The psychology of work groups

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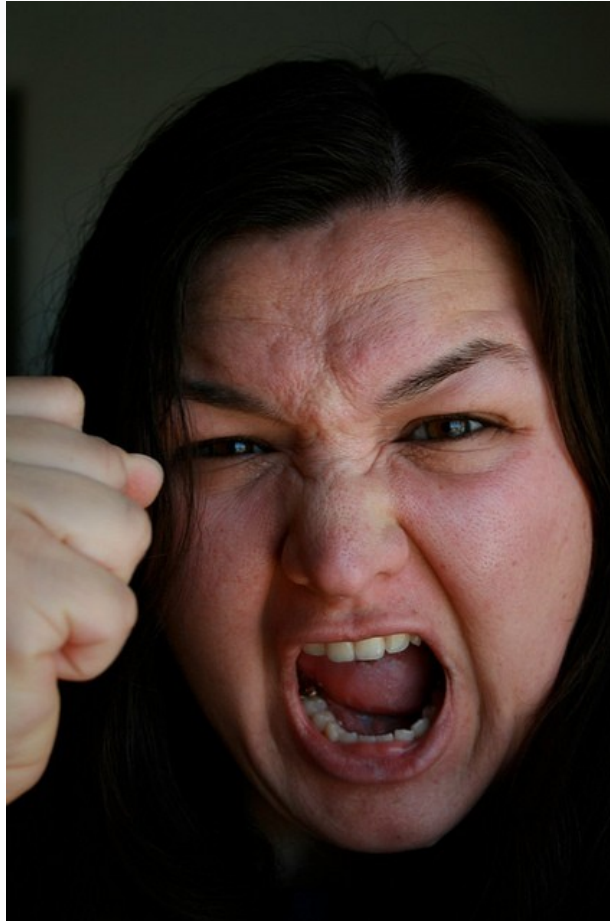
About me (@jstaffans)

- Helsinki-based developer, coach

- I think software is mostly about people

- Some smart guys with beards think so too:

  "Individuals and interactions over processes and tools"

Overview

- Your brain

- Work group effectiveness

- Understanding our actions

- Ground rules for effective groups
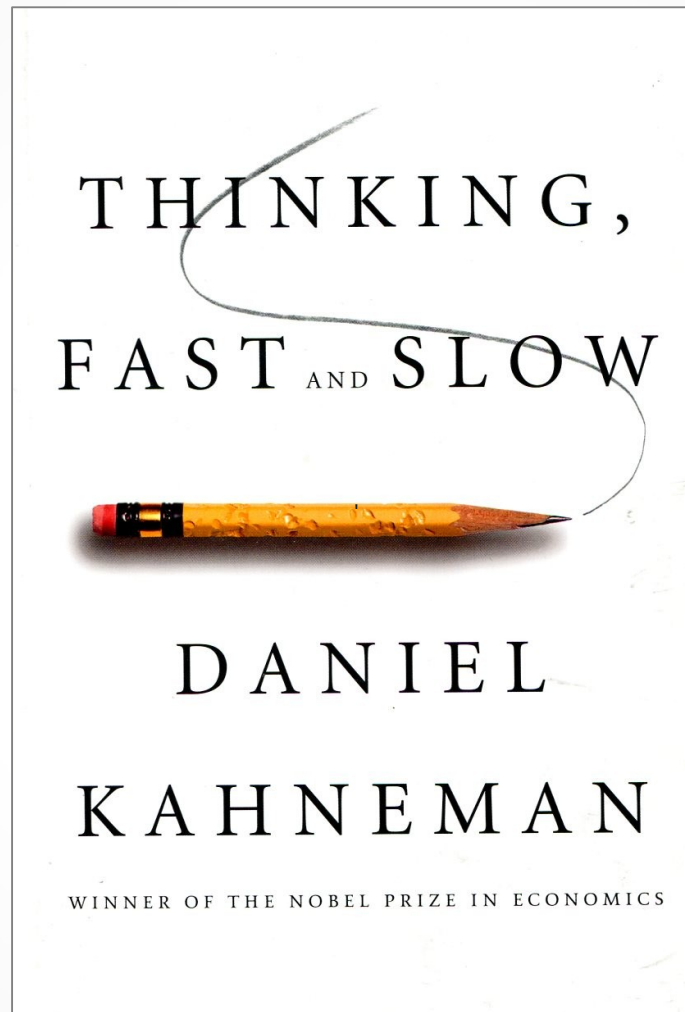
- (Facilitative roles)

How is this woman feeling?

27 x 14 = ?
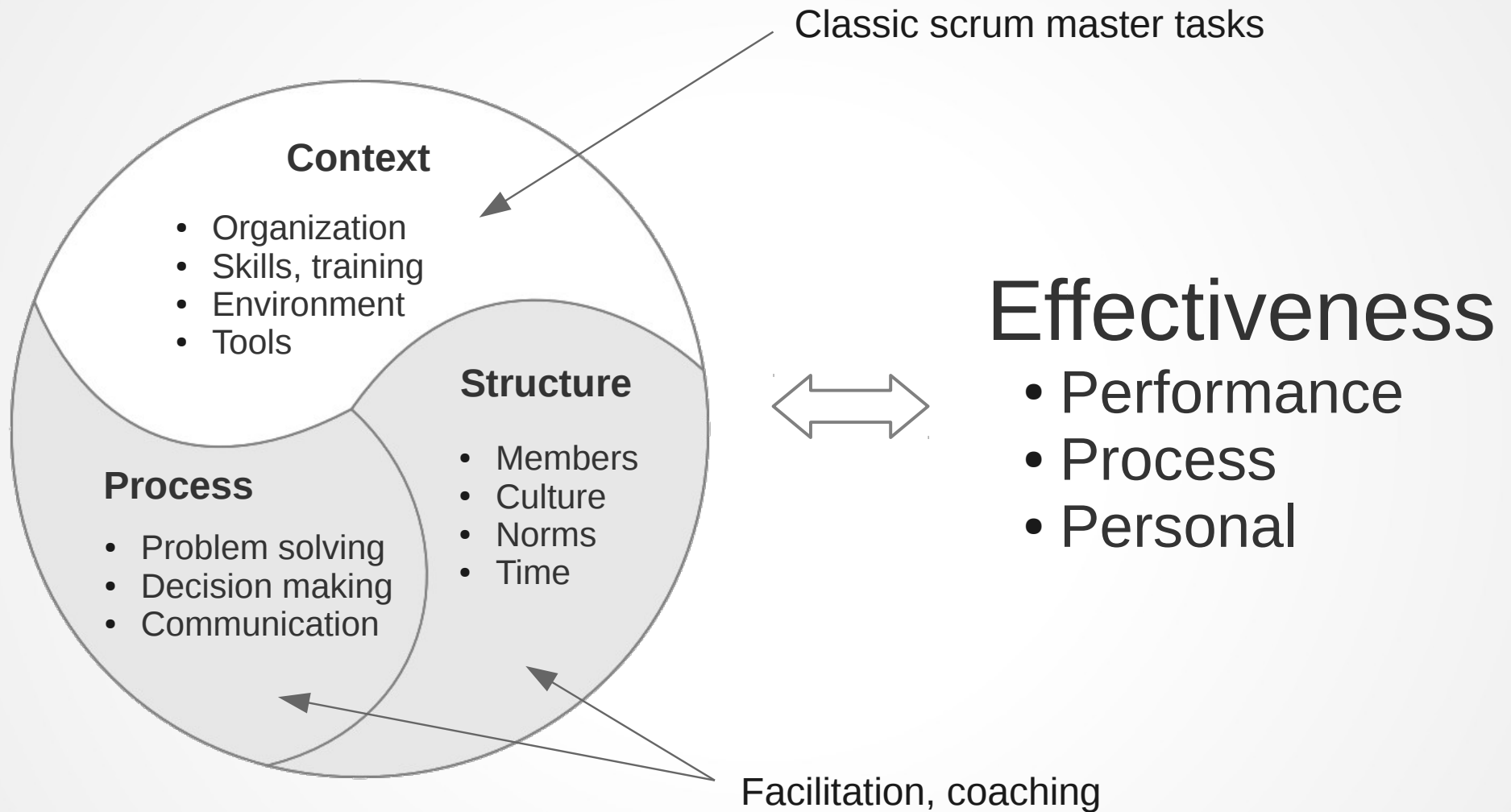
The two-system model

System 1

- Fast, automatic and emotional
- Heuristical and biased
  - WYSIATI

System 2

- Slow, deliberate and systematic
- Based on evaluation and logic

Work group effectiveness

Context

- Organization
- Skills, training
- Environment
- Tools

Structure

- Members
- Culture
- Norms
- Time

Process

- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Communication

Classic scrum master tasks

Facilitation, coaching

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Effectiveness

- Performance
- Process
- Personal

Adapted from "The skilled facilitator", R. Schwarz
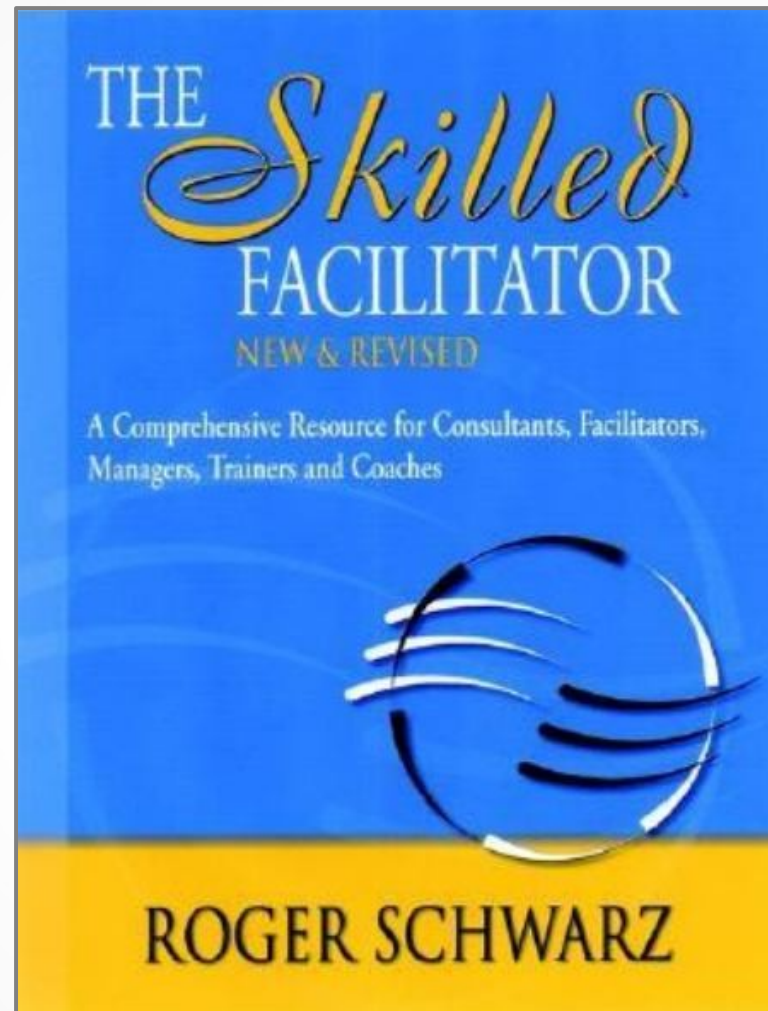
Theories of action

How do people normally react when faced with a problem in a group setting?

- Espoused theory vs theory-in-use

- Unilateral control model
  - Win, don't lose

- Hands-off model
  - Poor interpretation of the idea of self-organization

- Alternative: mutual learning model

Mutual learning model

- Valid information
- Free and informed choice
- Internal commitment
- Compassion (but not quite the Mother Teresa kind)

- I don't know everything
- I may be contributing to the problem!
- Differences are opportunities for learning
- People are trying to act with integrity

Ground rules

#1
Test assumptions and inferences

#2
Share all relevant information

#3
Use specific examples, agree on terminology

#4
Explain reasoning and intent

#5
Focus on interests, not positions

#6
Combine advocacy with inquiry

#7
Jointly design next steps

#8
Discuss undiscussable issues

Adapted from "The skilled facilitator", R. Schwarz

Facilitative roles

- Facilitative consultant
  - Can get to the core of a problem quickly
- Facilitator from the same organization but from a different group
  - No skin in the game
  - New points of view
- Informal facilitative leader
  - Don't have to be an expert, just be an effective role model

Thank you!

- Be curious! Read the books!

- Questions?