

# The TameFlow Connection Newsletter

The latest news and ideas about the *TameFlow Approach*

## TameFlow Connection No 8

Hello Friends of Herbie

### TameFlow

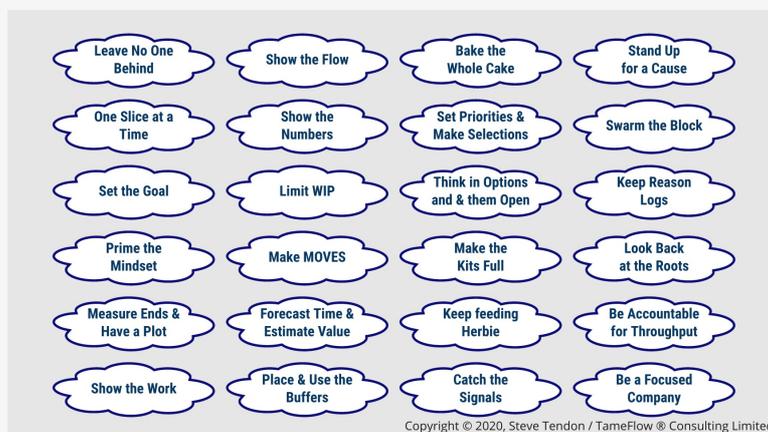
#### Campfire Talks with Herbie

Last week we had [Martin Nantel](#) as the main guest on the [Campfire Talk with Herbie No.17](#), and also [Paula Steward](#) who provided lots of insights and questions during the show.

Martin has a longstanding experience in the industry. He recently discovered the *TameFlow Approach*, tried it on the field and got great results. To the point that he has decided to incorporate a company to offer TameFlow training courses in the private sector. In fact, he is one of the first **Certified TameFlow Trainers**.

At the end of the interview, Martin asked me to "*Briefly explain the stepping stones to introduce, sell and implement TameFlow in an organization.*" You can read my reply to Martin here: [Herbie talks about... Bootstrapping the TameFlow Approach](#).

In particular, I came up with the following illustration - which you might want to have as a reference - to summarize some of the **Proto-Patterns** that we can use to kick-start the adoption of the *TameFlow Approach*.



A deeper explanation on how to do this is found in *Chapter 21, Patterns to Get Started* of the [Tame your Work Flow](#) book.

The next *Campfire Talk with Herbie* will be on Tuesday, July 14, at 20:00 CEST on this Youtube live stream:



Campfire Talks 18

## Re-read Saturday with Tom Cagley

[Thomas "Tom" Cagley Jr.](#), the host of the [Software Process and Measurement Cast](#) (also known as the "SPaM Cast!"), is continuing with his **Re-Read Saturday** series of blogs. Last week was the re-read of *Chapter 4, Utility of Flawed Mental Models* of the [Tame your Work Flow](#). His commentary is [here](#).

I particularly liked his summarizing the key concept that *"the constraint is underutilized – it has spare capacity"* whenever we are pushing more work than can be handled by it.

(Note: If you don't have the book you can always get it with a discount with [this deal](#).)

## Theory of Constraints

### My TOCICO 2020 Virtual Conference Presentation

As you probably know, I recently delivered a presentation at the *TOCICO 2020 Virtual Conference*. Many have asked me to make the presentation available online.

So here it is in its entirety on Youtube:



TOC in a VUCA World

In the presentation I go over the origins of the *TameFlow Approach*, how it shares some common heritage with **Scrum**, the role of **Alexandrian Patterns**, the discovery of **TOC** and **Kanban**. My mission of overcoming Kanban's inability to find the real Constraint in knowledge-work, and to do so using all the concepts of TOC.

I explore the **nature of knowledge-work**, with **iterations**, **interactions** and **increments**. I consider the impact of uncertainty, incompleteness and interactivity in the presence of digital computation.

I highlight the **Core Conflict** between Agile and conventional project management practices. I consider **Critical-Chain Project Management** as a collection of patterns, and think about which patterns are still good in a knowledge-work setting.

I develop a rudimentary **Current Reality Tree**, **Future Reality Tree** and a **Prerequisites Tree**, while highlighting another core conflict between Kanban and Scrum. I show a resolution with two **Injections**.

The first injection is the usage of **Probabilistic Forecasting**, which though needs the conditions of **Little's Law**, with a stable process and the necessity to **Limit WIP**.

The second injection is to resort to **DBR Scheduling** as an alternative way (in place of **Column WIP Limits**) to achieve the limitation of WIP.

I go on reasoning about how **Flow Time Distributions** allow us to find the percentiles and place a CCPM-style **Buffer**. Actually this is the **MOVE Buffer** as it is called in the *TameFlow Approach*.

Using Little's Law and **Linear Projections** (with all the caveats of doing so!) we can derive the **Buffer Consumption** of that Buffer on the forecast timeline of a MOVE in progress.

Though this requires some deeper thinking about how to **size** and where to **position** the Buffer exactly. In particular, that Buffer sizing and placement depends on how well the **Conditions of Little's Law** are upheld.

The more stable the system, the more "aggressive" we can be with the Buffer's size and position. Therefore, in order to keep the system as stable as possible, we must Limit WIP by using DBR Scheduling.

Now, DBR Scheduling necessarily requires identifying the **Constraint in the Work Process** - as if it were a manufacturing plant. We can find the Constraint in the Work Process by looking at the **Work Process Stage** with the longest **Average In-State Flow Time**.

Hence a **DBR Buffer** is placed in front of that step, i.e. a **Column** on a **TameFlow Board**.

Bringing these two factors together, we can manage time via the MOVE Buffer, and the **Work Load / Work Flow** via the DBR Buffer.

A final consideration on the difficulty of sizing and placing the Buffer, I show how it can be done interactively - taking into account the need to keep the team in a state of **Psychological Flow**. The idea here is to calibrate the actual position of the Buffer as to strive to keep the team in the **Yellow Zone**. That Yellow Zone can be considered as a tangible representation of the team's **Flow Channel**.

Quite possibly, this is one of the best presentations I've ever put together to illustrate (some of) the key concepts of the *TameFlow Approach*.

## Agile

### The Positioning of the TameFlow Approach in the Agile Landscape

This article, [Agile's Early Evangelists Wouldn't Mind Watching it Die](#) is a rather long read. It gives an account of the opinions of Mary

Poppendieck (the author of the excellent book "*Lean Software Development: An Agile Toolkit*" from 2013) about the current situation of the Agile industry, with the history of Agile, and how it came about.

Insightful observations are about that software development, the original real of Agile, has strayed from engineering; and that Agile has become about anything but engineering.

Mary laments how "soft skills" took over Agile. She further reflects on how this impacts the roles of woman engineers. And, paradoxically, the advent of continuous delivery has diminished the original needs of actual engineering capabilities; pushing Agile to find new space - the "soft skills" space.

At the end, she says, it is all about "*being good at things*" and to let "*engineers be engineers.*"

All of this brings me to think about **how to position the *TameFlow Approach* in the current Agile landscape.**

It is undeniable that Agile's drive towards almost becoming a philosophy based on values and principles - oftentimes borderline with fanatical following, religious belief and political fervor - rather than a pragmatic tool that helps with "*being good at things*" has molded a very different socio-technical corporate landscape compared to its origins.

And this is not necessarily for the better; as oftentimes it has brought about adversarial standpoints. Many of Agile's values and principles have taken the direction of becoming antithetical to the needs of corporations - or more aptly, the needs of *all* people in modern knowledge-intensive businesses.

In particular we notice this in the diffuse anti-metrics and anti-management sentiments, which are very common in the Agile world. Such sentiments are totally foreign to the way of thinking we cultivate in the *TameFlow Approach*.

So this brings us to the conclusion that **we should NOT consider the *TameFlow Approach* as an "Agile" approach.**

The *TameFlow Approach* is based on **praxis** (theory informed practice), and - in consonance with the *Theory of Constraints* - promotes a **universal decision making paradigm** that can allow any goal-driven company to become exceptionally "*good at things.*"

If we really have to position the *TameFlow Approach* in this Agile landscape - which we are sort of forced to do when we have to compare to all other Agile approaches to which we seem to be the alternative and the competitor - we should claim that we are primarily concerned about **Business Agility**. And that business "agility" is simply intended in the literal sense, as the ability to change direction at speed and at scale.

Counter-intuitively, even if the *TameFlow Approach* is deeply grounded in metrics and praxis, and agnostic to any values or principles, due to the way all the elements of the *TameFlow Approach* concur in creating a **Unity of Purpose** and a **Community of Trust**, at the end we will have organizations that are more true to those soft-skill elements that Agile purports to pursue. Without having created

further internal divisions or exclusions.

That's why we can claim that what we do is more agile than Agile, but we do not call it "Agile."

We call it **TameFlow**.

Have a great week!

Steve

P.S.

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