10 pitfalls when implementing kanban

May 13, 2011

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Kanban / Lean coach

www.crisp.se

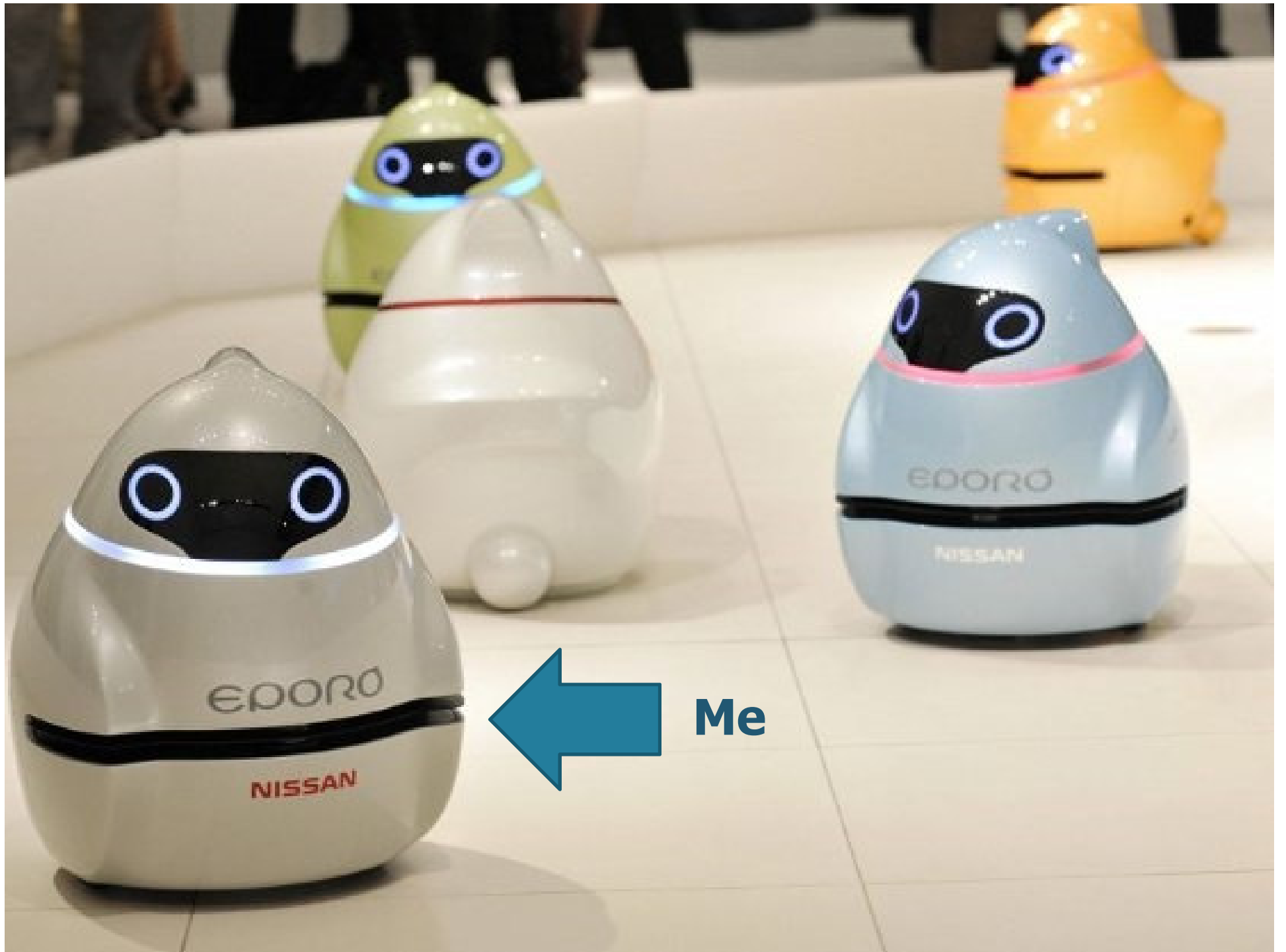http://blog.crisp.se/mattiasskarin

mattias.skarin@crisp.se
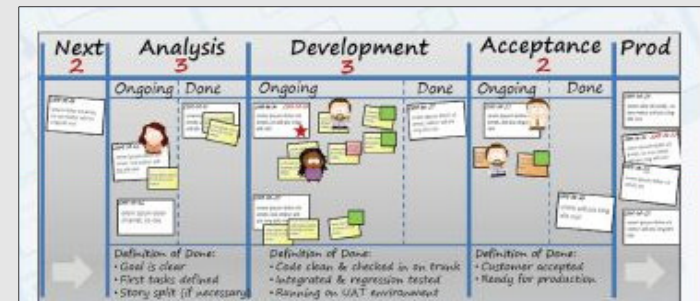
Kanban and Scrum
making the most of both

Henrik Kniberg & Mattias Skarin
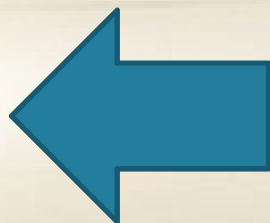
Forewards by Mary Poppendieck and David Anderson
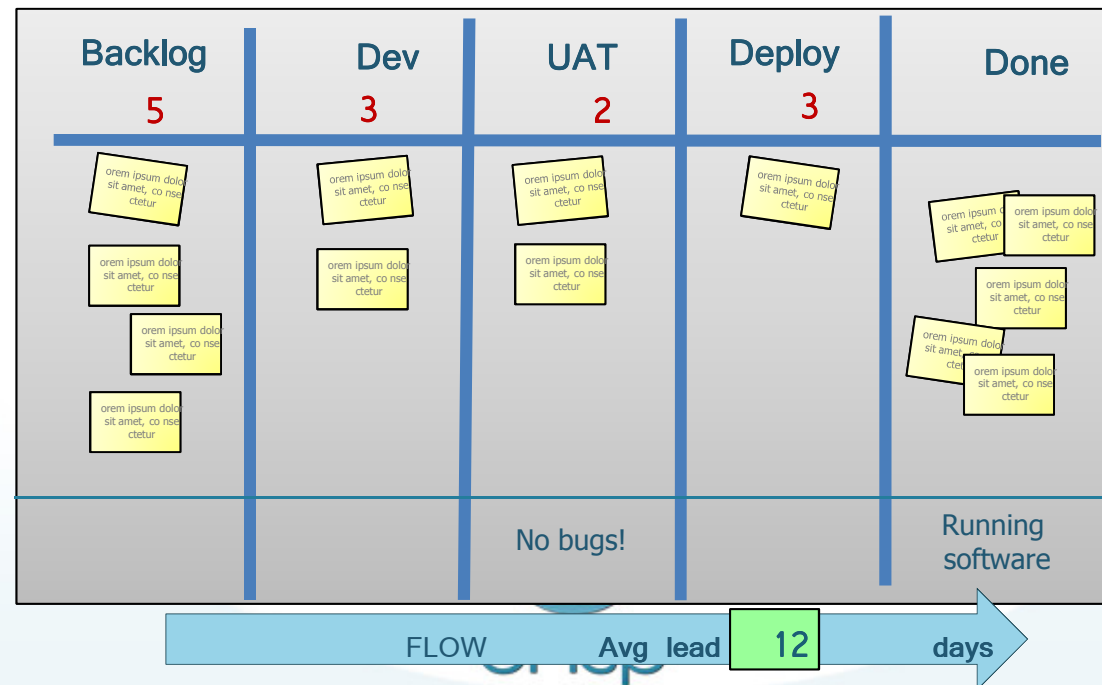
ENTERPRISE SOFTWARE
DEVELOPMENT SERIES

InfoQ

Me

What is Kanban?

- **Visualize the workflow**
- **Limit WIP** (work in progress)
- **Measure & optimize flow**
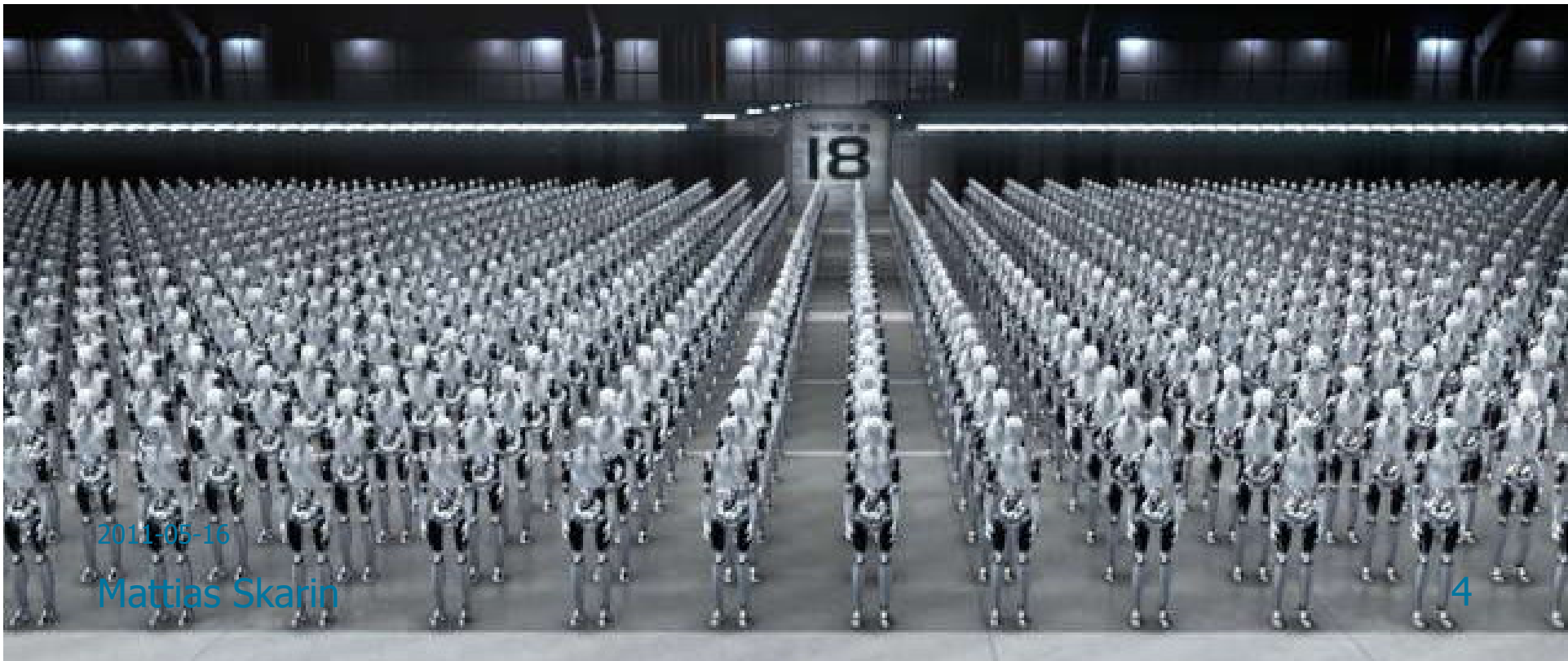- **Explicit policies** (definition of Done, WIP limits, etc)

Backlog	Dev	UAT	Deploy	Done
5	3	2	3	

No bugs! Running software

FLOW   Avg lead   12   days

Mattias Skarin

3

3

#1 Purpose first

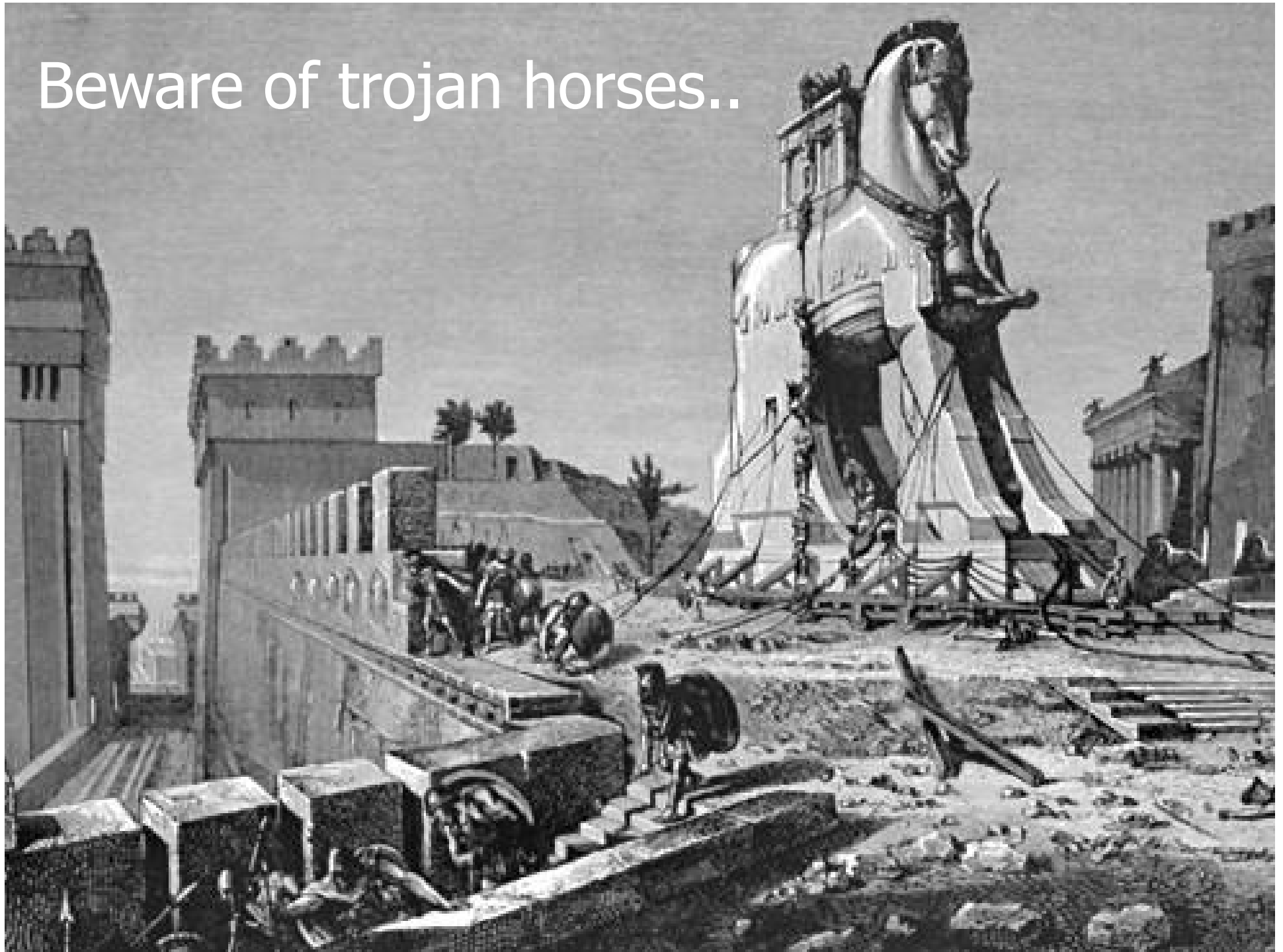You cannot improve what
you don't understand

Beware of trojan horses..

Some purposes from real teams

"Enable higher degree of self organisation.."

"Growing team member skill sets"

"Know when we can deliver.."

"Get focus. (On completing, not starting)"

"To be able to complete more assignments on time, with less stress and more laughter!"

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#2 Management by absence

Even we managers need WIP limits..

Kanban principles:

1. Visualize workflow
2. Limit Work in Progress
3. Measure and manage flow
4. Make process policies explicit   (.. living by them; or remove them..)

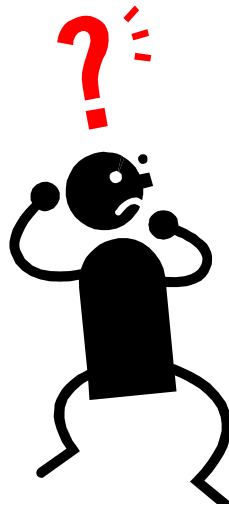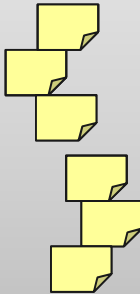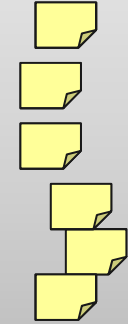# My management checklist

- Can I see the most valuable things to work on?
- Are we keeping WIP limits?
- Are policies transparent, and in use?
- Is there any blocking problems that should be dealt with?
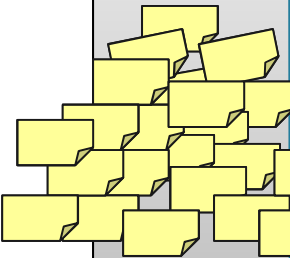- For learning over time: Are we measuring flow?

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#3 Not ready for the transparency

Backlog	In work	Done

People who build their case on heroic efforts might be in for a surprise..

#4 Loss of overview

Backlog [5]	Dev [2]	Acc. test [3]	Deploy [5]	Done

I'm I using the right granularity?

Concerned coach

Kanban sanity check:

• I can see the most valuable thing to work on right now

• I can see if we are keeping our WIP limits

• Team members are discussing in front of the board
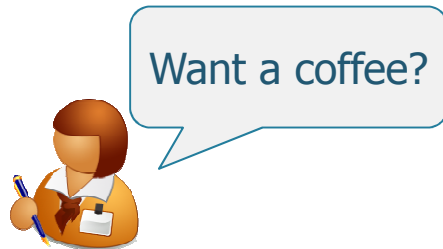
#5 Ignoring WIP limits

Potential cure: Physical WIP Limits
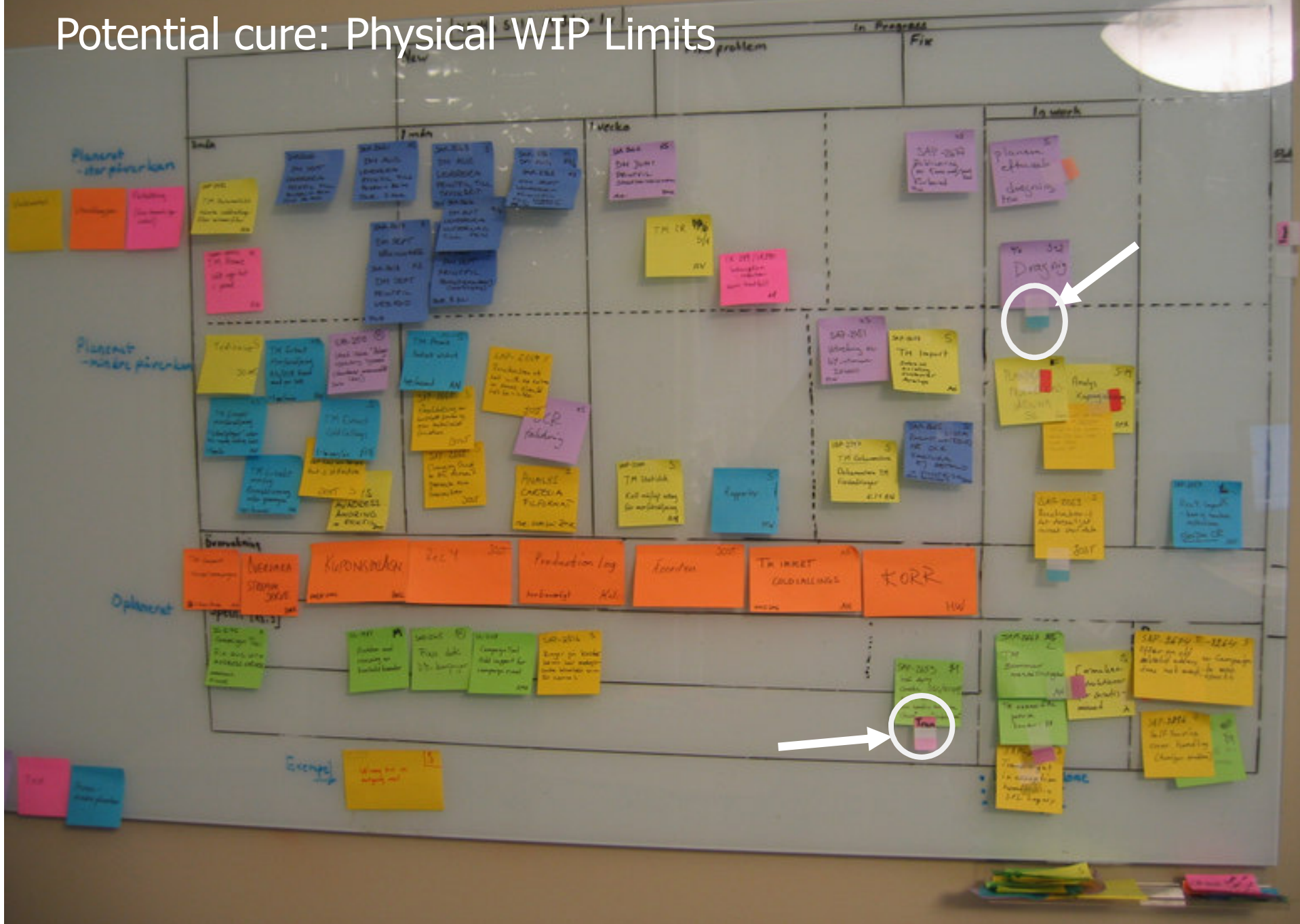
#6 All tasks must be on the board

Want a coffee?

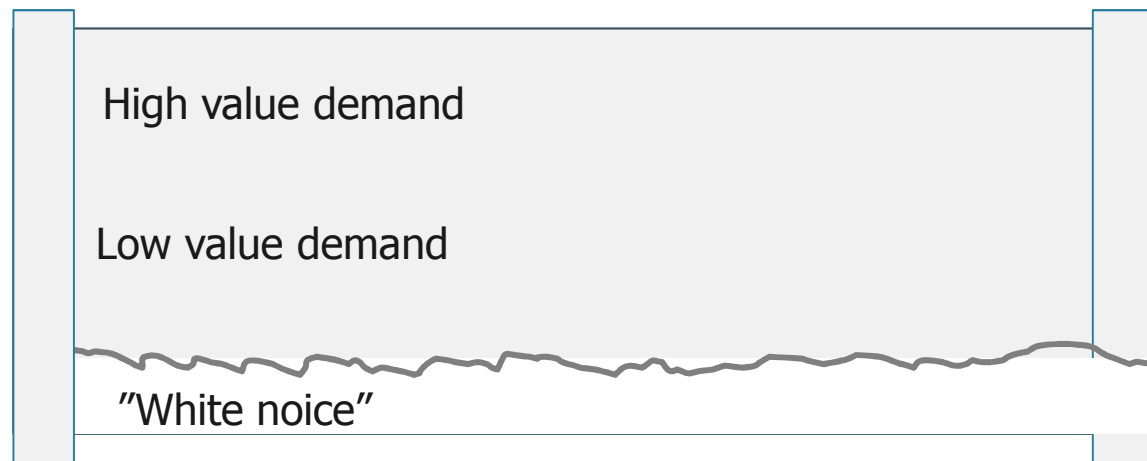Sure, write a Jira ticket and add it to the Kanban board

Backlog [5]	Dev [2]	Acc. test [3]	Deploy [5]	Done

Potential mistakes..
- ✓ Confusing tasks with demand
- ✓ Treating all demand equal
- ✓ Ignorant about incurring overhead

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Ask: "What demand do we want to learn about?"

✓ It's nature
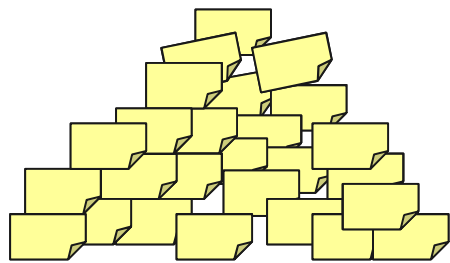✓ And our capability to meet it

High value demand

Low value demand

"White noice"

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Caught under a big pile of work?

Treatment #1: Hold back "Overanalysis"

"Pile of work"

Analysis required for next sprint	Analysis we don't need right now

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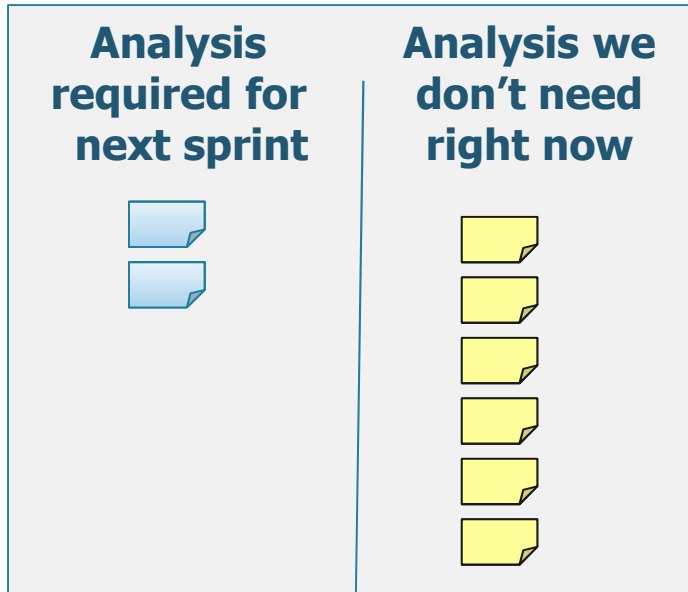
Treatment #2: Early screening of purpose

Senior team member
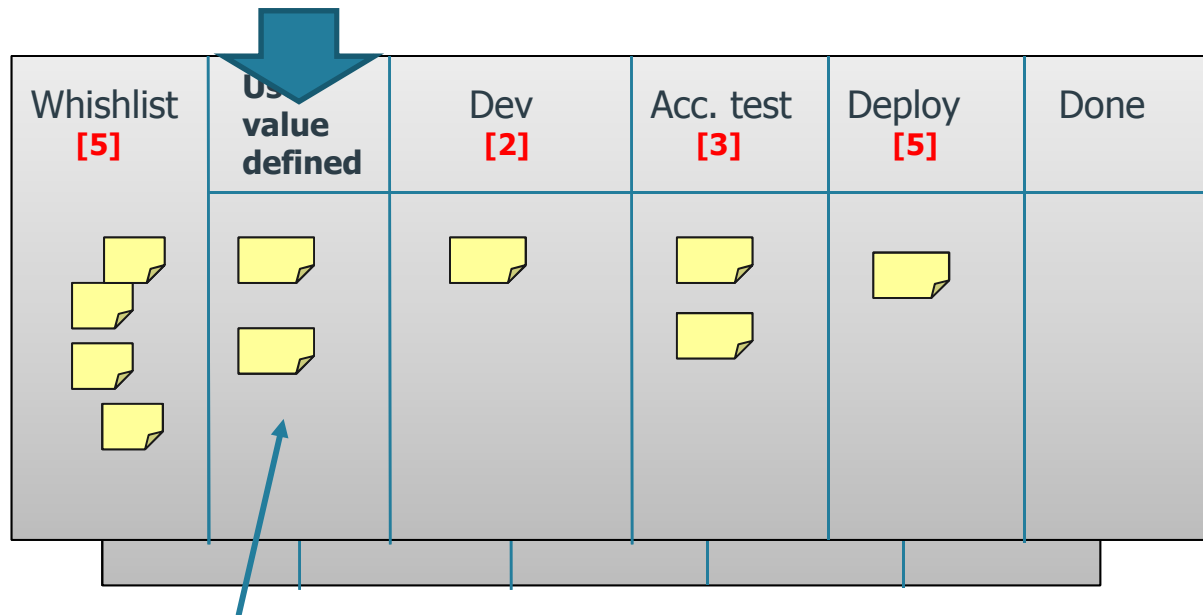
"I understand why this feature should be made"

Whishlist [5]	Use value defined	Dev [2]	Acc. test [3]	Deploy [5]	Done

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Treatment #3: Let your bottleneck set the pace

In queue

Front end team

5 stories / week

Limit to 2 legacy team
stories already here!

2 stories / week

Legacy team

Flow
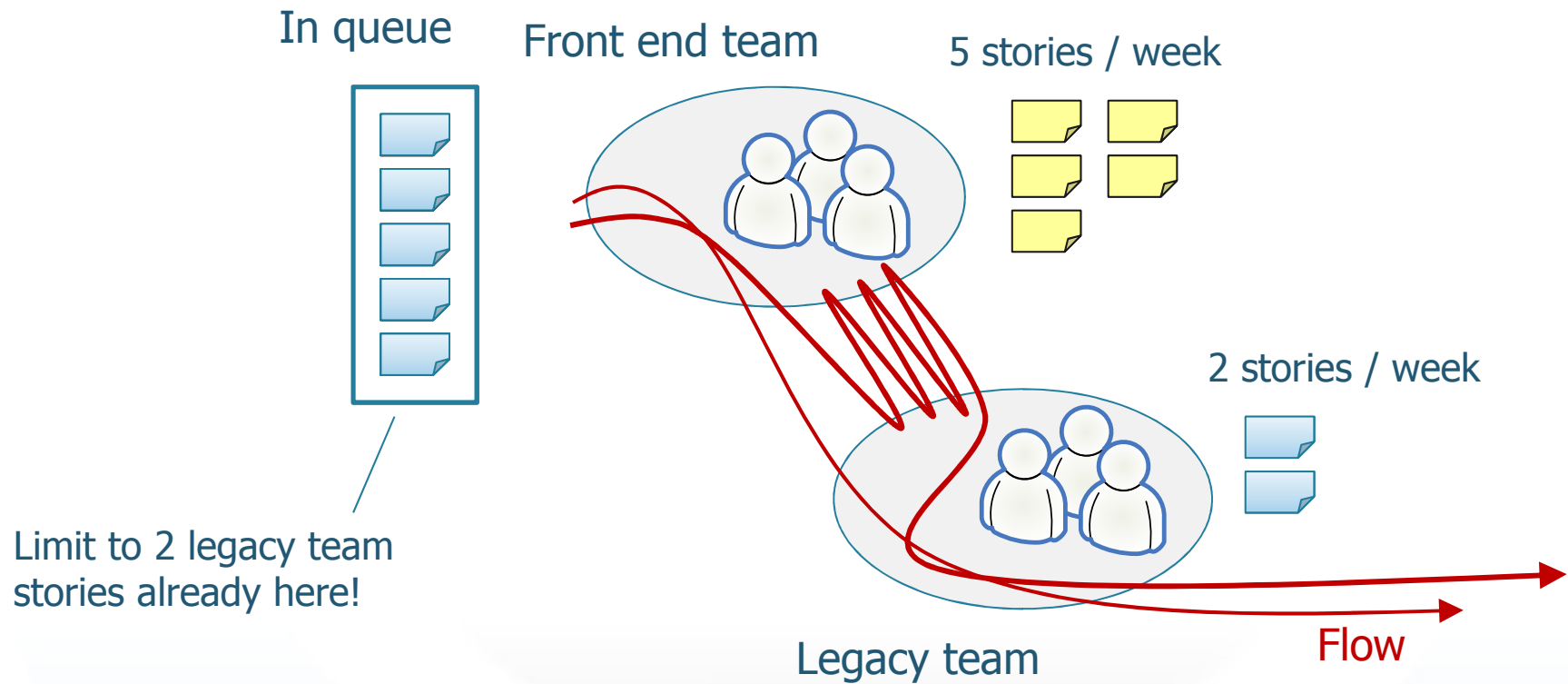
Treatment #4: Fix failure demand upstream
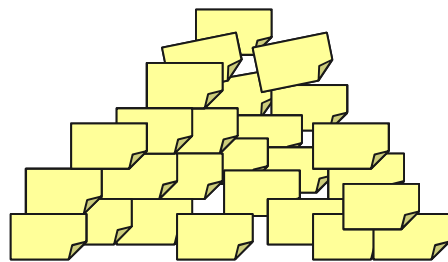
"Pile of work"

Value demand	Failure demand
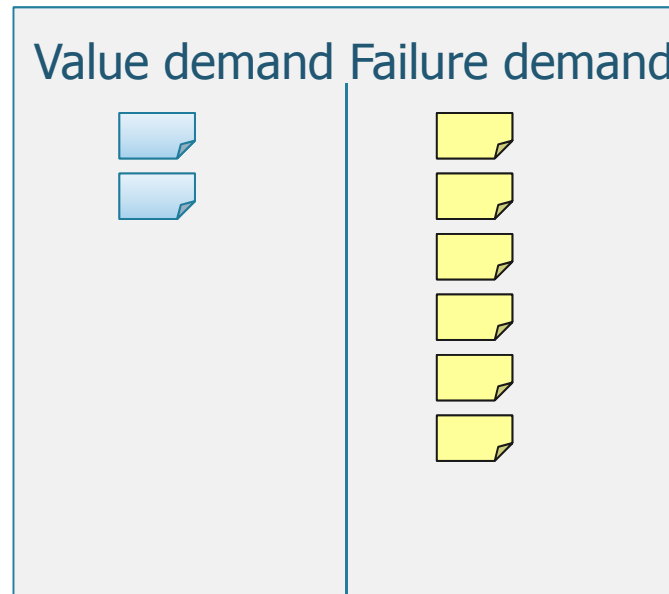
Value demand:	Demand for service from customers
Failure demand:	Caused by failure to do something right for the customer

Example: Fixing failure demand upstream

#7 Overbelief in value of planning

#8 Not having a strategy for dealing with variance

$$

Work to do

"Does it need a deadline?
Define why.."

Flow
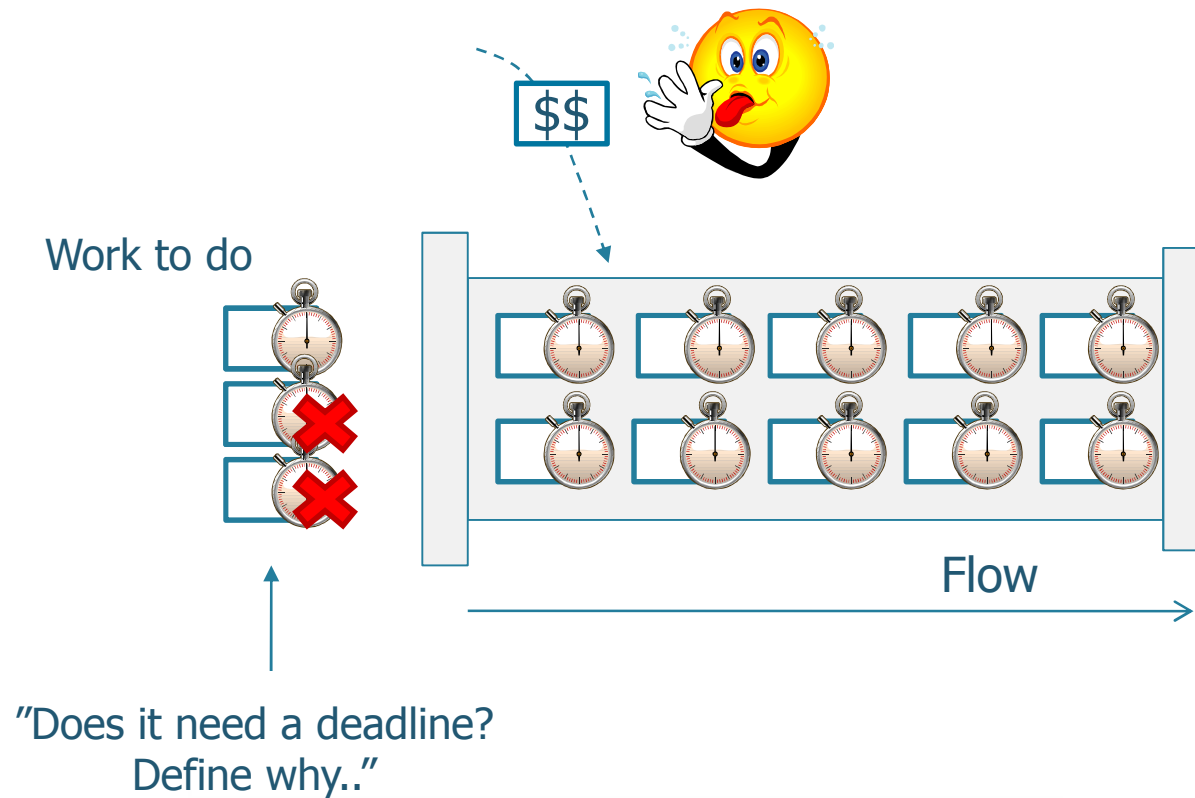
#9 Improvement efforts gets eaten upp by events (lack of endurance)

External tech partner

External service partner

Business area A

First line support
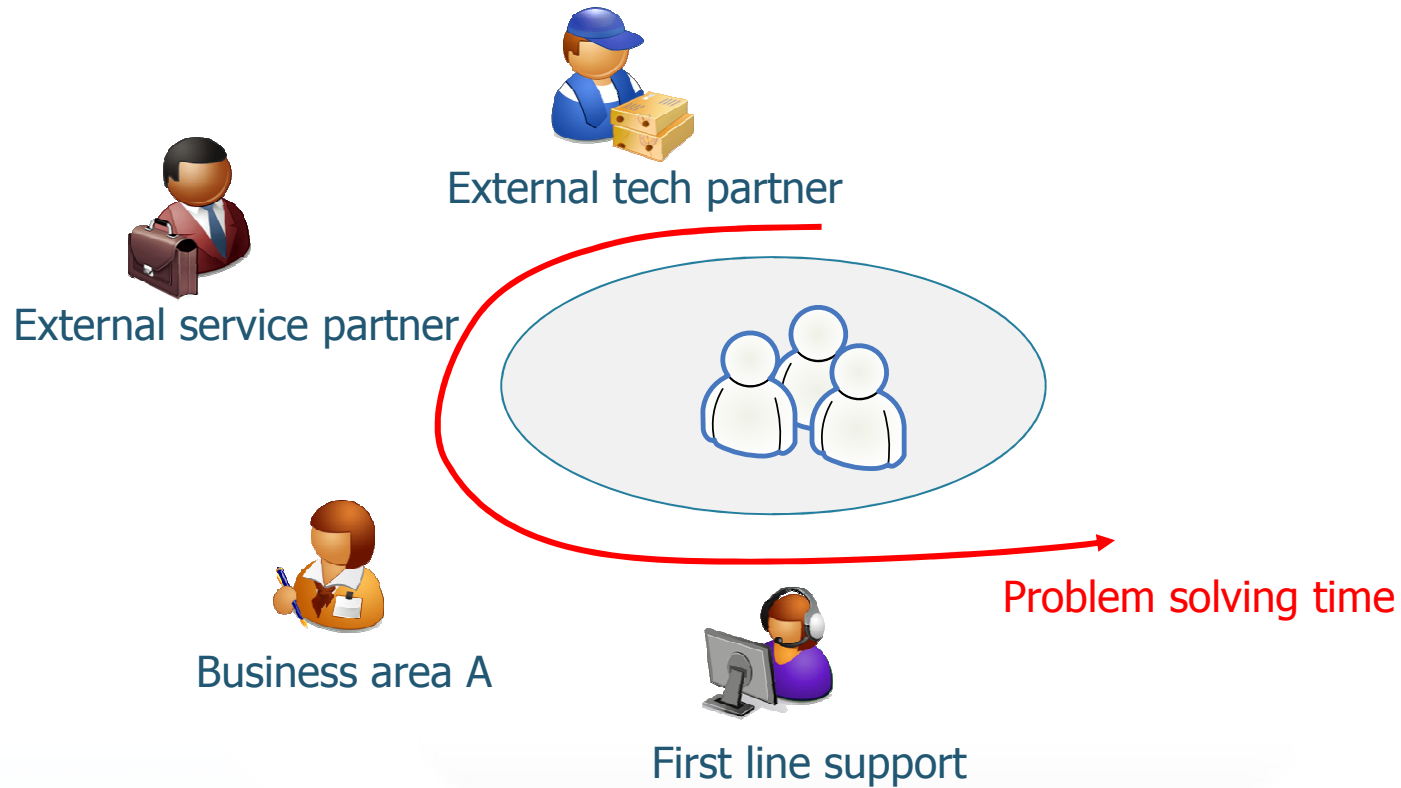
Problem solving time

Getting endurance in problem solving

Managers door
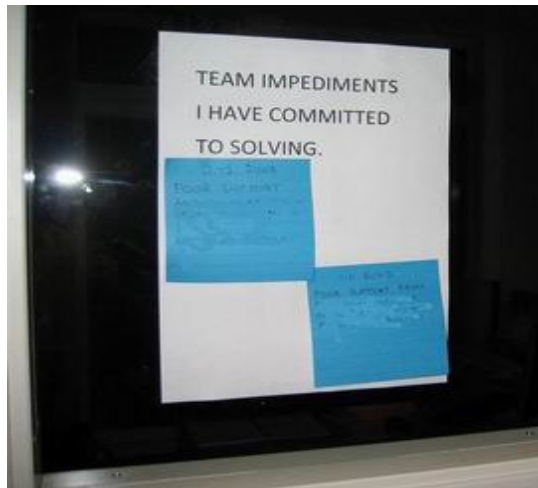
Improvement kanban

	Next [2]	In work [2]	Done
What we as a team do	🟨	🟨	🟨
What we need help with from the organization?		🟦	🟦

Example from Fredrik Lindgren, Crisp

#10

"Everybody thinks of changing the world, but noone about changing himself"

- Leo Tolstoy

Good news! Fixes can be applied

To our demand

And our capability

Now, go practice!

Expand your toolkit:
www.crisp.se/utbildning

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