GET TWICE AS MANY PROJECTS DONE—
AND BE HOME FOR DINNER

PMI Washington DC Chapter – Ashburn Local Community

Presented by Michael Hannan, PMP, TOC Jonah
Founder & Principal Consultant, Fortezza Consulting
MY PROMISE TO YOU FOR THIS SESSION:
Inspire and excite you on the topic of project portfolio performance improvement.

MY WILD-EYED STRETCH GOAL FOR THIS SESSION:
Help you maximize your impact as leaders, so that you might advance humankind through the pursuit of dramatically higher levels of organizational performance.
On September 11, 2001, the largest sealift rescue initiative in the history of humankind was carried out, rescuing over 35 times more people per hour than the next largest — the 1940 evacuation of Dunkirk.
What I Mean When I Say “Maximize Your Impact”

2. In the past 10 years, a major pharmaceutical company found a way to double the number of life-saving drugs it brought to market, with no increase in cost.
What I Mean When I Say “Maximize Your Impact”

3. In the span of just a few years, Amazon went from deploying new software < 10 times a day to deploying new software more than 7,000 times a day.

a = 10 times a day
In its first 8 years, SpaceX made space launches 5x less costly, and in the next 8 years, expects to make them 100x less costly.
How did they do it?

All had inspirational leadership, but many lower-performing organizations do as well. All had a strong sense of urgency, but many lower-performing organizations do as well. Two applied some type of formalized Agile methods, but not the other two. Two had internal performance-improvement initiatives, but not the other two.

The Common Denominators:

Inspirational leadership.
A strong sense of urgency.
Unbridled enthusiasm for unlimited upside.
Sound planning.
Staggering according to capacity.
Single-task focus.
They committed to nothing that was “lower-level.”

The focus of this session is to codify these as techniques.
TECHNIQUE #1: STAGGERING ACCORDING TO CAPACITY
Three simple projects, seven weeks each

Three types of tasks, requiring three different resources:
- A – Planning, Scoping, Prioritizing
- B – Architecting, Developing, Integrating, System Testing
- C – User Acceptance Testing

The sooner we start....
The Illusion of Progress

![Diagram showing resource utilization and delays over weeks for three projects.](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

- **Resource A** and **Resource B** and **Resource C**
- **Project 1**, **Project 2**, **Project 3**

- **High resource utilization**
- **Delay**

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SIMULTANEOUS VS. STAGGERED PROJECTS

Simultaneous Projects

Staggered Projects
Executive stakeholders must be convinced that a project start date weeks or months in the future will result in an earlier finish.

Staggering helps expose hidden resource bottlenecks, identifying opportunities for getting even more projects done.
   ◦ Note: quite often, this bottleneck is outside the scrum team

Individual efficiency must be subordinated to the goal of maximizing throughput
TECHNIQUE #2: CODIFYING SINGLE-TASK FOCUS
# Single-task Focus: Task-Switching Game

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DONE
TYPICAL GAME RESULTS

Almost twice as fast!

First round results with task switching

Second round results with focus

\[ 2\sigma \sim 90\% \]

\[ 2\sigma \sim 60\% \]
IF SIMPLE TASKS SEE A ~2X IMPROVEMENT...
CODIFYING SINGLE-TASK FOCUS: CONCEPT FIRST

Lean/Kanban

− Visualizing the actual flow of work is critical to identify impediments and to experiment with improvements
− Enabling the system to “pull” work improves flow while empowering teams
− Minimizing batch sizes—ideally down to “single-piece flow”—can generate impressive flow improvements
− Keeping “work in progress” (WIP) within capacity is key to maximizing flow
Theory of Constraints, Psychology

- Single-tasking is a highly effective way to minimize lead times for human tasks
- Maximizing flow across a complex organization (system) can only be done once the system constraint is identified
CODIFYING SINGLE-TASK FOCUS: CONCEPT FIRST

Agile/Scrum, Psychology

- The team can find ways to improve flow more effectively than any single member
- The team is much more motivated when working under a disciplined framework designed to foster team autonomy.
Codifying Single-task Focus: A Simple Solution

Number of Task Owners

Keep striving to make this number…

...lower than this number

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**CODIFYING SINGLE-TASK FOCUS: EXAMPLE**

**SUMMARY CUMULATIVE FLOW DIAGRAM**

- **Improved single-task discipline**
- **Over 2X!**
- **Impediments; lapses in single-tasking**
- **Previous productivity level**

- 2 months

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Staggering + Single Tasking

### Staggering

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### Staggering + Single-Tasking

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4 Project Completions

7 Project Completions

Assuming a 35% speed improvement…

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**Key Takeaways: The Focus-and-Flow™ Method**

- Can speed up *any* project or operation and be used with *any* methodology.
- Can *complement* key characteristics of Agile:
  - Self-organized Scrum Teams, user stories, story points, backlogs, burndown charts, retrospectives, customer transparency, scope buffering, and more.
  - Offers an option to replace time-boxed sprints with *single-piece flow* to improve velocity and predictability of execution.
- Speed improvements in real-world environments have ranged from 30% to 300%.
TECHNIQUE #3: 
ELIMINATING LOWER-LEVEL COMMITMENTS
Game of Sixes

Cumulative Probability

Number of rolls
Responsible task owners understand the inherent uncertainty in task execution, and build in appropriate buffers when committing.

- The same concept applies with velocity commitments (story points per sprint).

Responsible task owners are often hesitant to deliver early, because they fear they may be held to the same short deadlines in the future.

Responsible task owners enjoy delivering early—much like a relay-race runner does—as long as they have the assurance that their team is behind them if things don’t go so well.
**Staggering + Single Tasking + Eliminating Lower-level Commitments**

Assuming an additional 33% speed improvement…

12 Project Completions
Eliminating Lower-level Commitments: Key Takeaways

- Aggregating buffers at the project level pools project risk, just like an insurance policy does.
- Eliminating sprint-level commitments encourages individuals and teams to pursue ever-higher velocities, rather than pace themselves to a pre-defined velocity.
- Enhances Agile’s scope-buffering approach.
  - In other words, the feature backlog of “desirements” can still serve as the project’s protection against uncertainty & variability, but with higher upside potential.
- Speed improvements are sometimes as big as 2x, and execution is more predictable and reliable.
GETTING STARTED

- Fortezza Consulting is offering new customers a “30/30” guarantee:
  - Guaranteed 30% speed improvement in 30 days or less, for teams up to 30 people in size.
    - Happy to craft a larger-scale approach—with a similar guarantee—for enterprises looking for organization-wide implementation
  - Consulting and coaching paired with a 30-day free trial of a leading task-board solution (LeanKit).
  - Check out details at http://www.FortezzaConsulting.com/30-30/
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