Using the Impediment List

Joe Little — September 3, 2024 — Version 13
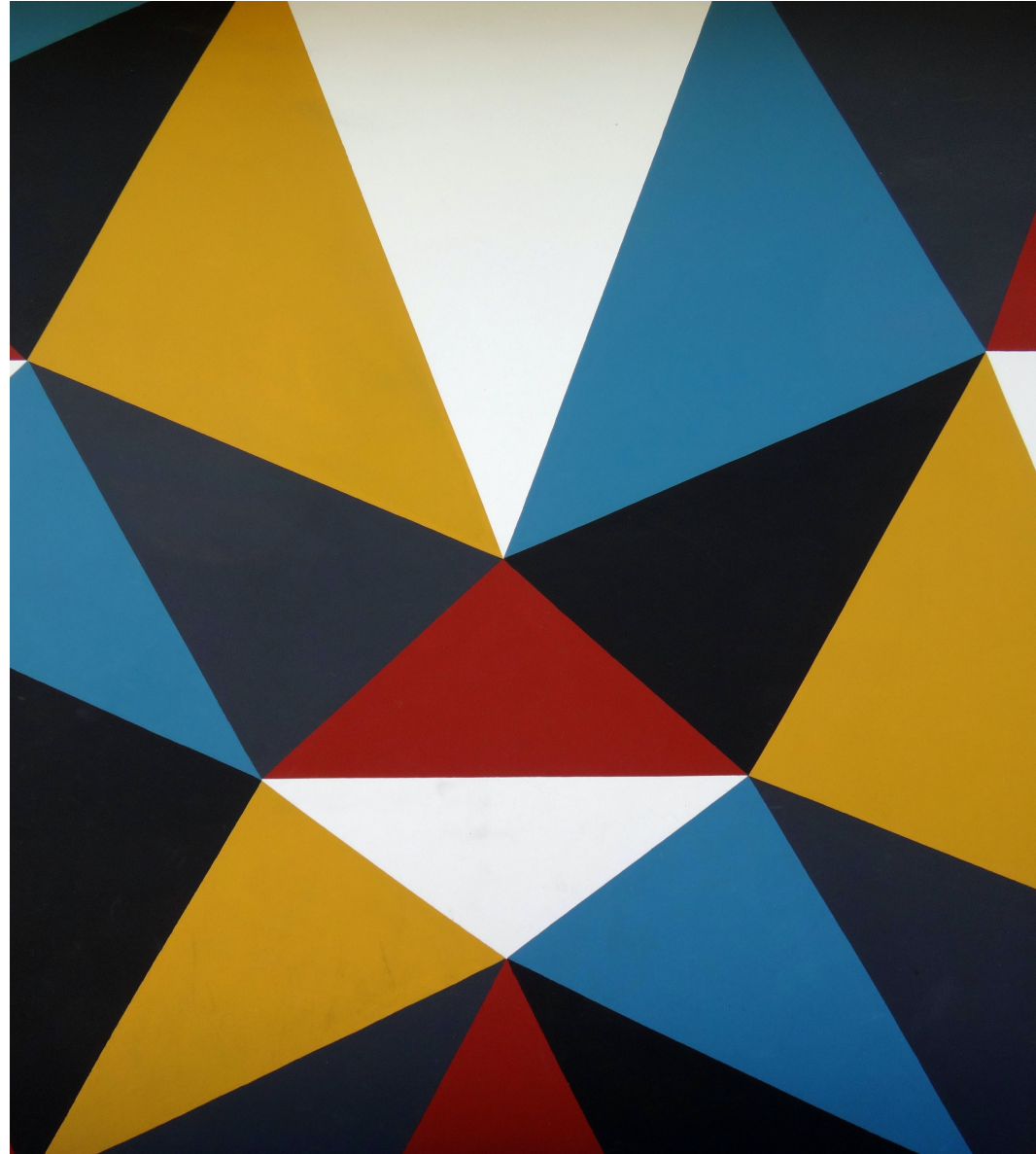Webinar — **LeanAgileTraining.com**

Intro

Reminder to me…

- **If you want the slide deck (in PDF):**

- If I don't have your email…

- Put it in the Chat. Or, send me a quick email.

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.

- Let's start!

Change

Talking about change

- We must have a sustainable pace of change

- Not for you, but "the culture"

- "Hard to see, this one is"
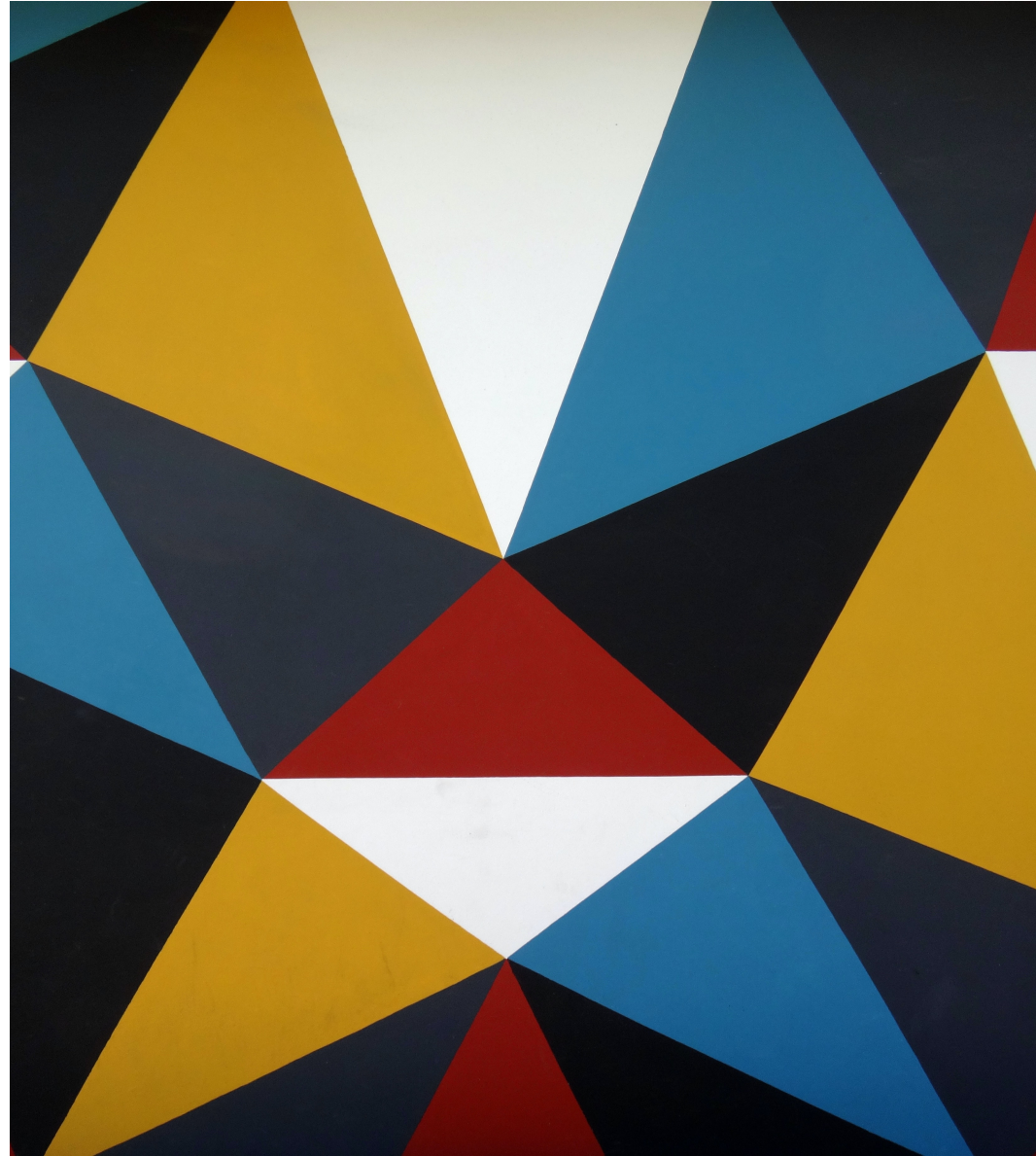
What is an Impediment List

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.

- This pattern is <u>basic</u> to becoming better. But, given humans, it is not a silver bullet.

Not Just One Pattern, but How It All Works Together

- **Also:** Not a noun, but a verb.

- It's not <u>having</u> an Impediment List, it's <u>working</u> the Impediment List to become better.

- Some patterns it works with: Daily Scrum, SM, Sprint, Retrospective, Velocity, etc.

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 increased Velocity), really ROI (bene/cost), and other factors

- Prioritized by the Scrum Team

- Part of the social contract between the Organization and the Team

What is an Impediment?

What Is an Impediment?

- Anything that is "slowing us down"

- Not just "blockers"

- Any "opportunity for improvement."

- I suck, we suck, they suck, it sucks

- 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 (less, right?)

- So, a balance!

- And higher motivation and morale

How can we improve?
Some ways…

- Automate work

- Improve the process

- Make fewer mistakes

- Learn

- Become more skillful

- Less "non-Value Added time" (Cf. Lean)

- Less waiting or delay (Cf. Lean)

- More efficient

- Less distracted

- Better collaboration

- Have everything we need to be successful (DOR)

- Less time stuck

- More energy (awake, motivated, having fun)

How do you measure improvement?

- Many possible ways

- One: Within a time box, with a given set of inputs, more good stuff to customers in T2 than in T1

- What is "good stuff"? Probably more BV than lines of code.

- It's the Gestalt, the whole. It's not about the individual parts, per se. But the overall improvement of the Team, with the context of company, customers, etc.

- Increase in Velocity? Mainly? First? Can we measure BV yet?

How Big is an Impediment?

- By the time an impediment gets to the Top…

- Normally fixable (or 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

- The Kansas City Chiefs must be better than last year (they won the Super Bowl).

How to use Impediments?

Watch Out!

- People can feel pushed. Not good.

- Improving also requires these:

  - More happiness / fun

  - Higher quality

  - Less stress

  - 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.

Examples

- Here is one list:

- https://leanagiletraining.com/better-agile/impediments-orlando-may-2015/

Problems

- Telling the truth…

- A Team member doesn't want to admit she is not perfect.

- Low trust within Team.

- 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.

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Prioritize - factors

- Benefits:

  - Increased velocity

  - Higher morale

  - More BV

  - Less confusion, waste

  - JIT knowledge conversion

  - Higher quality

- Costs of implementation

- ROI

- Other factors

- Make impediments the right size
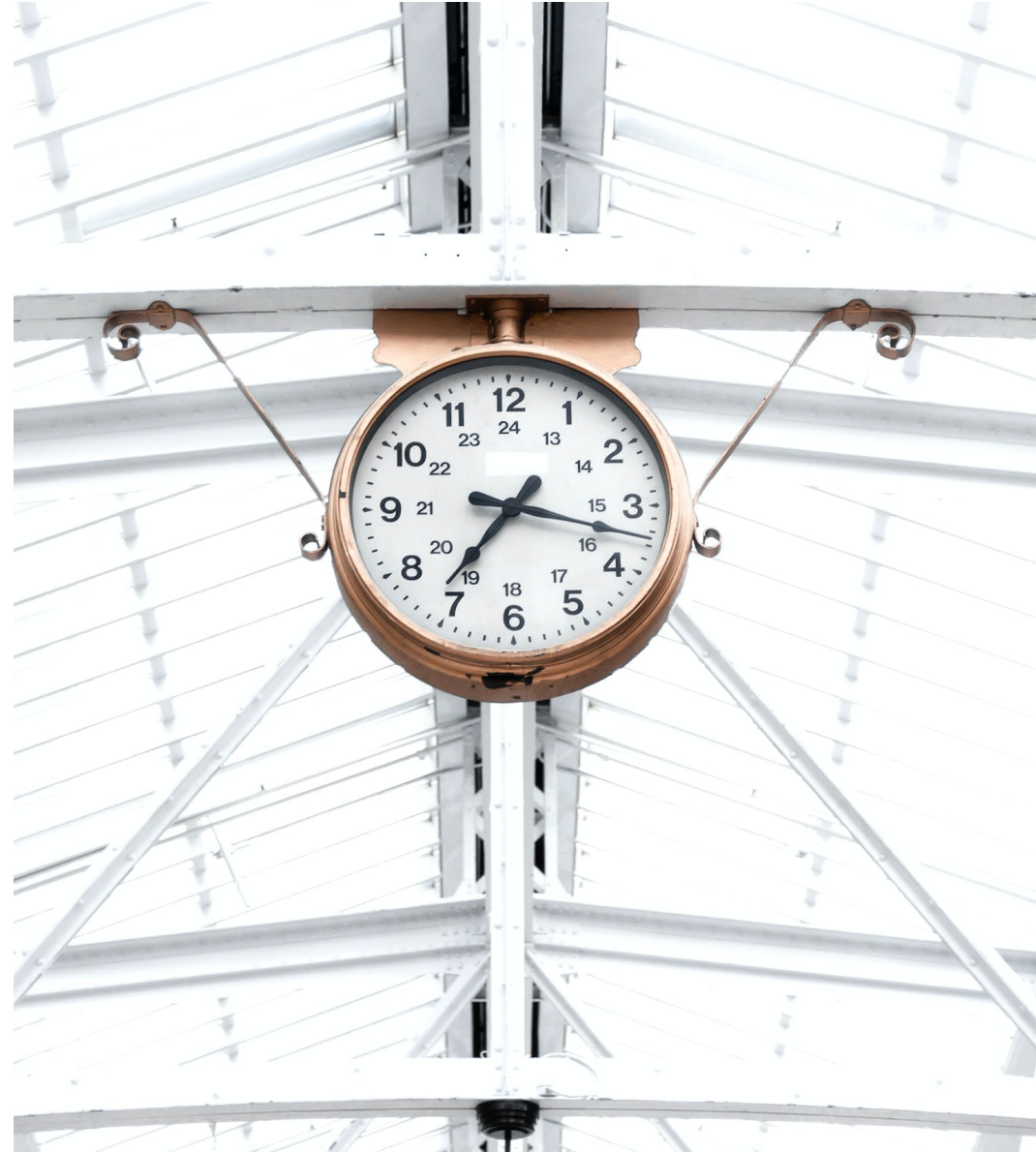
"One step at a time."

- 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 <u>must</u> 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 (eg, BSHs, others)

- **People outside the company (eg, a vendor, etc.)**

The Bigger Picture

Impact?

- If you did the Top 8 (or N) impediments, could you double the Velocity?

- How long to fix the Top 8 (or N)?

Transparency

- The Impediment List brings transparency.

- And more honesty.

Painful, some

- Being honesty

- Being humble

- More effort

- Annoyingly, people things <u>never</u> become perfect

- The Org provides friction

- CHANGE!

What is the gain for the pain?

- You must 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

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- Joe Little

- **jhlittle@leanagiletraining.com**

- (704) 376-8881

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