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Lean from the Trenches

Managing Large-Scale Projects with Kanban

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Lean from the Trenches

Managing Large-Scale Projects with Kanban

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Foreword

We who give project advice are faced with a mighty temptation. The teams who engage us are looking for direction, hope, ideas, energy, and guidance (and sometimes someone to blame, but that's a different topic). We are called in because we have been in a variety of situations, some more functional and some less. We try to help our clients move toward "more functional." However, we are often as baffled as they about what to do next.

The temptation I am referring to is the temptation to begin speaking beyond our experience, to meet the client's need for certainty by manufacturing a certainty we ourselves do not feel. Left untreated, this results in dogma, revealed by words like "must," "always," and "everybody."

One beauty of this book's story is its complete lack of dogma. It is a story. A story of a project that had real troubles and addressed them with a small set of easily understood practices. Applying those practices required wisdom, patience, and persistence, which is why you can't just copy the story to fix your project.

The other reason you can't just copy the story is because it isn't written as a general prescription. It is a particular team in a particular culture with a particular client. You are going to have to work to apply it to your situation, but that's good, because you are in any case going to have to work to encourage any change.

There are general principles at work here. I've been fortunate enough to work with Henrik a bit, and he told me he really has only one trick: make all the important information visible in one place and then decide what to do together. If that's his only trick (and I have my doubts), it's a good one.

Society has learned to distrust us for our big, complicated, and ultimately futile public software projects. This is the story of a public service project that managed to serve the public. What it takes to regain the public's trust is teamwork, transparency, and early and frequent releases. Oops, I just succumbed to that temptation I just warned you about. You'd better just read the story and learn your own lessons.

Kent Beck
September 2011