

Aalto University  
School of Science  
Degree Programme in Computer Science and Engineering

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# Lean software development and the effects of working with unfamiliar technology

## A case study

Master's Thesis  
Espoo, December 1, 2015

**DRAFT! — September 23, 2015 — DRAFT!**

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ABSTRACT OF  
 MASTER'S THESIS

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<b>Title:</b>	Lean software development and the effects of working with unfamiliar technology A case study		
<b>Date:</b>	December 1, 2015	<b>Pages:</b>	18
<b>Major:</b>	Software Engineering and Business	<b>Code:</b>	T-76
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Professor Marjo Kauppinen		
<b>Advisor:</b>	Eeva Suvi		
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<b>Keywords:</b>	innovation, services, service design		
<b>Language:</b>	English		

Aalto-yliopisto  
 Perustieteiden korkeakoulu  
 Tietotekniikan koulutusohjelma

DIPLOMITYÖN  
 TIIVISTELMÄ

<b>Tekijä:</b>	Oskar Ehnström		
<b>Työn nimi:</b>			
<b>Päiväys:</b>	1. joulukuuta 2015	<b>Sivumäärä:</b>	18
<b>Pääaine:</b>	Ohjelmistotuotanto ja liiketoiminta	<b>Koodi:</b>	T-76
<b>Valvoja:</b>	Professori Marjo Kauppinen		
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<b>Asiasanat:</b>	innovaatio, palvelut, palvelusuunnittelu		
<b>Kieli:</b>	Englanti		

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Examensprogram för datateknik

SAMMANDRAG AV  
DIPLOMARBETET

Utfört av:	Oskar Ehnström		
Arbetets namn:			
Datum:	Den 1 December 2015	Sidantal:	18
Huvudämne:	Programvaruproduktion och affärsverksamhet	Kod:	T-76
Övervakare:	Professor Marjo Kauppinen		
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Nyckelord:	innovation, tjänster, service design		
Språk:	Engelska		

# Acknowledgements

TODO: Thank people here

Espoo, December 1, 2015

Oskar Ehnström

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Lean thinking has been gaining traction in the software development industry in recent years. Books like “The Lean Startup” and “Lean Software Development: An Agile Toolkit” have taught us how to take lean practices that were initially used in manufacturing and use them to create value in software development and service design. Organisations have, at this point, had the time to implement lean practices and try the suggested methods in practice. This makes it possible to compare findings and analyse what the common best practices and problems are.

Although uncertainty is always a factor in software projects, new and unfamiliar technology introduces even more of it and can potentially lead to budget overruns or even project failure. Understanding how to adjust accepted lean practices to these projects would enable projects to perform more reliably and avoid introducing unnecessary risk when striving for high rewards using new technology.

### 1.1 Scope

Scope of the literature review will be existing literature on lean software projects, comparing these to find similarities if there are any.

Scope of the empirical study will be one lean software development project. The project will be studied from the point of view of developers, customers and end-users. The thesis is limited to one case study.

### 1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This section presents the structure of the thesis.

First, chapter 3 covers the existing literature on lean software development. In this chapter experiences of previous lean software projects are analysed and compared. This is done in order to find some common trends or best practices to use in projects. These common trends and best practices are compared in order to later compare them with the findings of the empirical study, which are presented in chapter 6.

Second, chapter 4 goes through the methods used in the empirical study. The participants and their roles are presented as well as the practical arrangements regarding interviews.

Third, chapter 5 presents the results of the empirical study. The data gathered is presented as raw data.

Fourth, chapter 6 discusses the results gathered from the empirical study and their implications. This is done by analysing the relationship between the data gathered from the empirical study and the literature review presented in chapter 3.

Lastly, chapter 7 presents the conclusions of this thesis and suggestions for further research.



## Chapter 2

# Background

### 2.1 The origin of lean thinking

**!FIXME This section will be about the history of lean and how it came to be applied to software engineering FIXME!**

Even though the traditional wisdom is that the Japanese car manufacturers had a significant advantage over western competitors due to the lean methodologies they implemented there is some controcersy over wether this was in fact the case. Dybá & Sharp argue that by examining the facts and taking automation into account the Japanese did not have a superior organizational advantage. [1]

### 2.2 Lean versus Agile

**!FIXME This section will discuss the differences between lean and agile FIXME!**

**!FIXME Lean should be thought of a set of principles rather than practices. This article has some excellent points and trends to talk about.[5] FIXME!**

**!FIXME End with something about everything being services nowadays and lean/agile being developer focused. The continue to... FIXME!**

### 2.3 Lean Service Creation

**!FIXME Lean Service Creation is about build measure learn and create somehing new. Tie this into the problem and focus on the new**

**part. Using news devices maybe? FIXME!**

Lean Service Creation is based on the ideas of “The Lean Startup” as described by Eric Reis in his 2011 book.[6]

**!FIXME How do I get a source for this? Interview? FIXME!**

## Chapter 3

# Litterature review

In this section I will present the existing litterature and what general guidelines or conclusions it presents. I will refer to the main concepts presented in books and compare those findings to case studies that have implemented the relevant concepts in order to find some commonalities if there are any.

I will also present the process for finding and analyzing the material I have chosen.

- How was the litterature review conducted?
  - Scholar
  - Scholar through related articles of known good articles
  - Key articles then their sources
  - Same author, look for more
  - Same conference/journal, look for more

Keywords: *new service creation, digital service creation, service-dominant, design thinking, new service development*

### 3.1 Comparison of existing litterature

In this section I will compare articles regarding case studies focusing on lean software development/management.

Two case studies. This is an early attempt to test lean software development. The article covers an experiment set up to test the validity of using lean principles in software development. [2]

Timberline Inc. case study. Probably the first case of adopting lean principles to software development.[3]

Question	Litterature review	Empirical study
What are the currently available best practices for lean software projects?	x	
Which of these best practices need to be adapted when working with new technology?		x
How do these best practices need to be adapted?		x
Which best practices remain valid?		x

Table 3.1: Research questions and their respective sections

BBC Worldwide case study. The gist of it is that the performance of the team improved when adopting lean practices, but there were some challenges in fitting the the lean principles with the rest of the company.[4]

## 3.2 Research problem and question

This chapter will end with the research problem and questions.

The research problem is defined as follows:

*What are the commonly accepted and used lean software development practices and how do they change when working with new and unfamiliar technology?*

To investigare this problem three research questions have been set up in table 3.1.

## Chapter 4

# Methods

In this section I will describe how I conducted the empirical study.

- Interviews
  - 2-3 project members
  - 2-3 customers
  - 2-3 end-users
  - 1-1.5 hours each (5-10min for end-users)
- Semi-structured interviews

## Chapter 5

# Results

In this section I will present the results of the empirical study. This section contains the raw data of the conducted interviews. This section does not analyze or compare the results with the litterature.

## Chapter 6

# Discussion

Here I will discuss how the findings from my empirical work relate to the literary review. What are the similarities and differences when comparing what the literature says and what the interviews showed.

## Chapter 7

# Conclusions

Here I mention the most important findings of the discussion section and the literary review section.

I also point out how this research can be used in the future and what its limitations are. (e.g. only one case study)

2 pages



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## Appendix A

# Interview questions

Here goes the questions from the interviews.