20 unintended consequences of LeSS experiments

LeSS Conference 2022

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13

~~20~~ **unintended consequences of LeSS experiments**

LeSS Conference 2022

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13 **(because Less is More)**

~~20~~ **unintended consequences of LeSS experiments**

LeSS Conference 2022

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About PandaDoc

- Started as QuoteRoller in 2011, pivoted to PandaDoc in 2013 as a leading document workflow automation and electronic signing software

- More than 30,000 customers in 130 countries

- 700+ employees located across the world

- 4 consecutive years of accelerating revenue growth – Grew 80% in user count and 65% ARR in 2020

Resiliency

Covid-19

Adhering to consistent brand standards will help us maintain exceptional quality.

Protests in Belarus

By defining who we are, what we say, and how we say it, we can move fast in the right direction.

War in Ukraine

A solid brand foundation will allow us to rapidly scale at different levels to reach our growth goals.

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	Solutions	Eleven
45	Solutions	Lucky
46	Solutions	Expresso
47	Solutions	Avacato

Bamboo Magazine

Some things you are about to here were designed as experiments.

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Some things you are about to here were designed as experiments.

Other were just stupid ideas applied without thinking them through. *

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Some things you are about to here were designed as experiments.

Other were just stupid ideas applied without thinking them through. *

* but we will treat
   them as "experiments"

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Consequence 1

Overcomplicated Product organisation

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Bunch of Positions

- Product Manager

- Product Director

- VP of Product Management

- SVP of Product Management

- CTO

Reality

- Decision impotency
- Short-term thinking
- Conflicting messages from different people
- Communication delay
- Expectations mismatch

Consequence 2

Tiny Requirement Areas

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Best intentions:
kick-off important initiatives
with focused Team(s)

Business be like:

"We have to do this,
let's establish
a new area"

LeSS Huge Structure

- Customer requirements that are strongly related from a customer perspective are grouped in Requirement Areas.
- Each Team specializes in one Requirement Area. Teams stay in one area for a long time. When there is more value in other areas, teams might change Requirement Area
- Each Requirement Area has one Area Product Owner.
- Each Requirement Area has between "4-8" teams. Avoid violating this range.
- LeSS Huge adoptions, including the structural changes, are done with an evolutionary incremental approach.
- Remember each day: LeSS Huge adoptions take months or years, infinite patience, and sense of humor.

The Ego Effect suggests that you're prone to making the same mistakes over and over again when you protect your beliefs instead of learning from your mistakes and changing your beliefs in response to conflicting evidence.
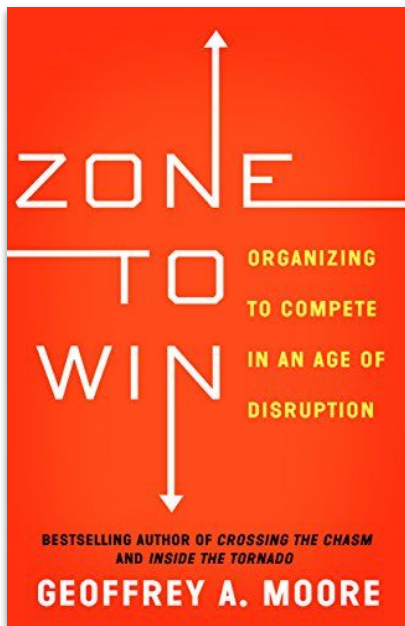
Consequence 3

"Incubation" Area

When people read books...

... they tend to borrow ideas

The Four Zones

	Disruptive Innovation	Sustaining Innovation
Mission Critical	Transformation Zone Horizon: 2-3 years	Performance Zone Horizon: Next fiscal year
Enabling	Incubation Zone Horizon: 3-5 years	Productivity Zone Horizon: Next fiscal year

ZONE TO WIN

ORGANIZING TO COMPETE IN AN AGE OF DISRUPTION

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *CROSSING THE CHASM* AND *INSIDE THE TORNADO*

GEOFFREY A. MOORE

Best intentions:
discover new revenue streams
and product opportunities

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Reality: innovation bottleneck/cemetery

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Consequence 4

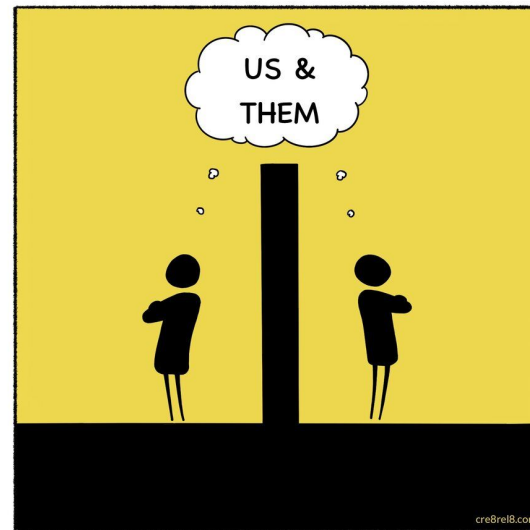# Platform... again

Best intentions:
have people focused on
making Developers' life suck
less

Platform is…

- SecOps
- QA Automation
- Performance QA
- DevExp
- Infrastructure (AKA DevOps)
- SRE

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Reality

- Not addressing real-life problems
- Delays
- Separate Product Backlog
- Unable to make a common work even between Platform team

Consequence 5

Replace static Stagings with Dynamic environments

Best intentions:
cut down env creation time for new teams and cut infra costs

Reality

- Spinning up the Dyn Env might've taken up to 4.5 hours
- Lots of complaints being ignored
- Inability to test scenarios involving third-party Integrations

Consequence 6

Introduce SA/TA process

Best intentions:
Consistency of architecture
and technical design,
knowledge sharing

SA/TA structure

Reality

- Median "SA/TA creation time" varied from 15 to 45 days
- Created the false sense of "fixed scope"
- Some Teams spent the whole Sprint or multiple Sprints writing no code at all while creating SA/TA
- Introducing "Architecture Council check" stage slowed the development down even further
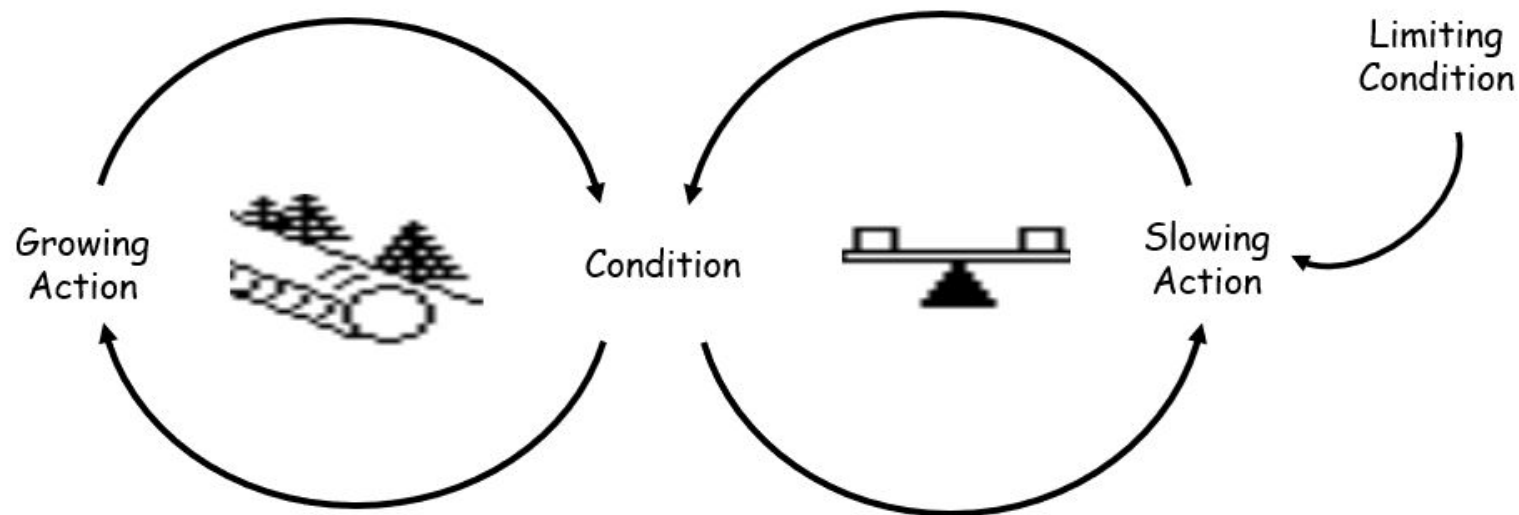
Consequence 8

Focus on Hiring

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Unfortunately,
investors invest in growth

Limits to success

Limits To Growth

Reality

- Increased number of production errors
- Adding more people did not deliver speed increase
- Sense of tension in the system (trying to push something big into small size)
- Communication drop
- Engineering practices went out of control

Consequence 9

Hire only "Senior Engineers"

Best intentions:
hire professionals able to work
in a complicated Product

Reality

- Developers' professional growth halted ("We are good enough")
- Many ideas and over-engineering
- Impossible to launch mentoring programs
- Engineering Managers have less skills than engineers we hired
- Many biases

Consequence 10

Hire domain-specific Product Managers

Best intentions:
bring-in domain expertise
from the market

Reality

- Product Managers got stuck in Areas (like "forever")
- "My features" mindset
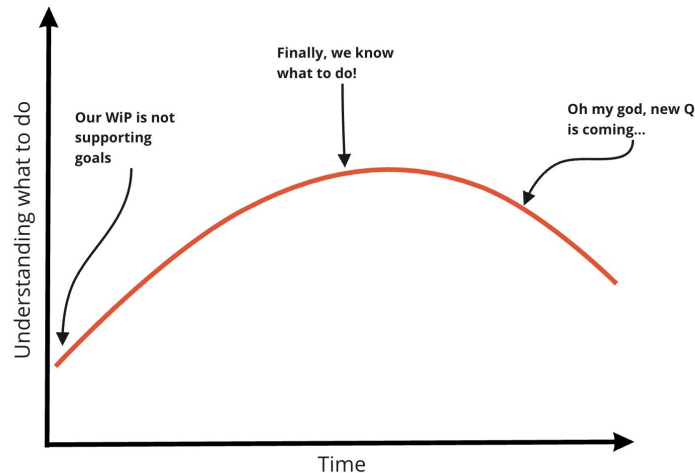- "I was not hired for this job"

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Best intentions:
create quarterly OKRs to improve Focus

Reality

- "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion" (Parkinson's law)
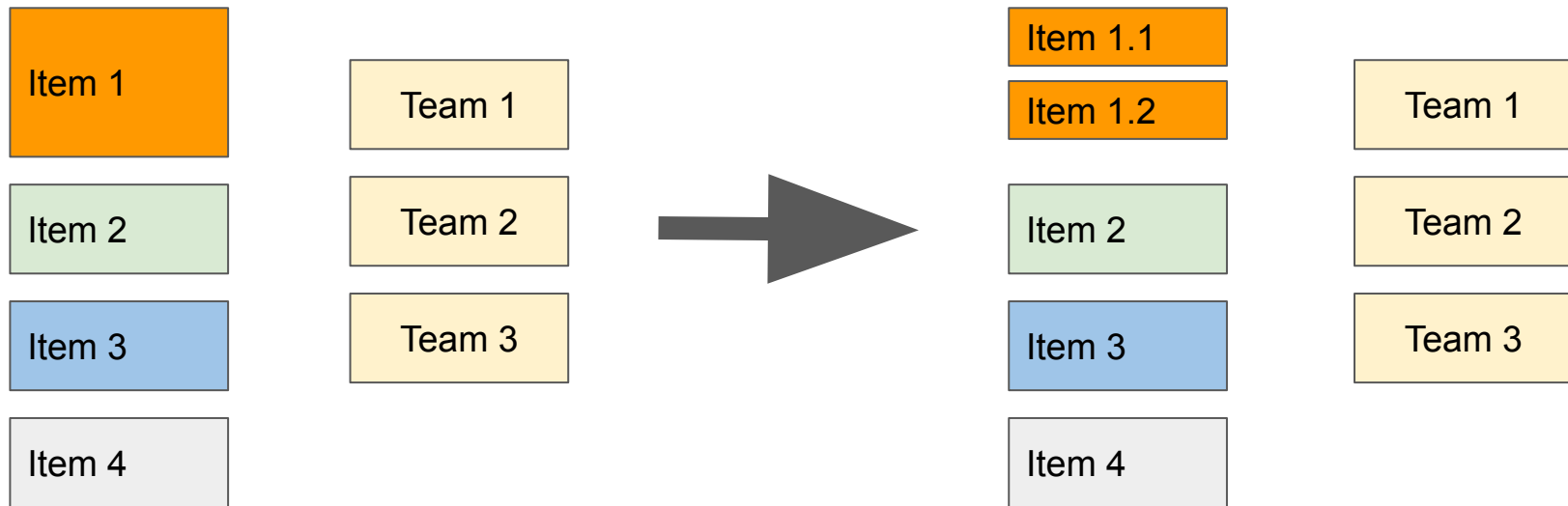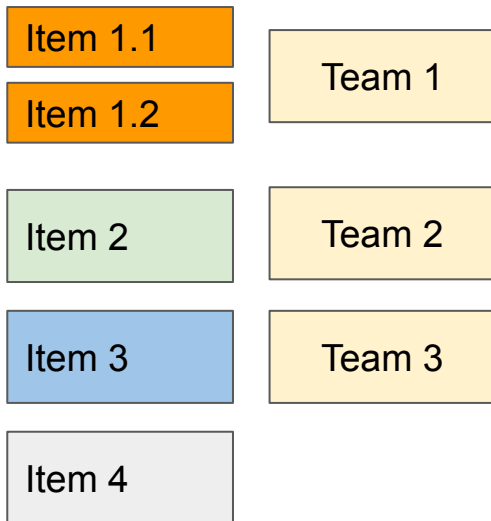- Tendency to plan solutions over Objectives

Understanding what to do

Our WiP is not supporting goals

Finally, we know what to do!

Oh my god, new Q is coming...

Time

Consequence 12

Teams "allocation"

Imagine the situation

Item 1	Team 1	
Item 2	Team 2	
Item 3	Team 3	
Item 4		

→

Item 1.1	Team 1	
Item 1.2	Team 2	
Item 2	Team 3	
Item 3		
Item 4		

"Efficiency" thinking

Item 1.1

Item 1.2

Team 1

Item 2

Team 2

Item 3

Team 3

Item 4

Observations:

- APO wants to have more items taken into work (more taken = more done)
- Manager "knows better" how teams should work on items
- Teams believs that working on items together creates many problems, "more time to sync and less time to work"

Reality

- Inability to stop some work
- Inability to re-prioritise
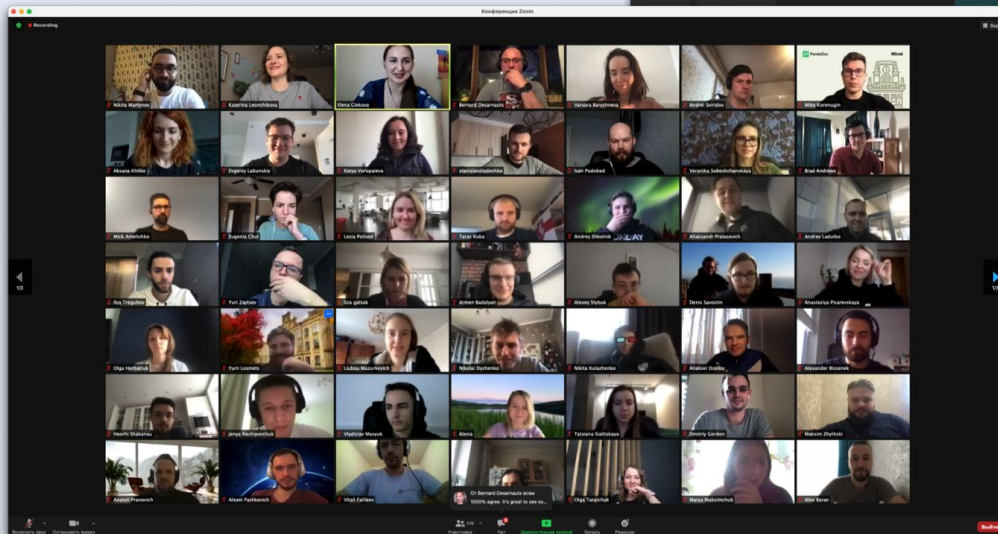- Less product knowledge
- Longer lead time

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Consequence 13

New Sprint Review format

Open Space for 200+ participants

Reality

- Bigger Tracks with fancier features got all attention ("Success to the Successful")
- Tracks that lacked attention got demotivated
- Knowledge exchange between Tracks went down
- Stakeholders tended to join and stand in the same room for the whole event

Denis Salnikov 1:46 PM

🐼 Dear Pandas,

As you know, over the last two months **we've been experimenting with the new Sprint Review format**. The problem we've been trying to address was the lack of feedback coming to Tracks from this event.

After several iterations, we've identified some positive aspects of this format but **decided to return to the old way**. We observed an adverse effect of the new format on some Tracks in terms of motivation and engagement due to low external participation.

What does it mean in practice?
- Starting from the next Sprint Review this Friday, September 16th, **we re-establish an agenda with fixed time slots**
- **There will be no "Track rooms"** - all rooms will have an agenda consisting of multiple demos from different Teams of different Tracks
- **Teams will have to book timeslots** upfront using the Coda page (which will be updated shortly)

What do we encourage you to keep doing?
- Please, **keep actively reaching out to invite stakeholders** of your feature to the room
- Please, **keep sharing lessons learned and outcomes of experiments** even if they were recognized to be unsuccessful
- **Keep combining multiple small features into a single demo session where applicable** - that's a better way to share your minor but still valuable achievements than just skipping them
- If you want to book a slot **to share important Track Updates or showcase some bigger feature**, you can either choose the first slot which will be 15 mins or book two slots in a row

My fellow Scrum Masters will post the regular announcement with instructions here as soon as the Coda page gets updated.

🆗 Cheers and have a great week ahead!
cc @scrummasters

🔥 16   🆗 11   🤜 5   👍👍 4

Announcing the rollback

PandaDoc

Thank you

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