

The TameFlow Connection Newsletter

The latest news and ideas about the *TameFlow Approach*

TameFlow Connection No 6

Hello Friends of Herbie

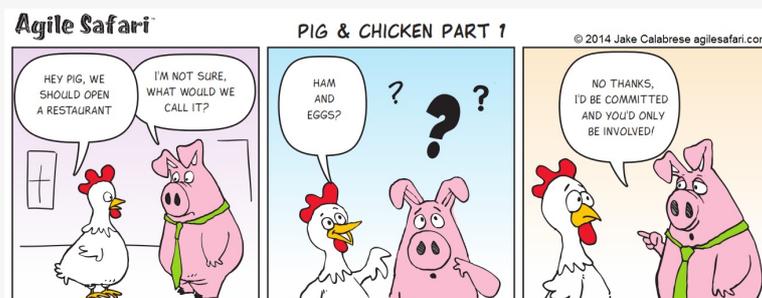
Last week my attention and time was almost entirely taken up by the **TOCICO 2020 Virtual Conference**. I did not have time to host any Campfire Talks. So this TameFlow Connection will be short. I will just hand-pick a few notable takeaways from the conference.

TOCICO 2020 Highlights

There was a plethora of presentations. One talk more compelling than the other. And I haven't looked at all of them yet. Anyway, here are a few fast-food-for-thought items that I took away.

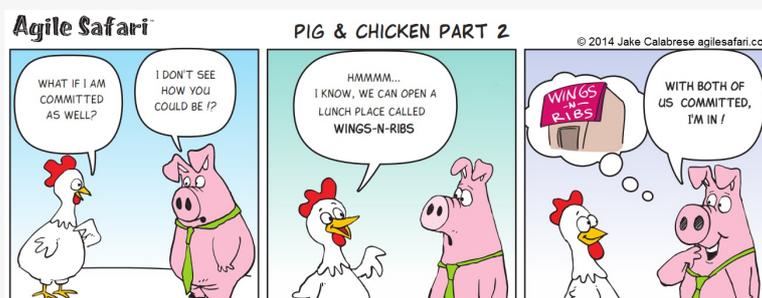
Three Types of Metrics

In the Agile circles anti-management sentiments are widespread. I will never stop reminding people of the "*Chicken and Pigs*" metaphor, that has shaped so much of the attitudes, especially in Scrum; as highlighted by a famous educational cartoon.



Yes, the metaphor has been "[retired](#)" - with lots of debate. The cynical side of me would say that the Scrum folks realized they could sell their offerings to a much broader audience, if the "powers that be" would be included as well. That happened - coincidentally! - more or less when the matter of "scaling" became a concern.

So even the educational cartoon was extended with a strip #2:



(Yes! one "issue" I have with Scrum - besides the technicalities of the

approach – is this revisionists history habit: of redefining elements on the basis of convenience, with no overarching coherence or integrity.)

Anyway... often these feelings result in sheer **resistance towards metrics**.

In the eyes of plenty Agile folks, metrics are seen as **means of abuse by management** who use numbers to inflict unreasonable demands on those doing the work. I always had a problem with this view, as it runs contrary to the idea of the fundamental patterns of the *TameFlow Approach* (*Inspired Leadership, Unity of Purpose and Community of Trust*).

In his talk, Daniel Walsh, a veteran of TOC, offered an interesting classification, identifying three types of metrics. Quoting from his slides:

- **Performance** – Summary of past effort, periodicity.
- **Conformal** – It is binary: "Did you achieve planned effort, periodicity?"
- **Operational** – This is cause and effect (Real time, forward looking) – i.e. Take action A in order to achieve B

My conclusion: the anti-metrics Agile proponents have seemingly experienced only misuse of performance and conformal metrics; but they are not aware of the power of operational metrics. So this is something to keep in mind when discussing metrics with the Agilists – and turn it into an opportunity to **educate rather than confront**.

The Dark Matter of Dependencies

Robert Newbold provided another interesting classification; namely the classification of dependencies, and offered the following:

- **Path dependency:** The activity must wait for another activity.
- **Resource dependency:** The activity must wait for a limited resource.
- **Process dependency:** I choose to make the activity wait for another activity or resource.

Robert explains: "*Process dependencies are choices. They are the 'dark matter' of our lives. They often take up 80% or more of the time we spend on things.*"

This insight also provides a good framing for the discussion of dependencies. Most people and approaches are overly concerned with *path* and *resource* dependencies. Often such dependencies don't leave that many choices and degrees of freedom. They are what they are. However, process dependencies are primarily determined by *our choices*.

In other words, they are a manifestation of our **Mental Models**; and they offer the greatest leverage to improvement. And the more powerful *Mental Models* will also determine or provide alternative management paradigms for the path and resource dependencies.

Robert summarizes it this way: "*Process Dependencies – choices we make that delay us – cut across tasks, resources, products, and projects. Address one, and you affect many things.*"

This is exactly what we are doing when working with our explicit *Mental Models!*

Quality of Definition

Ian Heptinstall gave an interesting presentation on the broader scope of project management. He made the distinction between "*project management*", which is realm of project managers, and the "*management of projects*" which is the broader perspective of top management having to juggle with a multitude of initiatives and projects.

One important aspect is the notion of *Quality of Definition*, at all levels; and the consequential understanding that different approaches might a better fit for the situation at hand depending on context and lifecycle.

In particular, from an operational point of view, Ian mentioned **Full Kitting** as an instance of quality of definition: defining what are the conditions to be able to start working on something.

Of course, that resonated with what we have in the *TameFlow Approach*.

Precedence Based Program Management

In what might be the best presentation of the conference, Steve Holt and Matthew O'Brien, described their approach for large scale program management (at Boeing), where a mix of approaches (Waterfall, Agile, Critical Chain) might be used together in different parts of the business, with a distinction between **non-recurring product development activities** and **recurring execution activities**.

Their work uses the Cynefin framework, Theory of Constraints, Design Structure Matrices, and different project management methods, often rooted in set based concurrent design practices.

There was really a lot of ground covered in their work. What surprised me most was the extensive use of **Design Structure Matrices** (DSM). These are tools to represent the interactions or inter-dependencies between people, process steps, product components, services, and so on.

In Chapter 2 - *Shapes and Patterns of Hyper-Productivity* - of the [Hyper Book](#), I described how the same kind of representation - there I referred to it as an **Interaction Grid** - could be used to detect patterns that characterize high-performing teams.

So Steve and Matthew's work powerfully resonated with me when they described their use of DSMs

Steve and Matthew actually brought this technique further. Their matrices represented not only the interactions and inter-dependencies between *people*, but also between *components* and *activities*. All together, in one big consolidating matrix.

What was not present in their work however, was using the tool in order to **detect patterns**. I used the representation primarily to study the patterns of relationships between people; but the people element corresponds to one of the (sub)matrices used by Steve and Matthew.

Furthermore the *Interaction Grids* were also representing the **intensity of relationship**; and not only the fact that relationships existed. Not sure if this aspect is also handled by Steve and Matthew; at least I could not infer it from their presentation.

There might be lots to uncover by extending the approach to consider even components and activities, in addition to people. And then see if we can discover any overarching patterns; and represent intensity or strength of the dependencies too.

Going forward, I will certainly adopt their extend usage of DSMs in the *TameFlow Approach*, and see if the **TameFlow Patterns** can be extended even further. Maybe it will give me the motivation to resume the writing of the [TameFlow Patterns](#) book!

TameFlow

Re-read Saturday with Tom Cagley

As customary, [Thomas "Tom" Cagley Jr.](#), the host of the [Software Process and Measurement Cast](#) (the "SPaMCast!"), is continuing with his **Re-Read Saturday** series of blogs.

Last week was the re-read of **Chapter 3** of the [Tame your Work Flow](#) book.

His commentary is here: [Re-read Saturday. Tame you Work Flow Week 4: Chapter 3 – Flow Efficiency, Little's Law and Economic Impact](#). The passage of his commentary that I liked most this week was this entertain real-life example explaining **Flow Efficiency**:

"If I pull a work item at 8 AM, work on it for 30 minutes, at noon stop, and then finish it in 30 minutes of work between 7:30 and 8 PM. The task has been in process for 12 hours with 1 hour of Touch Time and 11 hours of Wait Time."

It is a great reminder about the value of focus and uninterrupted work!

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. You can get a copy of the book with a discount with [this deal](#).

Have a great week!

Steve

P.S.

Please spread the awareness about the *TameFlow Approach*. Tell your friends and colleagues to subscribe to this [TameFlow Connection Newsletter](#) – or just forward them a copy of this issue – and to watch the [Campfire Talks with Herbie](#) webinars. Besides, the [next episode](#) of the Campfire Talks will be on Wednesday, July 1, 2020; and the topic will be about *TameFlow tools*.

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