

Using the Impediment List

Joe Little — February 5, 2024

Webinar — [LeanAgileTraining.com](https://leanagiletraining.com)

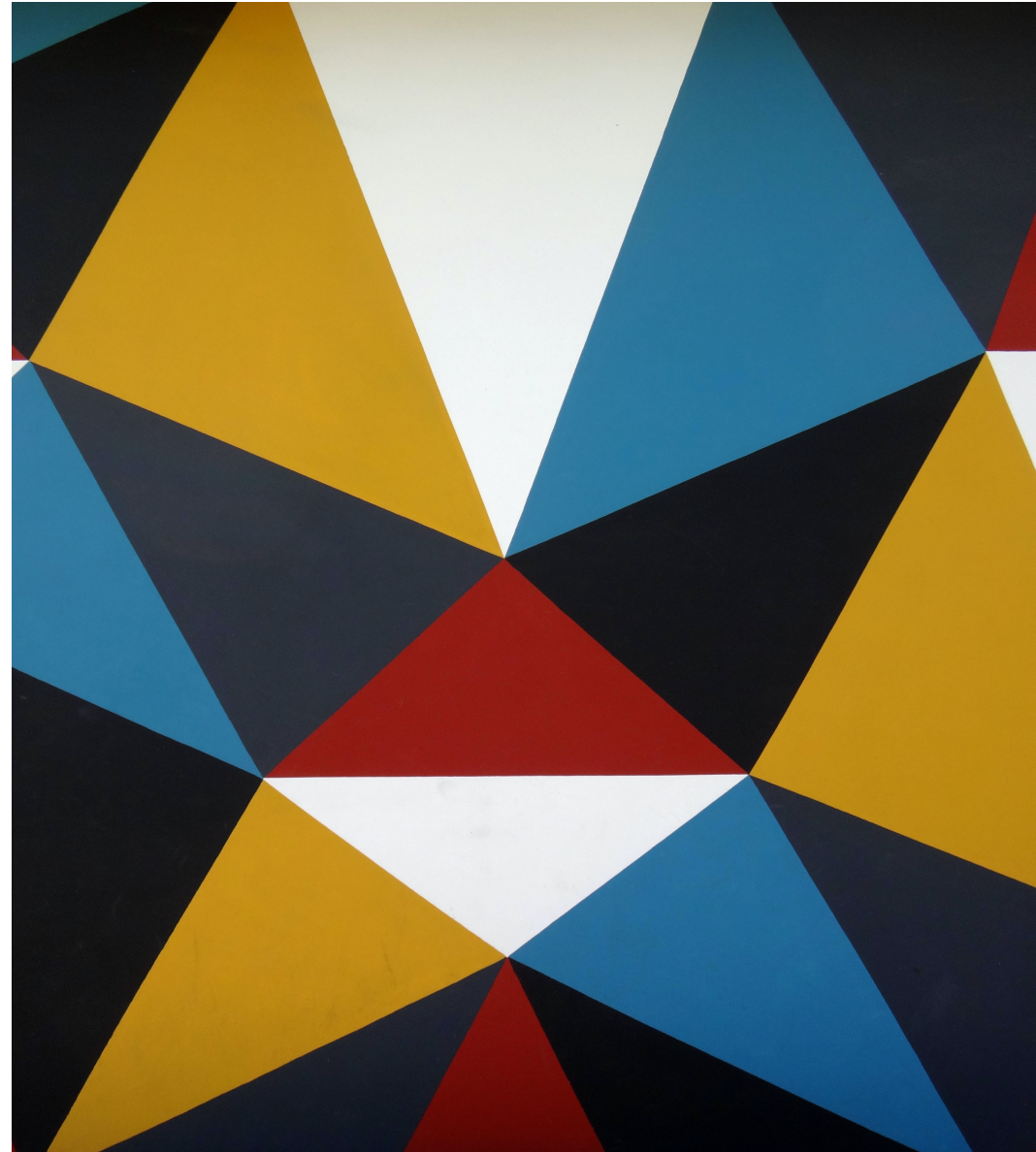
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Intro



Reminder to me...

- If you want the slide deck (in PDF):
- Put your email address in the Chat.



Recommendation

- “A Scrum Book” by Jeff Sutherland, James Coplien et al.
- It’s full of about 94 Patterns in ~500 pages.
- Patterns movement.
- See Christopher Alexander, “A Pattern Language.” “The Timeless Way of Building.”
- See wikipedia (“A Pattern Language”).
- See also: ScrumPLOP.org or scrumbook.org



Let's Review Some Basics and then discuss...

- What is an Impediment List
- Wait! What is an Impediment
- How to use the Impediment List
- Some ideas around that. Etc.

- Let's start!



Some Ideas to Share



Talking about change

- We must have a sustainable pace of change
- Not for you, but “the culture”
- “Hard to see, this one is”



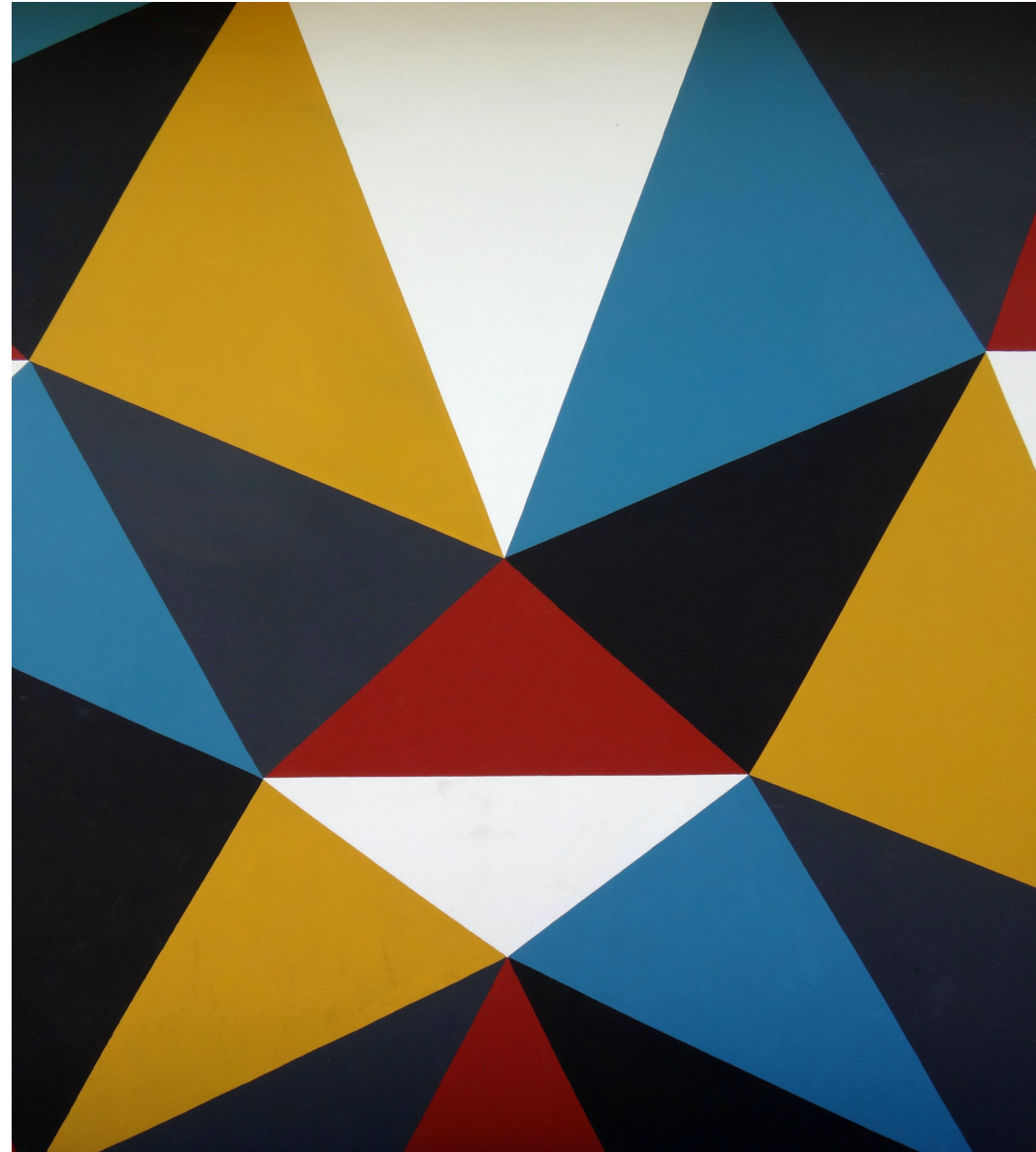
Impediment List Is a Pattern

- This pattern fits with other patterns (e.g., ScrumMaster, First Things First)
- This pattern (we hope) helps you become better, or your team becomes better. And maybe more broadly, helps others become better.



Not Just One Pattern, but How It All Works Together

- **Also:** Not a noun, but a verb.
- It's not having an Impediment List, it's working the Impediment List to become better.



What is an Impediment List?

- A list of Impediments.
- A list of the Top 20 (?) (a) things to fix, or (b) opportunities for improvement
- Prioritized: By benefit (mostly incr. Velocity), inc. ROI, and other factors
- Prioritized by the Scrum Team
- Part of the social contract between the Organization and the Team



What Is an Impediment?

- Anything that is “slowing us down”
- Not just “blockers”
- Any “opportunity for improvement.”
- I suck, we suck, they suck.
- From which: A collection of improvements that helps us become 100% more productive quickly. (A subset of 20?)
- *“What do we need to change around here to become 100% more productive?”*



Team Goals

- More fun / happiness
- Less stress
- 40 hours
- So, a balance!
- And higher motivation.



How Big is an Impediment?

- By the time an impediment gets to the Top...
- Normally fixable (can be mitigated enough) in one Sprint
- Slicing and dicing takes cleverness
- Some resulting benefit (ROI on the impediment) starting (we hope) immediately
- Sometimes: “Oh sugar, maybe that was not the right thing to fix!”
- Company Culture is definitely TOO big for one Sprint



If you (or any person) or “it” is not Perfect

- ...then you have an “impediment”.
- Let’s be fair: by that definition everything is an impediment.
- “The relentless pursuit of perfection.”
(Lexus)
- Yes, it is humbling, daunting somewhat



Watch Out!

- Improving also requires these:
 - More happiness / fun
 - Higher quality
 - Fewer hours
 - More BV per Story Point
 - More motivation
 - *“I never want to leave this team — the best 6 months of my work life, ever.”*
- Otherwise: They will assume that “impediments” is just talk, and assume management wants us to work harder. “Under Pressure”



Exercise: Write Impediments

- Take 2 minutes and write as many impediments as you each can on our mural at mural.co.
- So, you have some examples.



Problems

- Telling the truth...
- Team members don't want to admit they are not perfect.
- The "organization" does not want to talk about the dirty linen.
- People blame Scrum for the problems Scrum reveals.
- Hence: Courage



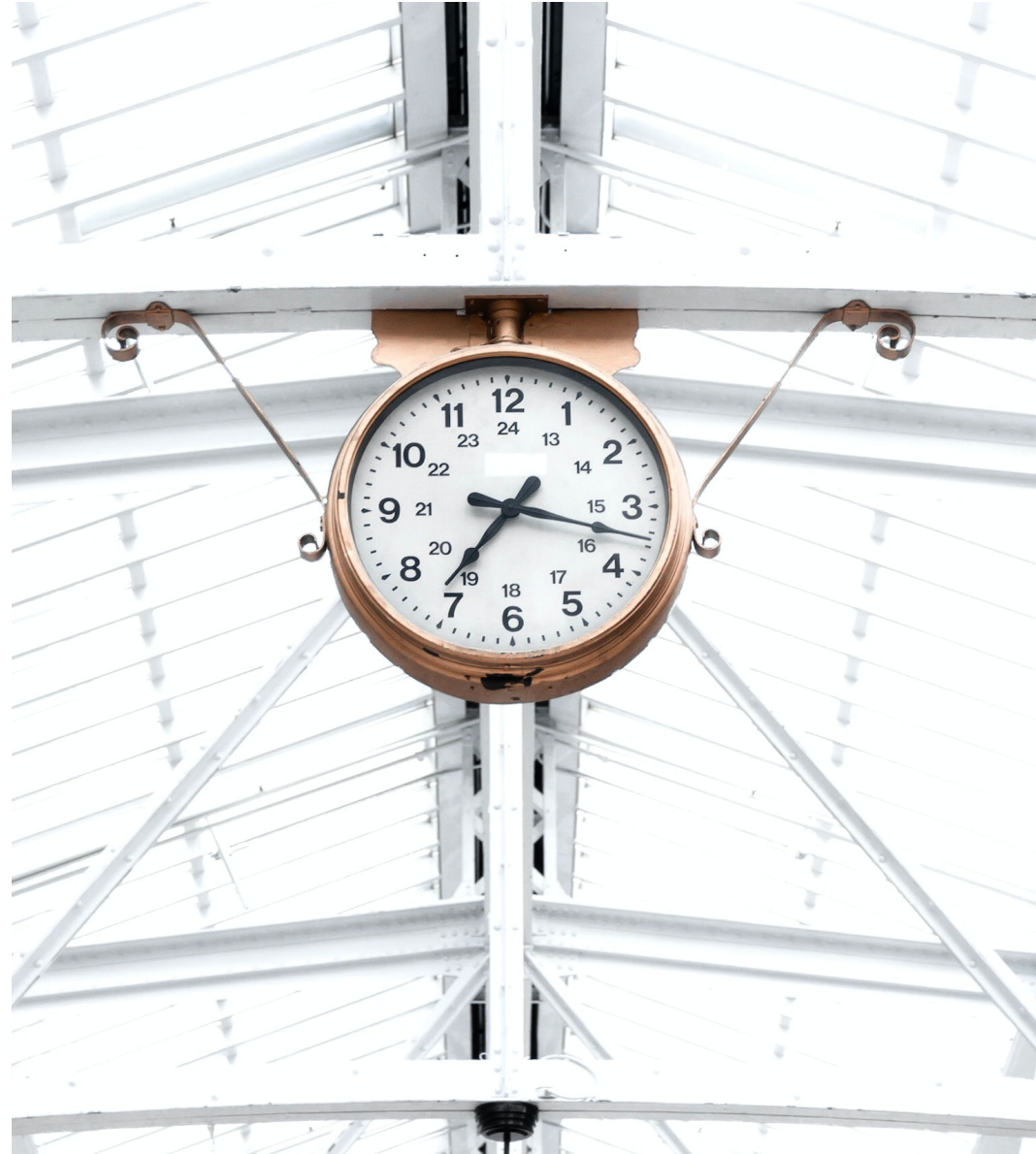
Some Domains for Impediments

- People issues
- Scrum-Butt
- Automation (Testing, CI, etc.)
- Distractions
- Organizational impediments (wide range)
- Unwillingness to change, mindset, culture
- Business side issues (PO sucks, BSHs suck, DOR process sucks)
- Etc.



Prioritize - factors

- Benefits:
 - Increased velocity
 - Higher morale
 - More BV
 - Less confusion
 - Higher quality
- Costs of implementation
- ROI
- Other factors
- Make impediments the right size



“One step at a time.”

- Work on one impediment at a time. Usually.
- Don't get distracted. (So easy to get distracted.)
- Suggestion: Make a list of the impediments fixed or mitigated. And a Velocity chart (improving?) - over time.
- Don't scatter your energies on many small impediments and get nowhere.



The People



The Team Must Help

- We mean the whole Scrum Team, including the PO.
- Identify the best impediments (eventually)
- Work on some impediments...



ScrumMaster

- Guides, cajoles, coaches, etc.
- Works on some impediments
- Pulls in the other parties, “manages”
- The main driver (“the straw that stirs the drink”)



The Manager

- [A Team should have one manager.]
- A manager must help them attack impediments — in general and specifically.
- The manager must say yes (sometimes) to people, money or approval, or all 3.
- A manager might actually fix some impediments.



Business Stakeholders

- They see the list every Sprint (or the Top 3)
- Let the BSHs choose whether to invest in fixing some impediments. (They have some money, normally)
- They should help some (maybe only by saying yes)



Summary:

Who fixes impediments?

- The SM
- The Team (like a PBI in the sprint). The whole Team... (PO)
- The Manager
- Other people outside the Team
- **People outside the company (a vendor)**



The Bigger Picture



Impact?

- If you did the Top X impediments, could you double the Velocity?
- How long to fix the Top X?



Transparency

- The Impediment List brings transparency.



How Does It Help?

- Let's list the ways an **Impediment List** helps.



Benefits

- Increased velocity
- Visibility
- Transparency
- First Things First
- Less complaining
- Higher quality
- Less Stupid
- Higher morale
- They learn to identify the important stuff
- SM work list
- SM less distracted

Discussion, Questions



Discussion, Questions

- Don't be shy!
- Just turn off the mute
- OR: Type them in the Chat



Other webinars

- Two Types:
 - About courses and workshops (30 mins)
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- Where:
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