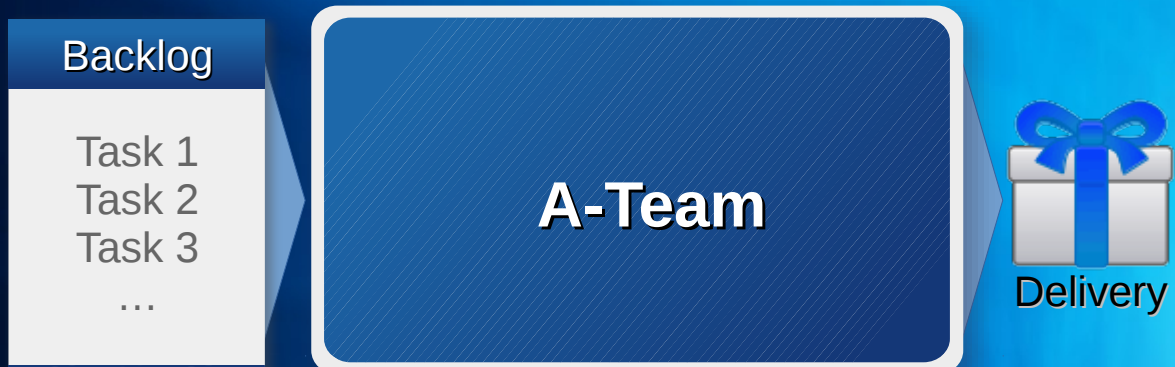


Organization – The simple way

a OnePageBook™



Geir Isene & Brendan Martin

Build your organization with small autonomous teams¹. Make sure each team has a clearly defined output. The output is the product, the deliverable that a customer is willing to pay for². A customer can be external to the organization or another team within the organization.

Make sure each team is complete and “cross-functional” and have the competence needed to deliver the expected output³.

Customers place orders in the team’s “backlog” and expect a certain delivery. An order must fulfill exact criteria for accepting the delivery. All orders must be in alignment with what the team is supposed to produce. The “backlog” is prioritized by the customer(s). Let the customers hash out the priorities of a team’s backlog. This is much healthier than letting the team struggle with prioritizing tasks between customers.

If there are many customers placing orders into the “backlog” of several different teams, you can decide to have one team that helps the customers prioritize tasks and then distribute tasks to the right teams. Such a “distribution team” would have as their deliverable “a correctly distributed task”. This team could also be charged with following up and informing customers on the progress of their orders.

Teams can work parallel or sequential in set or shifting patterns. As long as each team has clearly defined inputs and outputs, logical patterns will emerge. One team can produce one part of a final product. Another team can work in parallel on another part. A third team can assemble parts into the final product delivered to an external customer.

Let the team decide on the criteria for accepting an order, what the order must include and how it must be specified.

Let the team decide on its own organization – whether they use a methodology like Lean, Scrum, Kanban, ITIL, PRINCE2 or any other way of organizing deliveries, or whether they opt for no formal organization at all. Let the team elect a leader if they feel they need one.

Measure each team’s throughput – the average time it takes to transform a task into a delivery.

Agree on how the various teams will be financed. As long as a team delivers according to the expectations, let the team spend their resources as they see fit.

Any overall leadership in the organization can likewise be organized in a team. This team sets deliverables, expectations and financing criteria for the other teams. It could also coach other teams whenever they ask for guidance and coaching.

Drop the hierarchy. Flatten the organization. Ideally, a “leadership team” would never have to exert authority over any other team. A team that doesn’t deliver would go “bankrupt”, wither or fade away due to lack of orders and thus financing. A booming team could give birth to new teams.

Such an organization would parallel the structure of a society at large with autonomous companies and organizations as building blocks. The main difference is keeping the teams small. Small teams limits the need for bureaucracy and other overhead.

One could argue that it is naive to think that this type of organization could function without a strict hierarchical command. But it could also be argued that it would be naive to think a society without a strict communistic or fascistic structure could function⁴. And instead of arguments for or against, one could try it out in a small scale and see if it brings about benefits.

One benefit could be that with small comparable teams, some of which work in parallel, it would be easier to test new ideas or methods. Only by experimentation followed by direct observation can we verify or falsify assumptions. Even then there is a risk of extrapolating data⁵. Try Kanban in one team and see if that works better than PRINCE2 in a comparable team. Train one team in Lean and see if the throughput rises above similar teams.

Perhaps you could think of yet other possible benefits? Or perhaps, like us, you could try out such a radically simple model.

¹The Science Behind Why Small Teams Work More Productively (Janet Choi): <http://tinyurl.com/lyfneu2>

²Processes, Automation and Human Potential (Geir Isene, Brendan Martin): <http://isene.com>

³Scaling Lean & Agile Development (Craig Larman, Bas Vodde): <http://tinyurl.com/ls2otm>

⁴LiQUiD – Organizing Human Potential (Geir Isene): <http://isene.com>

⁵Antifragile (Nassim Nicholas Taleb): <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antifragile>

This is a OnePageBook™ that cuts straight to the matter at hand: a really simple way of organizing. The authors have written extensively about organizational theories, models and framework and has helped numerous organizations implement frameworks like ITIL, Scrum, Kanban, Lean and PRINCE2. They are both renowned mental trainers for executives, artists and top athletes and specializes in helping teams perform at their peak. Their company “Å” (A-Circle AS) carries the apt slogan, “Boosting performance”.

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