

The TameFlow Connection Newsletter

The latest news and ideas about the *TameFlow Approach*

Hello Friends of Herbie!

Here's the second issue of the **TameFlow Connection Newsletter**. What a week it was: the world witnessed the launch of the SpaceX... after my own launching of **Campfire Talks with Herbie** webinar series. Cannot decide what got me more excited! :)

News

TameFlow and Blockchain

As many of you know, in my "other" life I am quite active with *Blockchain Technologies*. Usually I do not mix TameFlow and Blockchain; but in this case I have to do an exception, as yesterday Adriana Hamacher published this article: [The man who builds Blockchain Islands](#).

As you will read, the connection here is that when I designed Malta's National Blockchain Strategy, I employed the TameFlow Approach. In particular it was about applying the **TameFlow Patterns** to create **Unity of Purpose**. The strategy was developed in less than 8 months, and then received *unanimous approval* by the Cabinet of Ministers on the first discussion. Bear in mind: Blockchain Technologies and the related crypto technologies do not have the greatest support, especially by governmental bodies who are very conservative and prudent by nature. Yet here we had a whole government who embraced the proposition. Then in a matter of another 18 months or so, a completely new legal framework was produced, with three new laws, and ensuing regulations. That is record speed in terms of law making. The whole country embraced the initiative of becoming the "*Blockchain Island*" - a term I coined in the early drafts of the strategy.

Then, unfortunately, and as you will read in the article, things did not go quite as expected for Malta – but that is another story.

I was then called to help the Republic of the Marshall Islands to help them with "Version 2.0" of the concept.

In both cases I had to consider the situation of a small island state that has very limited resources, and yet aims at having an important role in the global economy. So you see how the **Theory of Constraints** could be relevant.

For the Marshall Islands, the situation is even more critical. In addition to the nuclear pollution, climate change, with rising sea levels and acidifying of sea water that corrodes the coral reefs that make up the base of the islands' atolls, the country is literally at risk of being sub-merged and disappear from the maps. Like a modern time Atlantis.

The point of this story is that TameFlow has been used to impact the economic and survival strategy of two countries. As far as I know, no other of the mainstream methodologies can claim to have done anything similar. If ever there was a testament that TameFlow can have an impact in the large, this is it! Now let's wait and see if all the Scrums, SAFes and Kanbans of this world can "scale" to this extent! :)

TOCICO 2020

I will be a speaker at the **Annual Theory Of Constraints 2020 Conference**. Registrations are now open. It is an on-line virtual conference, 22-26 of June. Organized by TOCICO, the official global TOC community not for profit organization. Early bird price until 15th of June. Prices start at only \$79 for members.

There will be over 50 presentations including business cases from McDonald's, BAE Systems, Boeing, Aerosud, Ariane Rockets ... and world renowned experts Dr. Alan Barnard, Eli Schragenheim, Ravi Gilani, Dr. Lisa Lang, Henry Camp ... A virtual conference with: Qs and As, exhibit halls for sponsors and software vendors; and 3,000 "seating" capacity.

For more information see here: [TOCICO](#).

TameFlow

If you missed the *Campfire* webinars, here's a synopsis:

- [Campfire No. 1](#): featured [Daniel Doiron](#) as the show's guest. My own whiteboard session was about the **Four Flows** and also showing how they can be framed in Frederic's Laloux *Model of Organizational Development*.
- [Campfire No.2](#) had [Michael Küsters](#) as the guest. Michael is one of the first *Certified TameFlow Trainers*, and soon his classes will be listed on the official [TameFlow Training](#) page. In this episode, I elaborated – and this is the first time ever I have shown this in public! – how **Buffer Management** can trigger **Psychological Flow** in teams; and conversely how the team's behavior can provide guidance on how to size and position their **MOVE Buffer**. The gist of this is to be pragmatic about buffers. Statistical methods and analytical acrobatics have their place; but when you want to "get stuff done," it is clearly more important to have methods that are easy, fast and useful. So don't worry too much if the your *Buffers* are correctly sized and position: keep an eye on what the **Work Flow** is telling you, and calibrate the size and position of the *Buffers*. This is the quintessence of adapting to your changing **Work Load** reality while taking into consideration your team's mental well-being!
- [Campfire No. 3](#) was enlightened by the thoughts of the incredible [Minton Brooks](#). My whiteboard session was about what is possible my most important contribution so far to resolving how to perform **Step 1: Identify the Constraint** in the context of knowledge-work: I explained it through the metaphor of the **Jeep in the Jungle through a Journey** ("3Js"). First I explained how just using a Kanban board to look at queues and starvation (as it happens in the Kanban Method, SAFe, and most approaches that use Kanban boards) is inadequate. Instead, we need three perspective to be able to focus on the Constraint that is effectively holding us back the most. We need to look at:

The "Jungle" – The team that has the longest **Virtual Queues** in front of the individual teams to find the **Constraint in the Work Flow** (the "Jungle").

The "Jeep" – For that team, look for the highest **Average In-State Flow Time** to find the **Constraint in the Work Process***.

The "Journey" - Once work is released to the team, monitor the **Buffer Consumption** of each team, and look for the team with the highest **Buffer Penetration**: that is the **Constraint in the Work Execution** in that particular moment.

- [Campfire No. 4](#) had a guest from Armenia: [Aram Petrosyan](#), a very experienced professional in the field. Aram asked many insightful questions, and I only got started answering the first one. (I promised Aram he'd be back to talk about the other questions he raised and we didn't have time to go through.) We delved into the relationship between **Critical Chain Project Management** (CCPM) and TameFlow, and why the *planning* phase of CCPM is discarded. This brought us to reflect on the **Nature of Knowledge-Work**, where there is a lot of **VUCA**, to the extent that conventional planning is impossible. Instead we need to resort to **Empirical Process Control** and continuously **Inspect and Adapt**. The way to progress is through **Iterations, Increments and Interactions** ("3Is"). Another observation was that the cycles of **Differentiation/Divergence** and **Integration/Convergence** of knowledge-work cannot be shoe-horned into fixed-length time-boxes, as is customary in **Scrum** - that's one reason why *Scrum* is not really *that* good at handling knowledge-work. Ironically, one of the historical papers that inspired Jeff Sutherland - the "[New-New Product Development Game](#)" by Takeuchi and Nonaka - somehow already highlighted this back in 1986. It is impossible to determine a "wave-length" of the cycles of differentiation and integration; but somehow Jeff Sutherland missed that from that important source!

In the discussion, I did pronounce the controversial sentences: "*Scrum is an incremental improvement over Waterfall*" and "*Sprints and WIP Limits are impediments.*" But no worries, TameFlow is here to fix this! :)

- [Campfire No. 5](#) was privileged to welcome a very, very special guest: [Thomas "Tom" Cagley Jr.](#) Tom is the host of the [Software Process and Measurement Cast](#) - also known as the "SPaMCast!" - where he has held over 600 episodes! Tom is a special guest because I have myself been featured on his podcast ever since 2014, always talking about TameFlow. I've been on that show so many times that even Tom himself stopped counting! Tom is

also authoring a series "Re-read Saturday" blog posts, where he comments in depth on relevant books... and he announced that very soon start he will start a [Re-read Saturday](#) of... guess what!? ... yes, the very [Tame your Work Flow](#). The conversation with Tom was so engaging that I did not have a whiteboard session. It was more like a Oprah Winfrey kind of talk show. However we did go in deep discussions about **Multi-tasking** and why it is an "evil" thing. In the conversation we also touched on the purpose of **Full-Kitting** that makes the business side meet with the engineering side; and we can start to hold business accountable for giving **Estimates of Value** so that we can make real economic decisions. We talked about the importance of **Enlightened self-Interest** in the **Psychological Flow**; and the differences between **Idle Time** (for the worker), **Wait Time** (for the work), and **Touch Time** where work and worker get together. In this context I also touched upon the "Patient in the Hospital" metaphor. We also touched upon the value and limitations of **Experiential Learning**, with games and simulations.

If you want to make sure you won't miss the next episodes of these *Campfire Talk with Herbie* you may subscribe and get [calendar notifications](#) when they come out.

Note: For these notifications I use the [Eventable](#). If you typically use your mobile to check your calendars (and who doesn't!?) and you are using Google Calendar, then you might have to [activate calendar synchronization](#) manually. The good thing, is that you would need to do this only once.

As if all these *Campfire Talks with Herbie* were not enough air time for me, last Friday I was also a guest of [John "The Agility Chef" Coleman's](#) webinar about [Objectives & Key Results \(OKRs\) the TameFlow way](#). John kicked it off by giving a great overview of **Objectives and Key Results**, providing many valuable references as well. In my part I explained how Goldratt's mantra of expressing any company's goal as to "*Make money today in the future*" implicitly implies that there is a *future* view. In other words there must be a **Strategy** that prepares the future business. We can see how in addition to **Operational Flow** and **Financial Flow** are focused on the present, while the the future perspective needs a **Flow of Initiatives**. And this is where we can connect to the OKR topic. I briefly explained how a **Goal Tree** is similar

to OKRs, but driven by more stringent **Necessity Logic**. Then I went on to explain how TOC's **Strategy & Tactics** (S&T) trees work, and described how they can be enhanced with a **S&T Tree Node Canvas**, where there are key questions that need to be answered; and, in particular, focus on results expressed as **Expected Effects** that can either be *measured* or *observed*.

Theory of Constraints

It is always nice when the **Theory of Constraints** becomes the topic of mainstream news. Here's an article from **Forbes**: [Smart Leaders Purposely Put Themselves At The Bottom Of The Org Chart](#)

Noteworthy quote: *"Finally, as a leader, remember that what you choose to optimize is just that: a choice. You can focus on what delivers real value and maximizes the company's competitive advantage—or you can let the org chart decide for you."*

It is always a great step in leadership self-awareness when one realizes that *the greatest constraints of all might be there: at the very top!*

Agile & Scrum

This post... [Do Agile Change Agents Know how to Manage? Do They Have to Know?](#) by [Stefan Willuda](#) ...is just brilliant. It puts into perspective the role of management, the three fundamental change questions of Goldratt, and the way *"Agile Change Agents"* work in the large. Food for thought if you are in the **Agile space** and are wondering how your work connects to the **Theory of Constraints** – or how the Theory of Constraints can help you become better at what you are doing.

Another interesting read is [Don't mistake adoption patterns for maturity patterns](#) by Matt Philip. The gist as I understand it? Mainstream approaches (read Scrum and SAFe) fossilize people's **Mental Models** to the extent that anything different from what they know is considered too "advanced" or "difficult." Matt metaphorically asks: *"Like fast food, just because a practice is popular doesn't mean it's the best thing for you. Why not start healthy? ... Why wait until your arteries clog to change your diet?"* Couldn't agree more!

That's all for this time. Make sure you don't miss the next "[Campfire Talks with Herbie!](#)"!

Have a great week!

Steve

P.S. Forward this mail to your friends and colleagues. Let them know they can [get "Tame your Work Flow" at a discount](#) and invite them to watch the "[Campfire Talks with Herbie!](#)" too!



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