Quick or Dead
Organizational Velocity for an Impatient World

University of Maryland, October 6, 2007
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“We used to live in a world where only the fittest survive. Today we live in a world where only the fastest survive.”

-Bill Gates
Three things to talk about:

1. S is for “System”
2. V is for “Velocity”
3. A is for “Addiction”
S is for “System”
Examples of Systems

- Microsoft Word
- The cardio-vascular system
- The federal government
- The product that your project is building
- The project that is building that product
“Immutable Law”

Without exception, always and forever, the system shall:

- exist to serve the needs of its owners
- conform to the design criteria imposed by its noble designers
Let's get real:

- Systems have needs of their own.
- Their needs trump ours.
- Most systems are designed by Happenstance.
V is for “Velocity”

Consider the system for building a system, your project:

☐ Velocity (getting a lot of meaningful stuff done in not very much time) is clearly a need of the users.

☐ But did Happenstance understand that?

☐ Are the system’s own needs (which trump ours) consistent with high velocity?
V: the false model

The faster we are at doing our work, the more organizational velocity will improve.
Closer to the truth

The difference between fast and slow organizations is not how quickly they do their work, but how much of their time they spend on-task.

Are you and your people on-task

★ when doing email?
★ when in a meeting?
★ when presenting and viewing powerpoint?
★ ????
How Knowledge Workers Spent Their Time (1970s)

- Working alone
- Working with one or two others
- In meetings

How Knowledge Workers Spent Their Time (Today)

- In meetings
- Working alone
- Working with one or two others
A ceremony

- a meeting with no defined exit criteria
- ended by the clock
- attended by all members of some group
- characterized by serial one-to-one interaction
A working meeting:

1. Exists for one purpose and one purpose only: to make a decision.

2. Is attended only by those people needed to make the decision.

3. Is constrained by a published agenda (the decision).

4. Is ended when the decision is made.

5. Is allocated at least a 4-hour block.
A is for “Addiction”

You know humans can become addicted to narcotics and alcohol. But how about:

* meetings
* email
* powerpoint
* documentation
* review
* . . .
Flawed Model of Addiction
Flawed Model of Addiction

- Feeling good
- Do some drugs

Diagram shows a cycle where feeling good leads to doing drugs, which then leads back to feeling good.
The 4 Elements of Addiction

All four of the following have to be present for addiction to happen:

1. pain
2. a defect of reasoning of the form: “only doing xxx will relieve my pain”
3. short-term reduction of pain due to doing xxx
4. long-term increase in pain due to doing xxx
The 4 Elements of Addiction

- Pain
- Do XXX

短期影响 (short-term)
长期影响 (long-term)
The DeMarco Prescription

- Abolish ceremonial meetings.
- Make a cult of one-on-one and 3-way interaction.
- Take steps to eliminate corporate spam.
- Teach the organism to self-coordinate.