

UNSCALING

(Rethinking agility for larger organizations)



By Richard Lawrence
For Agile Denver, August 25, 2014



AS WE GET STARTED...

Discuss with one or two people near you:

When your organization decided to adopt an Agile way of working, **what were the desired results**? What did you want to get from the change that you didn't already have?

What's the best
TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?

What do you think?

- a) Whatever you have already
- b) As many people as you can afford
- c) A specific number or range
- d) It depends

What's the best
TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?

< 20

– James Buchanan (1999)

What's the best
TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?

4.6

What's the best **TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?**

4.6

Is there an optimum team size [...]? A study conducted by Neil Vidmar and myself is at least suggestive of an answer. [...] the optimum group size was **4.6** members.

– J. Richard Hackman

What's the best **TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?**

6

My rule of thumb is that no work team should have membership in the double digits (and **my preferred size is six**), since our research has shown that the number of performance problems a team encounters increases exponentially as team size increases.

– J. Richard Hackman

What's the best **TEAM/PROJECT SIZE?**

Based on our experience:

The best performing Agile **teams** have about **5-7 people**.

Many programs/**projects** work well with **2-3** of these **teams working together**.

Why do

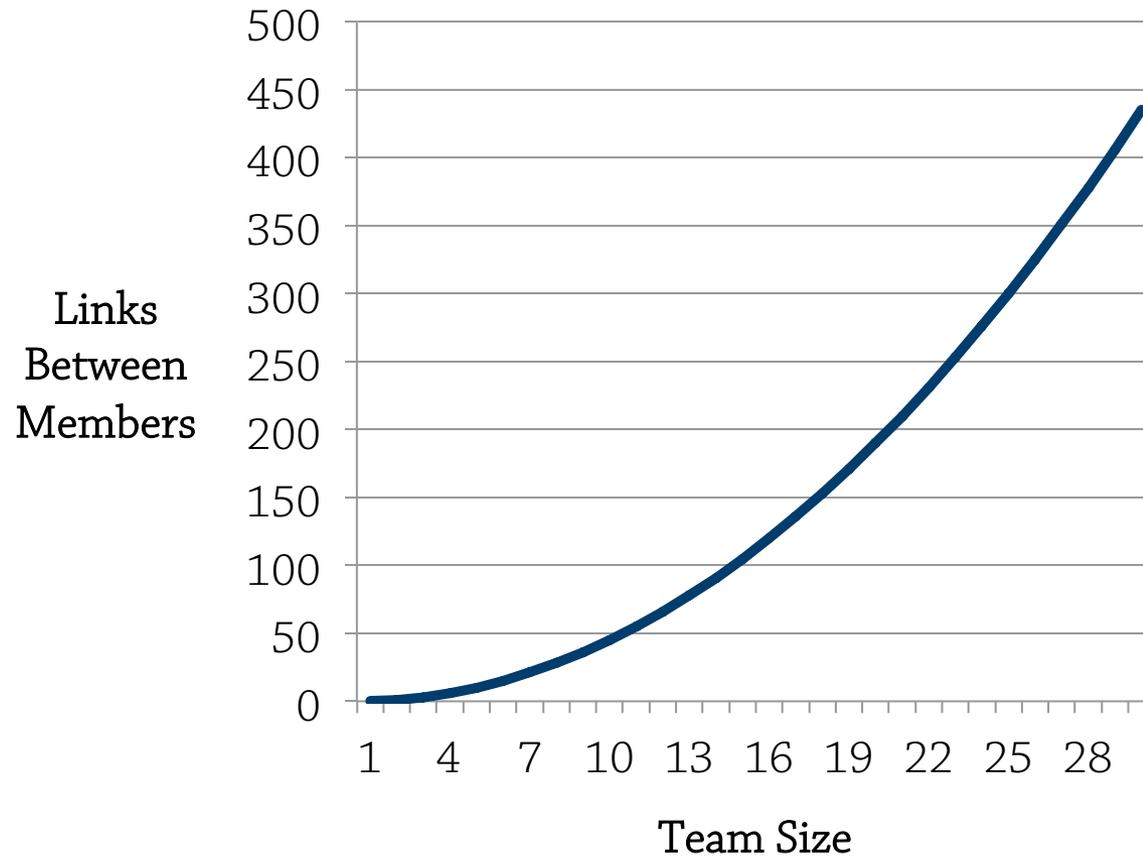
LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?

...our research has shown that the number of performance problems a team encounters increases exponentially as team size increases.

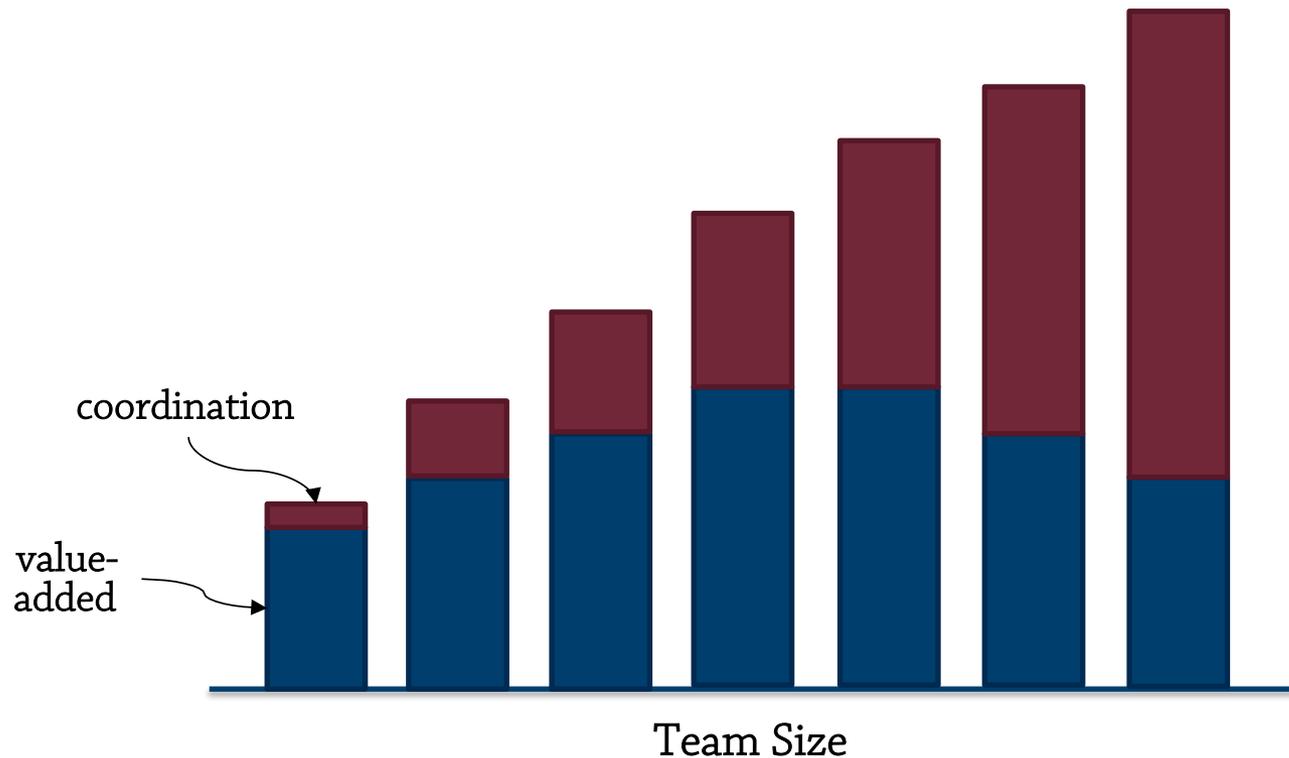
– J. Richard Hackman

Why do

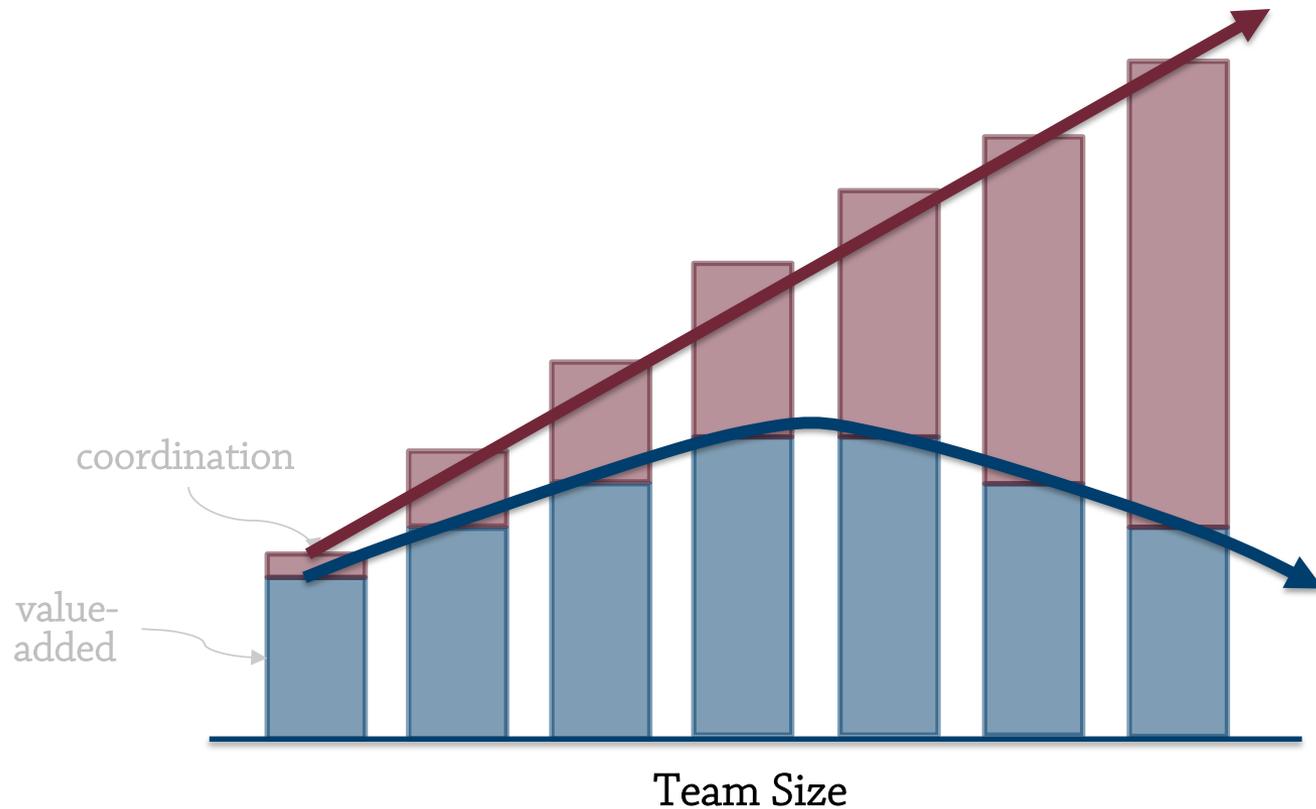
LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?



Why do LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?



Why do **LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?**

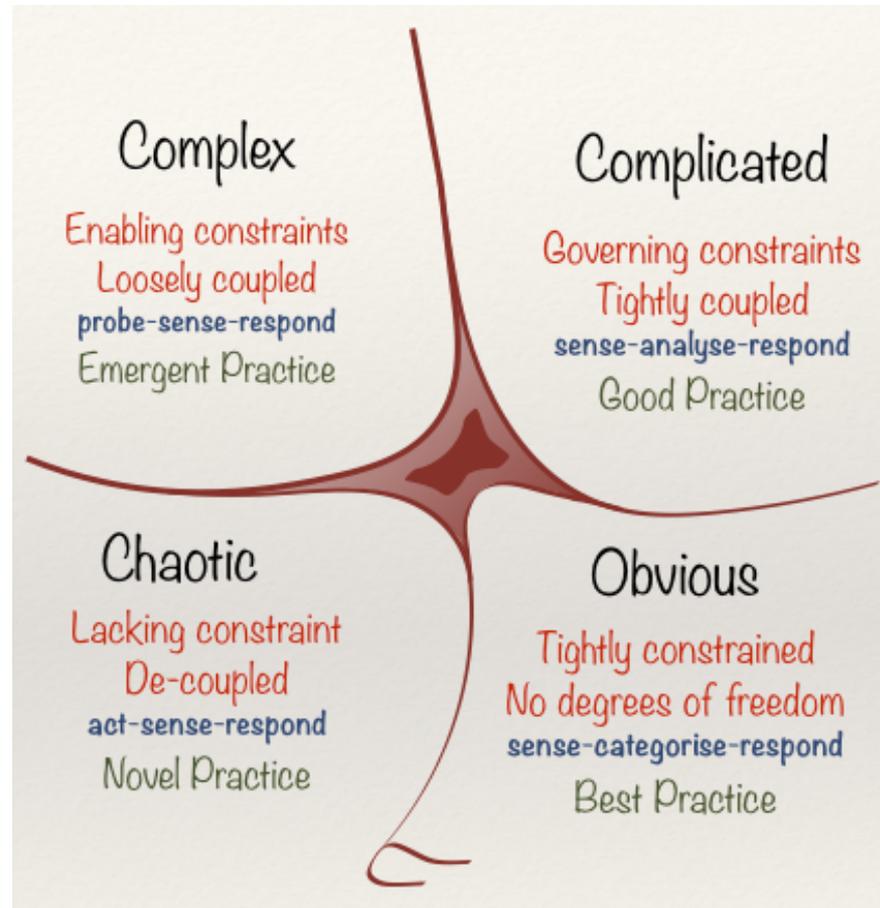


Why do

LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?

Complexity makes
things even worse.

THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK



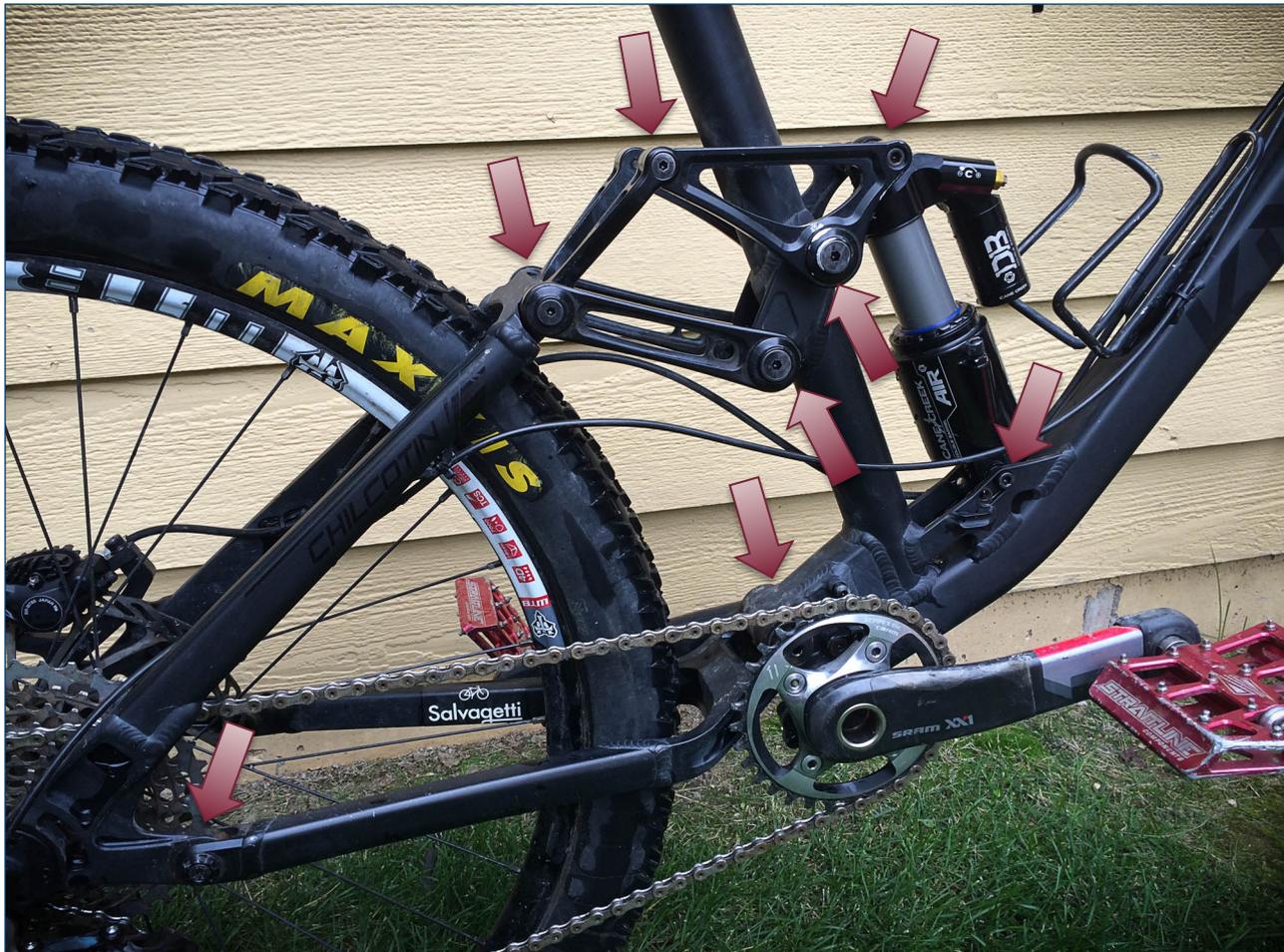
THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

Obvious



THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

Complicated



THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

Complex



THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

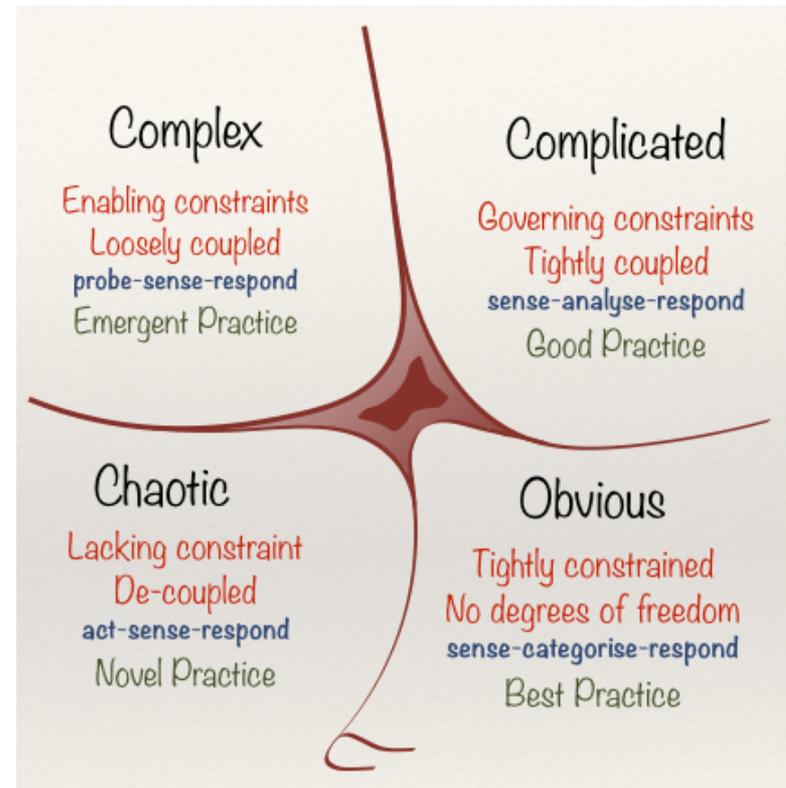
Chaotic



THE CYNEFIN FRAMEWORK

With one or two people near you:

Describe an example you've experienced in your work of each of the Cynefin domains.



Why do

LARGE TEAMS & PROJECTS HAVE PROBLEMS?

Complexity makes
things even worse.

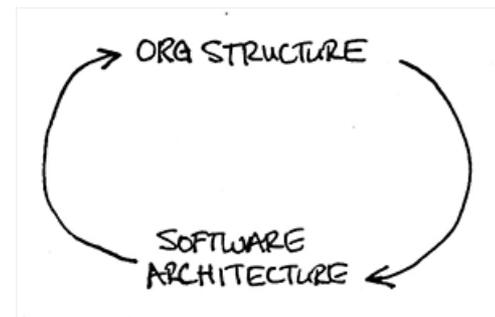
*We're big and want the
results Agile can provide,*

SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

CONWAY'S LAW

“Any organization that designs a system (defined broadly) will produce a design whose structure is a copy of the organization’s communication structure.”

–Melvin Conway



CONWAY'S LAW

Discuss with one or two people near you:

1. In what ways does **your product look like your organization**?
2. In what ways does **your organization look like your product**?
3. How does the structure of your product and organization to date **constrain** your present and future?

Evaluating your **STAFF LIQUIDITY**

1. List the kinds of work your team(s) need to do. (A backlog and definition of done help here.)
2. Have team members rate themselves on each item:
 - 0 = “I know nothing.”
 - 1 = “I can run it.”
 - 2 = “I can tweak it or bug fix it.”
 - 3 = “I can redesign or refactor it.”/
“I OWN it!”

(Via Chris Matts. See his blog for more on this topic.)

NEXT STEPS

1. Reveal and grow T-shaped people.
2. Do Agile well with 1-2 teams, then expand.
3. Prefer networks over hierarchies.

QUESTIONS?

Contact me...

Twitter: [@rslawrence](#)

Email: richard.lawrence@agileforall.com

Blog: www.richardlawrence.info