Software Improvement Group

Agile Product Delivery

From strategy to product

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Introduction: Software Improvement Group

GETTING SOFTWARE RIGHT

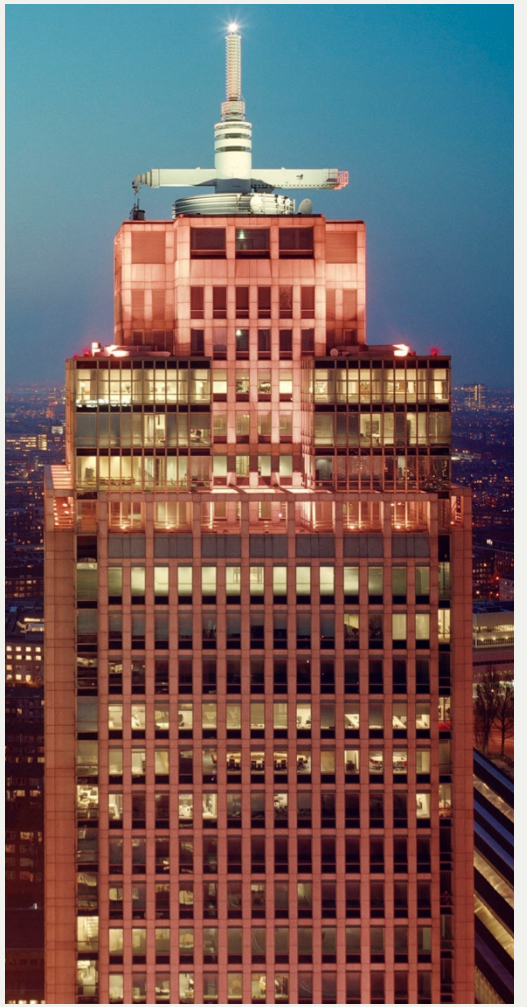
we help clients improve the software their business depends on

We are an international consultancy agency aimed at software improvement founded in 2000.

We are an independent, objective and impartial mediator between clients and IT suppliers.

We deliver management insight in IT project and systems based on validated facts and measurements.

We actively contribute to scientific research in the field of software engineering.



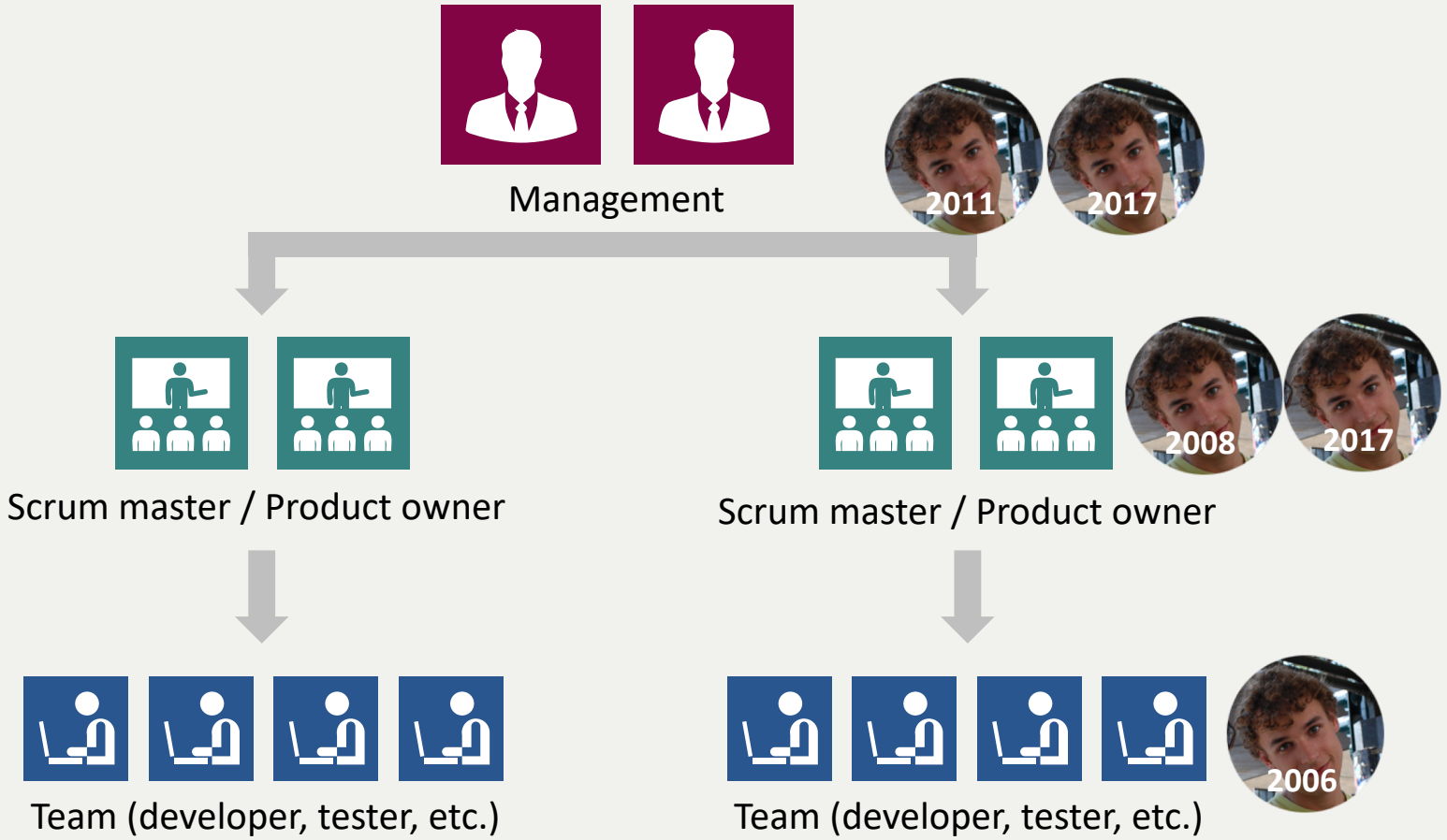
Our claim for today:

Measuring the quality of software *products* is key to successful software *projects*

"You can't control what you can't measure, you can't improve what you can't measure."

-- Tom DeMarco, Controlling software project management

Who am I and what have I heard about agile product delivery strategies?



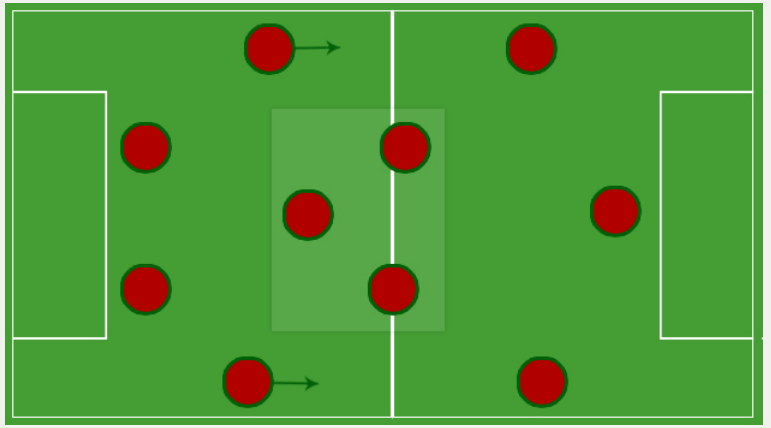
What kind of process are people using?



94% of teams claim they're using some form of an agile process

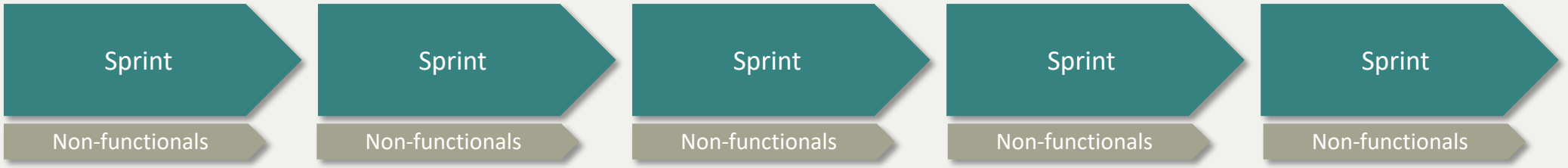
> Most of these processes are custom: people take elements from Scrum, but don't follow it to the letter

> That's OK, a process should be specific to *your* circumstances, concepts like Scrum are just a blueprint



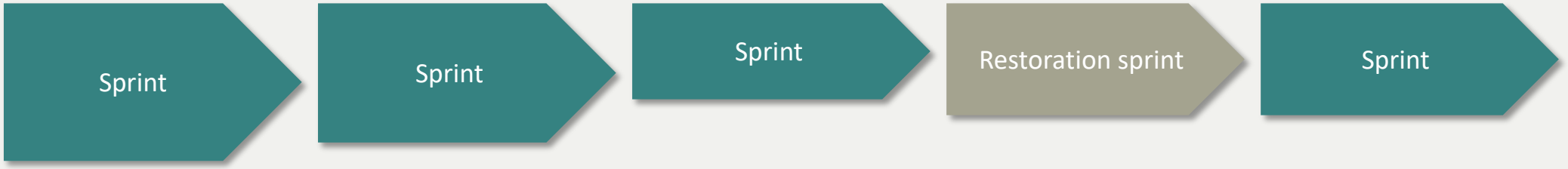
If sprints are all about functionality, non-functionals become an afterthought

Ideal approach: continuous understream to ensure non-functionals remain at desired level



Reality: too much pressure on functionality eventually leads to “restoration sprints”

> Somewhat ironically, over-focusing on functionality results in sprints that deliver zero functionality



The “let’s just start and we’ll figure it out later” approach doesn’t work



You cannot retroactively apply a strategy, it has to be clear from the start. Example: not thinking about infrastructure didn’t work out too well for Jakarta.

The problem with scale

Direct transmission of strategy

Full control, but impossible at distance



Indirect transmission of strategy

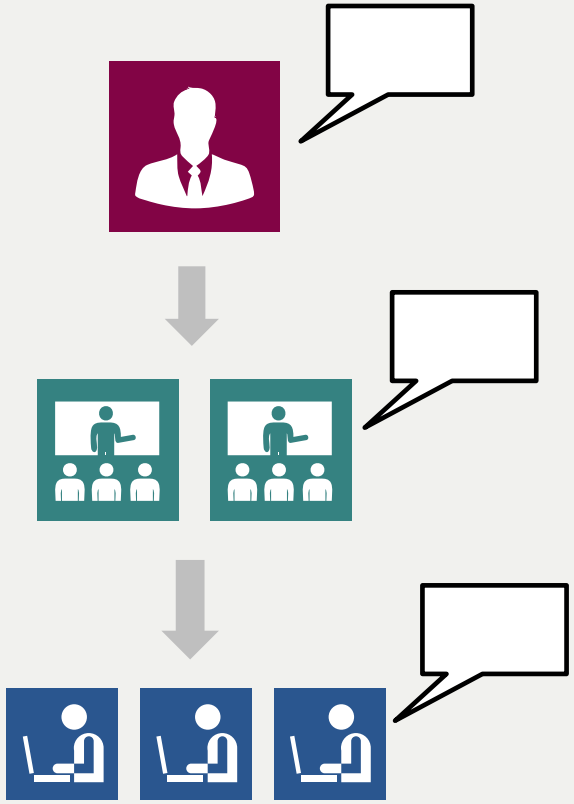
No direct control, hope for the best



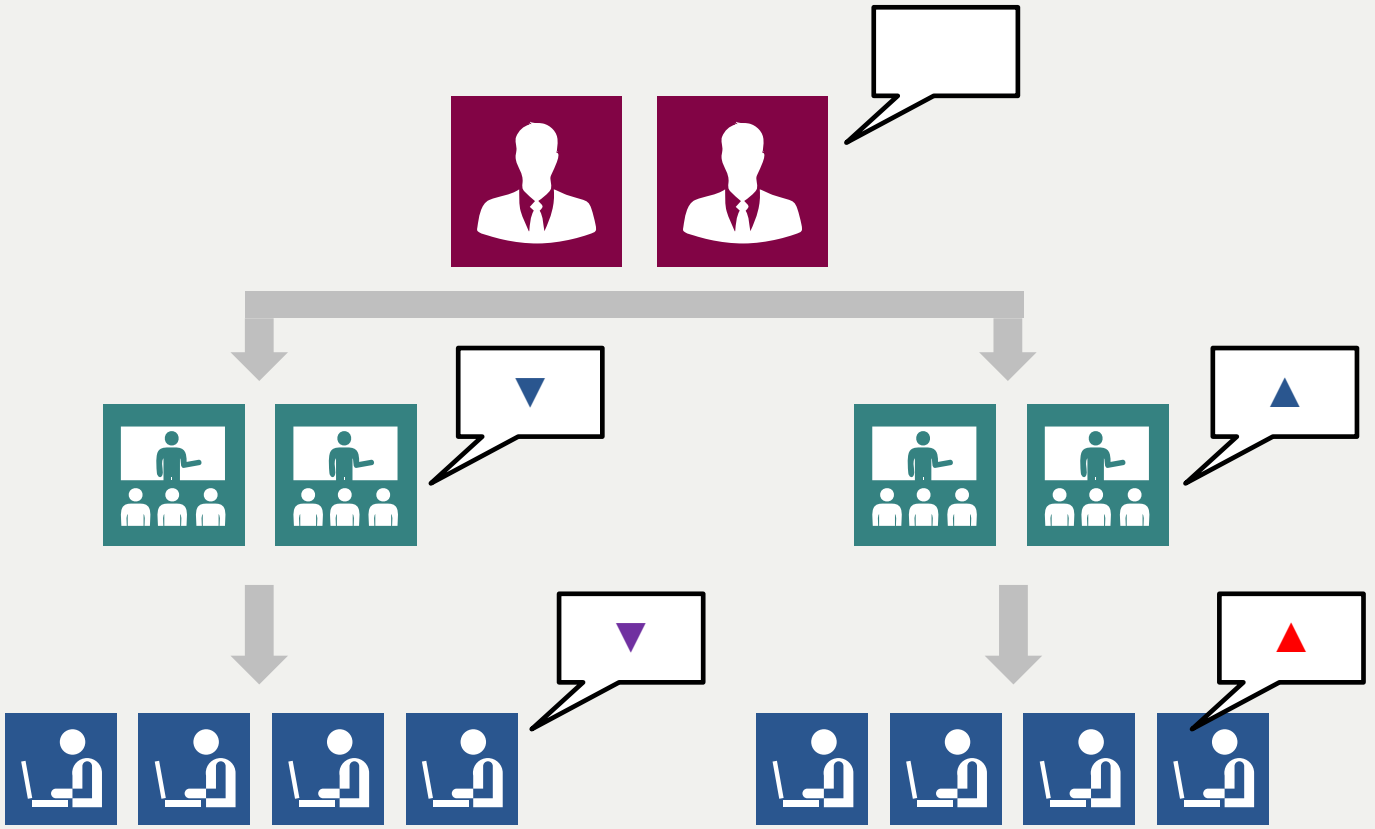
Source: "The politics of bureaucracy", Gordon Tullock (1965)

Strategy starts getting hard when you've got multiple teams

Direct transmission of strategy



Indirect transmission of strategy



Having a separate backlog per team is problematic if teams depend on each other

Having a sprint backlog requires the team to be able to be able to solve all impediments during the sprint within the team



> This is no longer possible when you split your product across multiple teams that depend on each other, as teams will promise to realize functionality during the sprint without being able to make that guarantee

Closing thoughts

Agile is hard

Applying it without coaching will not change anything

Strategy becomes increasingly hard when you grow

Above a certain number of people you have to rely on indirect communication

Maybe, following the strategy is not always essential

Teams will strive to produce the best possible product,
maybe following the strategy 100% is not achievable

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