



PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

Beyond Projects: How Project Managers can Succeed in a Product-Centric World

Sanjiv Augustine

Founder and CEO, LitheSpeed

PMSYMPOSIUM.UMD.EDU

Agenda



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**Our
Challenges
and Goal**

**What is the
Product
Operating
Model?**

**Leading in
a Product-
Centric
World**

Q&A

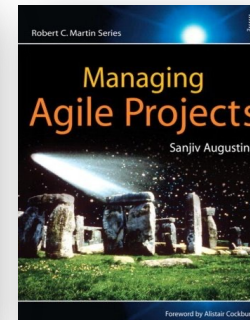
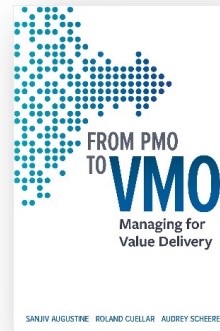
About Me



Sanjiv Augustine



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- **Sanjiv** is the Founder and CEO of LitheSpeed, LLC.
- He has enjoyed over 20 years of practicing and evangelizing Agile, with a focus **on agile leadership, The Agile VMO and the Product Operating Model.**
- Latest book: *From PMO to VMO: Managing for Value Delivery.*
- Podcast: *Leadership in Flux.*





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PMI Global 2025



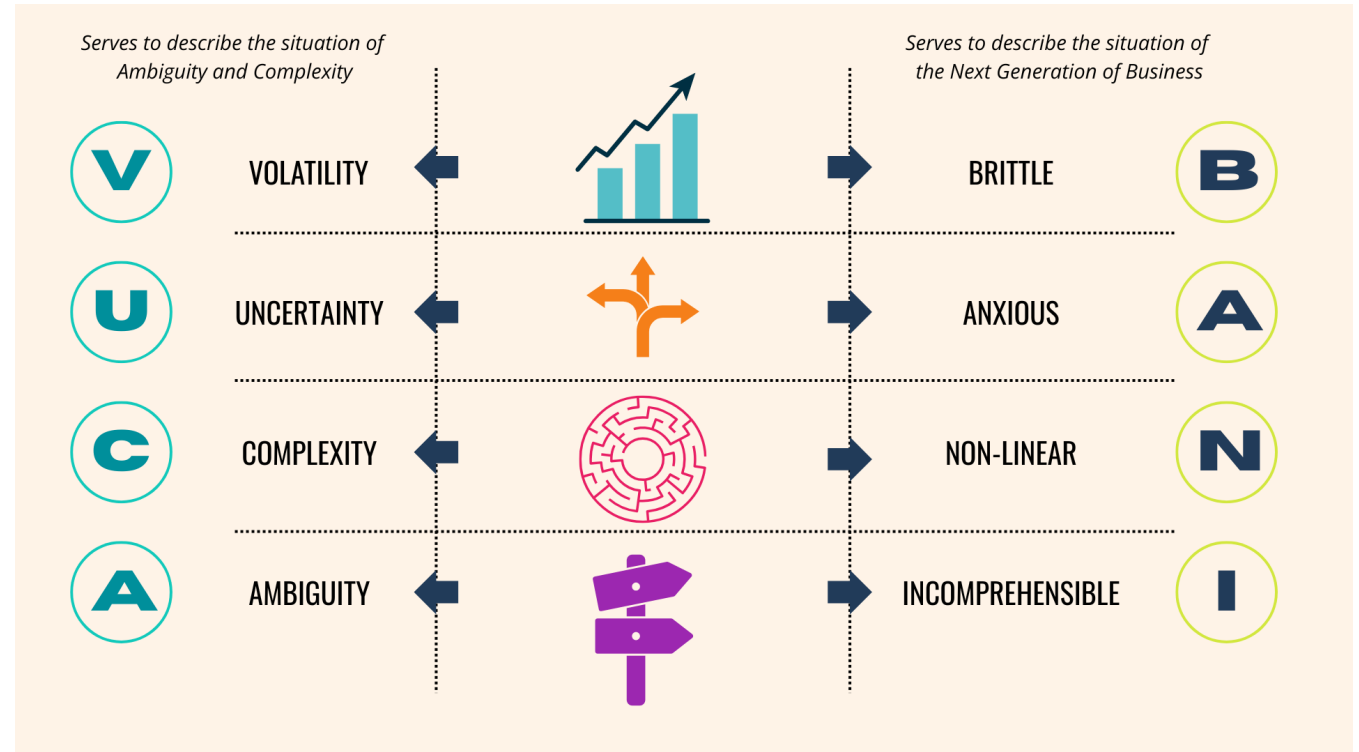
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OUR CHALLENGES AND GOAL

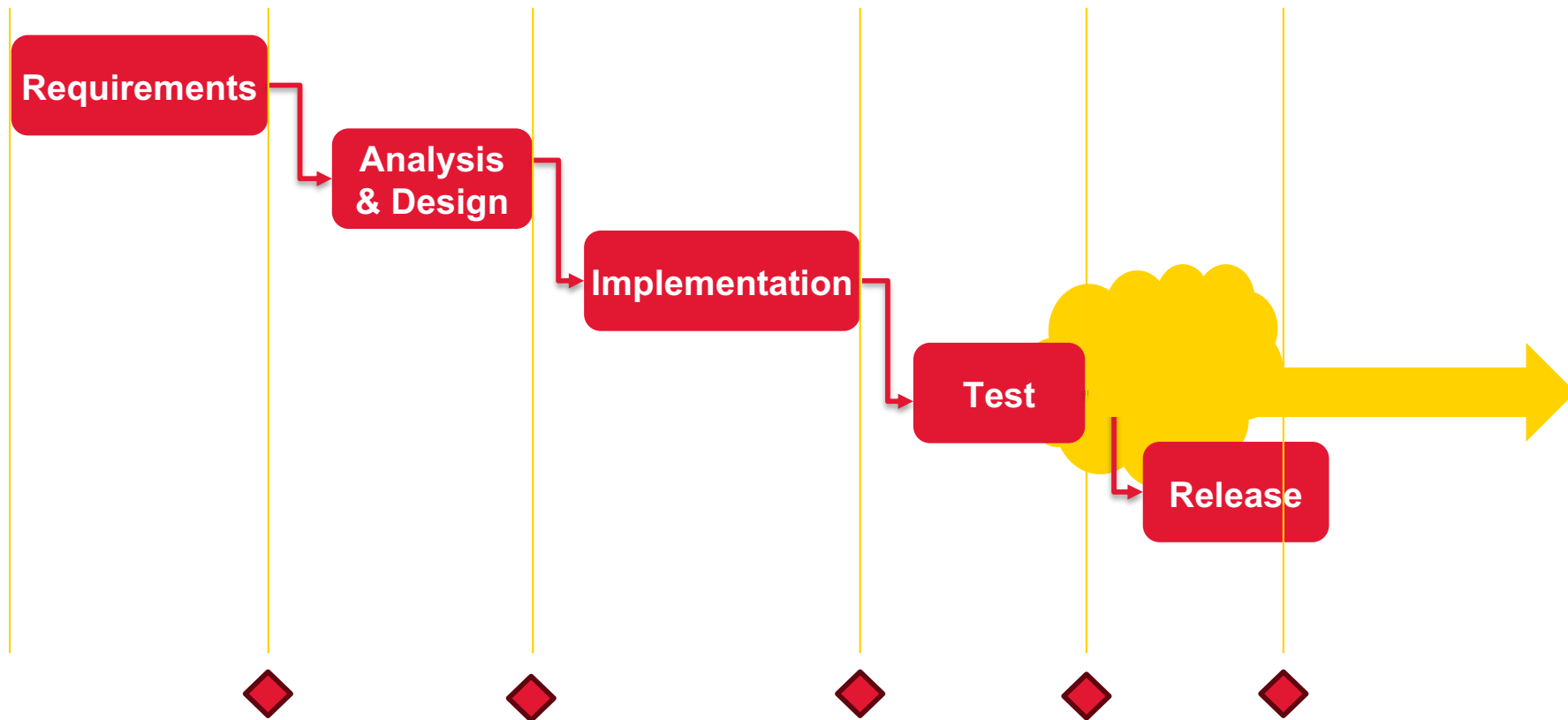
We live...in a BANI world



Digital and AI disruptions, global competition, mass layoffs, economic and political uncertainty...



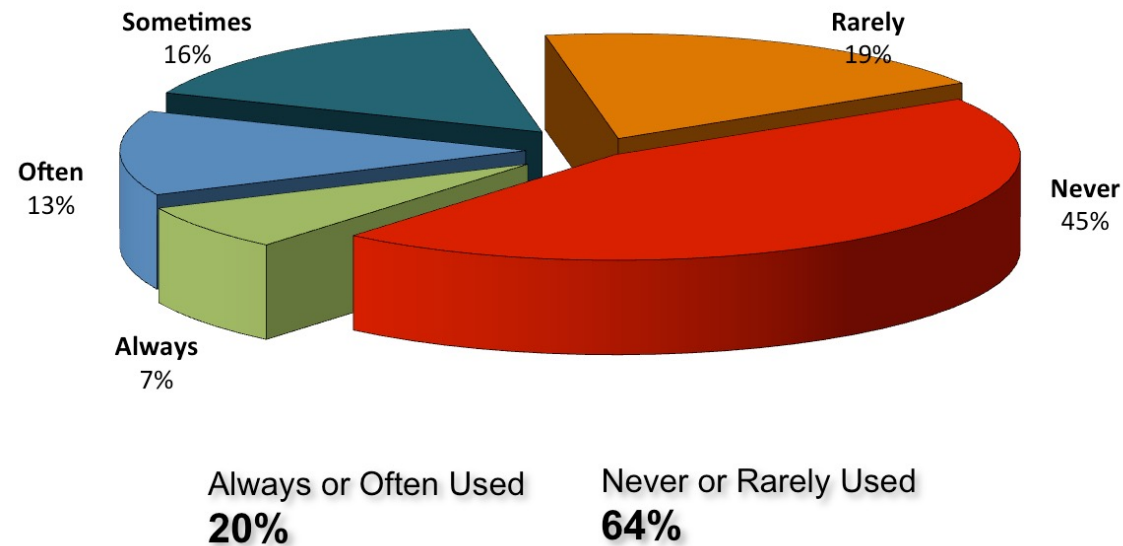
We struggle to deliver with traditional approaches...



...and much of what we build is waste.



Rates of Feature Usage in Software Projects



How do we stop funding scope that delivers no real value?

Our Goal: Hyper-Agility

“Agility is the ability to both **create and respond to change** in order to profit in a turbulent business environment.”
- Jim Highsmith



Startup Archive
@startuparchive_

Sam Altman: “Build the fastest-iterating company the world has ever seen”



“Build the fastest iterating company the world has ever seen.”
- Sam Altman

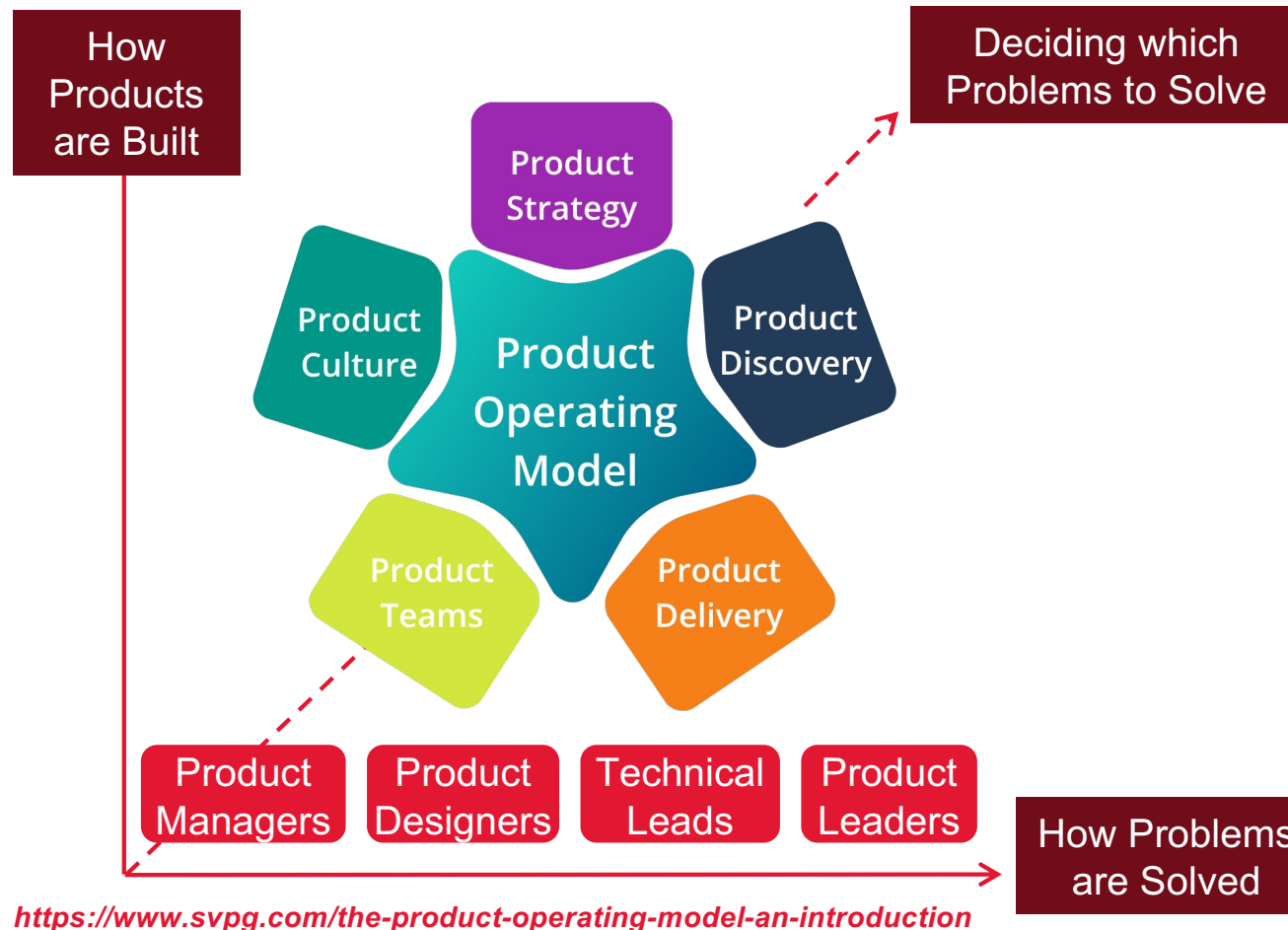


WHAT IS THE PRODUCT OPERATING MODEL?

The Product Operating Model



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A product operating model is a game plan that puts customer value first, and drives rapid innovation and continuous improvement.



1. Integrated Product Teams

In the product operating model, **cross-functional, persistent teams** are empowered to solve problems for their customers and create value for the business.

1. **Empowerment** – teams are given problems to solve and empowered with finding the best solution.
2. **Outcomes over Output** – teams exist to solve problems for the customer and the business, not to ship features that might not achieve the desired outcome.
3. **Sense of Ownership** – teams are responsible for and given ownership of something meaningful to the customer and the business.
4. **Collaboration** – the cross-functional team – product managers, product designers, and engineers – work together to solve problems.

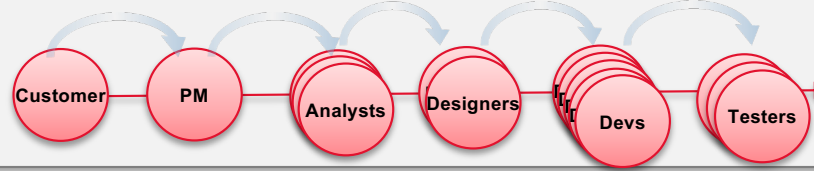
Integrated Product Teams (Cont'd)



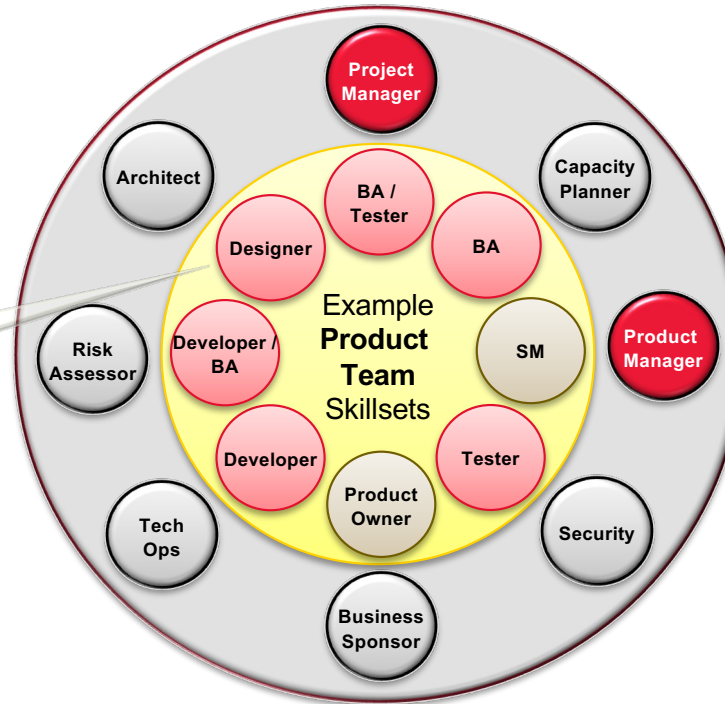
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Legacy:

Functional Silos with
hard handoffs.



Product Teams: cross-
functional, collaborative.



The **Extended Team** includes
partially-allocated
members.

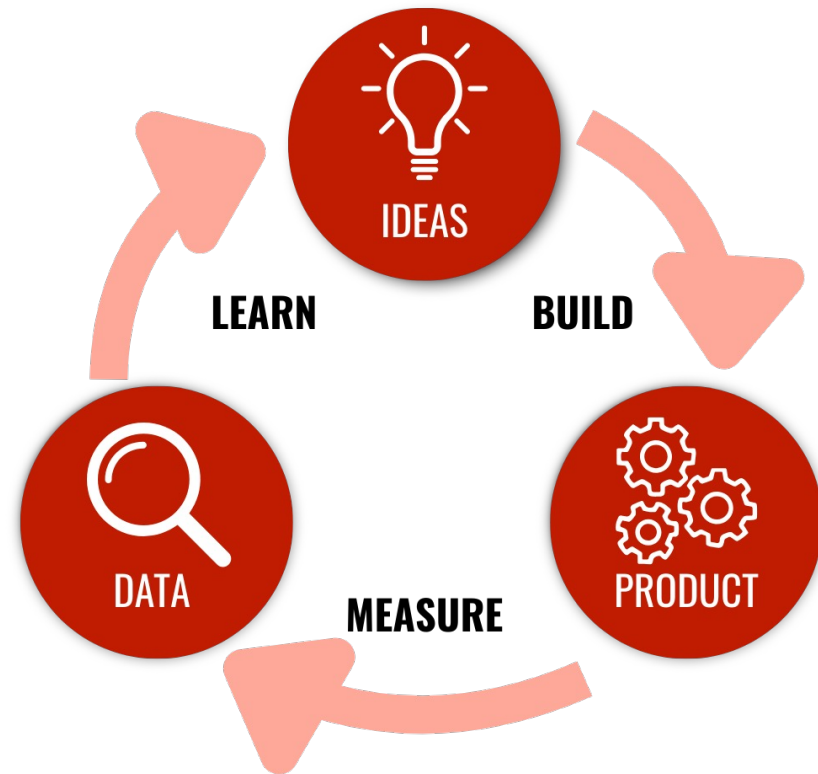
2. Product Discovery



Product Discovery illuminates problems, rapidly determines the best solutions:

- Valuable
- Usable
- Feasible
- Viable

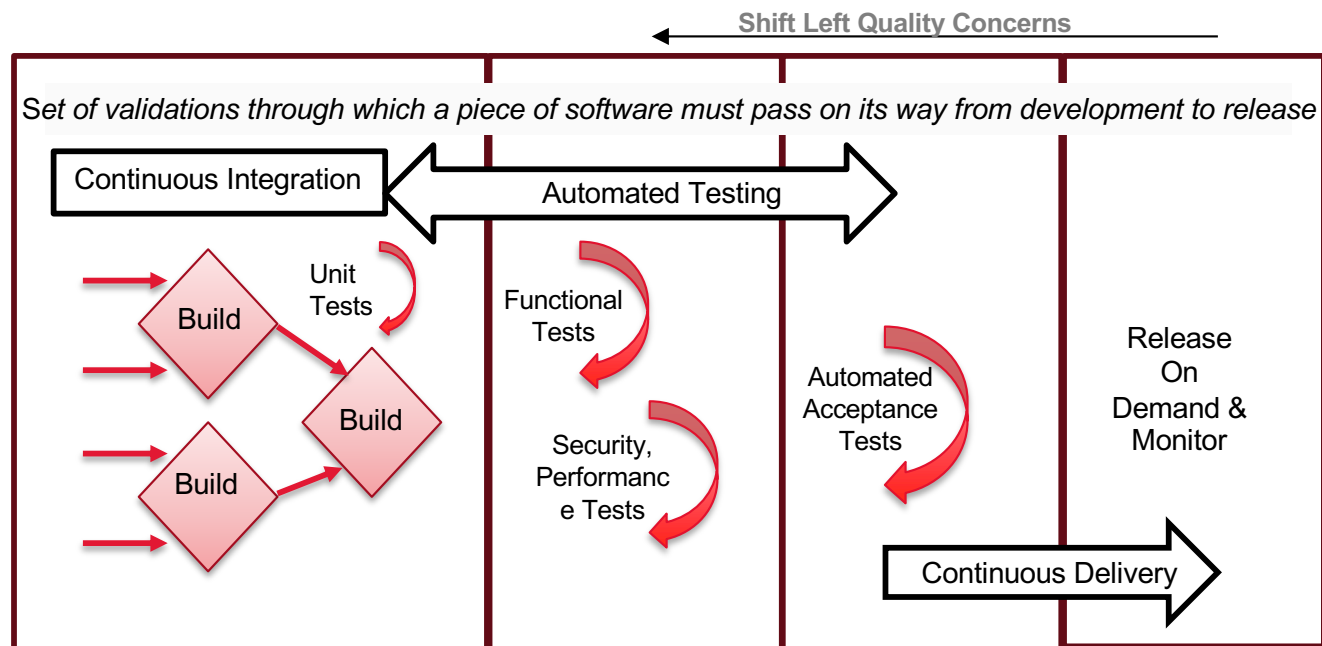
...and **achieves the necessary outcomes.**



3. Product Delivery

Product Delivery is building, testing and deploying a quality solution that is reliable, accurate, performant, scalable, and delivers the necessary outcomes.

1. **Small, frequent, uncoupled releases.**
2. **Instrumentation** – products must be instrumented to determine how and if they are being used.
3. **Monitoring** – strong monitoring is in place to quickly detect issues.
4. **Deployment Infrastructure** – tools that enable A/B testing and other deployment practices are used.



What is Dual-Track Agile?



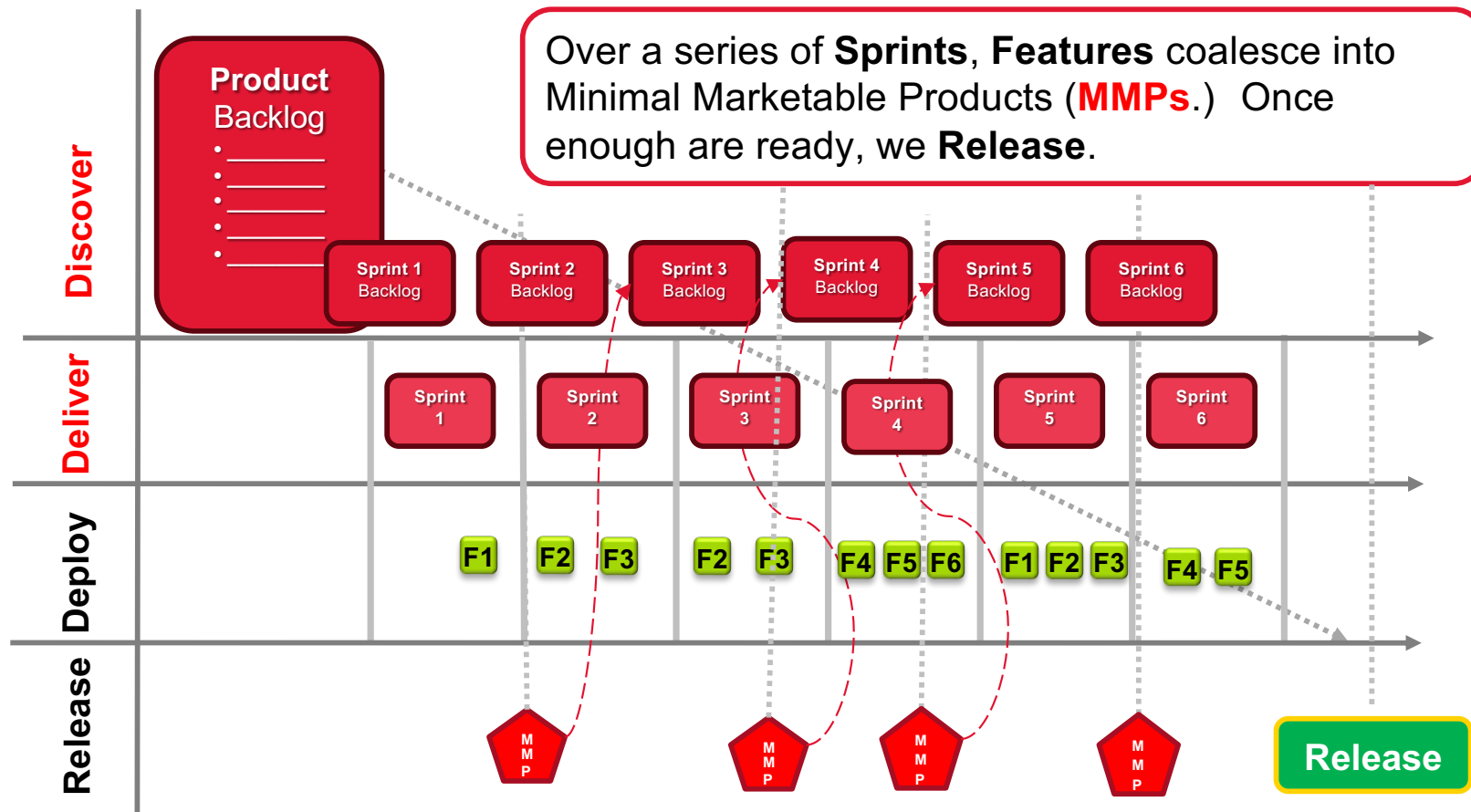
Dual-track Agile is a product development approach where teams work in two continuous, parallel tracks.



The **Discovery Track** focuses on understanding customer problems, exploring opportunities, testing assumptions, and validating potential solutions before committing to build. The goal is to ensure that the team is building the *right product*.

The **Delivery Track** focuses on building, integrating, and releasing working product in small increments. The goal is to ensure the team is *building the product right*.

Dual-Track Agile – Parallel Discovery & Delivery



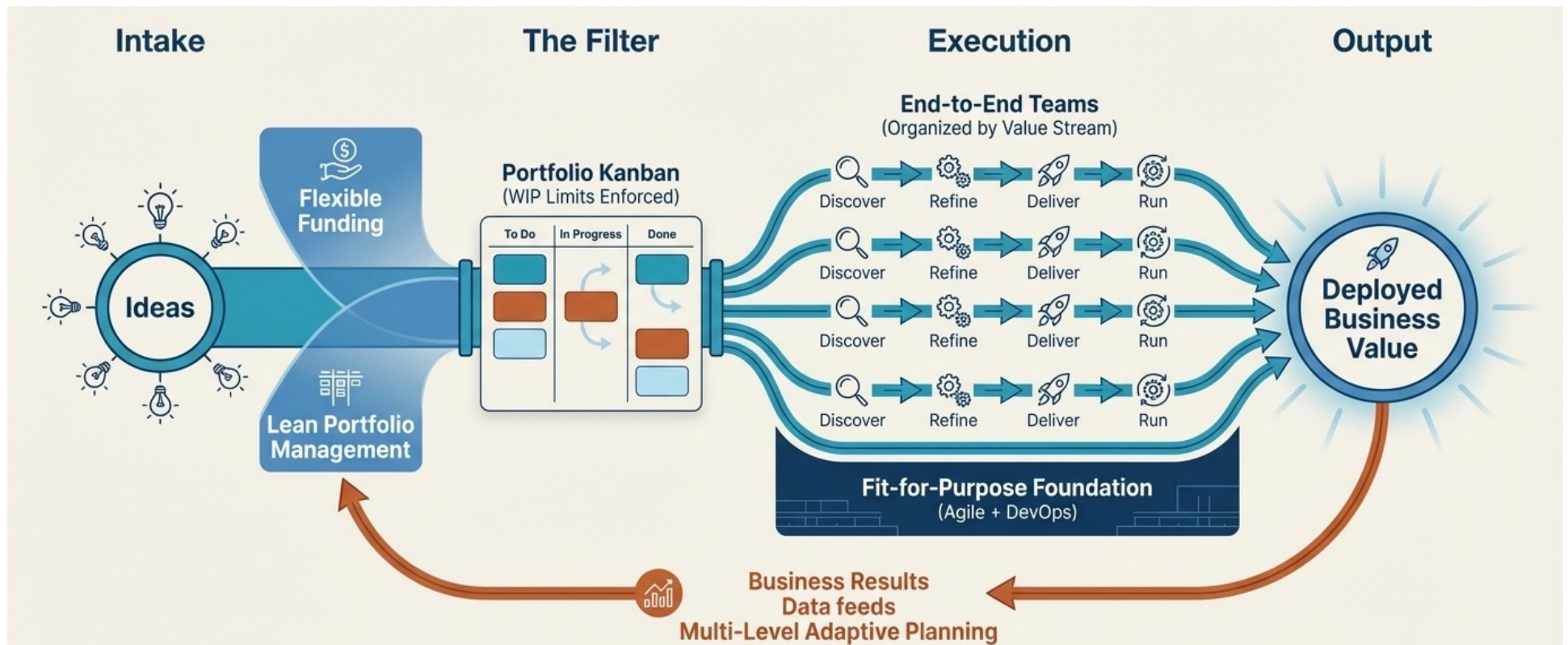


LEADING IN THE PRODUCT-CENTRIC WORLD

Fit-for-Purpose Process Baseline



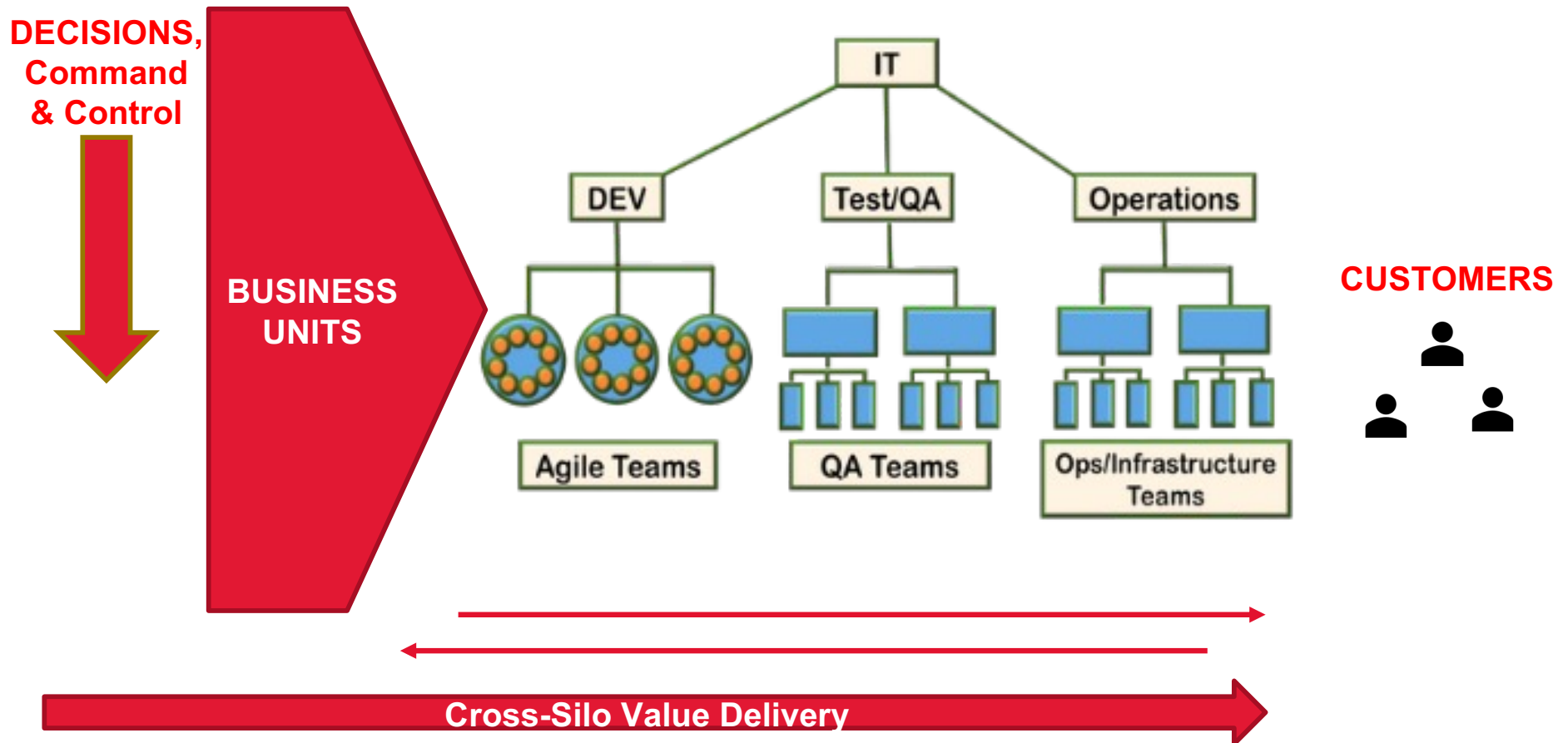
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Challenge: Legacy Management Hinders Agility and Resilience



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The Agile VMO® - Bridge to the Product Operating Model

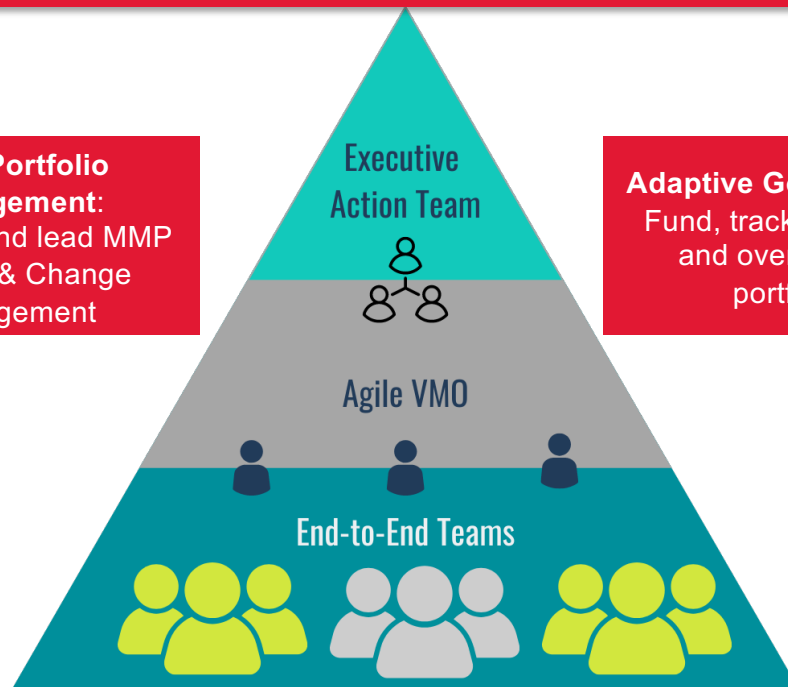


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Goal: Create seamless, end-to-end flow of value

Lean Portfolio Management:
Prioritize and lead MMP delivery & Change Management

Adaptive Governance:
Fund, track, measure and oversee the portfolio



Set up the VMO as a cross-organization, cross-hierarchy team of teams:

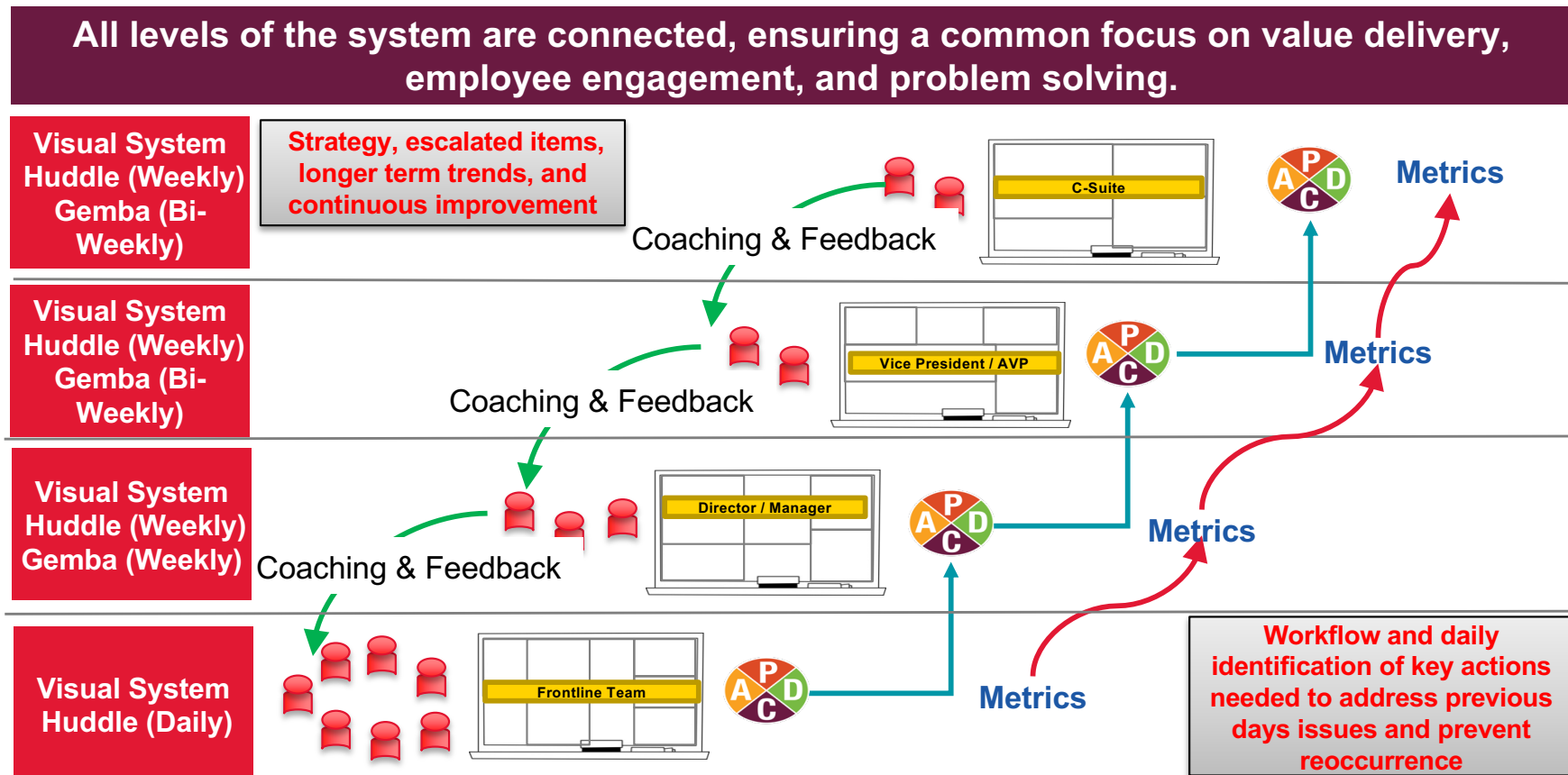
1. Bridge strategy and execution with OKRs.
2. Increase decision-making velocity via distributed decision-making
3. Accelerate flow: prioritize the portfolio and track MMPs.
4. Institutionalize Portfolio Tracking and Governance.

1. Drive Value with Enterprise Rolling Wave Planning



Plans are worthless, planning is everything. Embed continuous planning at every organizational level.

2. Increase Decision-Making Velocity via Distributed Decision-Making



Credit: Tom Paider, VP, Nationwide Insurance

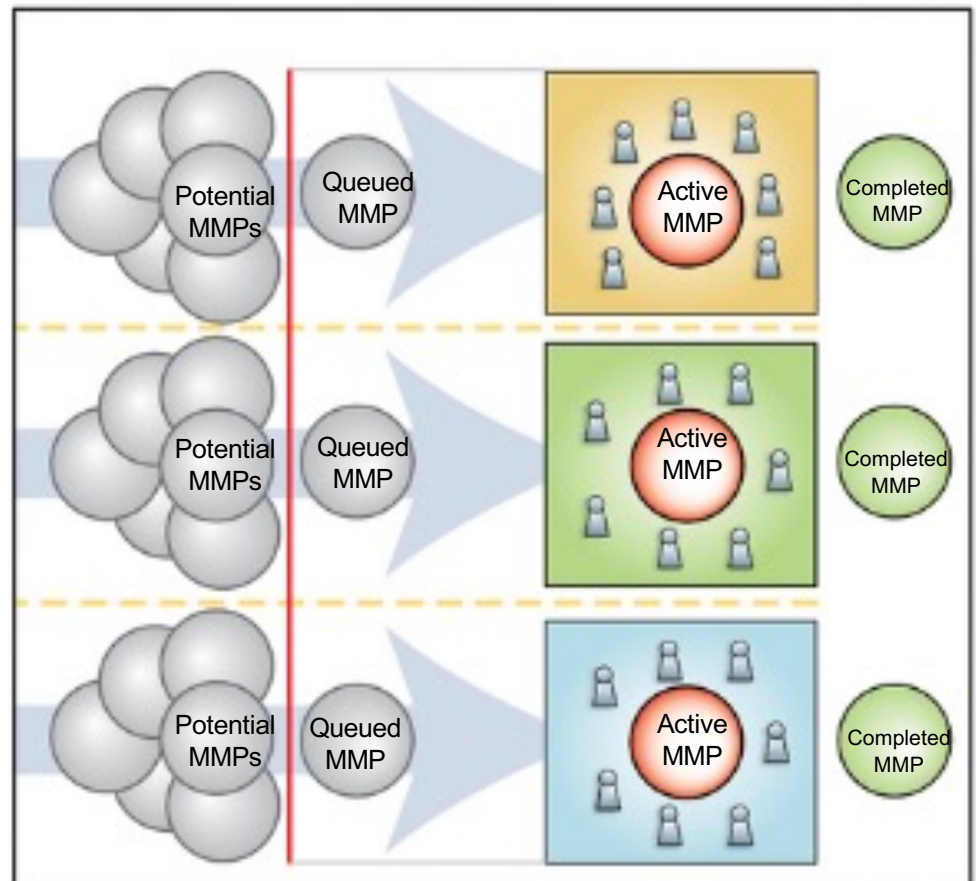
3. Accelerate Flow with Prioritized Minimum Marketable Products (MMPs)

Set up multiple, dedicated product teams supporting Value Streams or lines of business.

Prioritize the potential MMPs in ways that are economically sound to ensure we invest in the best opportunities.

Use Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF) to drive MMP selection and sequencing

Ensure each stream-aligned team **focuses on a single MMP at a time** and delivers that before starting new work.



4. Institutionalize Portfolio Tracking & Governance



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Governance Cadences:

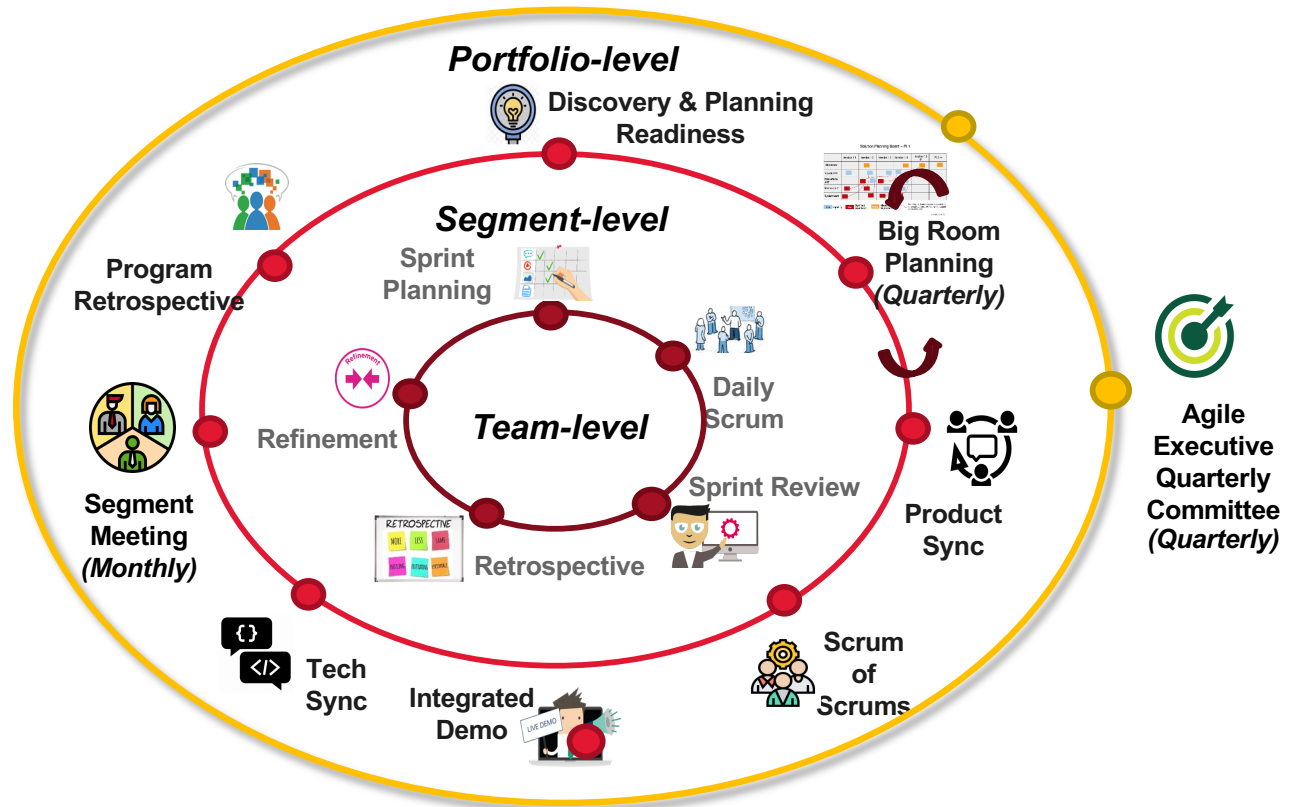
Quarterly, monthly, and bi-weekly reviews to align goals, reprioritize, and adapt delivery.

Real-Time Visibility:

Dashboards and Kanban boards for tracking flow and outcomes (e.g., OKRs).

Empowered Teams with Guardrails:

Clear decision boundaries (e.g., funding limits, risk thresholds) enabling autonomy.



End-to-end feedback and collaboration across teams and domains

PMs: Traditional Versus Product-Centric Role



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Key Area	Traditional Role	Product-Centric Role
Mindset Shift	Task execution and milestone delivery	Customer-driven, continuous value delivery
Role Evolution	Managing scope, schedule, and budget	Facilitating collaboration, strategy alignment
Metrics for Success	On-time, on-budget completion	Business impact, product adoption, and user satisfaction
Collaboration	Works with project team for specific deliverables	Partners with product managers, engineers, and designers for long-term impact

PMs: Leading in a Product-Centric Role



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1.

Drive Value with Enterprise Rolling Wave Planning.

2.

Increase Decision-Making Velocity via Distributed Decision-Making.

3.

Accelerate Flow with Prioritized Minimum Marketable Products (MMPs).

4.

Institutionalize Portfolio Tracking & Governance.

5-Minute Discussion – Key Leadership Actions

Pick one (1) leadership action and discuss with your neighbors or add your thoughts in the Chat.



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Leadership Action	Discussion Prompt
1. Drive Value with Enterprise Rolling Wave Planning.	How can PMs use rolling wave planning to connect day-to-day work with organizational strategy and ensure value delivery (not just outputs)?
2. Increase Decision-Making Velocity via Distributed Decision-Making.	In what ways can PMs shift decision-making closer to teams and customers while still managing risk, dependencies, and governance?
3. Accelerate Flow with Prioritized Minimum Marketable Products (MMPs).	How can PMs apply techniques like WSJF and Agile delivery to prioritize and release MMPs that maximize business and customer value?
4. Institutionalize Portfolio Tracking & Governance.	How can PMs help design and operate adaptive governance (dashboards, cadences, guardrails) to transition from PMO oversight to VMO value delivery?



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Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



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Project, Product and Hybrid Approaches



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Factor	Project Approach	Product Approach	Hybrid Approach
Timeframe	Fixed start and end dates	Ongoing, with iterative releases	Phased delivery with defined milestones, but allows rolling waves and iterative extensions
Focus	Delivering scope within constraints	Adapting to changing customer needs	Balance between delivering agreed scope and flexing scope to respond to evolving needs
Governance	Stage gates, milestone reviews	Continuous feedback and iteration	Light stage gates combined with ongoing demos, reviews, and feedback loops
Funding	Fixed-budget per project	Investment-based, long-term funding	Hybrid model: initial project funding with rolling funding extensions tied to value delivered
Ownership	Project manager oversees delivery	Product manager owns vision & roadmap	Shared accountability: PM manages execution; Product Manager sets vision & evolving roadmap
Customer Involvement	Limited, mainly in early stages	Continuous, real-time feedback loop	Customer input at key milestones , supplemented by periodic feedback and pilot testing

Case Study: Scrumban Product Discovery & Delivery



- Hybrid ScrumBan process
- Scrum for Discovery, with Product Backlog, Epics and Features
- Kanban for delivery, with flow-based items
- No Sprints/Iterations/Timeboxes