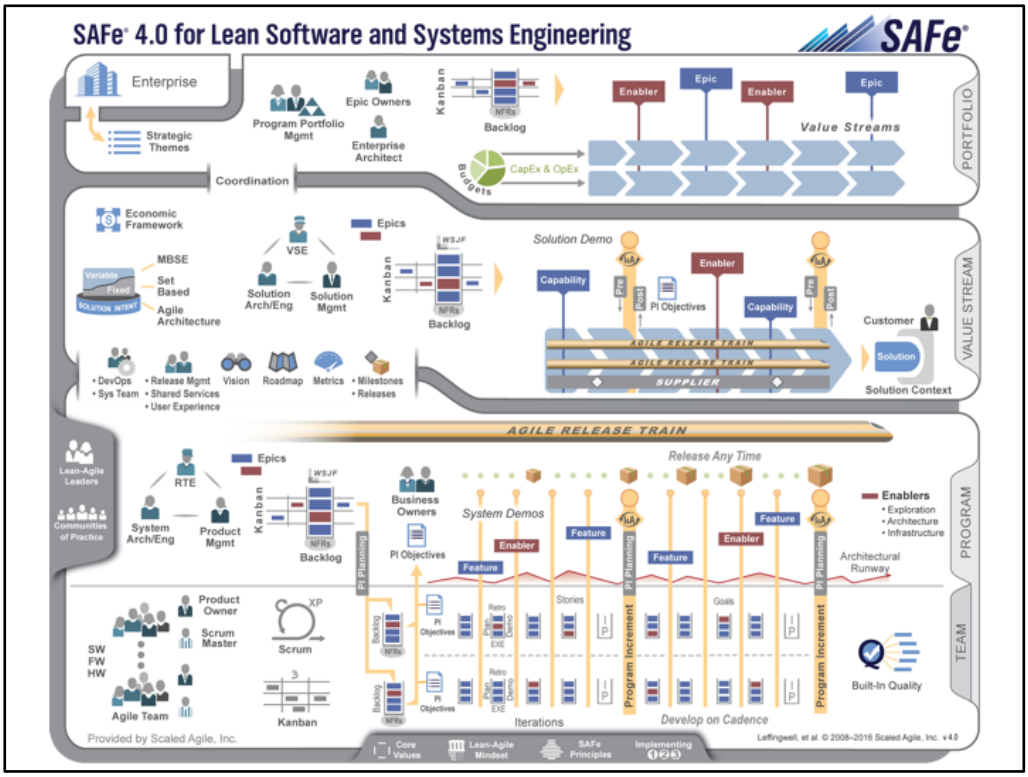
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
Banking on a SAFe QuickStart
Em Campbell-Pretty
Partner, Context Matters
@PrettyAgile
www.prettyagile.com
au.linkedin.com/in/ejcampbellpretty/
em@contextmatters.com.au
AgileAUSTRALIA16
20 - 21 JUNE 2016 | MELBOURNE



Before we being – who is familiar with SAFe?

In April 2015 I receive a message out of the blue asking me if I would be interested in supporting Westpac with progressing their SAFe implementation. They had launched one train in February and wanted help with launching the subsequent trains. I was flattered. I had done a small amount of work with Westpac in late 2014. I must have made a more significant impact than I thought. So I signed up and by the end of May I was back on site.

My first meeting on day one is with Tim Eddy.
Tim sits down an introduces himself. He explains he is about to move into a new job where he will be responsible for the change program for Westpac's brand new online banking platform.

The program that implemented the platform was nearing completion and it was time to translation it to “business as usual”.
However the new platform was also very successful resulting in a huge level of demand for additional features and a lot of pressure to deliver quickly.

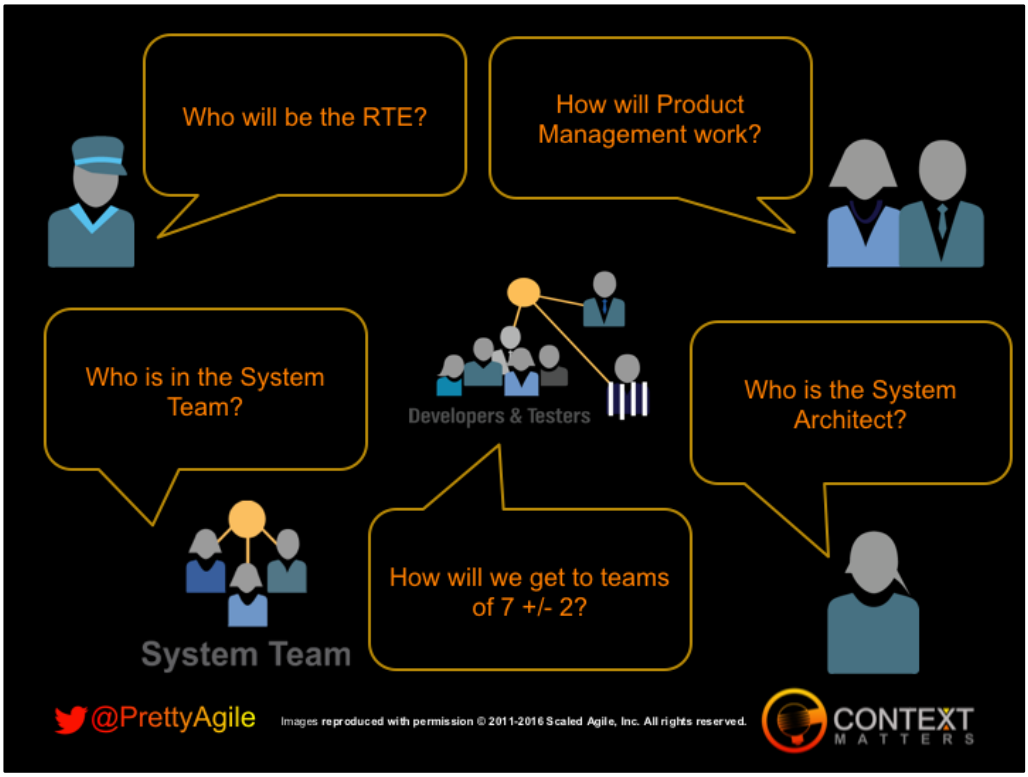
Tim says to me – I think we need to go agile but I know nothing about agile. What books should I read and what training do I need to do?

thought I had struck gold!
This NEVER happens!
I usually find myself trying to convince leaders that's they need to invest in self education and this guy volunteers in our first meeting.

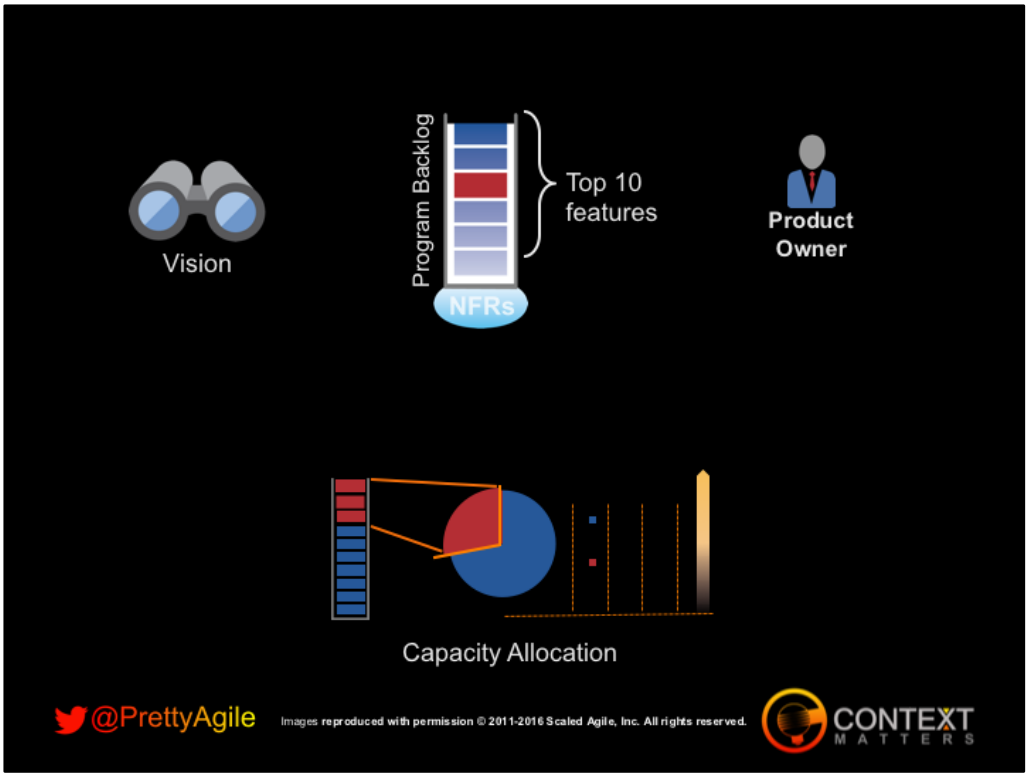
On face value it seemed like the suggestion that Tim form an Agile Release Train was sound. So I set Tim some homework …

Later Tim would tell me that the meeting had been going really well up until the point I told him I was a business person.

Luckily I then took a week out to attend the SAFe Leadership Retreat in Scotland, leaving Tim with enough time to what the video of my presentation at the DevOps Enterprise Summit. Once he heard that story he was convinced I knew what I was doing! I guess that was a lucky break!



When I returned from my trip it was time to get to work.
The next SPC class was still 2-3 weeks away which meant the time we carved out of Tim's schedule to focus on planning the ART launch involved a lot of context setting. Me providing context about SAFe and examples from other ARTs I had been involved in and Tim trying to explain to me how things work at Westpac. While we progressed conceptually we didn't know enough about Tim's new team to make much progress.



And then of course there was the content. We needed a vision, a prioritized feature backlog, an approach to product ownership and a decision on capacity allocation.

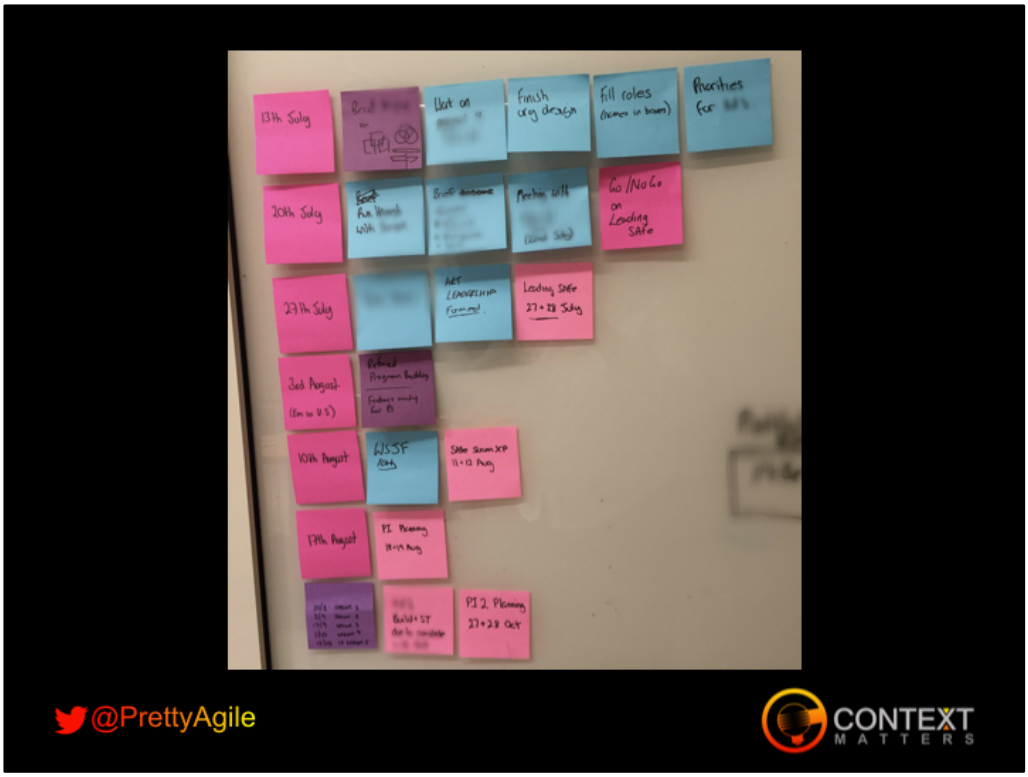
So with some base understanding of the entry criteria for launching a train in place. It was time to plan the laucnh.
The window of opportunity turned out to be VERY small.
Currently everyone was focused on delivering the final release of the inflight program
We would need to move vey quickly if we were going to change the delivery approach for the next release!
A quickstart seemed like our only answer.

Talk through the mechanics of a quick start

So based on when we thought the development teams would be free we had two options. One was 6 weeks away. The other was 4 months away.
Neither option was particularly appealing.
But if we didn't't make the change to agile now then we would need to do two transitions in 4 months and that just seemed like cruel and unusual punishment!
So we went with the six week option. It was gong to be tight!

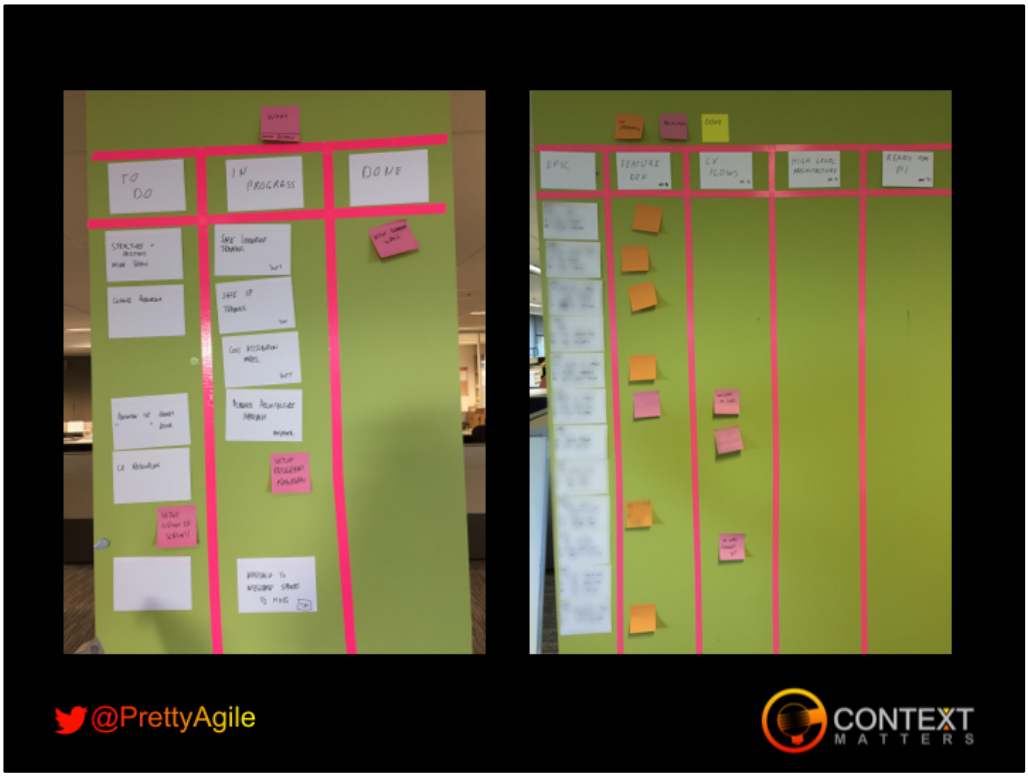
With the date set we were off to spend a week with Dean Leffingwell. I got to pair with Dean and deliver an SPC class, while Tim got to actually learn about agile and SAFe.

When we got back to the office at the end of the week, we revisited the plan, to find one minor flaw. Tim was going on leave for two weeks and he was still working his old job……. We needed to rethink..

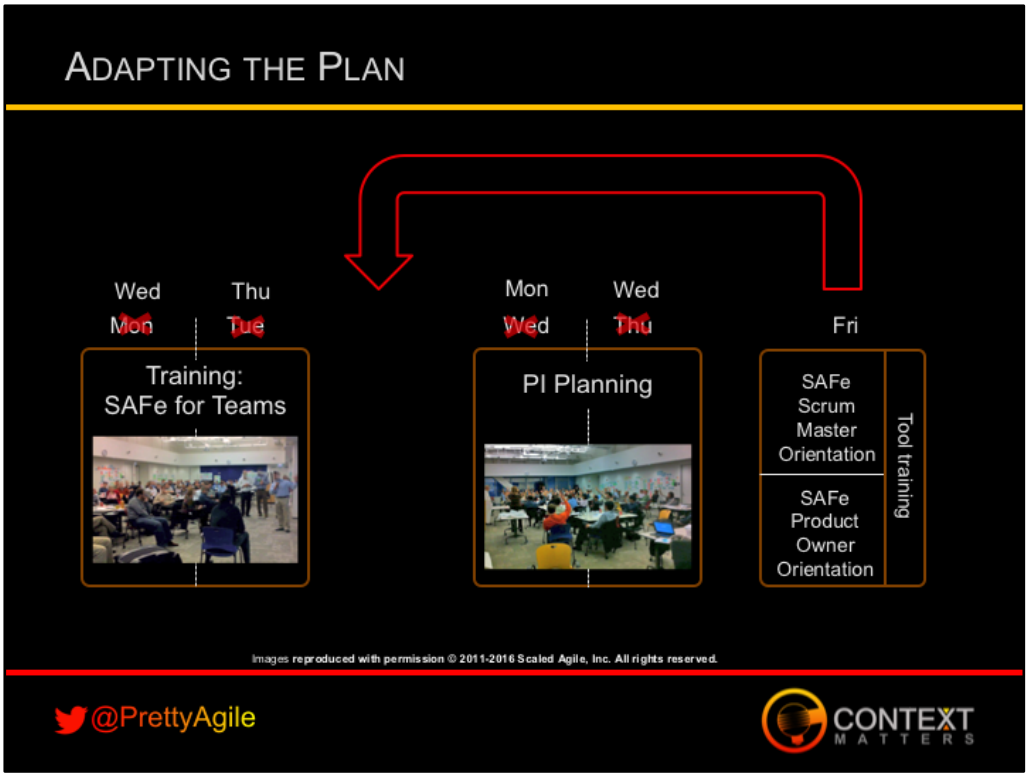


We planned in exec briefing, Leadership training, team train and the PI planning event.
It was going to be tight be it was doable. Just one more hurdle to cross….“sign off” on the plan

It was a couple of weeks later than planned but we did it!
By in from the execs on both the business and IT side\ - we were all systems go for the launch and I was off o/s again - this time for Agile 2015, leaving Tim to get the team working on defining the program backlog.



I came back to find, the team had moved into their new home. The feature backlog had been visualized. The entry criteria for PI Planning define.
There was a lot of WIP but not so much progress.
Tim & I had a quick pow wow.
The daily stand up of 15 people was not working. We need to get cross function teams happening. So we created pods of 3 people a BA, Architect & CX???
Things were mostly progressing ok, although a little slower than I would have liked.
Up until a exec offsite was scheduled over the top of PI Planning!

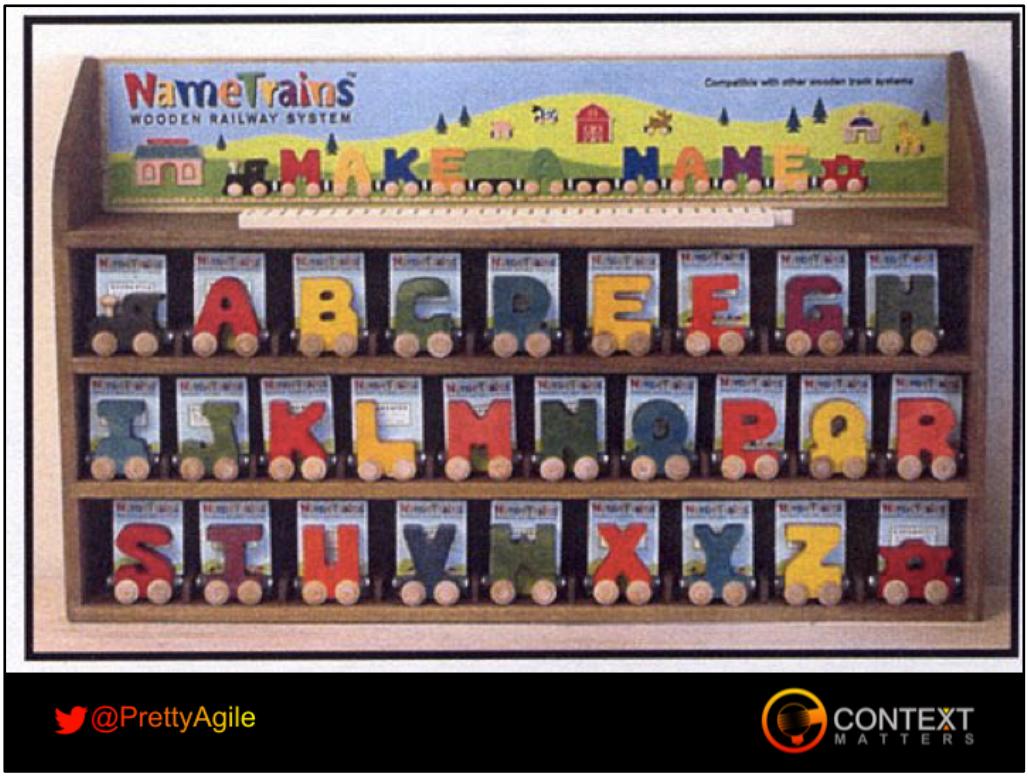


After considering our options.. We decided that the only path forward was to add a "down" day in the middle of PI Planning. Not ideal but, we were agile we had to adapt when we encountered the unexpected and we did.

On a side note, when we got to PI2 – the team were quick to complain they didn't't get the extra day! This seems to be a pattern with ARTs. Whatever compromises you make in your first PI can quickly become the norm.

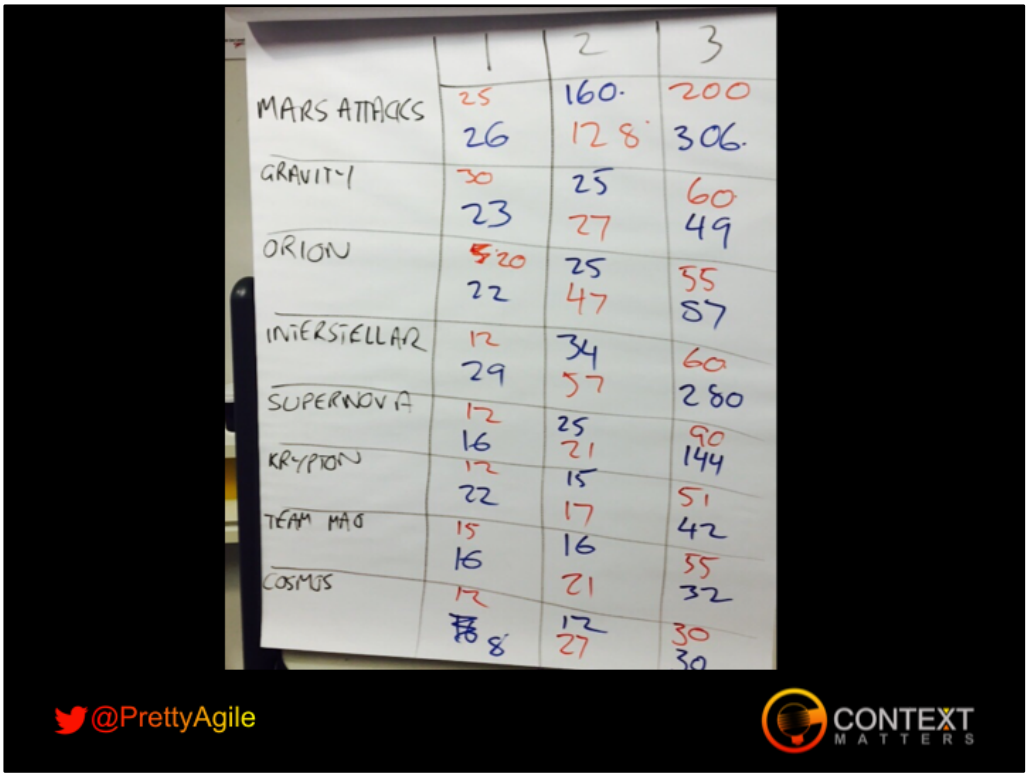
Our next milestone was Leading SAFe.
32 leaders across the business and IT together for two days talking about SAFe in the Westpac context.
So many open curious minds. They had heard Tim talking about SAFe and trains for months. Now finally they were getting the opportunity to learn and understand how their world was about to change.
Thank goodness – They were excited by the prospect!

The the leaders trained we needed to finalize the teams.
Given Tim was new to the team, he had no context with which to design the teams, so we relied very heavily on the vendor's management team to ensure the right mix of skills.



The final task to be complete before the quick start could commence was a theme for the train. While this is not actually part of the SAFe playbook, experience has taught me that giving the train a shared identity helps create a bond across the team of teams that is the agile release train, seeding the ”one team” culture that helps trains excel.

After many hours of throwing names around Tim finally made a call. I'm not sure it was so much a eureka moment as it was his desire to get out of the office. It was past 9pm and I think he had worked out I was not letting him leave until he made a decision.
The new Train was to be called Galaxy….

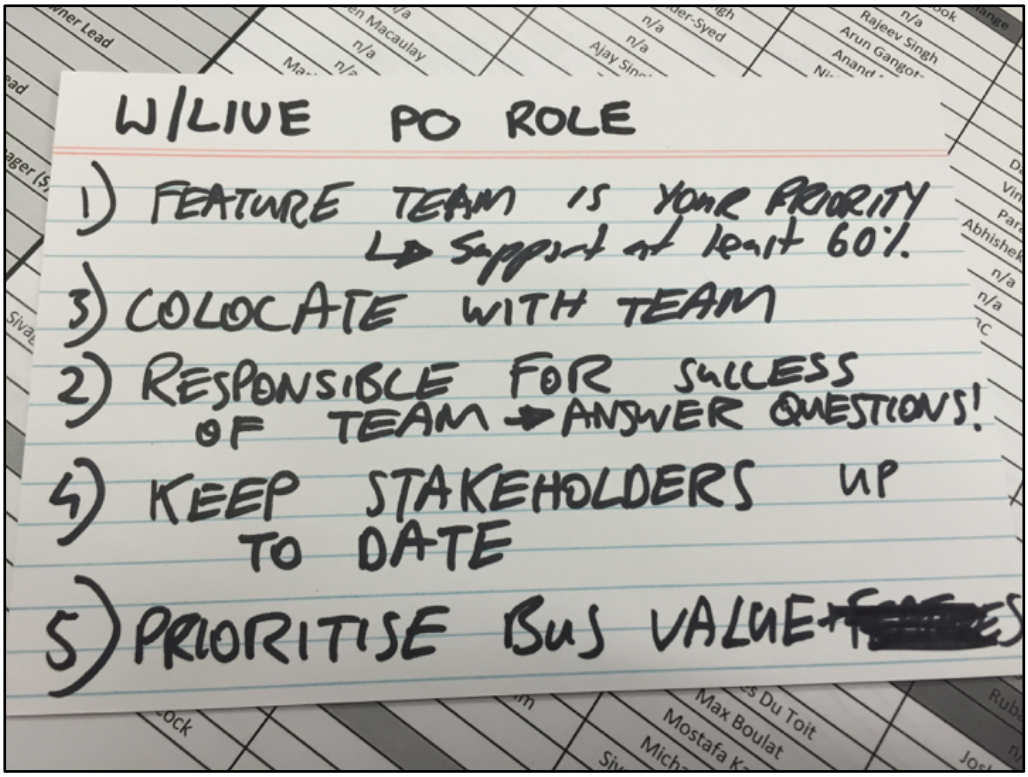


The next day SAFe Scrum XP training went ahead as planned.
And the first order of business was team names – with a galaxy theme!

I know it sounds crazy. Training 60 people at once! Surely that will impact the learning experience for the attendees.
But think about the benefit – Everyone hearing the same message from the same trainers at the same time.
A huge enabler for alignment and a one team culture.

The feedback from the teams to Tim at the end of the two days:

Somewhere in all the planning there had been a communication break down about the SM and PO orientation.
We ended up with about an hour with each group. It was just not enough. To add insult to injury some SMs and all POs missed on the Scum XP training. Definitely a lesson learnt from my perspective.



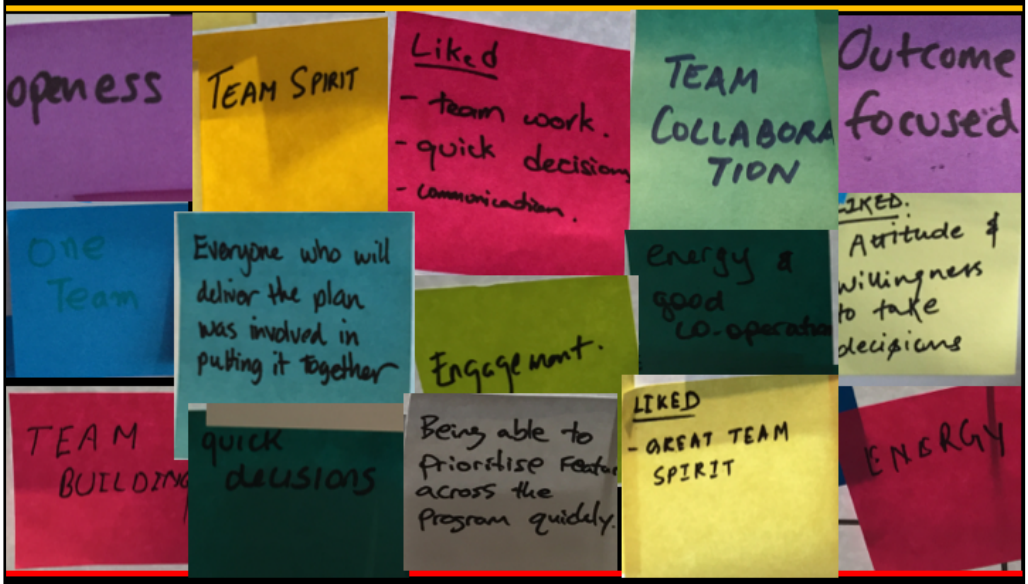
We did however have a great session with the Product Manager. Where he made his expectations of the product owners crystal clear.

And so Monday morning it was time to launch the train!
As is always the case it was awesome and painful at the same time and over in the blink of an eye.
Set up
(4) Briefings
(8) Morning coffee
(11) Briefings continue
(17) planning
(37) Draft plan review
(44) Packing up
(48) Management review
(58) Overnight
(101) Day 2 – early morning check in
(105) Update from over night
(107) planning
(116) Morning tea
(128) Plan review
(137) Roam
(140) packup

We were particularity challenged day one when the Product Mangers peers turned up with a wish list at lunch time. It turned out that the feature prioritization had been a solo effort by the product manager and not everyone was across it or bought in.

However, we got a plan committed to be the teams and accepted by the leadership.

HOW DID THE TEAMS FEEL ABOUT THE PROCESS?



@PrettyAgile

CONTEXT MATTERS

PI3 planning was completed last week. The world is not perfect but it is continuing to grow and improve.

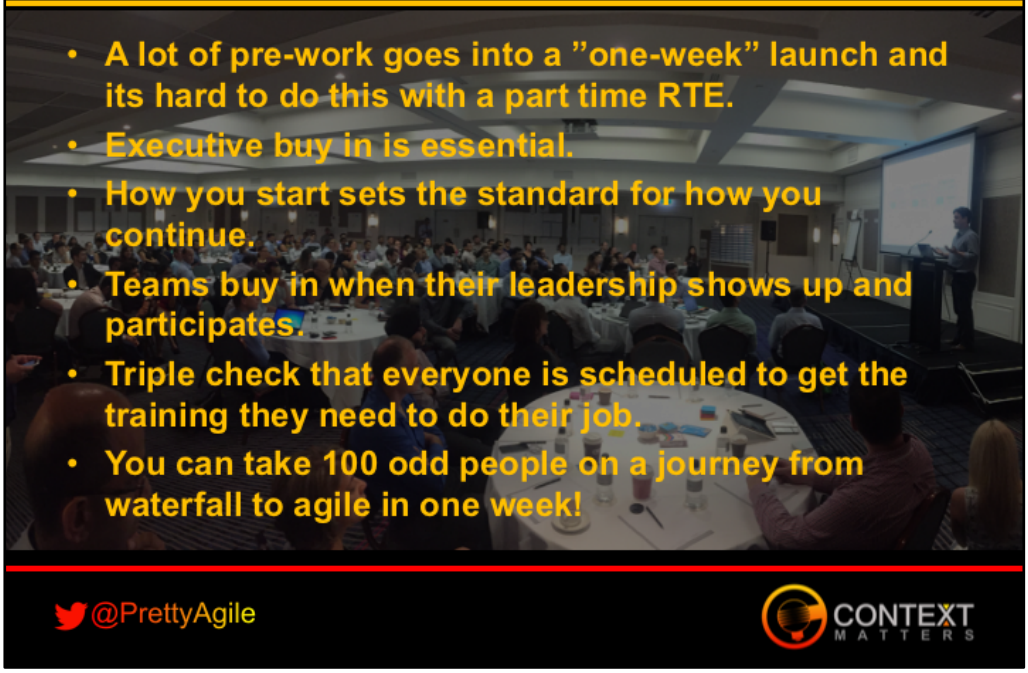
And the Results....

- Team Engagement ↑
- Business Engagement ↑
- Cycle time ↓
- Defects ↓

@PrettyAgile

CONTEXT MATTERS

Lessons Learnt



- A lot of pre-work goes into a ”one-week” launch and its hard to do this with a part time RTE.
- Executive buy in is essential.
- How you start sets the standard for how you continue.
- Teams buy in when their leadership shows up and participates.
- Triple check that everyone is scheduled to get the training they need to do their job.
- You can take 100 odd people on a journey from waterfall to agile in one week!

@PrettyAgile

CONTEXT MATTERS

QUESTIONS?

Em Campbell-Pretty
Partner, Context Matters
@PrettyAgile
www.prettyagile.com
au.linkedin.com/in/ejcampbellpretty/
em@contextmatters.com.au