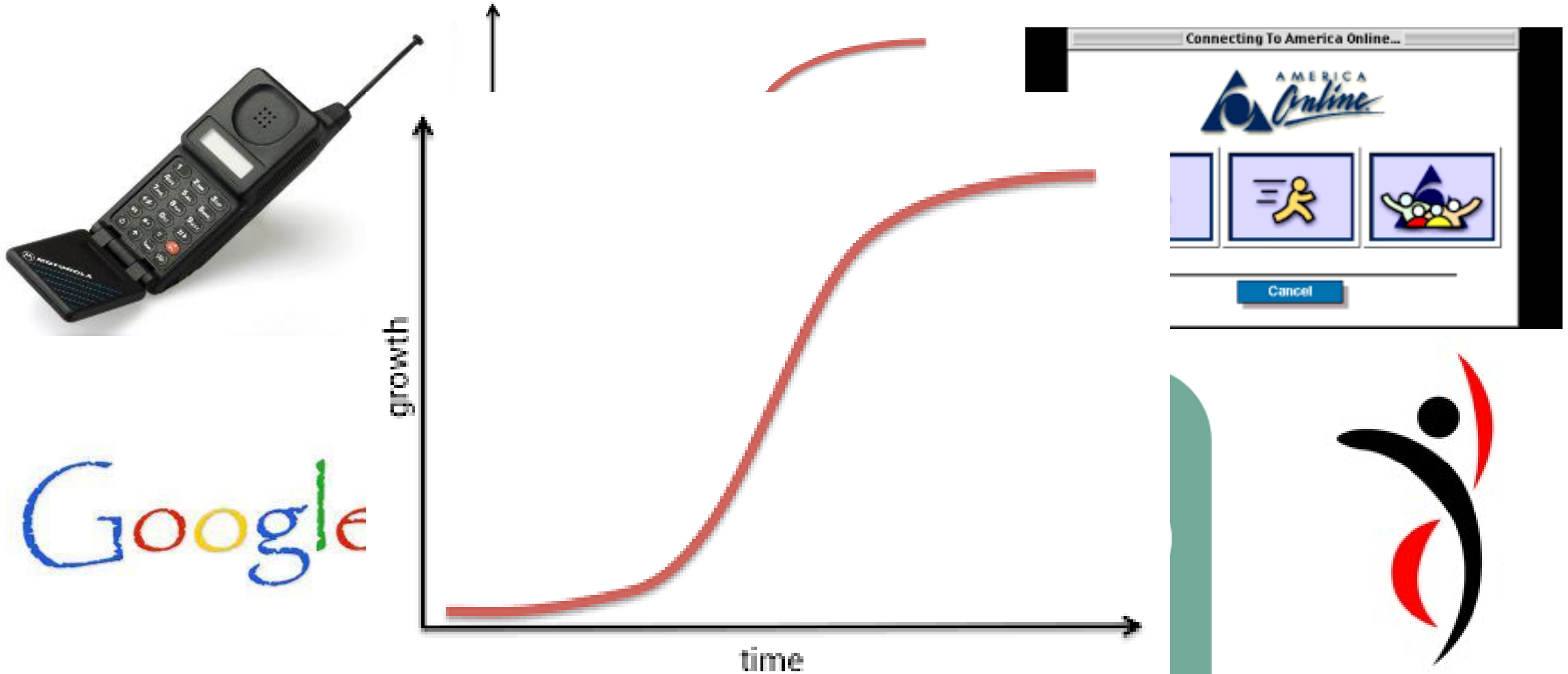
Books

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Who Would Transition: Target Audience & Early Adopters



"I came to cross the swamp, not fight all the alligators."

– Rosamund Zander

Now Versus Next (1 of 3)

	Pre-Agile	Now	Next
Origin & Focus	Software	Software & Product	People
Emphasized Communication Channel	Project-Specific Documentation	Meetings Email	Project-Independent Documentation
Time & Money	Low Frequency	High Frequency	Low Marginal Cost High Upfront Cost
Errors	Throw over wall	Iterative	Minimize Systemic Minimize Systematic Sampling Errors are OK
Approachability	Unapproachable		Approachable

Now Versus Next (2 of 3)

	Pre-Agile	Now	Next
Language to Govern		"All Over The Place" Verb Sprawl	Five Verbs
Speed	Slow	Fast Fatigue Burnout Traffic Jam	Synchronized Low Latency
Quality		Disposable	Durable
Adaptability	Low	High	
Scope	Large	Minimal	Modest

Does documentation undermine adaptability?

Does poor listening, prioritization, and courage undermine adaptability?

Now Versus Next (3 of 3)

	Pre-Agile	Now	Next
Debt	Incur Tech Debt	Incur Documentation Debt	Pay back Methodology Debt
Inspiration Learn From ____		?	Factory Asset Portfolio Arts
Culture		VUCA	Elegance

A New Manifesto (1 of 5)

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

Manifesto for Elegant Innovation

We are uncovering better ways of innovation teamwork by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

Expectation Setting over Flexibility
Low Marginal Cost over Frequency
Muscle memory over Creativity
Clarity over ambiguity
Sense of accomplishment over continuous delivery
Fixing institutional errors over fixing human errors
Succeed Fast, Succeed Small over Fail Fast, Fail Small
Ambition over Competition
Generosity over “Just Enough”

A New Manifesto (2 of 5)

Principles behind the Agile Manifesto

We follow these principles.

Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.

Welcome changing requirements, even late in development.

Agile processes

harness change

For the customer's competitive advantage.

Principles behind the Elegance Manifesto

We follow these principles.

Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through synchronized and paced approvals of valuable assets.

Welcoming changing expectations, even within days of setting or meeting them.

Elegant processes

harness change

For innovators' collaborative advantage.

A New Manifesto (3 of 5)

Deliver working software
frequently
from a couple of weeks to a couple of months,
with a preference to the shorter timescale.

Businesspeople and developers
must work together
daily
throughout the project.

Build project around motivated individuals.
Give them the environment
and support they need,
and trust them to get the job done.

Approving expectations
rhythmically
from a couple of hours to a couple of days or weeks,
optimizing the size of each batch of expectations.

Junior and senior employees
must work together
with schedule visibility and decision transparency
throughout the project.

Build projects around empathetic individuals.
Give them psychological safety,
a sense of belonging, and time away from the job
and trust them to get the job done.

A New Manifesto (4 of 5)

The most efficient and effective method
of conveying information
to and within a development team
is face-to-face communication.

Working software

Is the primary measure of progress

Agile processes promote sustainable development

The sponsors, developers, and users

Should be able to

Maintain a constant pace indefinitely

Continuous attention

To technical excellence

and good design

Enhances agility.

The most durable and scalable method
of setting and meeting expectations
among stakeholders
is executing five verbs wherever desks are located.

Go-live events

are the primary measure of progress

Elegant processes promote ambitious innovation

Junior and senior employees

Should be able to

Maintain a sustainable pace indefinitely

Continuous attention

To rhythmic excellence

and good balance

Enhances elegance.

A New Manifesto (5 of 5)

Simplicity—

the art of maximizing

the amount of work not done

is essential.

The best architectures, requirements, and designs

emerge from self-organizing teams.

At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

Simplicity—

the art of minimizing

verb sprawl in formal planning

is essential.

The best stories, experiences, and moments that matter

emerge from disciplined and empathetic teams.

At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.