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MAHDI D. FIROOZJAEI

COMP8967- Internship Project- I

Agile Leadership Toolkit- III
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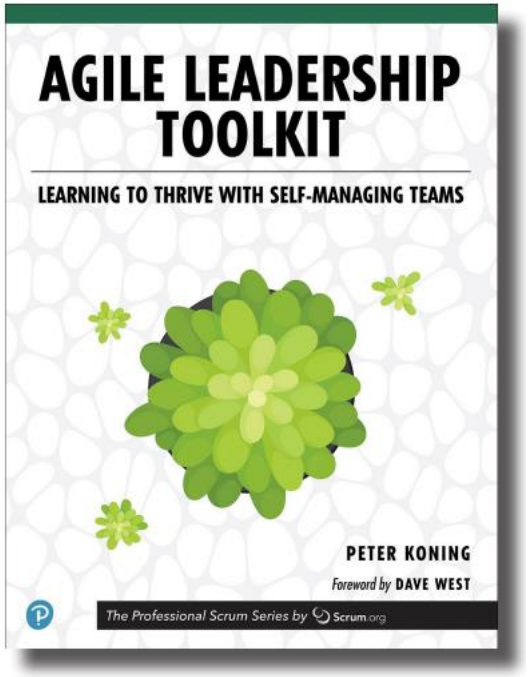
Recommended References:



Learning to Thrive with Self-Managing Teams

Peter Koning

AGILE LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

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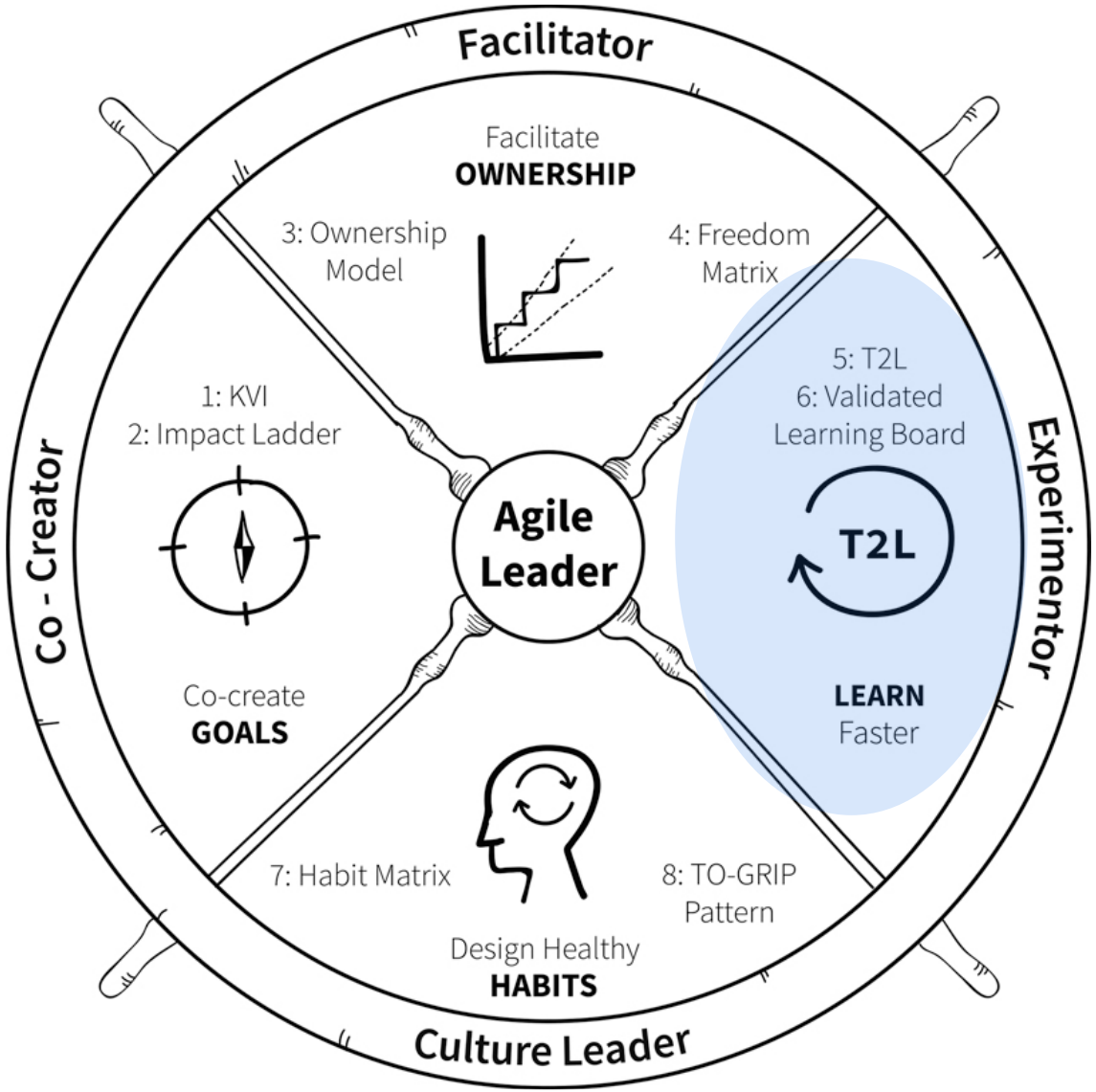

In a competitive market:

1. **What is your proof that your teams are doing the right thing?**
2. **When will teams receive customer feedback on their choices of today?**

A market fact:

Dispirited, unmotivated, unappreciated workers cannot compete in a highly competitive world

Build a great innovative new product: Revent

- What is the necessary of building a new product?
  - The old product had existed for more than ten years and was the market leader.
  - But it was threatened to be overtaken by the competition.
  - New functionalities were difficult to add, and the method of working was outdated.
- So that they make something revolutionary to remain market leader;
  - Believe: new product would easily beat the competition

Peter Koning ---as a new agile leader

- Created a new product using new techniques and a new methodology.
- Used Scrum as a method and worked with sprints of two weeks -every two weeks they had a new demo version (an “increment” within Scrum), -showed to all sorts of stakeholders -very satisfied.
- New product was demonstrated to the customers –
  - They were enthusiastic → they were more than willing to buy the new product soon
  - They were impressed by the smart algorithms that could automatically handle all kinds of situations.
- Also held steering-committee meetings with the director, and all known KPIs were green.
- Received test scenarios from customers that they used to test the new product continually.

After more than two years of intensive development, testing, and processing of feedback, they worked toward the first release. A select group of customers now really started working with the release.

Peter Koning ---as a new agile leader

- After the first release came the big disappointment.
  - Customers did not switch to the new product even though, in many areas, it worked a good deal better than the old one.
  - Although they had built smart algorithms that would make life easier for users, there were many exceptional situations that the new product could not handle.

This was such a blockade for their customers that they had to fall back on the old (existing) product.

CONTROL OVER ACTIVITIES

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- The agile leader is responsible for products from a team are not sold, unreliable, or require a lot of maintenance.
- The agile leader wants to know if the team members are performing their work well: example,
  - Does his team ensure that thousands of customers can visit the website at the same time?
  - Do the reports produced contain the correct figures and information?
  - Does his sales team not promise too many golden mountains in the sales process?

- The agile leader doesn't want to micromanage the team. At the same time, he doesn't want to blindly trust the teams for years.
- How does he find the balance between these two unwanted extremes?

  Learning loop: The agile leader has to create an environment in which teams get quick feedback from actual users and can spend time on learning from this feedback.

Frequent feedback from actual users is the most important piece of information when trying to determine whether teams are doing the right things

Note:

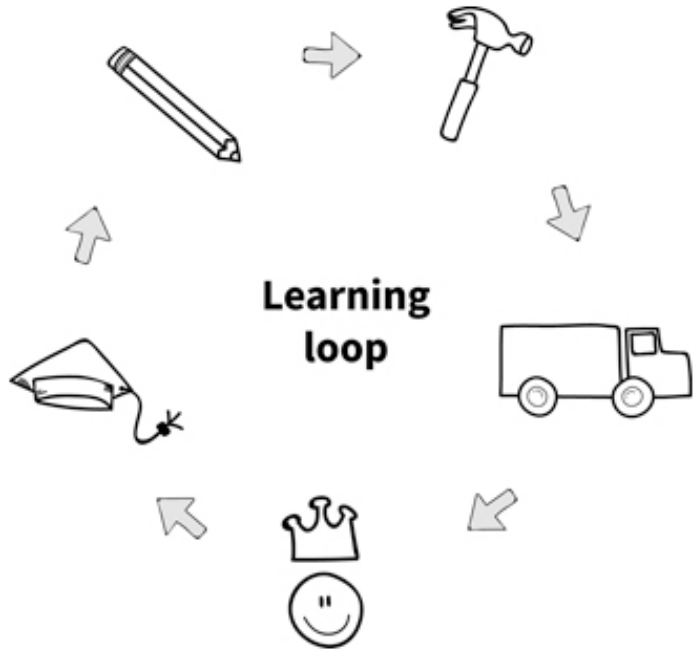
Instead of

- Getting all kinds of detailed reports,
- Spending time double-checking risks, and
- Asking questions on the forecast,

The agile leader is often more effective when he spends time optimizing the learning loop.

LEARNING LOOP

- The cyclic process of retrieving feedback from users, learning from them, and implementing improvements in the product is called the learning loop.
- The learning loop is a mean for the team members to know whether they are doing the right work. They can quickly adjust themselves based on new insights.
- By applying the learning loop, the team becomes more self-organizing and more agile.



LEARNING LOOP

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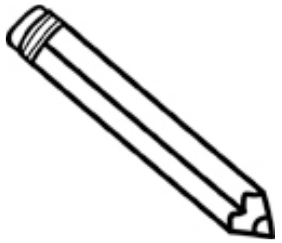
Step 1: Sketch



- Team, stakeholders, and customers together think about all kinds of ideas to expand a product or service.
- The most important ideas are elaborated in a plan/sketch: a drawing, illustration, or description.
- “Sketch” means that not everything needs to be worked out in detail, which happens during the next steps

LEARNING LOOP

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Step 2: Build

- Team gets to work with the most important ideas and incorporates these into a product or service.
- The team elaborates on the details of the ideas in consultation with stakeholders and customers.
- In the meantime, the team gives demos of the product to stakeholders and customers for the following reasons:
  - To discuss whether the details have been processed correctly
  - To brainstorm further details
  - To provide expectations about when the product or service can be delivered

LEARNING LOOP

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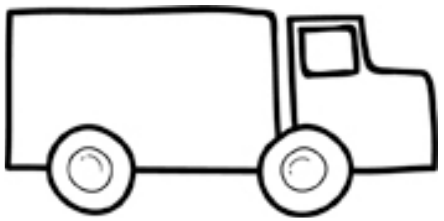
Step 3: Deliver



- Once the ideas are built, a customized product or service can be delivered.
- The shorter time this step takes, the sooner the users can get started and the sooner the team can learn from the users.

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Step 4: Use

- Customers use the real product; this is not a demo.
- During use, the team keeps a close eye on which and how much feedback the customer provides.
- Feedback can of course be both positive and negative. In addition, the customer can give hard and soft feedback.
- This step ends when enough feedback has been received to process or when an agreed amount of time has elapsed.

LEARNING LOOP

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Step 5: Learn

- The focus is on learning. The team studies soft and hard feedback and thereby
- Learns which ideas worked well in practice and which did not.
- As a result, the team grows, and it is always better to build products and services with which the customer is satisfied.
- In addition, the team can adjust or delete existing ideas and sketch new ideas based on the feedback.

The Agile Leader as an Experimenter

- Coach the team to go through each step of the learning loop. Do not skip steps or take steps too quickly because of time pressure.
- Ensure that the team is not working harder just to achieve their short-term results, but rather obtains feedback from users.
- Inspire the team to have an open mind for this feedback. Don’t stick to assumptions, suspicions, and opinions. Rather, ask questions and be open to refreshing ideas from customers.
- Explain why structurally reporting on user satisfaction and usage is so important.
- When the users are highly satisfied, give the team all the appreciation and gratitude. They are very mature and need a lot of freedom to be motivated.
- If user satisfaction is low, first pose a lot of open questions to the team, helping, guiding, and—if necessary—making adjustments to increase user satisfaction.
- Brainstorm with the teams on the impediments for next steps to a smooth and faster learning loop.

Note:

In a complex, unpredictable, and dynamic market, it’s crucial that teams know quickly whether they are doing the right work

- What do users give as feedback?
- How much time is spent per week on learning from actual usage?

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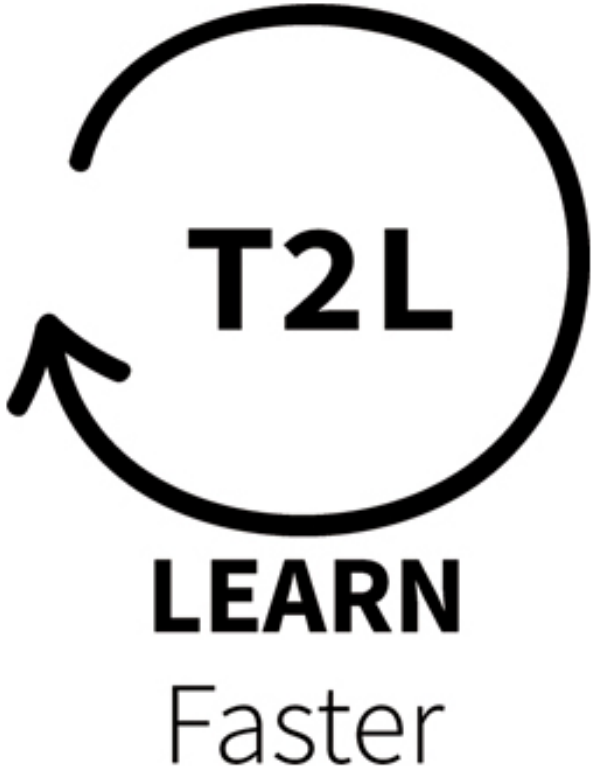
Tool: The Time To Learn (T2L)



THE TIME TO LEARN (T2L)

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- T2L is the total time needed from sketching an idea or improvement, building it, bringing it to the users, and learning from their usage.
- The T2L includes refining and designing, developing, testing, and integrating it, deploying it to market, letting users use it, gathering statistics and feedback on that usage, studying these results, and learning from it.

Some examples of calculating the T2L

1	5 months	I month	3 months	I month	10 months
2	2 months	0,5 month	2 months	0,5 month	5 months
3	4 weeks	0 days	I week	I week	6 weeks

Shortening the T2L

- By implementing improvements in a few places, the T2L can be lowered relatively quickly. Some examples are as follows:
  a. By choosing a smaller customer group instead of solving everything for everyone, the construction step becomes significantly shorter.
  b. Because the solution is less extensive, feedback from users can often be collected more quickly.
  c. By placing focus across departments and, in particular, reducing idle and waiting times, the turnaround time is considerably reduced.

Higher Agility Through Shorter T2L:
The higher the learning speed, the faster companies can respond to developments.

T2L in Practice

- It is useful to steer on a low T2L when making the plans.

- How?
  - By choosing a phased rollout and not doing everything at once.
  - It is a good indication of the risk for projects: a low T2L means a lower risk.

- What is a good relationship between the duration of a project, initiative or improvement, and the corresponding T2L?
  - A T2L of one-fourth the lead time is often a good rule of thumb.
  - Highly mature agile teams that issue releases to users several times a week have a T2L of less than one month.

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Additional Benefits of a Better T2L

1. Lower Cost-of-Delay
2. Lower Cost-of-Change
3. Higher Team Motivation
4. Improved Liquidity

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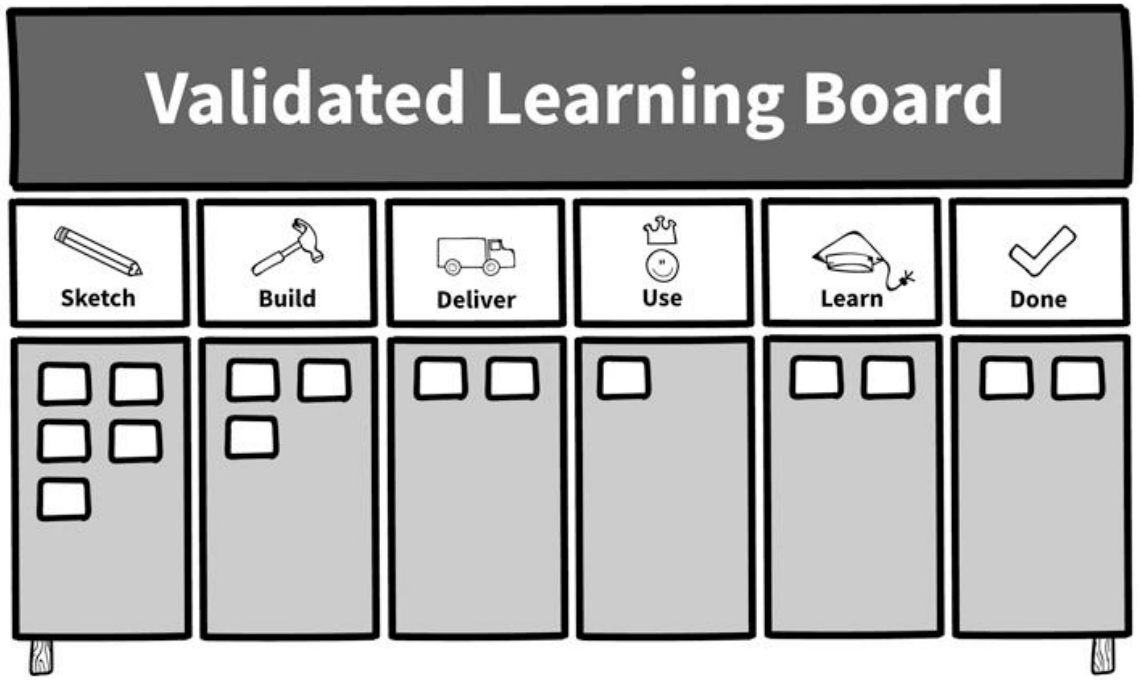
How can the Learning Loop be Put Into Practice?

1. Where is the feedback from users collected?
2. Is the progress of the learning loop visually monitored?

Tool: Validated Learning Board (VLB)



Validated Learning Board (VLB)

- The VLB consists of six columns, with each column representing a step in the learning loop—sketching, building, delivering, using, learning, and final column is “Done” or “Learned”
- In each column, these activities are current for the teams that are in that specific phase of the learning cycle.
- Ideally, there is a VLB per product or service.
- If many teams work together on a product or service, it is practical to also make a VLB for each team.

The Card on The Board

Short description User story: As <**user**> I want <functionality> so that <benefit>			*Theme*
Date started	*Date delivered*	*Date learned*	*# Tool*

- Each card contains the following elements:
  - Short description. A few words indicate what matters, such as “Reporting for Families” or “Forgot password” or “Dashboard for first users.”
  - User story. One or two sentences with a little more explanation for readability. It can be assumed that stakeholders know what it is about. The power lies in being quickly readable, not in the details. These are included in the tool for the complete work stock (e.g., Excel, TFS, Jira, or Trello).
  - Theme. Often, cards refer to a specific theme, such as “Good first impression” or “Simple reporting.” It’s best if the theme is visualized with an icon that increases recognizability. Or colored cards can also be used.
  - Date started, Date delivered, Date learned. It is practical to keep three dates. For example, the T2L of this card can be calculated afterward.

Validated Learning Board (VLB)

- How Detailed Should The VLB Be?

  The work listed on the VLB is not very detailed but is on the level of larger pieces of work

- The best place for a VLB: Common Place, Close to the Team .

- Stakeholders and Customers Meeting:

  with the VLB, the full strength of the learning loop is important. For this, it is important that time is regularly spent on learning together with stakeholders and customers.

Stakeholders and Customers Meeting

- With the VLB, the full strength of the learning loop is important. For this, it is important that time is regularly spent on learning together with stakeholders and customers. A structural meeting on the content of the VLB helps with this.
- If Scrum is used, add the following parts to the sprint review event.
  - Goal T2L Event: to improve the list of ideas so that the next version of a product or service is even better. In addition, this event aims to shorten the T2L by removing obstacles and increasing cooperation.
  - How Often to Have a T2L Event? A practical rule of thumb is to hold a T2L event every two weeks. It is useful to look at the frequency of delivery.
  - When and With Whom? Fix a day and time in the even weeks. The product manager, the team coach, and the team(s) that work(s) together on the same product or service are invited. If Possible, users are also invited. The agile leader is optional.
  - In Preparation: The team has prepared well for this learning session. They have taken the time to study the feedback and have already drawn preliminary conclusions. A brief overview of this has already been sent to the other participants for preparation.

Power of the Validated Learning Board

- The VLB is a powerful tool to continuously work within the learning loop, daily, and really apply it.
- The agile leader has the following tasks:
  - Indicate the importance of the board and the event.
  - Engage with the team on a regular basis and ask questions about the progress of the learning loop.
  - Motivate the team to repeat the lessons learned and pass them on to other teams.
  - Ensure that impediments of the learning speed are removed.
  - Facilitate the right stakeholders and customers, keeping time free to be present at the T2L event.
  - Support product managers in stakeholder management.

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How can Teams Implement Big Ideas in Small Steps?

1. How long does it take before a big new idea is validated with users?
2. When are big important ideas stopped or killed because of user feedback?

The man who moves mountains begins by carrying away small stones

Split Into Target Group and Situations, Not Into Parts and Functionality

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- How can properly divide an idea, large project, new product, or service?
- Cutting up a project well is sometimes difficult in practice. It takes time to find a solution together for that specific situation.
- Tip: choose the user target group and the situation in which this target group can already use the product.

Pitfalls When Shortening the T2L

- Shortening the T2L has some pitfalls. If this happens randomly, the number of risks can rise.
- A Select Customer Group
- Performance Test on Current Numbers
- Request Feedback When it is Finished
- Staff Discount