The Falling off a Log theory
and other observations on the
software industry

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What am I doing here?

97 Things Every Programmer Should Know, Henney, 2010

Context Encapsulation in Pattern Languages of Program Design 5, 2006

Changing Software Development: Learning to Be Agile, 2009

34 Business Strategy Patterns for Software Creators
Themes

1. My biggest mistake
   – … and the falling off a log theory
2. Three types of software creators
3. The Software Process
4. Customers
5. Four commandments
Falling off a log
3 Type of Software Company

- Software Product Company
- Corporate IT Department
- Software Service Company

ESP - External Service Provider
Ducks not Bullets

*No Silver Bullets*

- Ducks
  - Get ‘em in a Row
- Thousands of small decisions
  - Not one big one
Goodhart’s Law

Charles Goodhart, 1975

• Making a measure a target destroys it
  – Information content lost
  – People & system adjust behavior: conscious & unconscious

• So: Don’t make measures targets

any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes.
The Alignment Trap

Highly aligned

‘Alignment trap’
11% companies
+13% IT spending
-14% 3 year sales growth

‘Maintenance zone’
74% companies
Avg IT spending
-2% 3 year sales growth

‘IT Enabled growth’
7% companies
-6% IT spending
+35% 3 year sales growth

‘Well-oiled IT’
8% companies
-15% IT spending
+11% 3 year sales growth

Less aligned

Less Effective

More Effective

Source: Shpilberg, Berez, Puryear, Shah: MIT Sloan Review, Fall 2007
Objective: Agility
Excellence
Mediocrity

“In search of mediocrity....”

• Mediocrity is better than most
  – And usually enough

• Excellence is a bonus
Levels of Agility

Status quo

Basic Agile
- Time boxed iterations
- Burn down to release
- Stand-up meetings
- TDD

Incremental
- Piecemeal deliveries
- Burn-down an end

Evolutionary
- Product & process evolve with development
- Burn-up

Some legitimate claim to Agile

Know the language

Many

Few

Very Few

Rear
XP
Scrum
…
Agile
Lean thinking
Organizational Learning

Deepening – learning & change

More philosophical
Value & idea based

More prescriptive

Agile Pyramid

Applicability

Kanban
Agile, Agile methods & the Agile toolkit

The State of Agile (our objective)
- Quick on our feet
- Respond to change rapidly
- Deliver quickly

Agile Methods
Promise to create the state of Agile

The Agile toolkit
- Test Driven Development, Refactoring
- Iterations, Time boxing
- Retrospectives, ...
Its for the customer, stupid
Commandments

1. Be effective
2. Know your customers
3. Strategy that says No
4. Employee latitude
   - Managers first duty if to their staff
Thank you

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