

A photograph of a stone arch bridge with a curved, flowing shape, reflected perfectly in the water below. The surrounding environment is lush and green.

Feed Success & Starve Failure: **Continuous Product Management**

INDUSTRY 2019

Elizabeth Ayer
@ElizAyer

**My favorite senior PM
interview question:**



**Tell me about
something you built
that you *really*
shouldn't have.**



**“I have never made
a bad decision
because I’m such a
great PM”**



Translation

“I’ve never had real responsibility”

or

“I never stuck around to see what happened with my crummy decisions.”

A woman with dark, curly hair and glasses is laughing heartily. She is wearing a light-colored, patterned sleeveless top. She is seated at a desk, facing a laptop screen which is partially visible at the bottom left. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**“I had responsibility,
I was wrong, and I
learned.”**

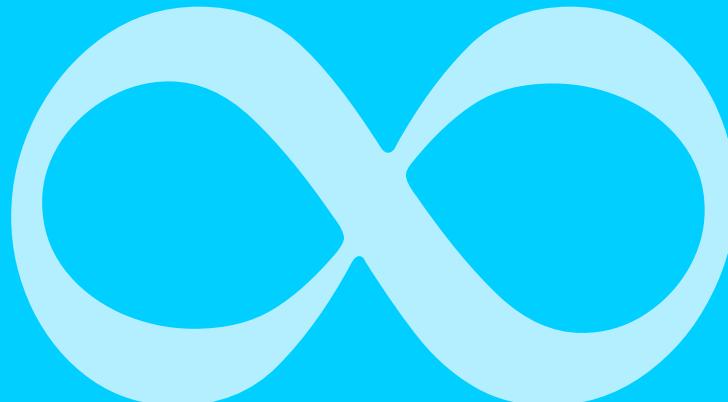


The world of Product is changing

A portrait of a young Black woman with short, dark hair styled in braids. She is wearing round, thin-framed glasses and a dark brown, textured coat over a black hoodie. She is smiling broadly at the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and city elements like a car and a bicycle.

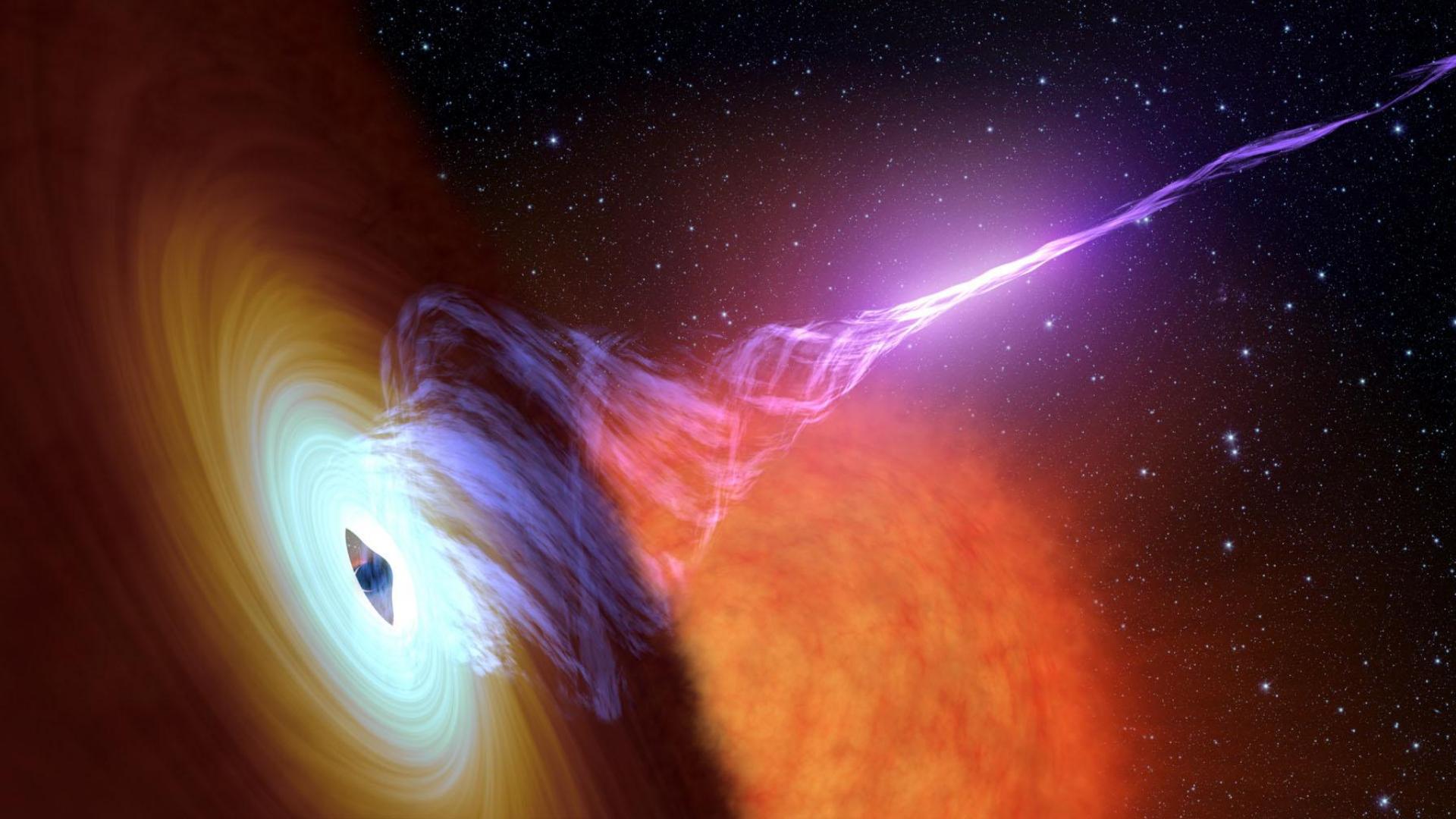
**“I’ve failed small
and corrected, and
it’s saved me a lot of
big failures.”**

Continuous product management



Rigid Up-front Planning

... the opposite of Continuous
Product Management



1800 F St





Set Weather ▾

Medicaid enrollment another troubled, expensive Oregon IT system

Updated Jan 09, 2019; Posted .

Comment

By [Jeff Manning](#) | The Oregonian

By [Jeff Manning](#) and [Irene S. Levine](#)

A project dubbed by one information technology executive as “the most expensive IT project ever” has led to escalating costs, a bureaucratic mess and a political headache.

The \$166.7 million effort to build a new Medicaid enrollment system led to delays for tens of thousands of Oregonians. The state Health Authority spent three years on the project, more than four times the original timeline.

The Department of Human Services just entered into a \$100 million no-bid contract with [REDACTED], lead developer of the ONE system.

It is the first step in a larger move to expand electronic enrollment for food stamps and other state assistance programs. Total cost: \$241.3 million.

At this rate, the ONE system will eventually surpass the cost of its disastrous predecessor, Cover Oregon, which failed to launch despite a \$300 million investment. Cover Oregon was supposed to serve both as a health insurance exchange and benefits enrollment system.



13% of large government software projects are successful.

Source: [State Software Budgeting Handbook](#)

The other 87%...

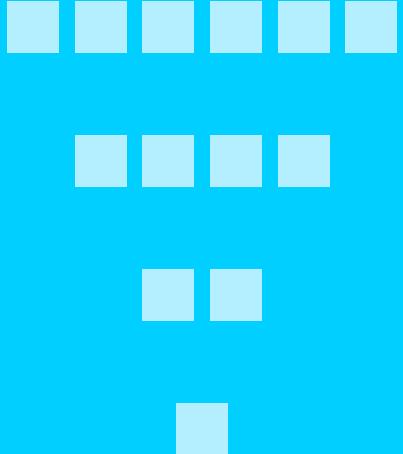




**We're driving instructors for
government product managers**

Photo by State Farm

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/statefarm/19976901011/>



**18F coaches people
to solve big problems
in small pieces**

Driving With Lag



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZK_fnS62Lk&t=520



**Lagged feedback
makes you oversteer**

Key struggles

**1/ How do you steer
your product smoothly?**

Key struggles

2/ How can I encourage senior leadership to a continuous mindset?



**Continuous Delivery
enables fast feedback**

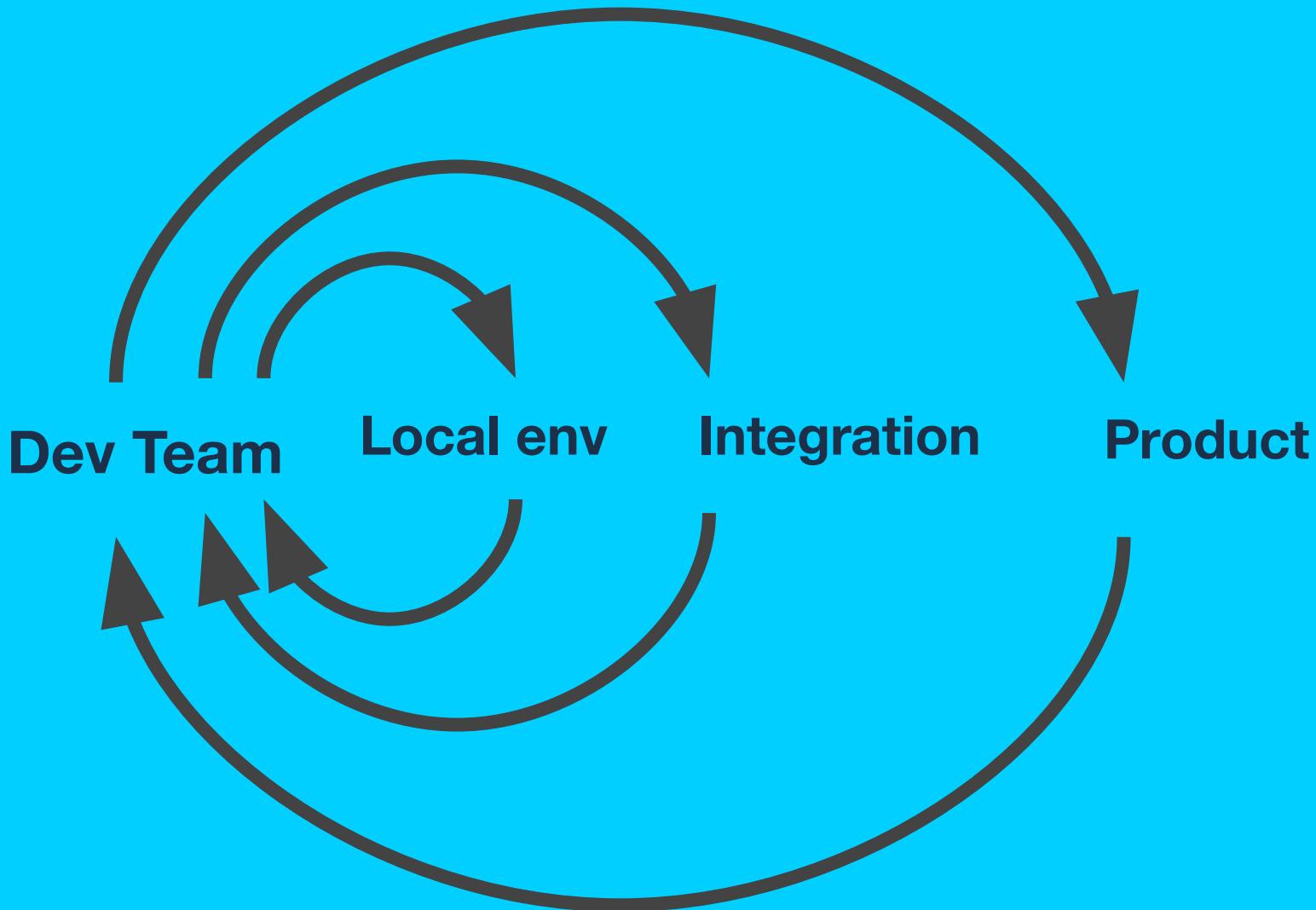
CONTINUOUS DELIVERY

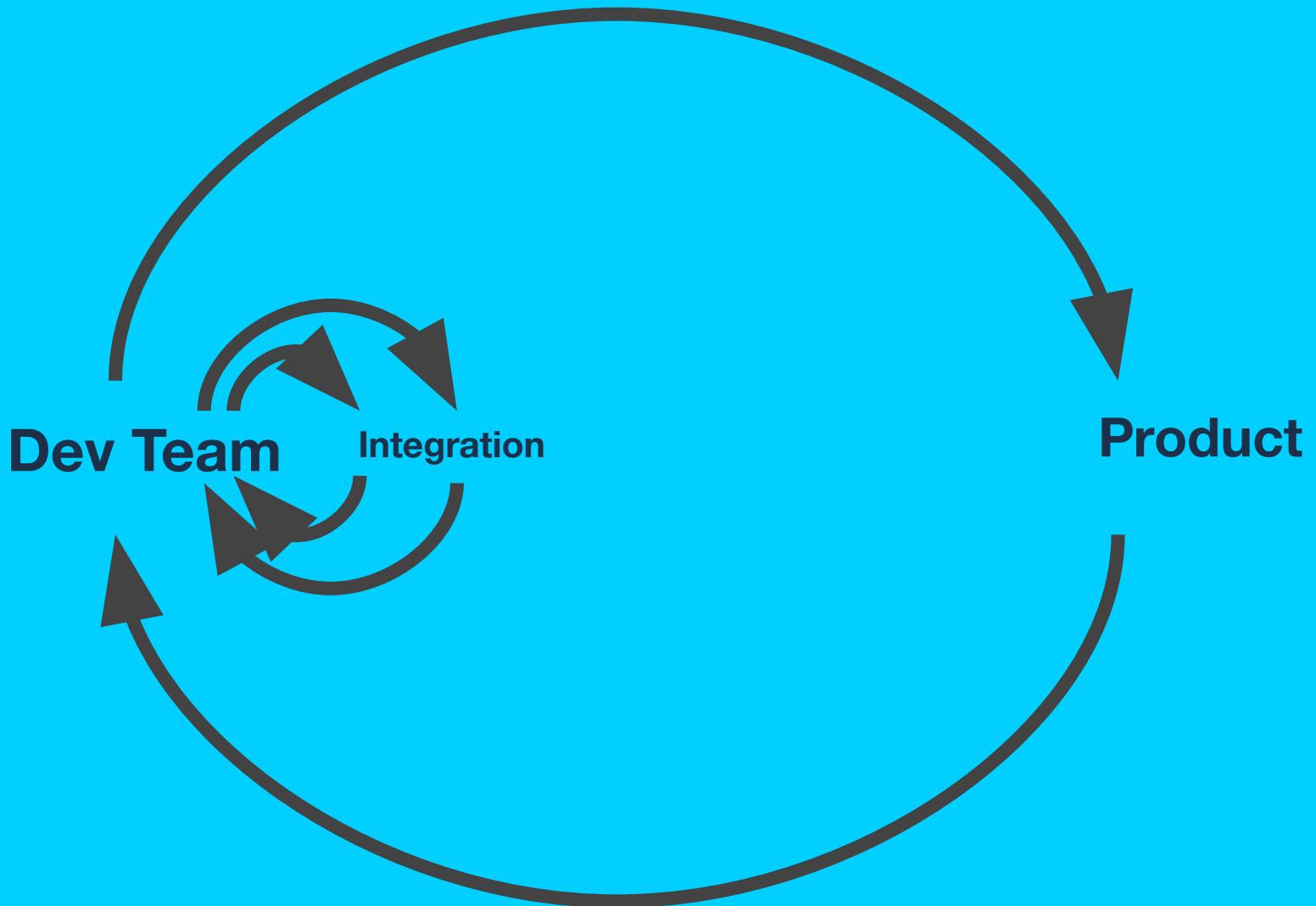


Principles

There are five principles at the heart of continuous delivery:

- Build quality in
- Work in small batches
- Computers perform repetitive tasks, people solve problems
- Relentlessly pursue continuous improvement
- Everyone is responsible





What can I change?

What can I change?

Practices

Culture

**First let's talk about
practices**



User Research

Features

Prioritization

Roadmap

Measuring Results



INSPIRED: the book insights blog workshops our team companies

Continuous Discovery

Marty Cagan
Oct 24, 2012

I have written recently about how product teams do [product discovery](#) in parallel with [product delivery](#). I have also written about how teams sometimes like to [time-box](#) their [product discovery](#) work.

What I'd like to write about in this article is an increasing trend I am seeing towards both continuous delivery and continuous discovery.

Continuous Delivery is an increasingly popular notion today. The concept has been talked about by many teams for a few years now, but now there are actually quite a few teams really doing it.

Nearly all product teams today do continuous build. The principle here is that if there are build problems, it is really good to find them sooner rather than later, so typically builds are initiated the moment changes are committed.

<https://svpg.com/continuous-discovery/>

PERMISSIONS

How does setup
with other team
tools?

e.g. Jira, TeamCity,
SQL Monitor

Currently, who
in the team
has access to
what?
Why's that?

Will active directory
be sufficient for
all users as
a way to restrict
users?

Are users
already step
this way?

Do users want
to restrict granting
rights or access
to the source
database?

Can any create
a claim and
put it anywhere?

Do users need
claims-based auth
for this?

What we don't know

What we don't know

User Research

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The image shows the top portion of a blog post from Amplitude's website. The header features the Amplitude logo, a dark blue navigation bar with 'Explore our Product Demo' and 'CATEGORIES' buttons, and a sub-header 'INSPIRATION'. The main title 'Do This Now: 8 Ways to Focus your Product Team on Impact, Not Features' is displayed in large, bold, black font. Below the title is a subtitle: 'Now is the time to shift your team's focus to measure the impact of the product and features you're building.' A profile picture of John Cutler, described as a 'PRODUCT EVANGELIST AT AMPLITUDE', is shown next to his name. A quote in a blue-bordered box reads: 'I work in a feature factory! What can I do to nudge my organization to focus more on impact and less on delivering features?' The main content area below the quote discusses nudging organizations towards impact-focused development.

Do This Now: 8 Ways to Focus your Product Team on Impact, Not Features

Now is the time to shift your team's focus to measure the impact of the product and features you're building.

 John Cutler
PRODUCT EVANGELIST AT AMPLITUDE

"I work in a feature factory! What can I do to nudge my organization to focus more on impact and less on delivering features?"

In this post, I am going to present eight things you can do this week to start nudging your organization towards being more impact focused. Big-bang, linear change works in some contexts, but product development is a different beast; it's very easy to push the wrong buttons and disrupt your change-agent mojo. With that context in mind, here are eight impact-focused nudges that I've observed successfully and safely encourage change in a range of organizations.

<https://amplitude.com/blog/focus-product-team-on-impact>

**“Fire bullets, then
cannonballs”**

-Jim Collins, *Good to Great*

**Feed success,
starve failure**

User Research

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The screenshot shows a blog post from the website 'The Black Box of Product Management'. The post is titled 'Prioritizing work within a project' and includes a subtitle: 'A ruthless mindset to determine: Is this absolutely necessary to do?'. The main content discusses the nature of prioritization during project execution, noting it's chaotic and emotional, involving decisions daily without deep analysis. It also mentions the impact on real customers and team reputation. Below the post, there's a sidebar with the blog's name, a follow button, social sharing icons (8.8K), and a bookmark icon.

Prioritizing work within a project

A ruthless mindset to determine: Is this absolutely necessary to do?

The nature of prioritization is different during the execution of a project. It's chaotic. Decisions are needed everyday, and you don't have time analyze each one as deeply as we did when prioritizing between projects. It's also a more emotional time for a team, as real customers are going to be impacted, and their reputation may feel on the line.

The only way to combat the speed and chaos of building products is to develop a **ruthless mindset**, one that is constantly aware of the work a team is doing and challenges them on the necessity of that work.

<https://blackboxofpm.com/ruthless-prioritization-e4256e3520a9>

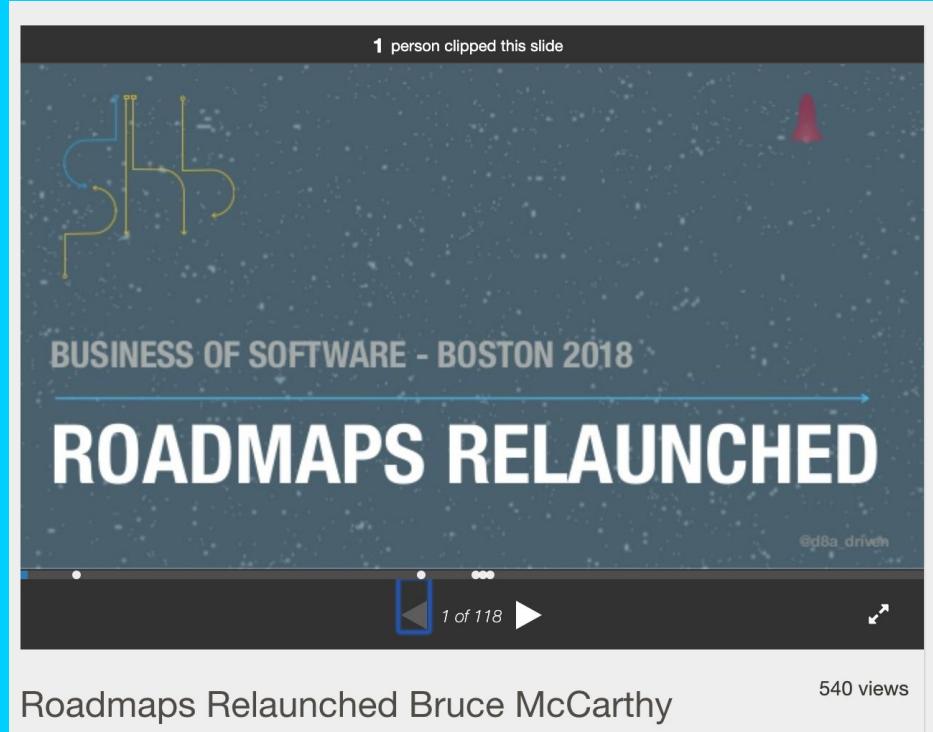
User Research

Features

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<https://www.slideshare.net/marklittlewood/roadmaps-relaunched-bruce-mccarthy-workshop-bos-boston-2018-tesla>

User Research

Features

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Roadmap

Measuring Results



1. It's a process, not an event.

Measuring performance is not a brainstorming workshop, an external consultant's report, or a dashboard app. It's a process of thinking about the difference you really want (e.g. a goal), how you'd notice that difference, how you might quantify that difference, and how you'll monitor the difference as it unfolds.

Understand the essential steps in any performance measurement process, and don't skip any of them.

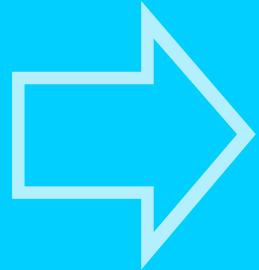
2. Measure to learn and improve, not compare and judge.

Buy-in, ownership and engagement are the hardest things to get with measuring performance. And the root cause is almost always that measures are used to compare people or groups to others or to standards or benchmarks, or to judge them as either good or not good enough. Measurement achieves nothing good if people aren't behind it. But it achieves amazing things if it helps everyone learn and improve.

Stop measuring people and teams and instead let them measure to improve their own processes.

<https://www.staceybarr.com/measure-up/11-important-memes-of-performance-measurement/>

**Now let's talk about
culture**



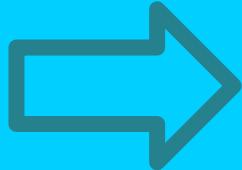
**Product people
consistently
underestimate their
impact on culture**

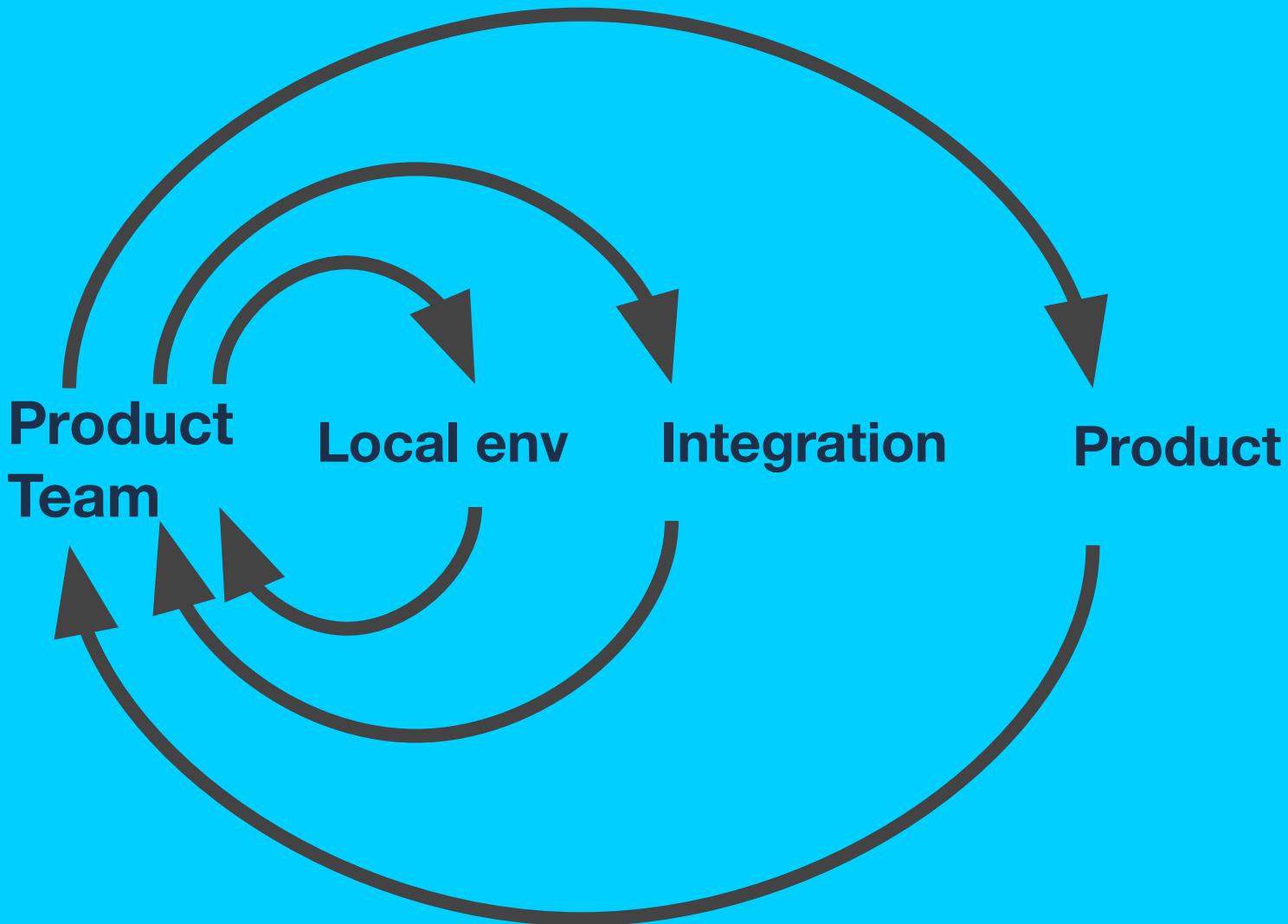
Embarrassing storytime...



?* &!

**“They just want us to
ship s***”**





- 1/ Outcome focus**
- 2/ Shared responsibility**
- 3/ Empowerment**
- 4/ Effectiveness**

Key struggles

2/ How can I encourage senior leadership to a continuous mindset?

CONTINUOUS DELIVERY



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- Relentlessly pursue continuous improvement
- Everyone is responsible



Beyond Budgeting - A High-hanging Fruit The Impact of Managers' Mindset on the Advant

Thomas Heup

Show more

Beyond Budgeting - A High-hanging Fruit

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)00831-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00831-X)

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Abstract

Beyond Budgeting is an alternative management control systems which evolved in the late 1990s. Even though the Beyond Budgeting



What is Beyond Budgeting?

'Beyond Budgeting' means beyond command-and-control budgeting, towards a management system that is more empowered and adaptive.

Beyond Budgeting is about rethinking how we manage performance. It is about creating a world where innovative management models represent a significant competitive advantage. It is also about releasing people from the suffocating control systems, trusting them with information and authority to make decisions, reflect, share, learn and improve. Above all it is about challenging the way we have managed. Many leaders who have built and managed 'beyond budgeting' systems say that they have seen dramatic improvements in their organizations.

The word 'budgeting' is not used in its narrow sense of planning and control, but as a generic term for the traditional command and control management model (with the annual budget process at its core).

Beyond Budgeting

- enabling business agility

Leadership principles	Management processes
1. Purpose - Engage and inspire people around bold and noble causes; <i>not around short-term financial targets</i>	7. Rhythm - Organise management processes dynamically around business rhythms and events; <i>not around the calendar year only</i>
2. Values - Govern through shared values and sound judgement; <i>not through detailed rules and regulations</i>	8. Targets - Set directional, ambitious and relative goals; <i>avoid fixed and cascaded targets</i>
3. Transparency - Make information open for self-regulation, innovation, learning and control; <i>don't restrict it</i>	9. Plans and forecasts - Make planning and forecasting lean and unbiased processes; <i>not rigid and political exercises</i>
4. Organisation – Cultivate a strong sense of belonging and organise around accountable teams; <i>avoid hierarchical control and bureaucracy</i>	10. Resource allocation - Foster a cost conscious mind-set and make resources available as needed; <i>not through detailed annual budget allocations</i>
5. Autonomy - Trust people with freedom to act; <i>don't punish everyone if someone should abuse it</i>	11. Performance evaluation - Evaluate performance holistically and with peer feedback for learning and development; <i>not based on measurement only and not for rewards only</i>
6. Customers - Connect everyone's work with customer needs; <i>avoid conflicts of interest</i>	12. Rewards - Reward shared success against competition; <i>not against fixed performance contracts</i>

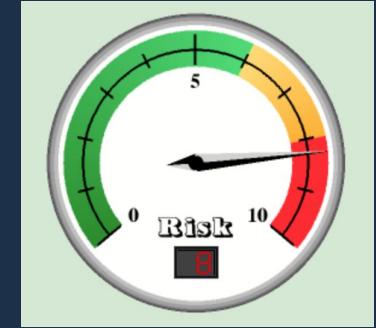


This is how they see us

Change travels at the speed of trust.

— Steven Covey (?) via @DanHarley3

As a *leader*, I need to know *critical information* so that I can *avoid getting caught off guard*.



As a *leader*, I need to know
options so that I can *guide*
decisions based on context only
I have.



**When you're in a position
to change things....**

A photograph of a unique bridge structure made from vertical logs or bamboo stalks, forming an arch over a body of water. The surrounding environment is dense with green trees and foliage.

Safe travels

Continuous Product Management

INDUSTRY 2019

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