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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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Preface

Many of us have heard about Lean software development, Kanban, and other trendy buzzwords. But what does this stuff actually look like in practice? And how does it scale to a 60-person project developing a really complex system?

I can't tell you how to do it, since every context is different. But I will tell you how we've been doing it (basically a Scrum-XP-Kanban hybrid), and maybe some of our solutions and lessons learned can be valuable in your context.

Who This Book Is For

This book is primarily written for team leads, managers, coaches, and other change agents within software development organizations.

However, some parts will probably be useful to anyone interested in software development, Lean product development, or collaboration techniques in general—regardless of role or industry.

For those who want to comment, go to the book's main page,[1] and from there you can reach the forum and errata pages. I welcome your comments!

How to Read This Book

This book is divided in two parts, each subdivided into several short chapters.

Part I, "How We Work," is a case study showing how Kanban and Lean principles were applied in a large project for the Swedish police. The first chapter describes what the project was about, and the subsequent chapters describe specific challenges (such as scaling), how we dealt with those challenges, and what we learned along the way.

Part II, "A Closer Look at the Techniques," starts with a high-level introduction to Agile and Lean and then expands on some of the practices mentioned in Part I, such as cause-effect diagrams.

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1. http://pragprog.com/book/hklean/lean-from-the-trenches

I suggest you read Part I end to end, since that is the heart of this book, and the chapters build upon each other. Then you can cherry-pick from Part II, since those chapters are independent.

New to Agile or Lean?

If you are new to Agile or Lean, don't worry. This book is all about practice, not theory. I'll simply show you what we've been doing, and you'll pick up most of the theory along the way.

If you prefer to start with a high-level overview of Agile and Lean and the associated methods Scrum, XP, and Kanban, then go ahead and jump to .

Disclaimer

I don't claim that our way of working is perfectly Lean. Lean is a direction, not a place. It's all about continuous improvement. *Lean* has no clear definition, but many of the practices that we apply are based on the principles of Lean product development that Mary Poppendieck, David Anderson, and Don Reinertsen teach. And these practices, by the way, happen to match Agile principles quite well on most counts.

Another thing—you will see this project from my perspective, a part-time coach during six months of this project. My goal is not to present a 100 percent complete picture; I'll just give you a general idea of what we've been doing and what we've learned so far.

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this book—thanks to you all! I'd especially like to thank Håkan Rydman for being the internal change agent and getting me into this project, and Tomas Alsterlund for providing strong management support and keeping us focused on the project goal.

And I'd also like to call out the following people:

Christian Stuart and the rest of the RPS management team for entrusting me to coach this project and allowing us to spread the word about what we've been doing.

All project participants for putting their hearts into this project and helping to drive the change process. I was amazed by the skill, creativity, and energy of this project team!

Mary and Tom Poppendieck for years of personal mentorship and cotraining in Lean software development and for encouraging me to write this book.

They also kindly contributed most of the content in Section 17.2, *Lean in a Nutshell*, on page ?.

My editor, Kay Keppler. I've never worked with an editor before, and I was surprised about how valuable this was. Kay not only improved the book, she helped me become a better writer!

All reviewers: Gunnar Ahlberg, Kevin Beam, Kent Beck, Pawel Brodzinski, Ward Cunningham, Doug Daniels, Chad Dumler-Montplaisir, Yves Hanoulle, Michael Hunter, Andy Keffalas, Maurice Kelly, Sebastian Lang, Rasmus Larsson, Mary Poppendieck, Sam Rose, Daniel Teng, Nancy Van Schooender-woert, Joshua White, and Colin Yates.

Martie Smith and Emma Mattsson for donating some great photographs.

Finally, my wife, Sophia, for granting me focus and flow (not easy with four small kids in the house...) so that I could finish the first draft of this book within days instead of months.

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