

The TameFlow Connection Newsletter

The latest news and ideas about the *TameFlow Approach*

TameFlow Connection No 5

Hello Friends of Herbie

First up, remember that this week (June 22 – June 26) will be the week of the **TOCICO 2020 Virtual Conference**. In particular, on Friday June 26, 2020, at 12:30 EDT you will have me talking about "*TOC in a VUCA World, Bridging the World of Agile and TOC.*"

Talking about this presentation, I caught myself saying that I care about becoming "*more agile than Agile!*"

So that is almost becoming a

What I do is more agile than Agile; but I don't call it "agile." I call it "TameFlow"

Not sure if the Agilists out there are happy about that – but once you've tried the *TameFlow Approach*, you will know that it is so! :)

TameFlow

The Campfire Talks with Herbie

Last week I hosted two "*Campfire Talks with Herbie!*" Here's what happened:

- [Campfire No 14](#) with [Øystein Mehus](#), who asked a number of questions, but in particular how to handle asynchronous and decoupled **Operational Flow** and **Financial Flow**. The answer was to apply the principles of **Throughput Accounting** and reason in terms of *Dollar-Time* diagrams.
- [Campfire No 15](#) with [Rudiger Wolf](#). As a continuation of the conversation with Øystein, I elaborated on how the **Prioritization Criteria** used in the *TameFlow Approach* differ from conventional ones (like ROI) or other popular *Flow* based economic criteria, like *Cost of Delay*. Of course what we care about is the **Financial Throughput Rate** over Herbie. The conversation with Rudiger was then broad and touched on many topics.

Re-read Saturday with Tom Cagley

[Thomas "Tom" Cagley Jr.](#), the host of the [Software Process and Measurement Cast](#) (also known as the "SPaMCast!"), is continuing with his **Re-Read Saturday** series of blogs. Last week was the re-read of **Chapter 2** of the [Tame your Work Flow](#).

His commentary is here: [Re-read Saturday, Tame you Work Flow Week 3: Chapter 2—Postpone Commitment and Limit Work in Process](#). One

passage I liked was this one:

"Postponing commitment until there is a capacity to do the work minimizes queue (time from acceptance to work beginning) and increases the likelihood of focus by reducing multitasking which will reduce flow time. That means that once a piece of work is accepted, it will get done faster and more predictably."

If you haven't read my book yet, now is a good time to do so, and follow along the weekly commentary from Tom; and maybe comment yourself on his blogs. If you don't have a copy of the book, you can always get it with a discount with [this deal](#).

Community Highlights

The [TameFlow Community](#) is growing in members. The discussions are also becoming more engaging, with many interesting discussion threads (often triggered by the *Campfire Talks* and [blog posts](#)) such as:

- [Søren Porskrog](#) was curious about if the [TameFlow Approach has ever been done for real](#) and also how to address [top management's unfamiliarity and skepticism of Throughput Accounting](#).
- [Ben Vautier](#) and [Wayne Mack](#) had a great and long discussion with me about [Buffer size - DBR Boards](#).
- [Grant Ballard-Tremeer](#) posted a very interesting question about [Work flow defined by external factors and multi-tasking](#).

LinkedIn

Every so often I find myself engaging in discussions on LinkedIn. At times, it is depressing, because of all the normative Agile arguments that are constantly raised. But the exercise is useful, just to learn about new ideas, and in particular about what objections might be raised when presenting the concepts of the *TameFlow Approach*.

At times, some brilliant observations come out of the conversations. For instance, some time ago, in a [comment](#) by [James Guaci](#), the idea of **Bottleneck of Trust** came up. It compelled me to this reflection:

Brilliant observation. Agile is high trust, but because of that cannot be high scale. Your span of trust is naturally limited by your circle of familiarity. So what do you do if your area of concern is larger than anyone's circle of familiarity? In Agile the answer is to "scale" - but it doesn't work very well, does it?

*In TameFlow trust in familiarity is replaced by trust in a **common goal** sustained by **mental models** that produce consistent and coherent **patterns of decision making** - that creates **UnityOfPurpose** and a **CommunityOfTrust** at scale, with trust-grade performance at scale.*

In all of this, the nitpicking about complexity becomes irrelevant, because the prevalence of the feeling of "being in it together" will allow that community to fearlessly face anything reality puts in their path, whether that path goes through the simple, complicated, complex, chaotic or any other kind of domain category.

*Love your expression though: **bottlenecked by trust**. It is true, and it*

can be said about any organization!

In a [post](#) on the *Agile and Lean Software Development* group [Kirk Bryde](#) came up with an interesting question about productivity and predictability. The thread offers all sorts of opinions, and also a lot of disagreement on simply finding a definition for the term "productivity." I contributed by 2 cents, and threw in the TOC definition:

Productivity = Financial Throughput / Operating Expenses

It is grounded in Throughput Accounting. It is not about counting widgets per unit of time. I further commented:

It is an economic measure, not an operational one. It means get the most \$\$\$ for the least amount of work. It encourages working LESS, which is the opposite effect of (most) operational definitions of productivity, that drive you to work MORE. Work less, work smarter.

In a satisfying way, this is consistent with the **eXtreme Programming** maxim which became the 12th Principle of the [Agile Manifesto](#): "*the art of maximizing the the amount of work not done!*". This is one reason why TameFlow is more agile than Agile: it aligns the **Financial Flow** with the (agile) engineering practices - that is certainly something that no other "agile" approach achieves. In fact, most still count productivity in terms of Story Point velocity!

So even when it comes to defining the meaning of "productivity" the *TameFlow Approach* holds the contrarian stance taught by Dr. Goldratt. The overarching driver is to "*Make money today and in the future.*" Any thing that affects our decision making, must be attached to a dollar sign - with the deep implications of being around in the future.

Another [post](#) by my good friend [Clarke "the bottleneck guy" Ching](#) lamented the fact that "*A common marketing tactic is to pick an enemy, and position yourself against them.*" I agree that it is not a nice thing to engage in deliberately creating such controversies. Clarke ended by saying: "*I despise the tribe of management-hating, Agile hypocrites, who also preach collaboration.*" Indeed, many in the Agile space must suffer from some cognitive dissonance problem, or just not be aware how hypocritical their arguments are.

In any case, Clarke's post gave me reason to reflect on the **positioning** of the *TameFlow Approach*. Clearly I have used confrontational positioning a number of times. This is the comment I posted to Clarke's post:

This [confrontational positioning] is somehow inevitable. I find myself in such a position with TameFlow, though it is not a deliberate strategy. It developed after pointing out the many things that just don't make sense (in Scrum, Agile and Kanban); as a defense to the many knee-jerking reactions my observations provoked. Some elements of those methods are simply incompatible with TameFlow (like sprints, WIP limits, anti-management, etc.). The conflicts are structural, inevitable. And since I do not share the same Goal with them, those conflicts cannot be resolved. There is no EC, without a common head! TameFlow itself developed by embracing the many good things from other approaches (in particular by applying Pattern Theory). But when there are vested commercial interests by the

incumbent proponents. The conflicts of opinion escalate, and become business competition. But that is good. It gives people choices. And they can chose to be foolish or wise when spending their money. I know where I would place my bets! :))

The Business of TameFlow

The last part of my comment to Clarke, above, brings me to reflect on the "business of TameFlow" - and if we are to find a positive way of expressing what TameFlow is, I have no doubts: **The TameFlow Approach is the high-performance alternative**. Alternative to all other Agile or agile-like approaches.

This positioning will also have implications on how all TameFlow services (like training and consulting) will be marketed and sold. I definitely want to create the perception that TameFlow is like the Porsche, Ferrari or Lamborghini of the industry - while the others are the Fiats, VWs and Ladas.

Another consequence is that the market size will be smaller; more like a niche. Not only because of the pricing aspect (high-end pricing), but because of the limiting factor that the *TameFlow Approach* will be successful only in those places where the CEO is totally onboard; where they are able to experience and perform **Inspired Leadership** and are driven by their own **enlightened self-interest** that is in alignment with that of any one else in their company.

Giving a high-performance car into the hands of an average driver will only make them get to the nearest hospital faster. To drive a high-performance car, we need high-performance drivers, that have what it takes. By definition, high-performance implies being in the top-percentile of whatever scale is used to measure performance. In short: the *TameFlow Approach* is *not* for anyone. But for those that do adopt the *TameFlow Approach*... well, they will be in for quite a ride!

This year is a pivotal year in the history of the *TameFlow Approach*. Thanks to the insistence of [Daniel Doiron](#), I am now convinced to develop the *Business of TameFlow*. Until now, TameFlow was simply my own very secret sauce, that allowed me to be extremely successful on the field, as a solo consultant.

Daniel raised the bar.

Now the game plan is to offer the high-performance alternative to all the Scrums, SAFes, Kanbans - and what else - that are the mainstream options today. There is no doubt in my mind that TameFlow can outperform any one of those - I've done it so many times myself. But can it get the place it deserves in the marketplace?

It is the **business development** of TameFlow that is the new challenge. And the first few actions since publishing the "*Tame your Work Flow*" book (like revamped website, this newsletter, renewed community site, the blogs, the campfire talks) are starting to show there is traction and interest. The demand for TameFlow services is rising. The next step is to gear up on the Training Services and offering. And for this, maybe you can help too: if you are an Agile Coach or other kind of professional in this industry, and want to help me in bringing the *TameFlow Approach* to the market - and, obviously, have an improved

Financial Throughput for yourself! - get in touch with me and Daniel.

There's lots of work to be done, and many rewards are awaiting on the way!

Have a great week!

Steve

P.S.

Also help me spread the awareness about the *TameFlow Approach*.

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