# The Use of Definition of Ready and Definition of Done in the Value Conversation

*"All we're trying to do is have an organizational conversation that starts with strategic opinions and ends with executable facts."*

Dean Leffingwell

# A Typical Value Conversation Elaborating from Opinions to Facts



**The Organizational Value Delivery Conversation**
From Strategic Opinion to Executable Fact
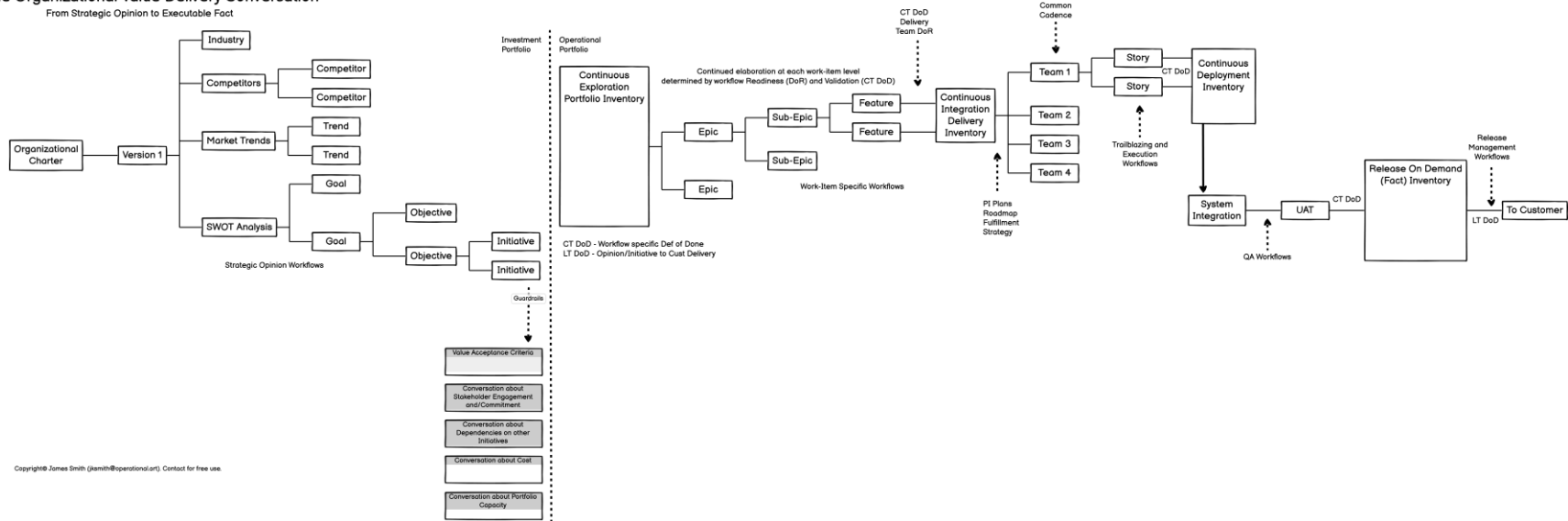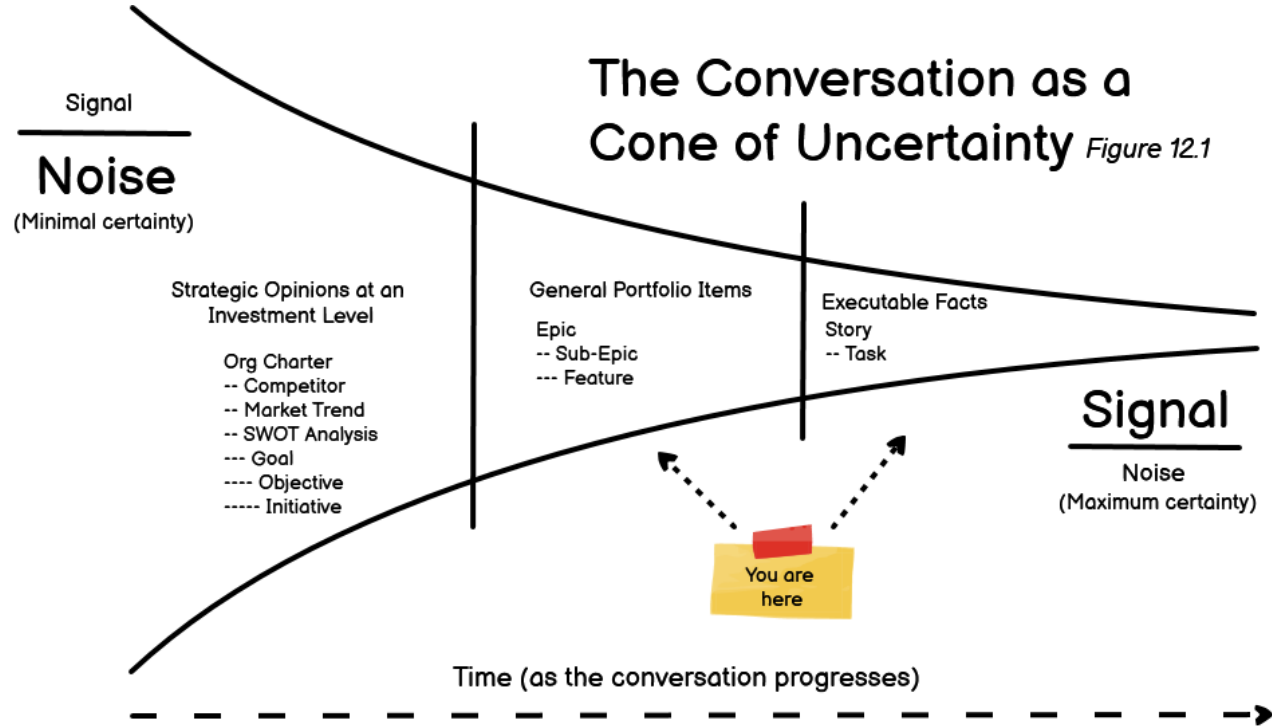
# The Conversation as System of Delivery

- A good organizational conversation helps us iterate from lots of noisy opinions to executable solutions with enough signal that we can call them "facts" delivered to the customer.

- A system designed to structure and flow this conversation provides opportunity to measure efficiencies, execute parallel work, reduce duplicated work, and create healthy dependencies.

# The Conversation as System of Delivery

- To get from lots of noise to executable signal, we use value elaboration streams.

- Value elaboration streams are implemented as backlog taxonomies (work-item hierarchies).

The Cone of Uncertainty Illustrates Increasing Signal/Decreasing Noise. How does a Backlog Taxonomy Represent a Cone of Uncertainty?

# The Cone of Uncertainty as a Backlog



The Conversation as a Cone of Uncertainty *Figure 12.1*

Signal / **Noise** (Minimal certainty)

Strategic Opinions at an Investment Level

Org Charter
-- Competitor
-- Market Trend
-- SWOT Analysis
--- Goal
---- Objective
----- Initiative

General Portfolio Items

Epic
-- Sub-Epic
--- Feature

Executable Facts

Story
-- Task

**Signal** / Noise (Maximum certainty)

You are here

Time (as the conversation progresses)

# The Value of DoR and DoD

In short, DoR and DoD enable flow of increasing understanding (signal) in the value stream conversation. DoR and DoD also enable faster flow by facilitating parallel work.

DoR and DoD are key components of the agile philosophy of learning and discovery. DoR represents our readiness for the next level of discovery. DoD is our examination of the value that level produced. It's the final opportunity to inspect and adapt before proceeding to the next level given what we know. If we don't meet our DoD, then iterate over the level again!
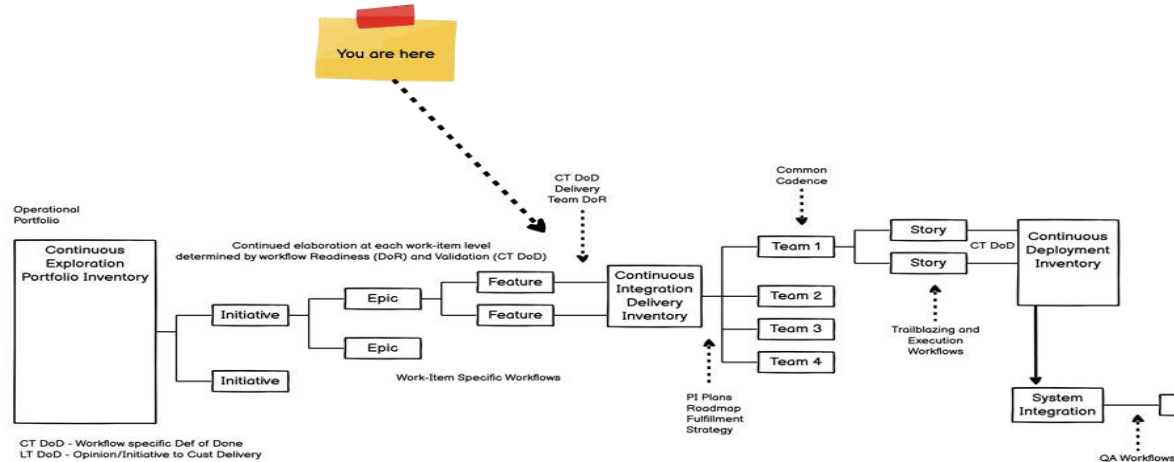
# DoR and DoD: The Core of Agile

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- DoR represents our readiness for the next level of discovery.
- DoD is our examination of the value that level produced. It's the final opportunity to inspect and adapt before proceeding to the next level given what we know.
- If we don't meet our DoD, then iterate over the level again!

# The Feature Handoff: An Example of Increasing Understanding and Parallel Work

- In short, DoR and DoD enable flow of increasing understanding (signal) in the value stream conversation. DoR and DoD also enable faster flow by facilitating parallel work.

# What is a Feature?

1) Features connect challenges to solutions.

2) A feature can be completed in a Program Increment.

3) Features are elaborated into stories.

4) Stories connect solutions to execution.

5) Features should provide the understanding required to originate stories that can be executed with certainty.

6) Delivery teams use their feature DoR to validate that understanding.

# Sample DoR workflow for a Feature

| Execution Team PO | | | Back to Portfolio Team | | | Execution Team PO | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (9) Ready for PO Review | (10) Under PO Review | (11) Execution Team Estimate Effort | (12) Calculate WSJF | (13) Ready for Execution | | (14) Under Execution | (15) Done | (16) Deployed to Customer |
| | | | | | | | | |

1) Delivery team PO sees this feature is ready for review.

2) PO moves this feature to "Under PO Review" status. This review will determine if feature is "ready" to be estimated by the delivery team.

3) If feature is "ready" to be estimated, it is moved to "Estimate Effort" status.

4) If team can estimate the feature with the confidence required by team's feature DoR, feature "WSJF" is calculated by feature owner.

5) Feature can then be moved to "Ready for Execution" status. This status is a flag for delivery team to begin breaking feature down into stories, and deliver the stories.

6) When the team begins breaking feature down and executing resulting stories, feature is now in "Under Execution" status.

# DoD in the sample Feature workflow

| Execution Team PO | | | Back to Portfolio Team | | Execution Team PO | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (9) Ready for PO Review | (10) Under PO Review | (11) Execution Team Estimate Effort | (12) Calculate WSJF | (13) Ready for Execution | (14) Under Execution | (15) Done | (16) Deployed to Customer |
| | | | | | | | |

1) Where are the DoD points in this workflow?

2) Prior to a feature being ready for delivery team review ("Ready for PO Review"), the feature is reviewed by the feature owner to determine if more feature development is required. This could be considered a feature development DoD, or cycle time DoD.

3) Once all stories resulting from feature elaboration have been deployed ("Deployed to Customer"), the feature has met its deployment DoD, or lead time DoD.

# DoR/DoD Usage: What happens on the street?

1) DoR/DoD are not just sharepoint documents...

2) Every DoD at one level in the taxonomy is followed by a DoR to initiate the next level down.

3) This design pattern provides a check and balance that value conversation signal is increasing and conversation noise is decreasing over time. Inspect and Adapt!

4) If necessary, iterate back over the level and re-test DoD!

5) DoR/DoD, plus the use of a taxonomy provide an opportunity for multiple teams to both work in parallel and minimize cognitive load:

6) A conversation between feature owner and delivery PO:

   "Is this feature ready for your team to break down?"

   "Yep"

   "Great, because I've got a bunch of other features to work on and I'm tired of working on this one!"

# So what are my Definitions supposed to be?

1) The short answer is: It depends on the domain being served by the team responsible for work-items in a particular point in value stream conversation. Having said that, the basic definitions should facilitate the following:

2) A check of whether or not signal is increasing and noise is decreasing over the lifetime of the value conversation. They baseline your Inspect and Adapt system.

3) Increasing signal provides the ability to include more resources in different parts of the conversation. So when the conversation becomes a repeatable value delivery system, more work can be done in parallel.

4) A good DoR/DoD reduces cognitive load and keeps me from having to wear so many hats!

5) DoR/DoD level of detail increases with the level of signal a taxonomy work-item is supposed to deliver. So while an epic work-item DoR/DoD is essentially an agreement, ideally a story work-item DoR/DoD becomes an executable "contract." See the presentation "DoR-DoD Contract."

6) *Remember: Your DoR/DoD for each work-item in the value stream taxonomy are not meant to be forgotten sharepoint documents. They should be reviewed for efficacy on a regular basis.*