

# Politics!



# Agenda

- Why this talk and what do I want to achieve?
- What is politics?
- Goals
- Political activities
- Summary and conclusion





# Why this talk?



## Triggers for this talk:

- Understand my own experiences. Why politics?
- Politics affects LeSS adoptions.
- Common question: How to cope with politics?

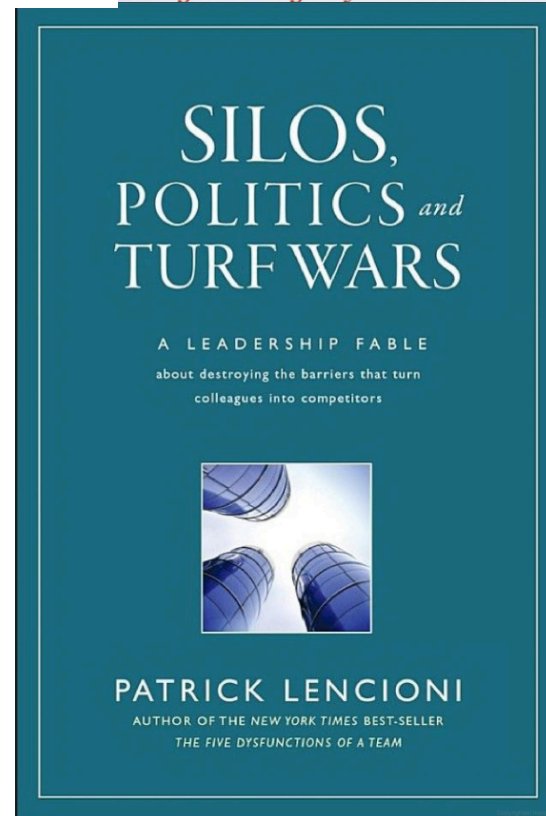
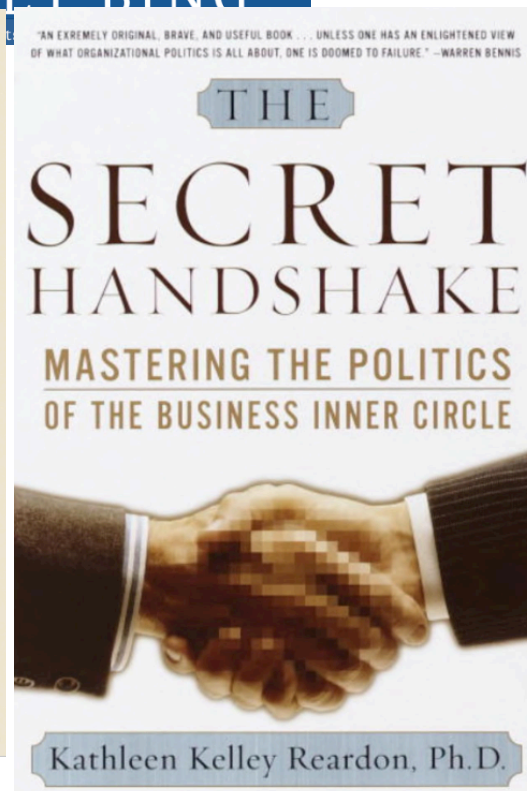
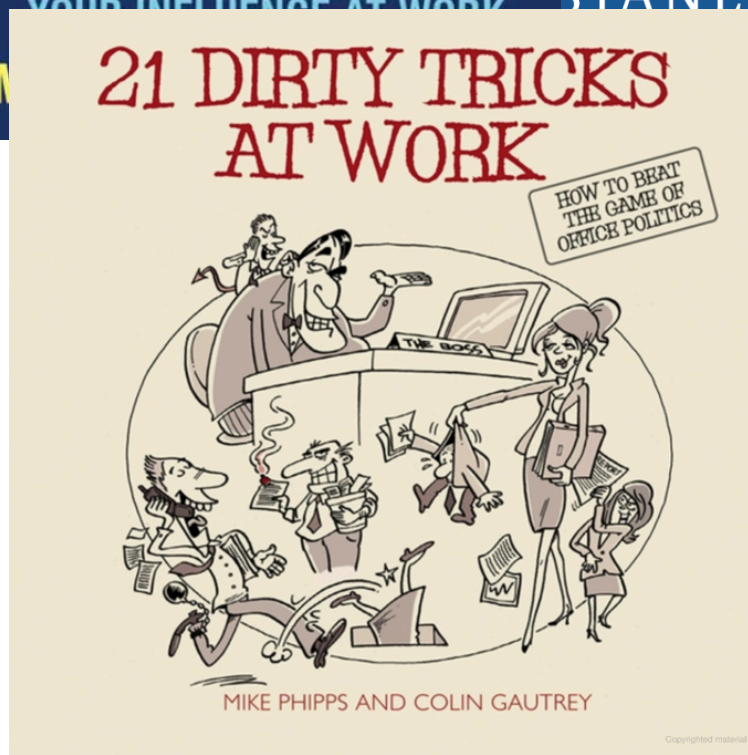
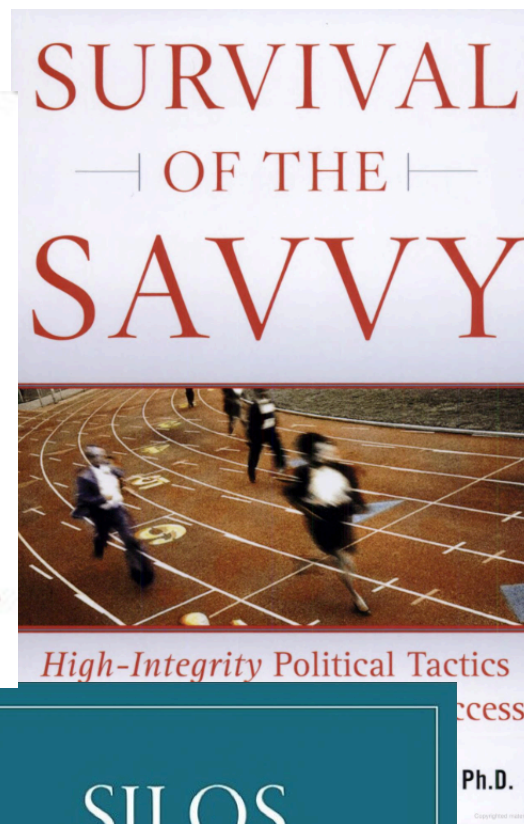
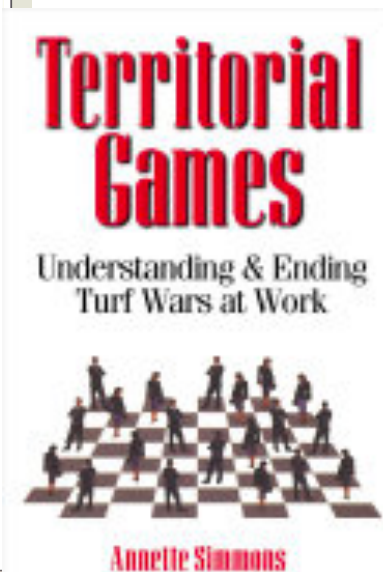
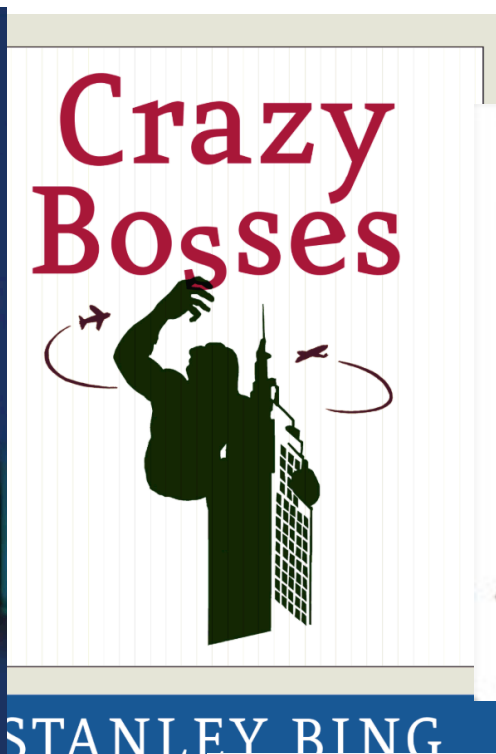
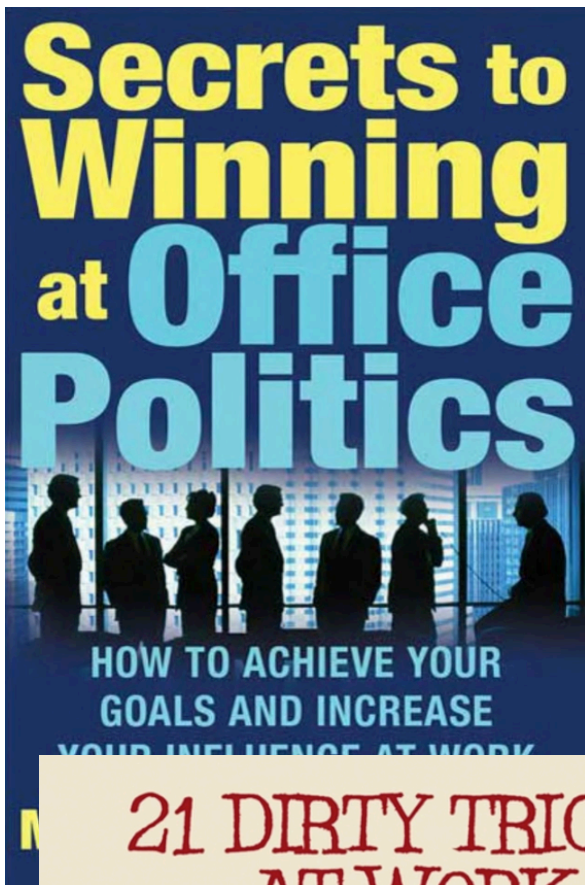
## Goals of the talk:

- Have a conceptual framework to understand why politics.
- Concrete principles and experiments to use.

# What is politics?







# **HARD FACTS**

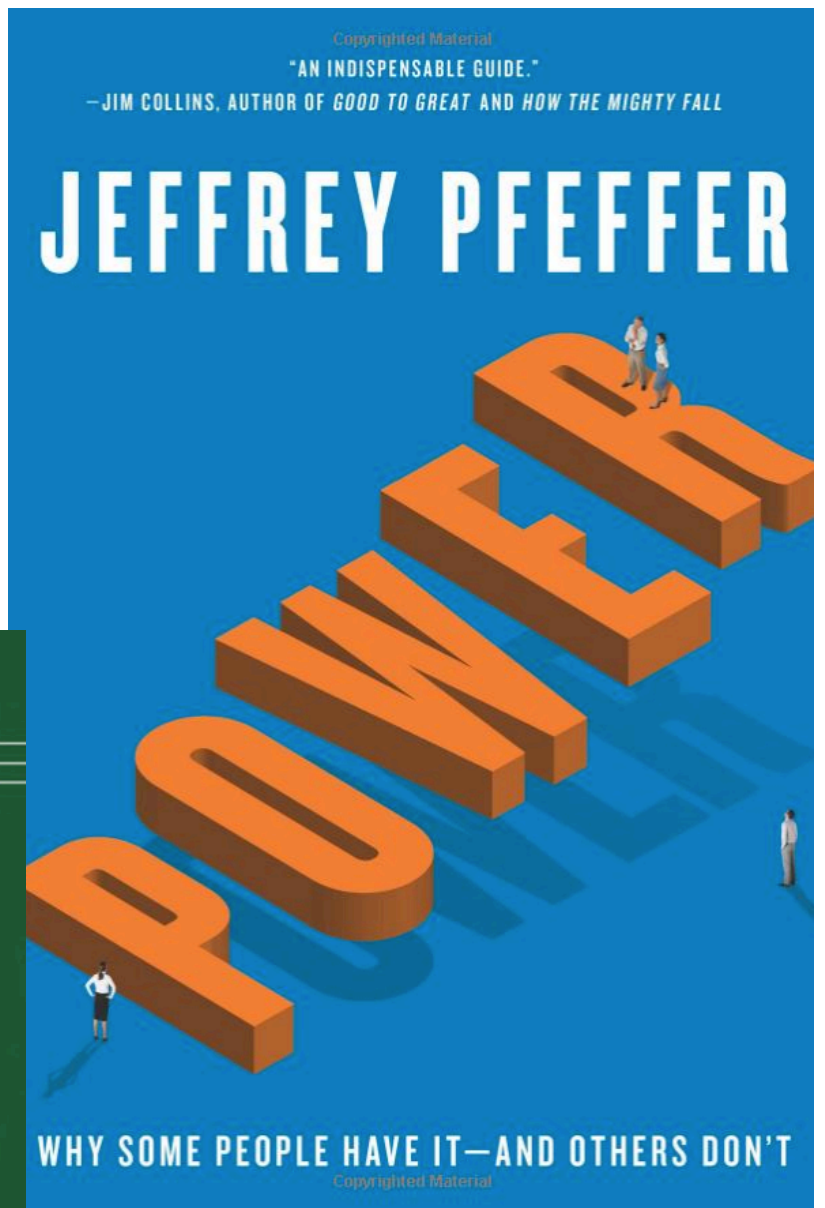
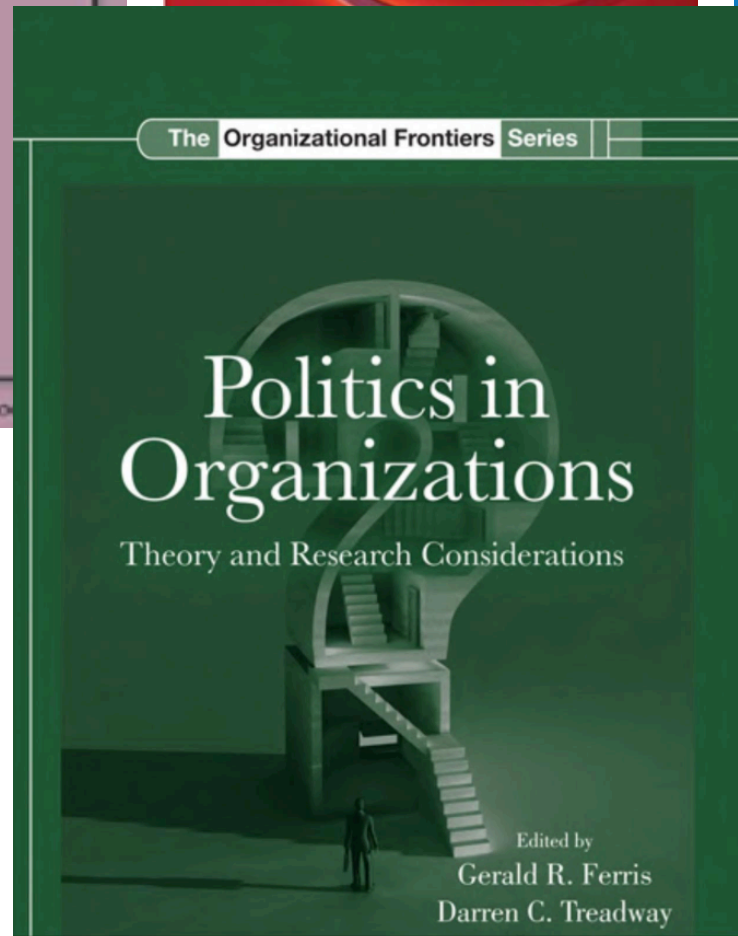
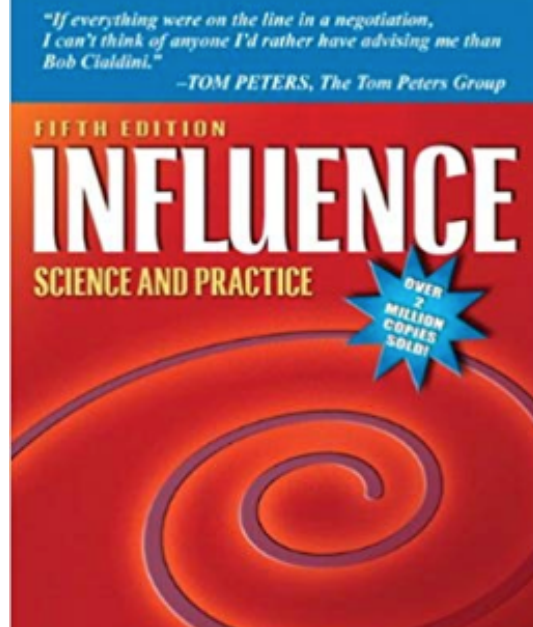
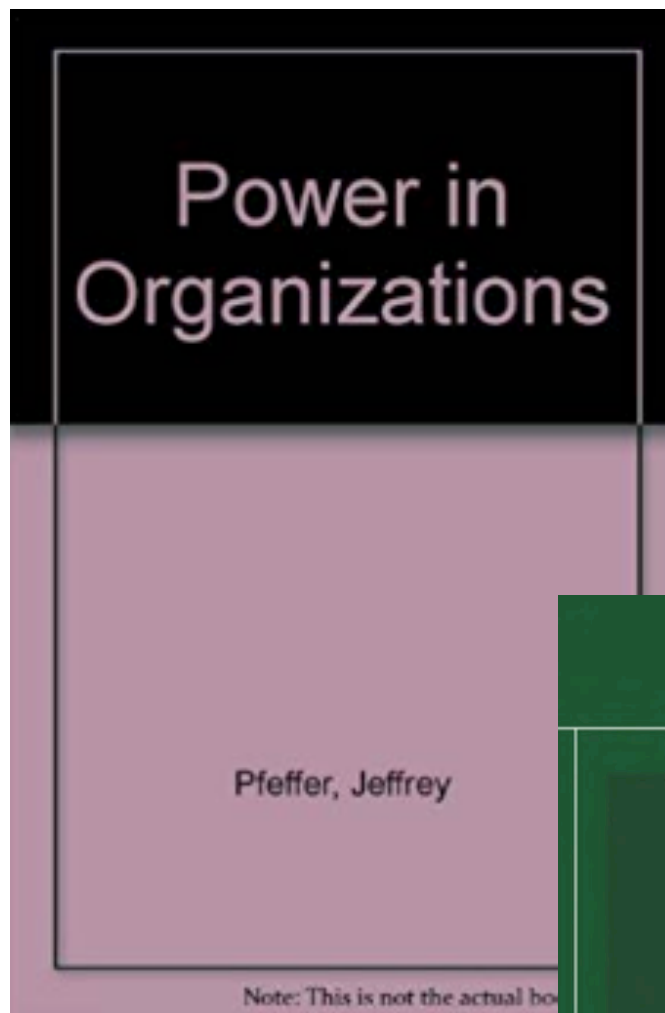
**DANGEROUS HALF-TRUTHS  
& TOTAL NONSENSE**

**PROFITING FROM  
EVIDENCE-BASED  
MANAGEMENT**

**Jeffrey Pfeffer  
Robert I. Sutton**

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS







# What is politics?

- Organizational politics are informal, unofficial, and sometimes behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence an organization, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives. (Brandon, Seldman 2004)
- Activities taken within an organization to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choice. (Pfefer 1981, Ferris, Treadway 2012)
- The management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non sanctioned influence means. (Mayes, Allen 1977, Ferris, Treadway 2012)



# What is politics?

- The management of **shared meaning**, which focuses on the **subjective evaluation and interpretation of meaning** rather than on the view that meanings are inherent, objective properties of situations; from the standpoint of managerial political behaviour, the objective is to **manage the meaning of situations** in such a way as to **produce desired, self-serving responses or outcomes**. (Ferris, Fedor, King 1994, Ferris, Treadway 2012)





# What is politics?

- How do actors use power and social influence in a group to achieve self-interested goals when officially sanctioned means are unavailable or undervalued. (Lepisto, Pratt in Ferris, Treadway 2012)

# Two key pieces



**Goals**



**Political  
activities**

# Political activity

## Constructive political activity

Activities towards shared  
organizational goals

Activities that created  
shared meaning

## Destructive political activity

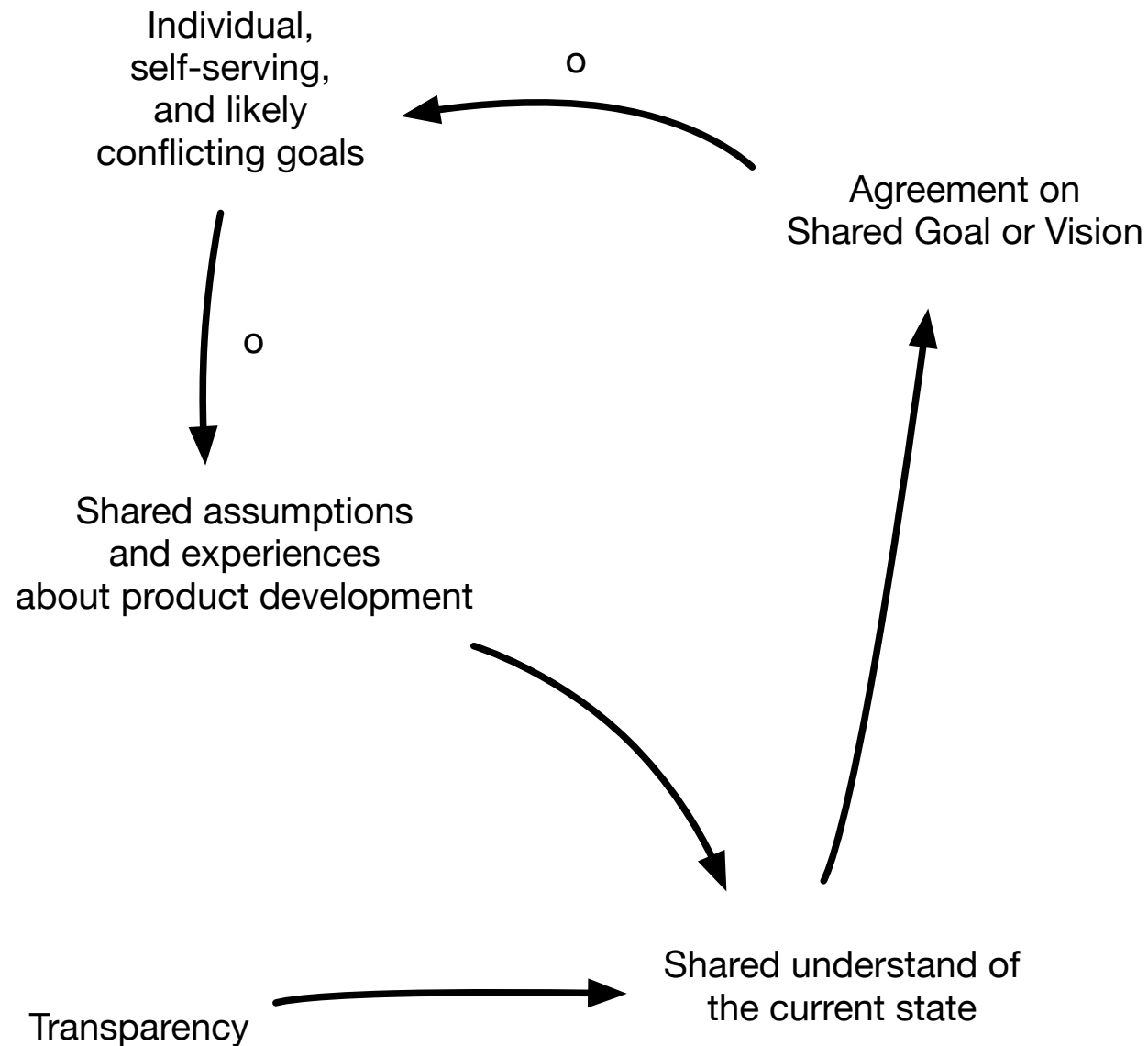
Activities towards individual,  
self-serving and often  
conflicting goals

Activities that destroy  
shared meaning  
(often through silo forming)

# Goals



# Goals



# Two Stories

**Mr . M**



**Mr . T**



**Lacking Go See,**

**Reality is just  
another opinion.**



# Try... Avoid... Weekly Mail

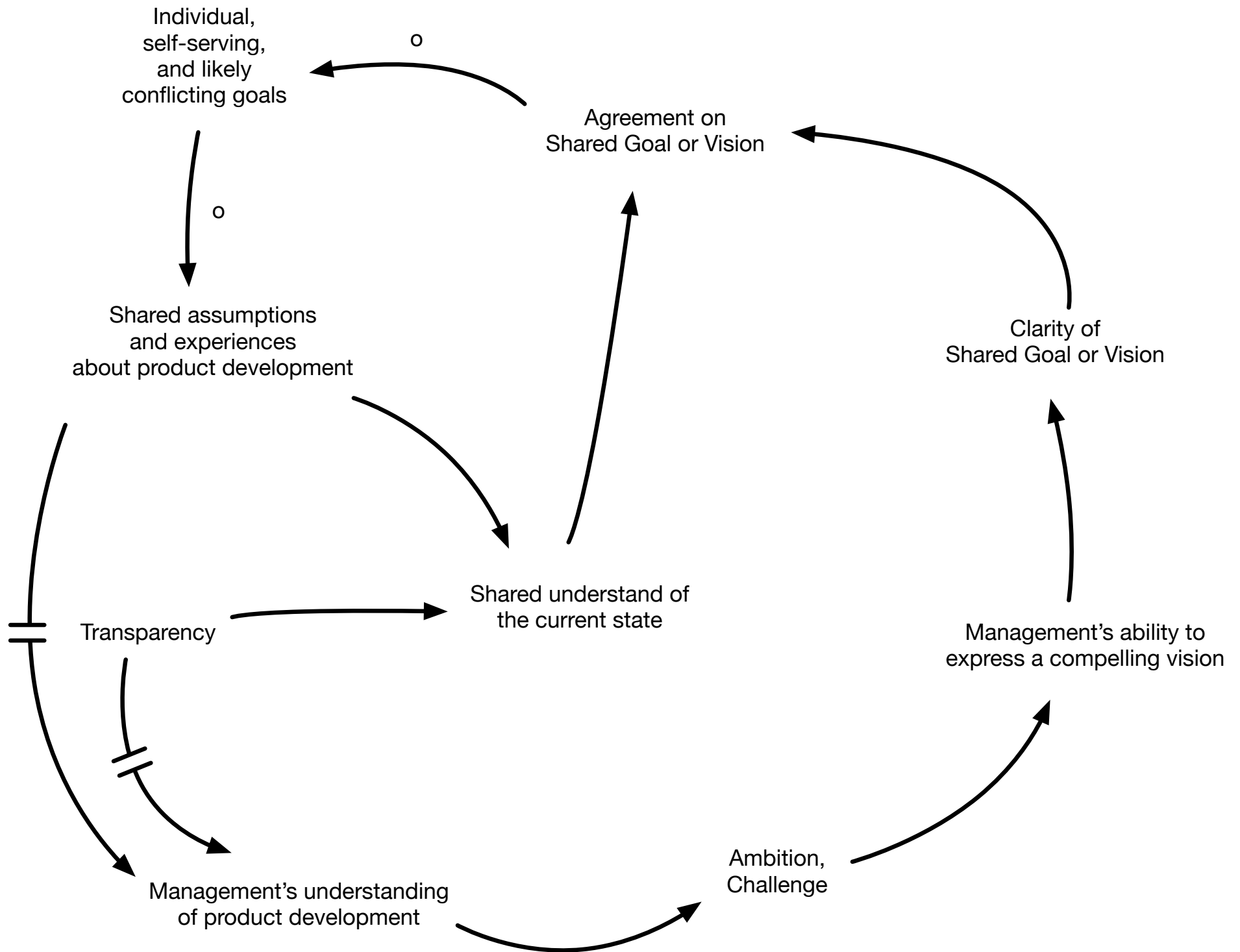
Hi M,

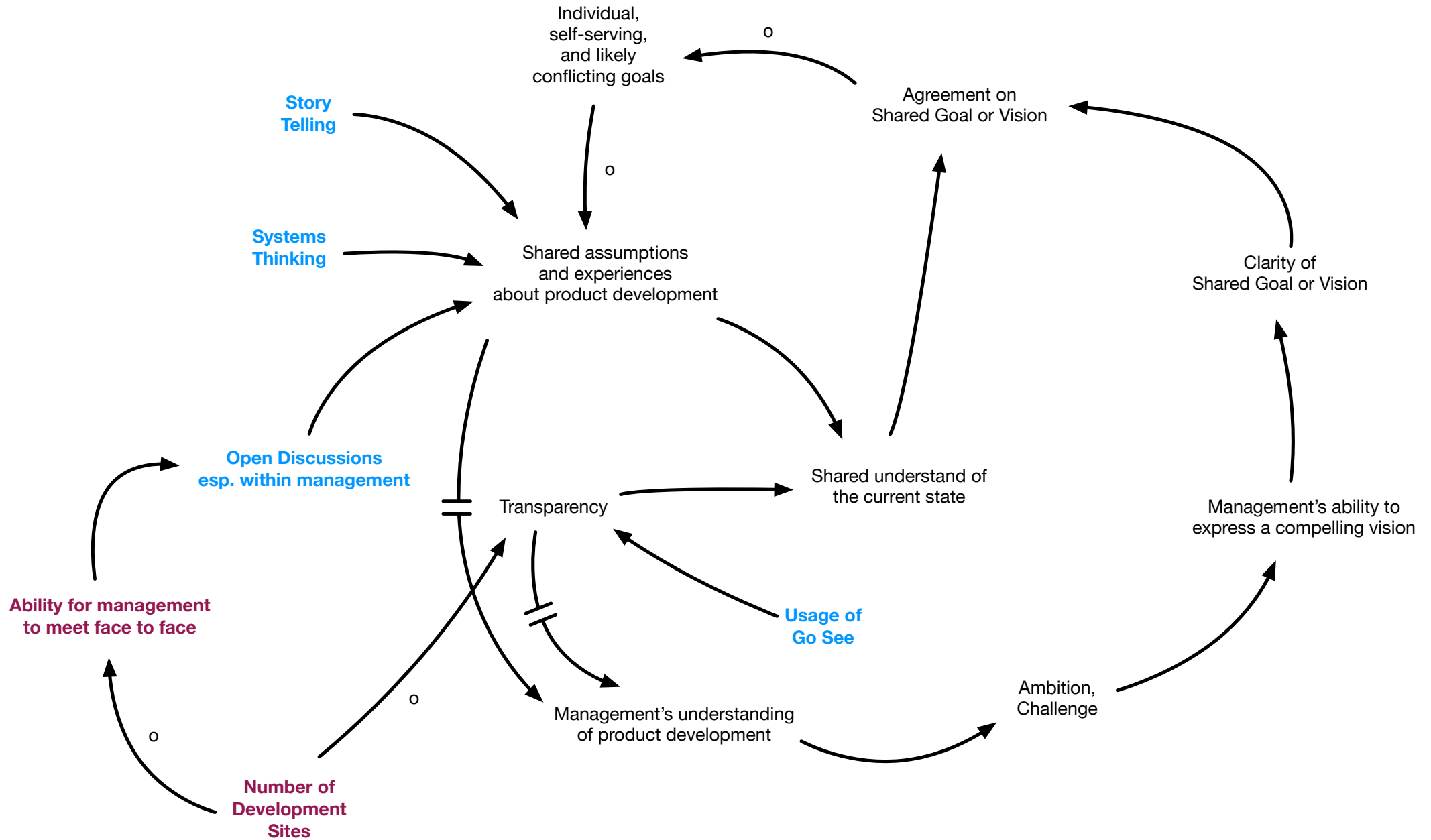
This week was an interesting week. I mostly spend my time on working with the team on improving their test automation. I noticed that the ex-QA person is still doing all the testing manually ...

That is unusual in LeSS or Scrum due to the shared team responsibility. QA people can't focus on just QA anymore and usually help the developers out during the Sprint. It was strange that this wasn't happening...

I discovered the team had spill-over items every Sprint, which created a buffer which allowed the QA persons to test the previous Sprint items.

The drawback from this is ...





**Does the meaningfulness  
of a product  
(it's contribution and  
impact on society)  
make it easier to  
create agreement on  
shared goals or vision?**

# Political activity



# Political activity

Constructive

Destructive

Open  
Group  
Discussions

Beer /  
coffee /  
watercooler  
discussions

1-on-1  
discussions

Gossip

Lying

Hiding  
information

Talking **to**  
others

Exaggeration      Controlling  
information

Talking **about**  
others

Assuming  
positive  
intent

Meeting people  
informally for  
achieving consensus  
(Nemawashi)

Staying in  
group

Assuming  
negative  
intent

Doing  
a favor

Giving  
a favor

# Confirmation bias

The tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that affirms one's prior beliefs or hypotheses





# Story: Cooks

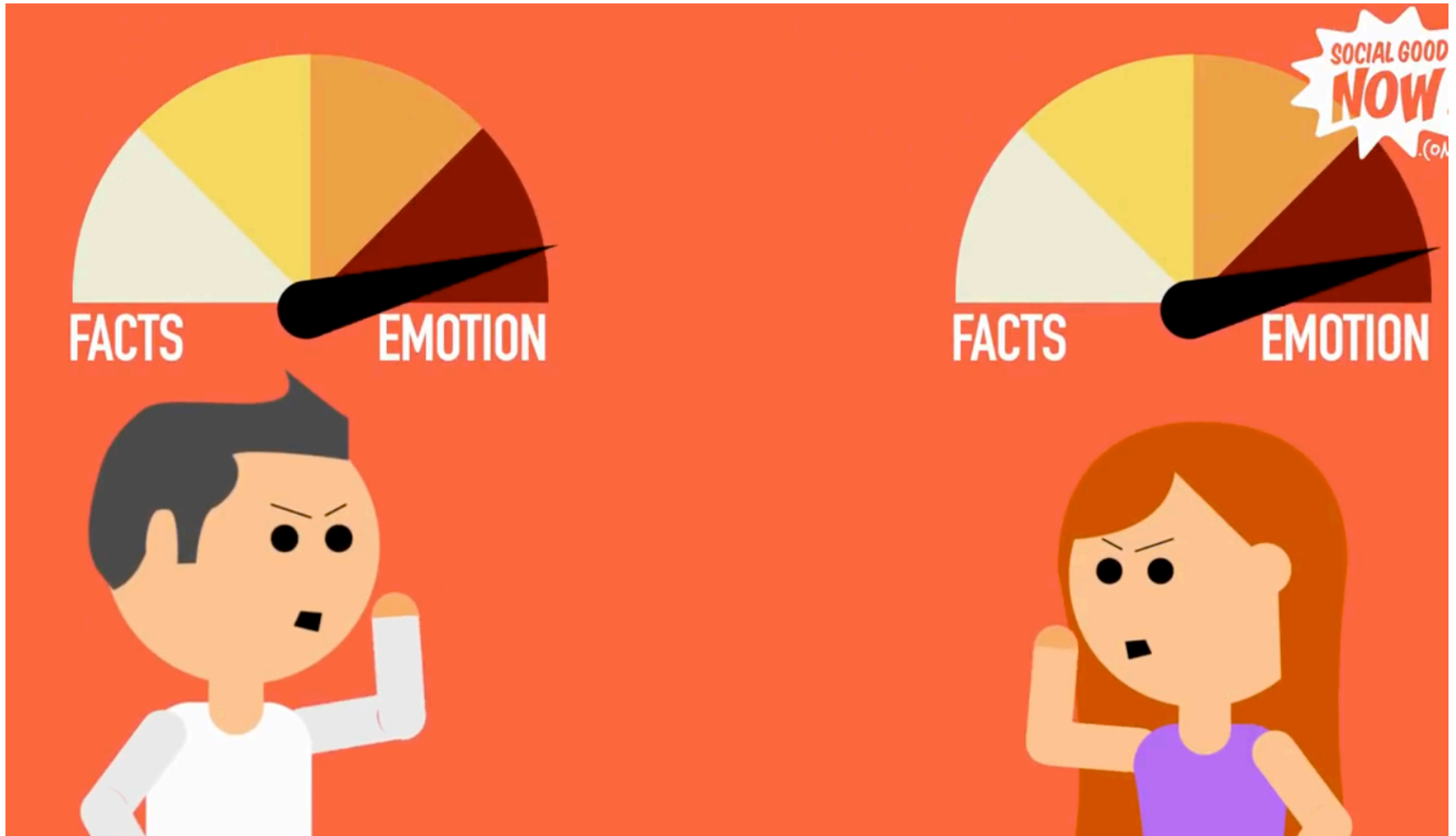




**Try... Always consider  
you are wrong!**



# Video !!!



# Avoid... Staying within “your group”



# Story: Team X

Hi large-distribution-list,

We Team Y, are trying really hard to meet our deadlines, but it is made impossible by Team X. They are making changes in our component and keep asking us questions.

To make matters worse. The code they are committing is really bad it it doesn't have any tests. Also they have broken the component build. It has now been broken for 4 weeks.

We cannot focus with team X continuously preventing us from meeting our deadlines with high quality.

# Try... Transparency increasing reply

Hi J,

Thanks for the feedback related to team X. It is much appreciated and we'll try to improve.

I did check some of the things you mentioned and want to clarify some things.

All commits team X did had tests added to that. The build (according to the build server) was broken for 2 weeks. Team X was the only one who committed for these 2 weeks and they hadn't noticed the build broke due to the build environment being different.

I must have missed something while I checked these facts. Could you please provide more information related to the mail you send?

If these were the facts, then I hope that we can have information with the facts in our future mail conversations.

# Try... Transparency increasing reply

## **Transparency increasing mail template**

Acknowledge and appreciate feedback

Ask for clarification

State conflicting facts

Mention conflict between feedback and facts

Ask clarification and for improvement of future conversation



# Story: Do not send that!



# Try... Be nice to people



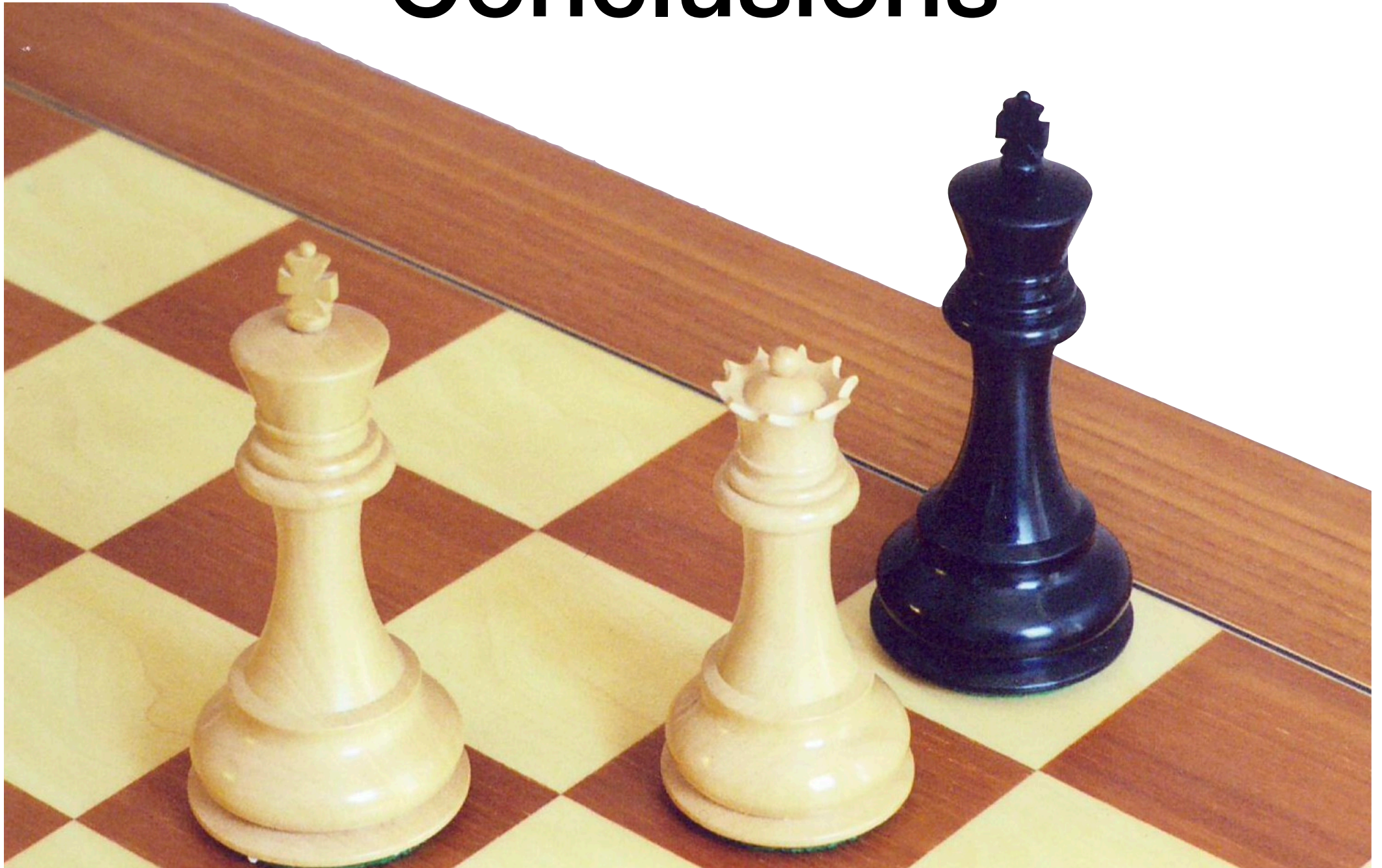
# Fight mental short-cuts

- Try... Listen more.
- Avoid... Giving the impression of agreement while listening.
- Avoid... Thinking other people have a negative intent.
- Avoid... Talking negatively about other people when they are not there.





# Conclusions



**Scrum Master  
is an inherently  
political role**



# How to deal with politics?

1. Facilitate agreement towards shared goal by
  - Activities that create shared assumptions and experiences.
  - Activities that increase transparency.
2. Facilitate the usage of constructive political activities by
  - Engaging in constructive political activities and avoiding the trap to join in destructive political activities.
  - Constructively educate the organization on the effects on destructive political activities.



# Questions

