# Experience report – Change when no one wants the change

**Srikanth Ramanujam**
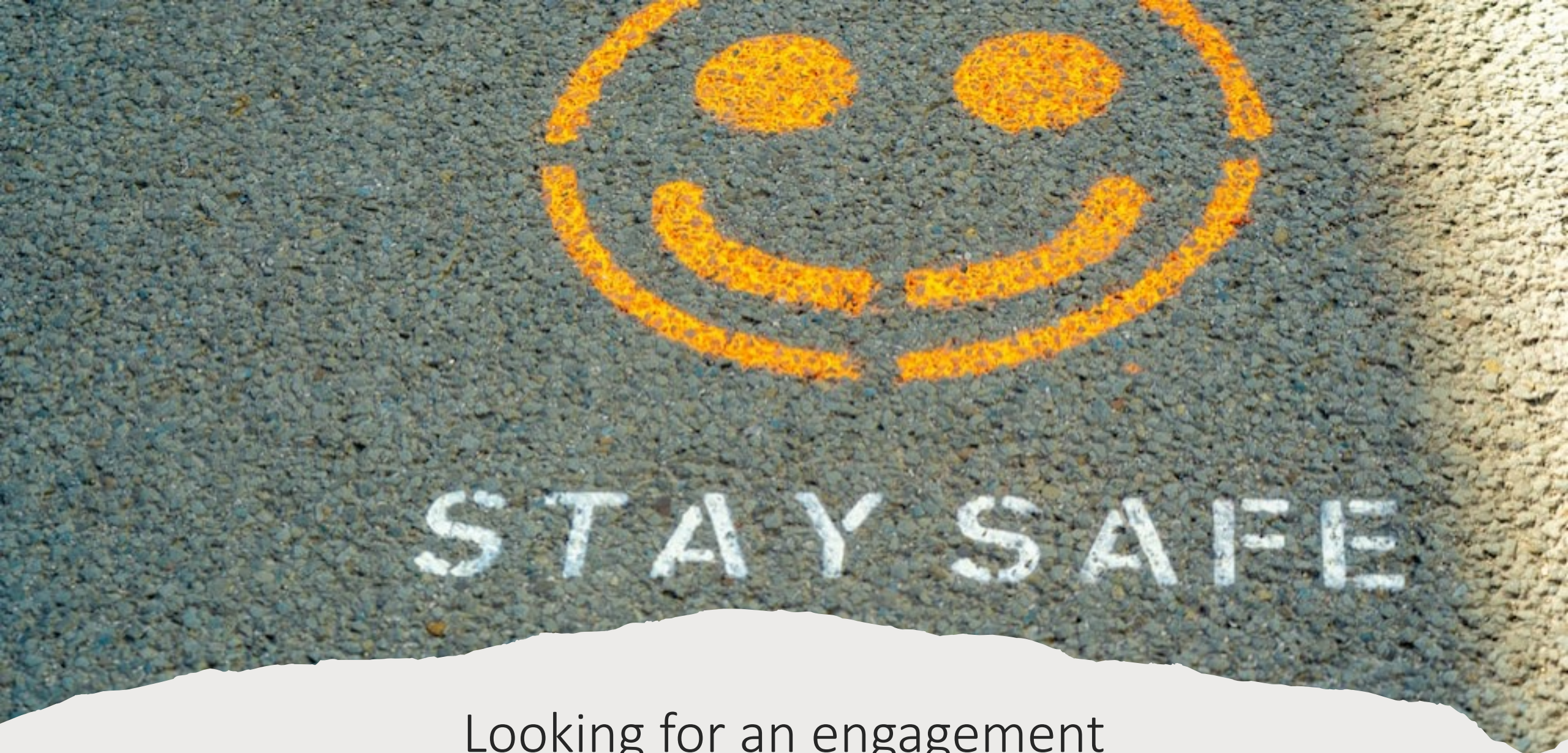
https://www.linkedin.com/in/srikanthramanujam
https://less.works/profiles/srikanth-ramanujam

Dry
Technical…
Tools
Methods
Formulas

Wet
People…
Ideas
Energy
Enthusiasm

Flour
Sugar
Baking Powder
Salt

H2O
Oil
Eggs

What is this change?
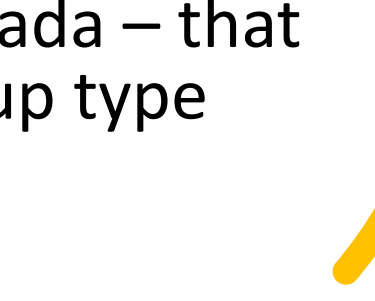
Looking for an engagement

Safe, Safer, Safest… (story)

Humans are encoded with the need for predictability

**Foolishness (n)**

The deliberate art of doing the same thing over and over again...

# Joined as a Coach at…

- Mid size financial services provider
- Market monopoly with 80% plus market share for their various offerings
- No mainframes, but legacy product from 20-30 years, 700+ people, 200+ in IT and Product Management/Development
- Protected by regulation, perhaps in the future too
- Open Banking looming in Canada
- Open Payments initiatives in Canada – that could take market share by startup type competitors
- Cost plus approach to market

# The first few months – state of the mart

### Defining my role

### New product development had limited scope

- Not much scope for agility there, yet
- Vendor control
- Contracts controlled, both by governments and organization

### Existing products where the opportunities were

- Spent time doing Gemba understanding the products, value stream, observing teams and their performance

### Operations were using Kanban (boards) at best

- Workgroups called teams, limited shared work, no prioritization, limited flow, process chaos

# Initial experiments

- Engage with the VP's – two levels from the top

- Tried to "teach" agility – different understanding but struggled to get through

- Got to agree on business outcomes – speed, market centricity, customer satisfaction, innovation and employee experience in that order as "continuous improvement" goals

- The VP's group agreed that focus was on existing legacy products – but confusing directions

- Formed a middle management team to help execute the change

Business Outcomes

Speed is a 3rd or 4th order effect of quality, continuous improvement, predictability and human centered practices

Customer satisfaction and market responsiveness are 5th and 6th order consequences – not directly achievable

Employee Engagement

Quality

Continuous Improvement

Speed

Predictability

Productivity

Innovation

Market Responsiveness

Customer Satisfaction

https://pathtoagility.com/learn-about-path-to-agility/

# Understood that organization not ready for adoption experiments

———

- Top down attempt was a failure so bottom up without that support was doomed to failure

- Not ready for Broad and Deep

- Volunteering is an alien concept, not appreciated or allowed
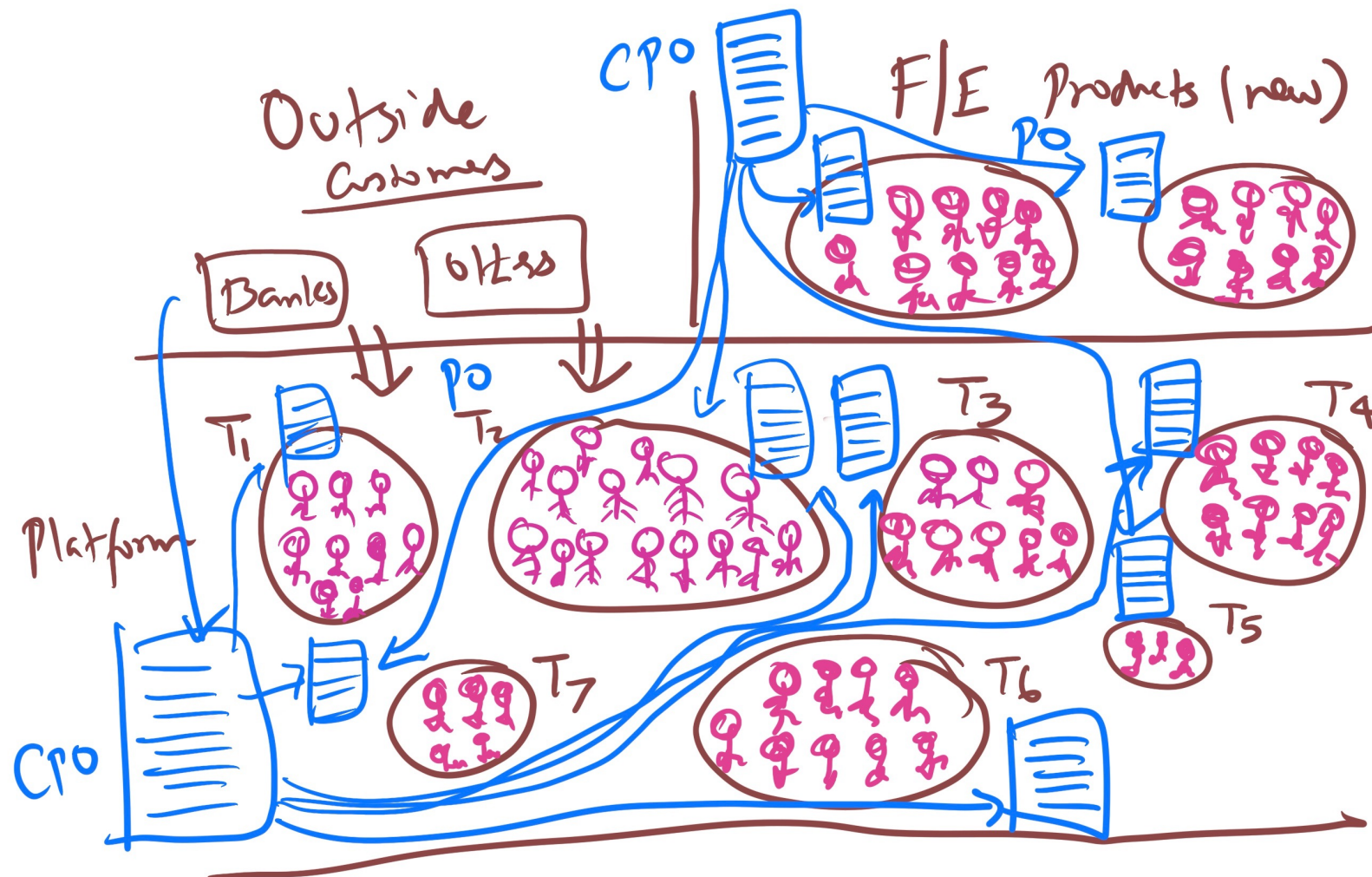
Six months ago…
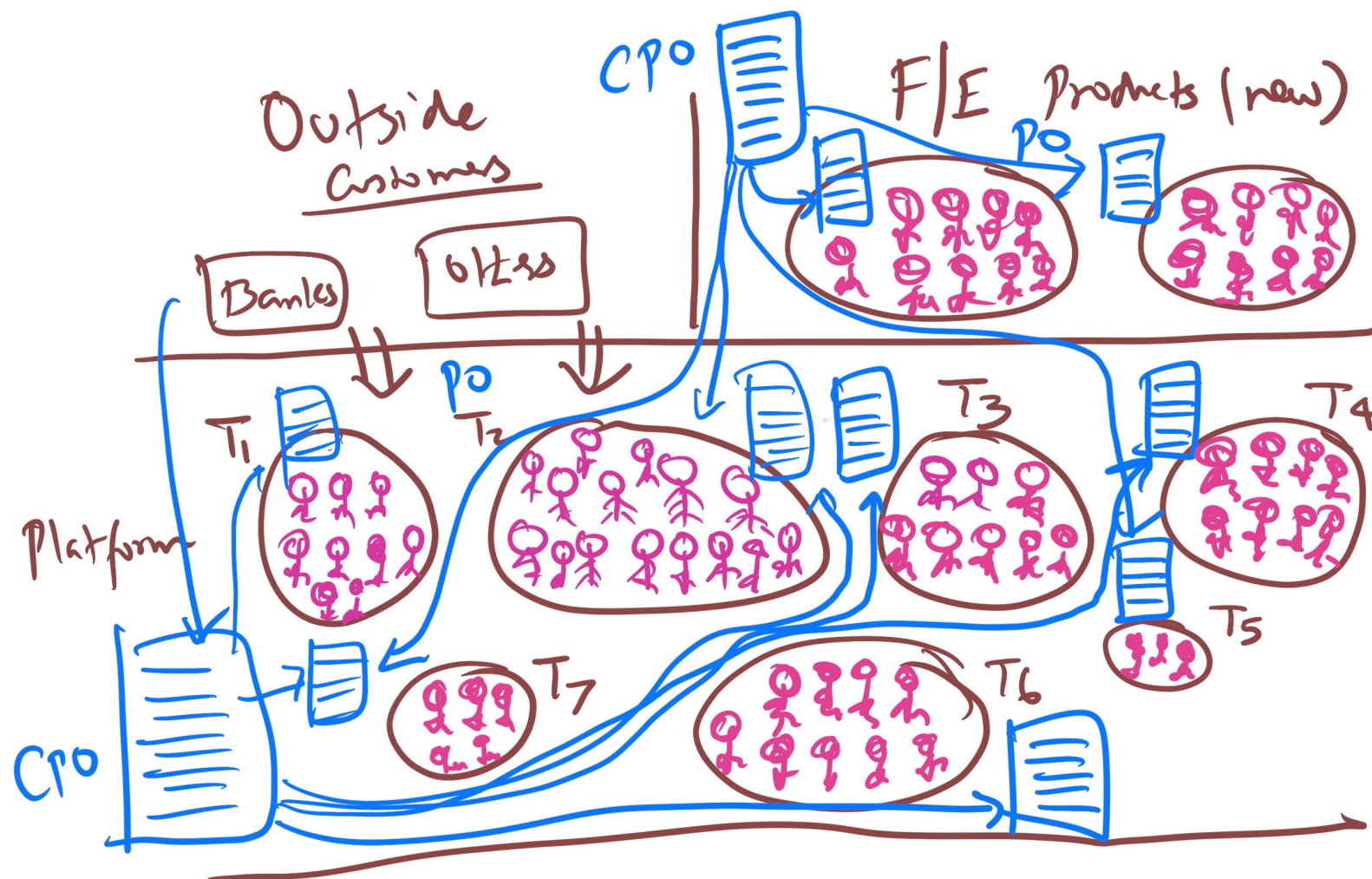
# State of the teams – 6 months ago

- Functionally siloed org – fixed roles, fixed process for work
- Sprints, but not completed, work slides from one sprint to another
- QA completed in last two Sprints of Release
- Five releases per year, Releases every 10 weeks approximately
- Component teams that integrated whenever they were ready
- When to integrate and dependencies managed by the Product Owners
- Roughly about two teams for each Product Owner
- Lots of prework before work reached teams – including architecture and design, stories were tasks
- No significant active retrospectives at a team level

# After six months…

(SURPRISE)
exactly the same as six months ago

# State of the teams - now

- Functionally siloed org – fixed roles, fixed process for work
- Sprints, but not completed, work slides from one sprint to another
- QA completed in last two Sprints of Release
- Five releases per year, Releases every 10 weeks approximately
- Component teams that integrated whenever they were ready
- When to integrate and dependencies managed by the Product Owners
- Roughly about two teams for each Product Owner
- Lots of prework before work reached teams – including architecture and design, stories were tasks
- Product level retrospective introduced every two weeks – this has forced team level retrospectives every two weeks.

# Crowd sourcing <u>your</u> ideas for further experiments

1. Find out the high-level pain from management
2. Training to the senior management
3. Open Space if the company is ready for it
4. Agile Guided coalition
5. Peer's – what are their problems?
6. Safety, Human perspectives
7. Goals – at every level as a starting point
8. Metrics and measures – cycle time?
9. Continuous Delivery and Technical practices as a driver
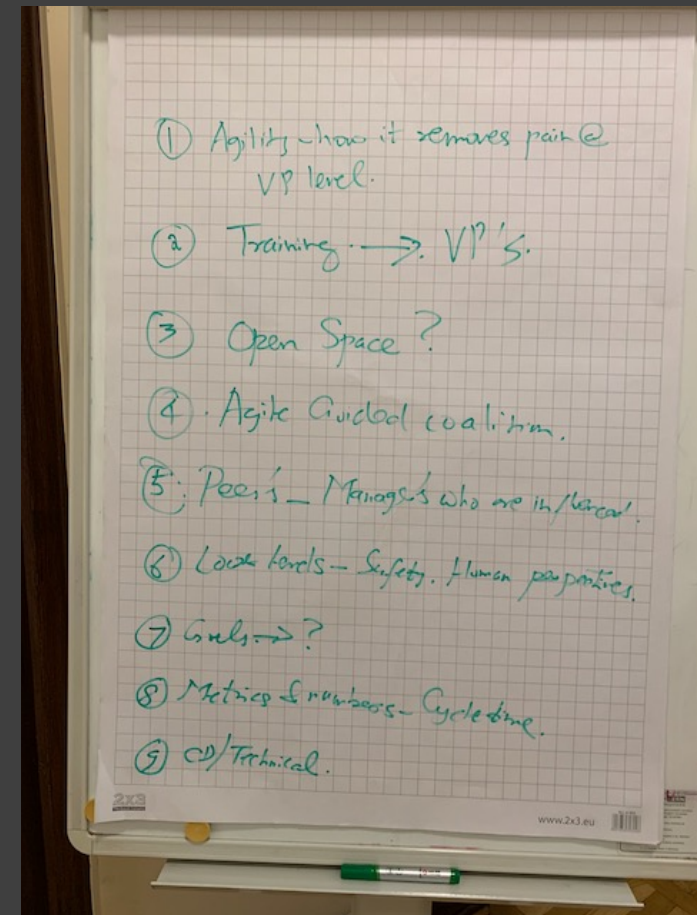
Chipping away

# Current experiments in progress

- Combined product level Sprints and product level Sprint Reviews – to do this require mandate to enable teams to work that way

- Product Ownership external training organized to help them understand Product Ownership - Planning to follow this up by internal training and substantiate it with systems thinking and product definitions

- Feature level backlogs and decompose vertical slices instead of component level decompositions.

- Value Steam mapping and retrospectives to identify improvements

- New Delivery Director joined, working to identify new triggers for change. Squad design identified as one of the pain points and used to start discussing experiments

- There was a leadership vacuum with the previous CIO leaving a few months ago. The new CIO has joined and working to understand this person's challenges, vision and expectations and use them as trigger

- Agile Fluency model self-evaluation as a retrospective by the teams to show where the Teams/Product/Organization was in the fluency curve

- Bring in a top-notch CI-CD pipeline company with technical coaches for pair programming with team members to teach and build competence.

# 2023: Luck as a strategy

_____

- Depending on and designing luck - luck is the only factor that can help this change, so working constantly to finding lucky breaks

- Constantly identify new levers and experiments that could be used to trigger change

- Identify future experiments that could have high potential to succeed

- Hope to back in Berlin next year with updates on how the year went