Five Key Habits to Accelerate Product Development

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Have you seen this movie?

- Zombie field problems
- Unpredictable delivery
- Credibility challenges
- Multiple "top" priorities
- Silos, planning & document focus
- Bad news breaks too late
- Handoff stress (esp. Support)

Special guest stars…

- Transitioning legacy on-prem to cloud
- Big Installed base
- Multiple internal stakeholders

Do any of these look familiar?

A FILM BY JIM JARMUSCH
THE DEAD DON'T DIE

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Agilent story

We had *all* of these issues at Agilent SID when I joined 10 years ago.

We had to clear our execution problem to rebuild credibility internally and externally

Before we could have a vision for the future or think about our competitors, we needed connection with our huge legacy installed base

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About me

- From 2014 - VP/GM of "the" Software division at Agilent Technologies
- Focus today: coaching leaders to lead product delivery turnarounds
- Engineer by training
- Mixed software + hardware products
- Garage to F100
- Range of markets and technologies
  - PC's, Test & Measurement, Telecomm, Medical Devices, Digital Health, Life Sciences
- Mostly B2B channels

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Agilent story

Because of these challenges, we decided to focus on execution and rebuild our credibility with customers and internally.

The poster on the right was the first step…

- PREDICTABILITY
- TEAMWORK
- EVIDENCE
- SIMPLIFY
- CUSTOMER FOCUS

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Agilent story

Our new habits led to:

- New product 65% CAGR over 5 years
- 2X our productivity per R&D dollar
- Greatly improved field quality
- Customer credibility advantage

It wasn't easy but very worthwhile
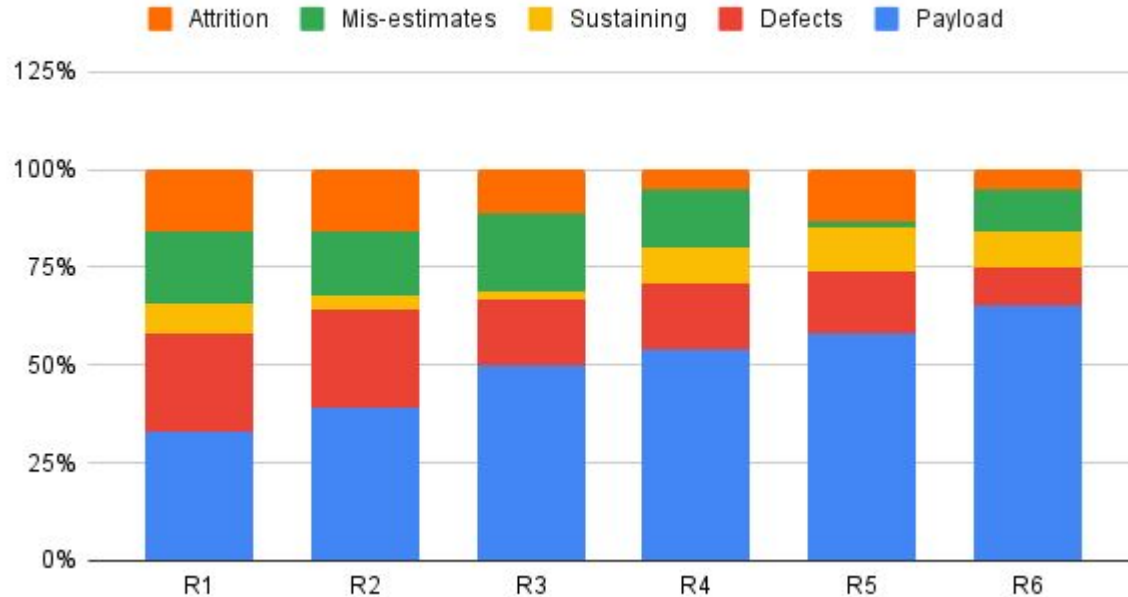
- PREDICTABILITY
- TEAMWORK
- EVIDENCE
- SIMPLIFY
- CUSTOMER FOCUS

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R&D productivity doubles

Payload capacity doubles over five releases

Legend: Attrition, Mis-estimates, Sustaining, Defects, Payload

- PREDICTABILITY
- TEAMWORK
- EVIDENCE
- SIMPLIFY
- CUSTOMER FOCUS

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So what?

Effective product delivery depends on **predictable execution and reliable sources of evidence** to guide decisions

Vision and strategy are only relevant if you can deliver them to market

You can lead improvement by promoting and supporting **effective development habits.** These are cross-functional!

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Why Habits?

Habits are automatic: what we do without thinking.

In an organization, habits and values make culture.

Discipline requires thought and effort. Research suggests we have finite capacity for discipline

>>> Develop good habits to create lasting change

Here are some habits that will help you kill your Zombies

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Habit 1: Quality, Cadence, Scope (QCS)

Every product org arranges these 3 in some order, stated or not
> Scope > Deadline > Quality when unstated

**Break the cycle with a rhythm of high-quality incremental releases**
- Scope may slip. Time and quality do not.
- Supports frequent customer interactions and cont. improvement
- Exposes true capacity
- Reduces planning complexity

High-level commitment required; yields high rewards

What does Quality mean? Who is responsible for it?

R6 Capacity

Payload · Defects · Sustaining · Mis-estimates · Cap loss
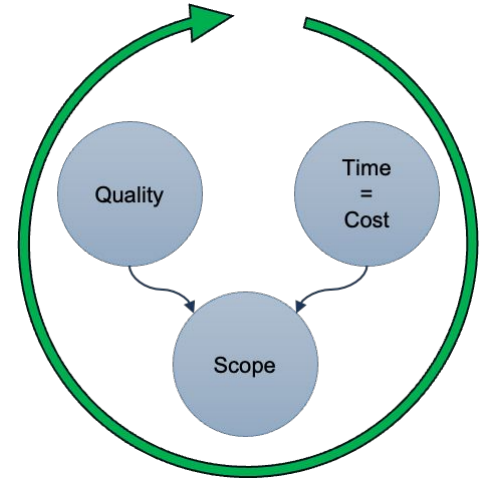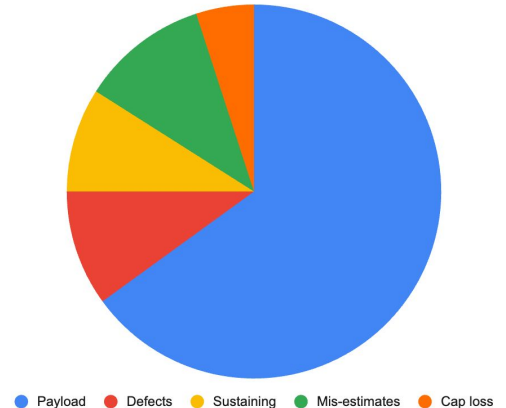
Habit 2: Evidence over Opinion

Become aware of differences of opinion.

Label them and explore reasons.

Do we have evidence to guide this decision?

A good customer story counts, as long as it is corroborated

Easier to justify decisions based on shared evidence than on opinion, no matter how expert. Also easier to update them as evidence changes. Opinions don't age well.

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Habit 3: Continuous Customer Engagement

Timely customer and market evidence reduces uncertainty

Develop interactions and data sources (a short list)

- Developers fix field problems (capacity carve-out; KPI)
- Thought leader partnerships (mod willingness to pay; "say Yes")
- User groups (ask only if you commit to responding)
- Behavioral data (usage, timing, upgrades, support calls, etc.)
- Support and service data
- Root cause analysis: Problem statements vs. solution statements

Who is responsible for "getting it right" for your customers?

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Habit 4: Starting and Staying Integrated

Have something working and "demoable" at each design iteration. Why?

- Transparency, potential for customer interaction
- Pulls risk forward in the dev cycle
- Reduces orphan capabilities

Un-integrated → tail risk when things don't work together. Integration risk causes unpredictability
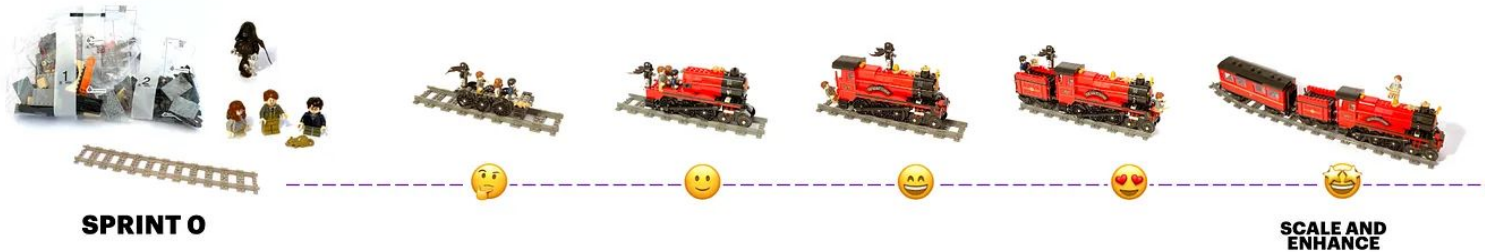
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SCALE AND ENHANCE

Image by Kit Friend

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# Habit 5: Psychological Safety, Bias for Learning

The Perfection Delusion: We cannot be perfect, so why pretend?

What we can do:

- Always be improving.
- Accept and learn from mistakes. Avoid repeating them.
- Reward candor; Expose differences without compelling alignment; Explore differences to learn faster.
- Frame work as experiments. How do we design work to maximize learning?
- Business results come from applying the learning. Learn Fast >> Fail Fast

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About TCGen

- Boutique firm focused on Lean Product Management and Agile Development
- Our principals have led product teams and delivered products, and we love to share what we have learned through experience
- We are pragmatic rather than methodological
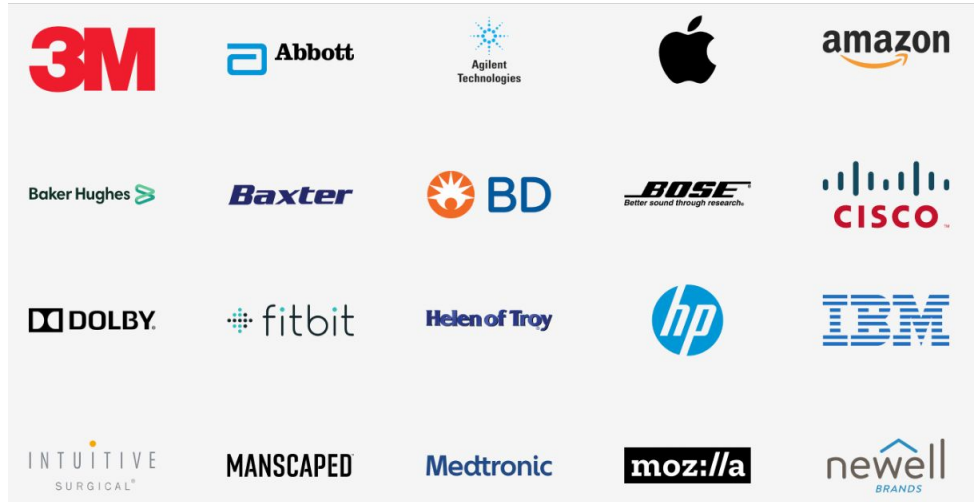
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Thank You! Questions?

For additional material and links, please contact me directly:

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