

Why Agile Doesn't Scale  
- and what you can do about it

Dan North  
@tastapod

How Agile can Cross the Chasm  
- and why it usually doesn't

Dan North  
@tastapod

# A Guaranteed\* Formula for Scaling Agile

Dan North  
@tastapod

\* Not guaranteed. Or a formula.

What do we mean by **Scale** ?

What do we mean by **Scale**?

- bigger problems?

What do we mean by **Scale**?

- bigger problems?

- bigger solutions?

What do we mean by **Scale**?

- bigger problems?

- bigger solutions?

- bigger programmes?

Why is scaling so hard?



Why is scaling so hard?

- Local optimisations don't roll up

# Why is scaling so hard?

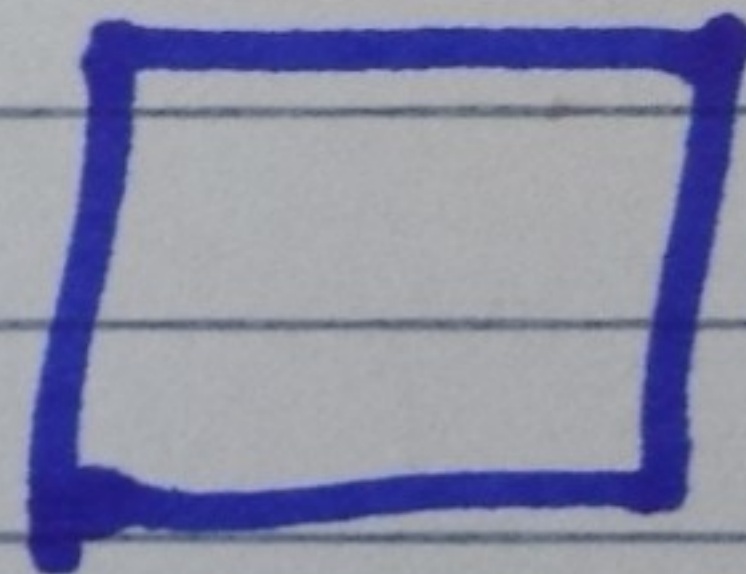
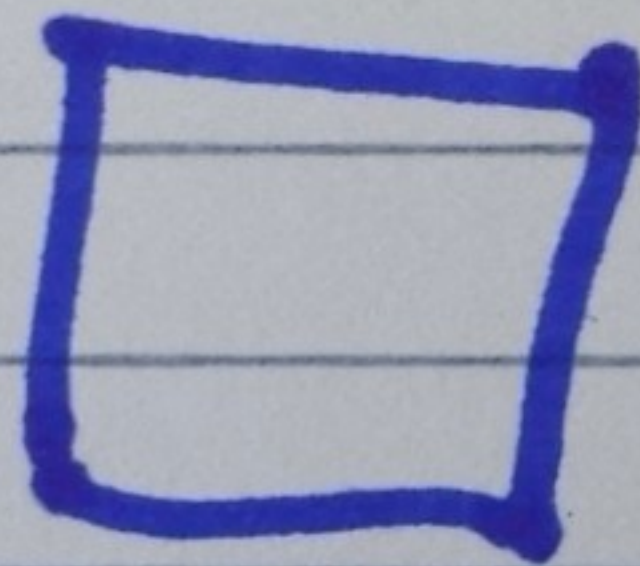
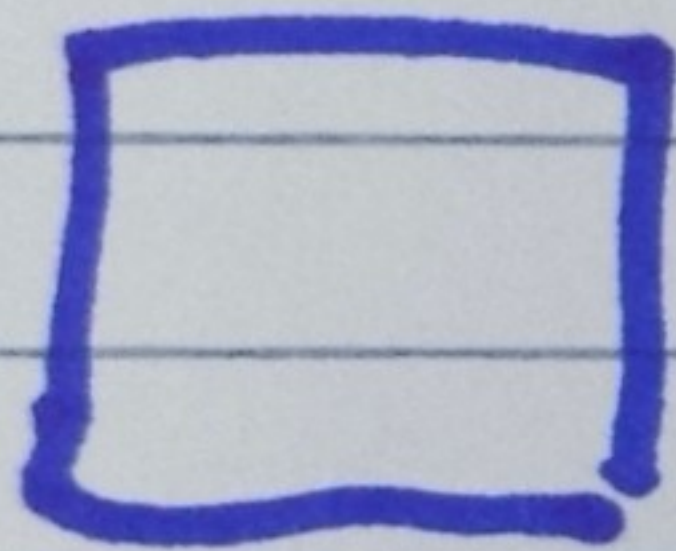
- Local optimisations don't roll up
- Agile doesn't have an opinion!

# Why is scaling so hard?

- Local optimisations don't roll up
- Agile doesn't have an opinion!
- Some of these things are **not like** the others...

Once upon a time...

Once upon a time...



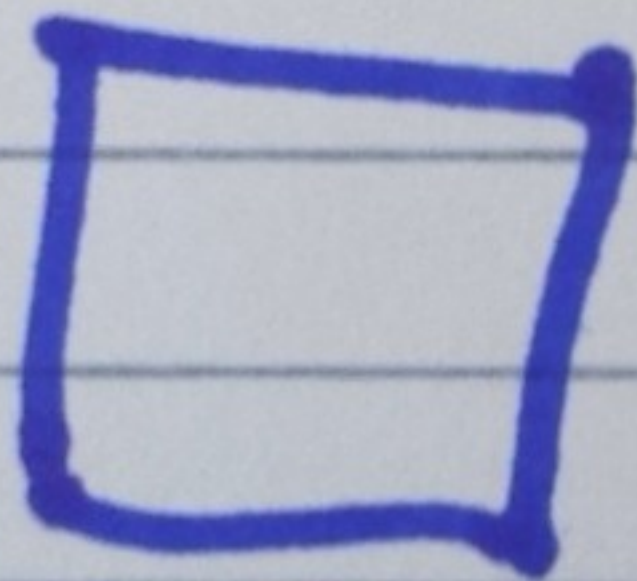
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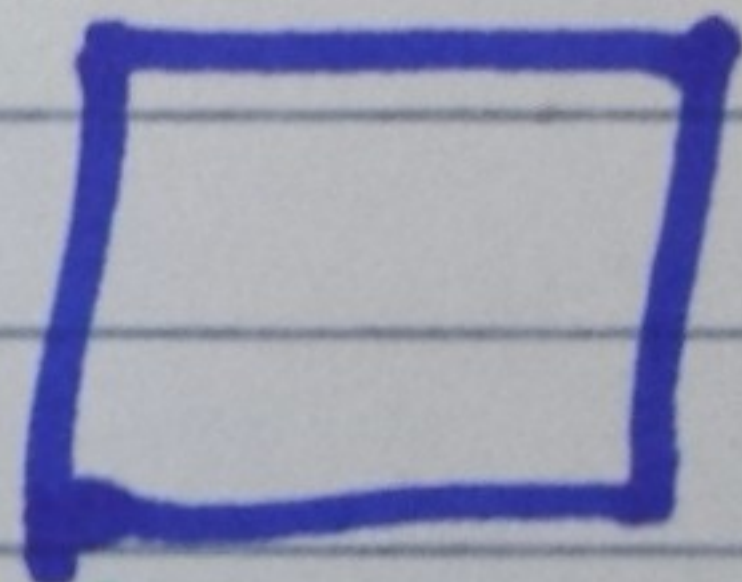
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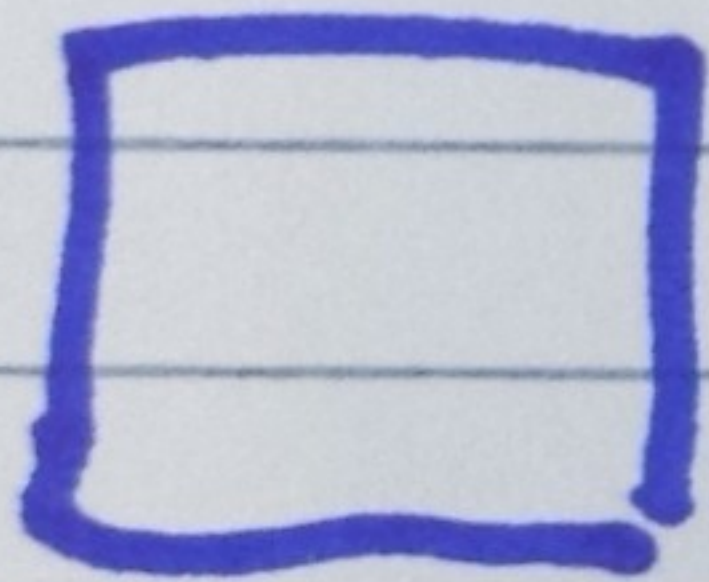


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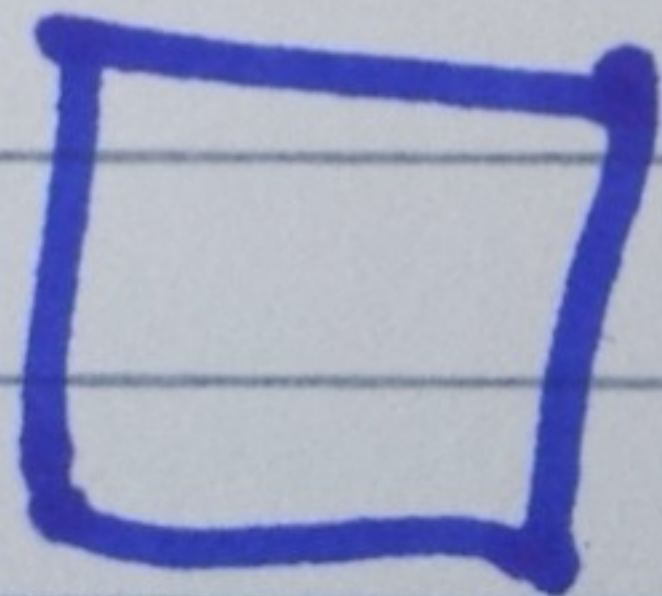
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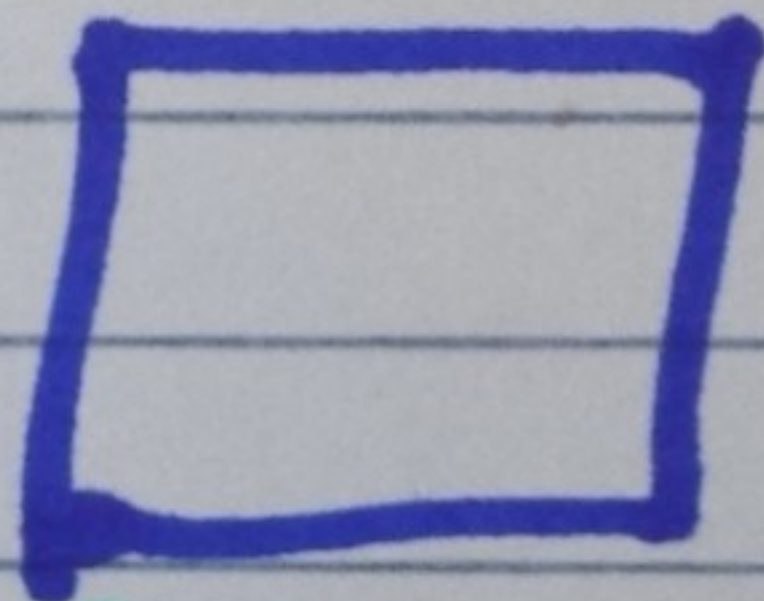
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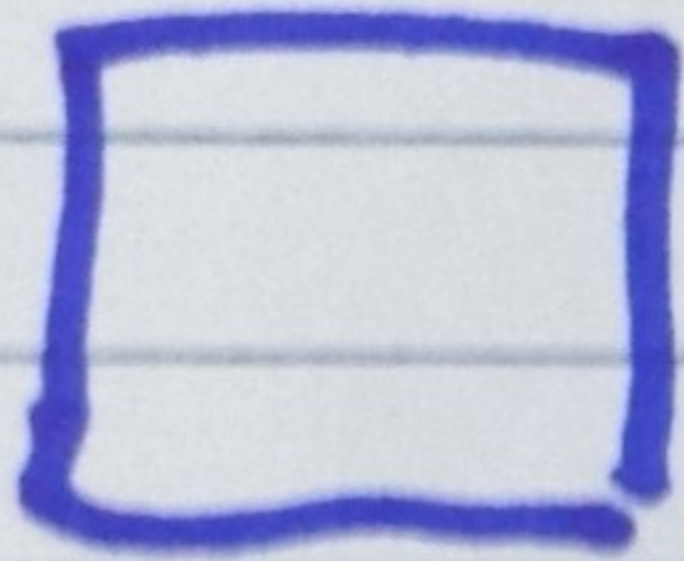


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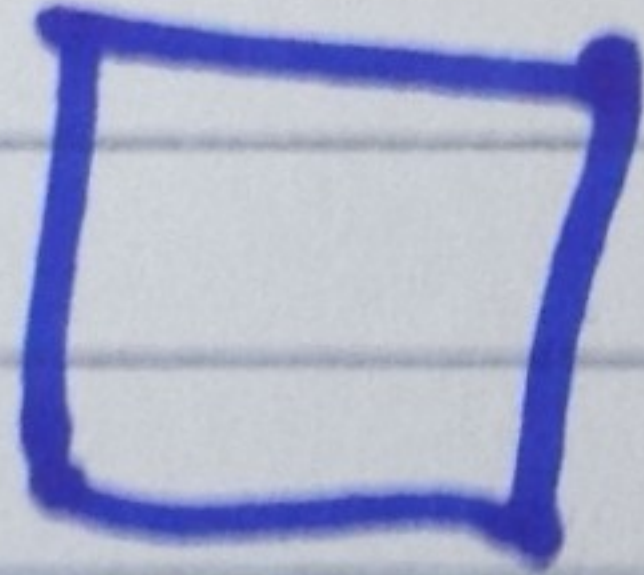
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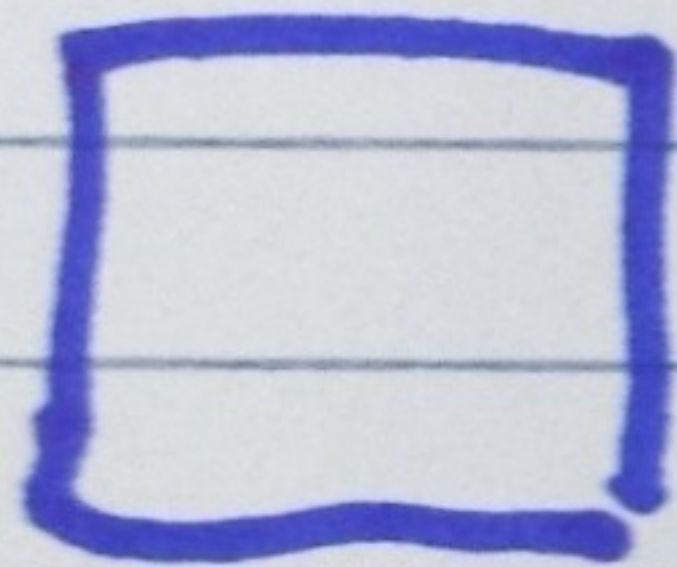
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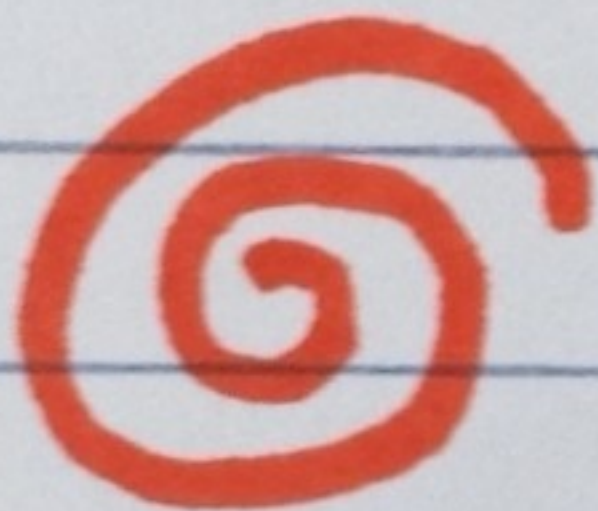
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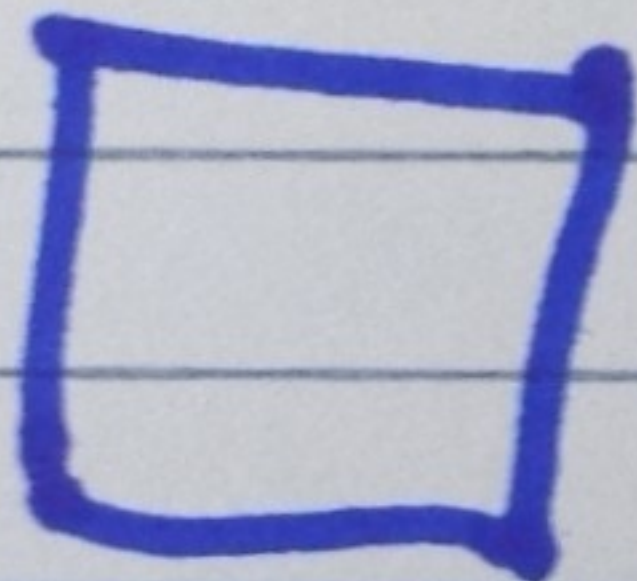
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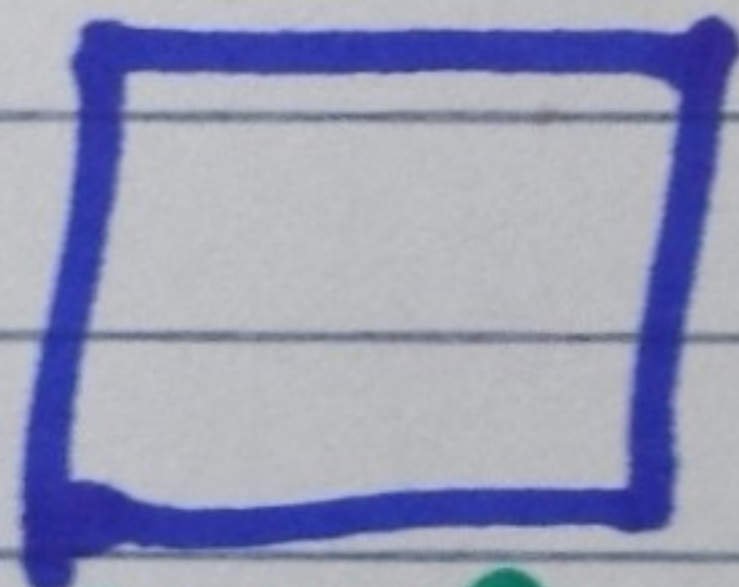
GGG  
G



GAG  
A

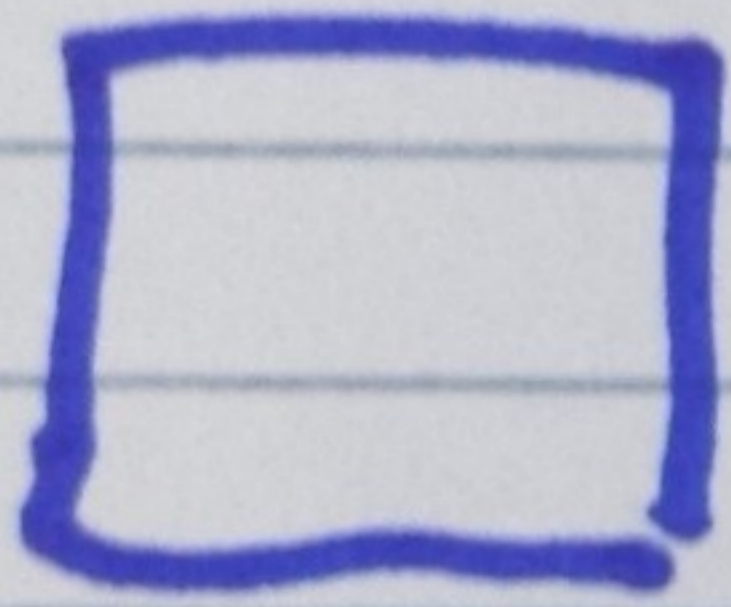


GGG  
G



GGG  
G

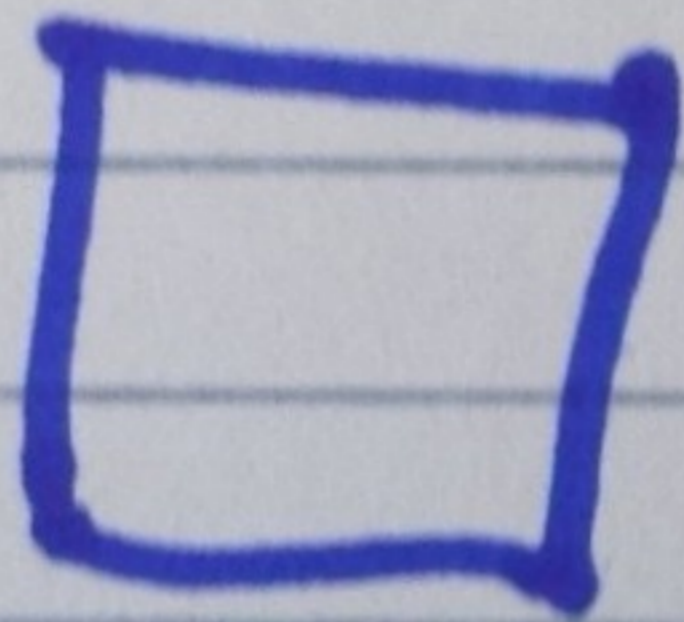
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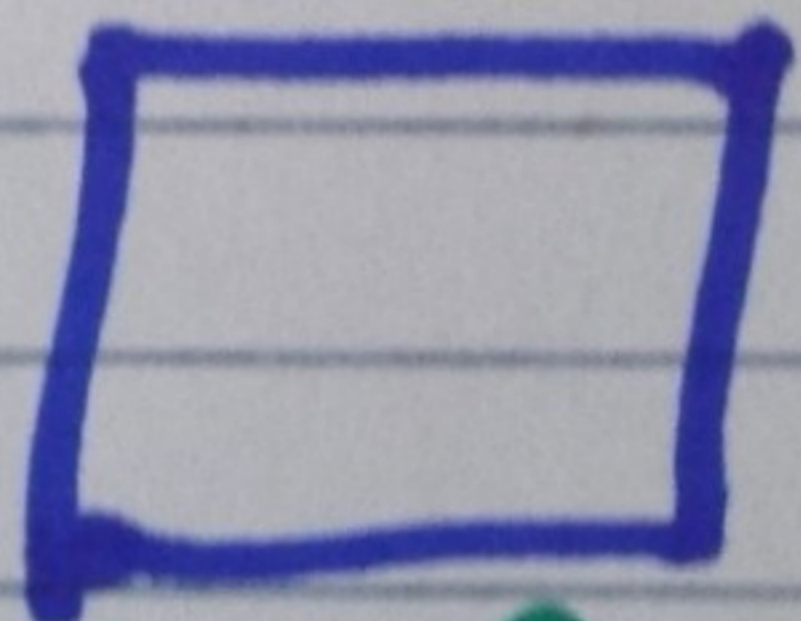
GGG  
GG



GAG  
AR



GGG  
GG



GGG  
GG

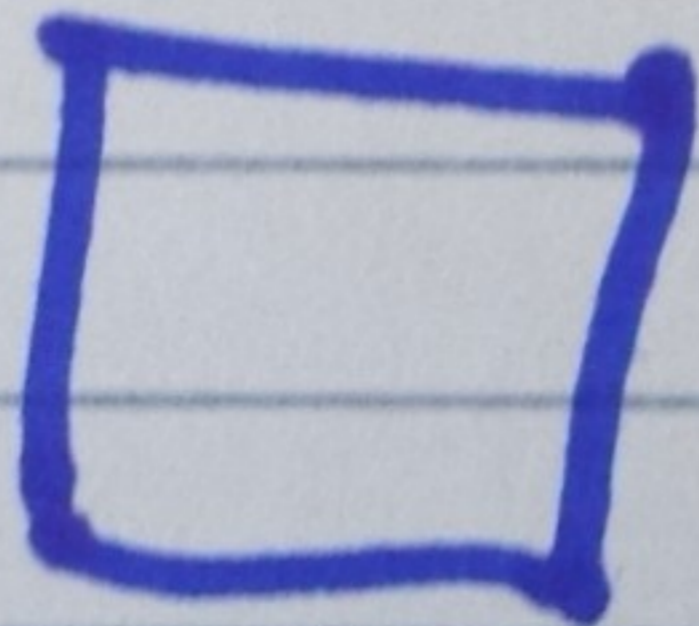
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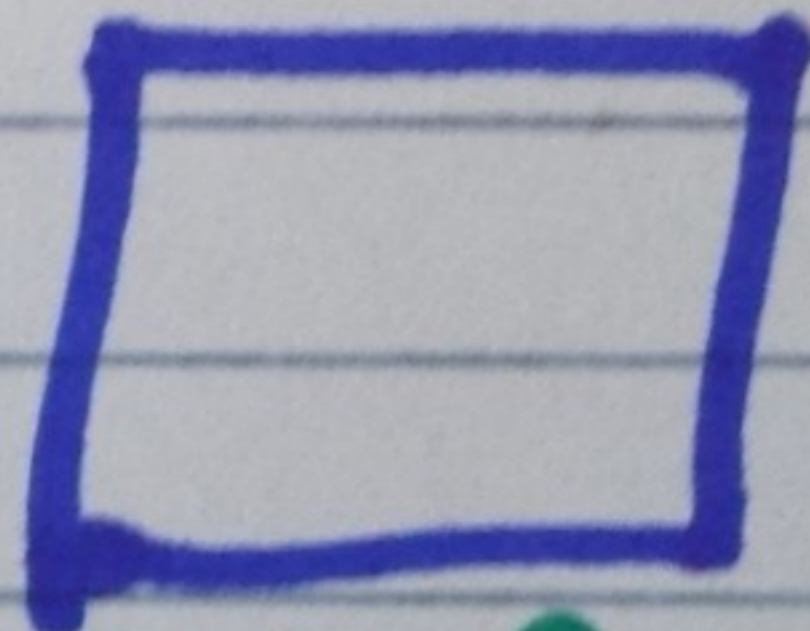
GGG  
GGG



GAG  
ARG

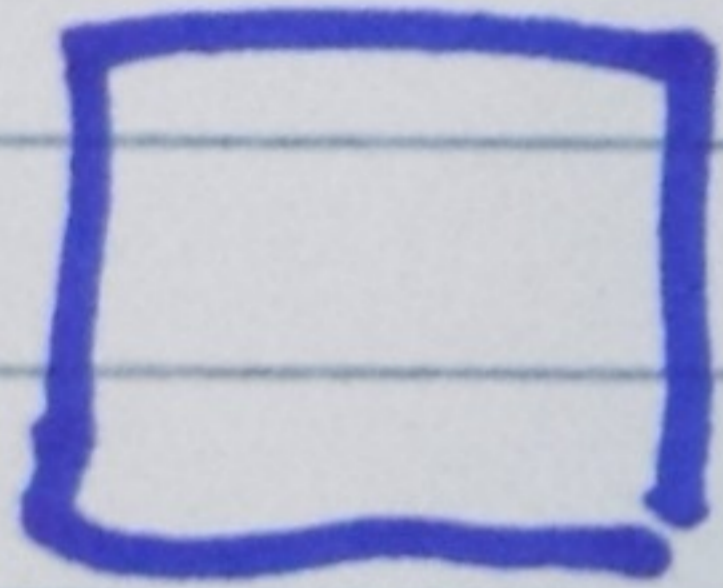


GGG  
GGG



GGG  
GGG

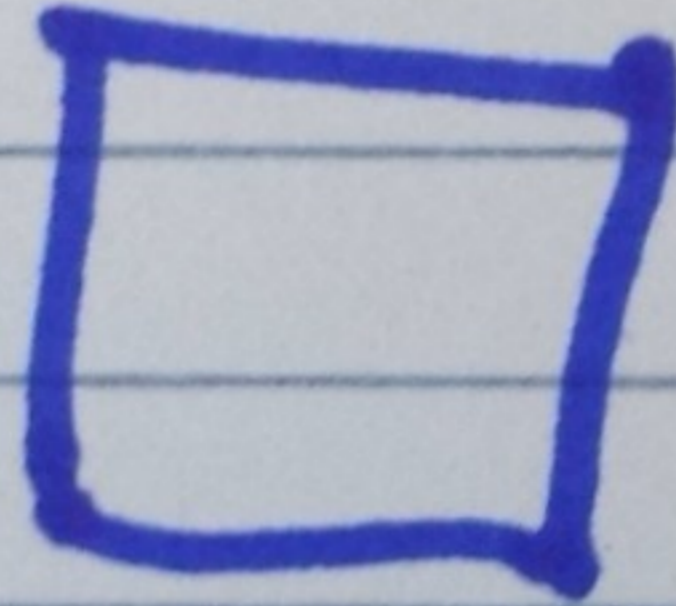
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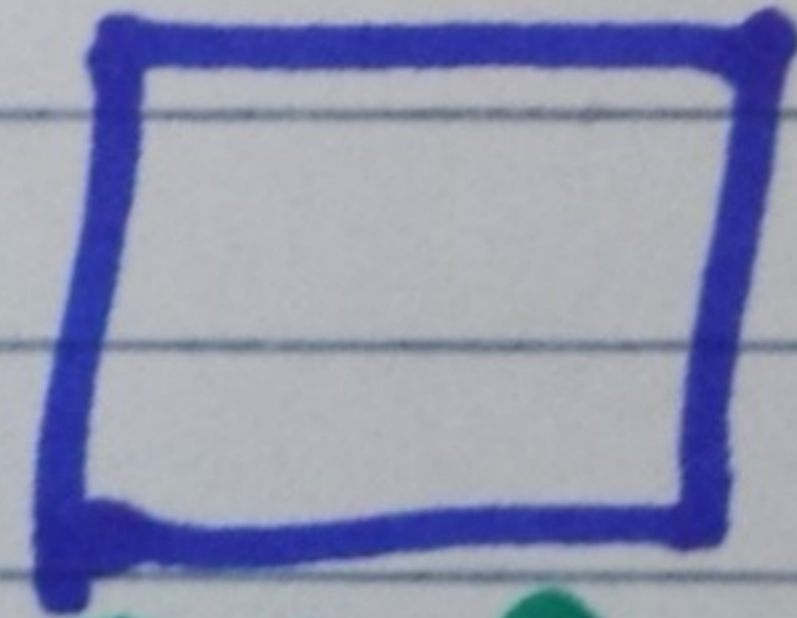
GGG  
GGG  
GGG  
GG



GAG  
ARG  
GGA  
AG



GGG  
GGG  
GGG  
GG



GGG  
GGG  
GGG  
GG

Once upon a time...

Diagram illustrating a sequence of four boxes, each crossed out with a red 'X'. The first, second, and fourth boxes contain a blue square with a red 'X' and a green checkmark above them. The second box also contains a red spiral. Below each box is a sequence of nucleotides (G, A, C, G) written in green and red.

<del>Blue square with red X</del>	✓ Red spiral	<del>Blue square with red X</del>	<del>Blue square with red X</del>
GGG	GAG	GGG	GGG
GGG	ARG	GGG	GGG
GGG	CGA	GGG	GGG
GG	AG	GG	GG

Agile Adoption Patterns  
- Richard Durnall, 2009

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Stage 1: The People break

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Stage 1: The People break

Stage 2: The Tools break



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Stage 1: The People break

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Stage 3: The Governance breaks

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Stage 4: The Customer breaks

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Stage 1: The People breaks

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Stage 5: The Money breaks

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- Richard Durnall, 2009

Stage 1: The People break

Stage 2: The Tools break

Stage 3: The Governance breaks

Stage 4: The Customer breaks

Stage 5: The Money breaks

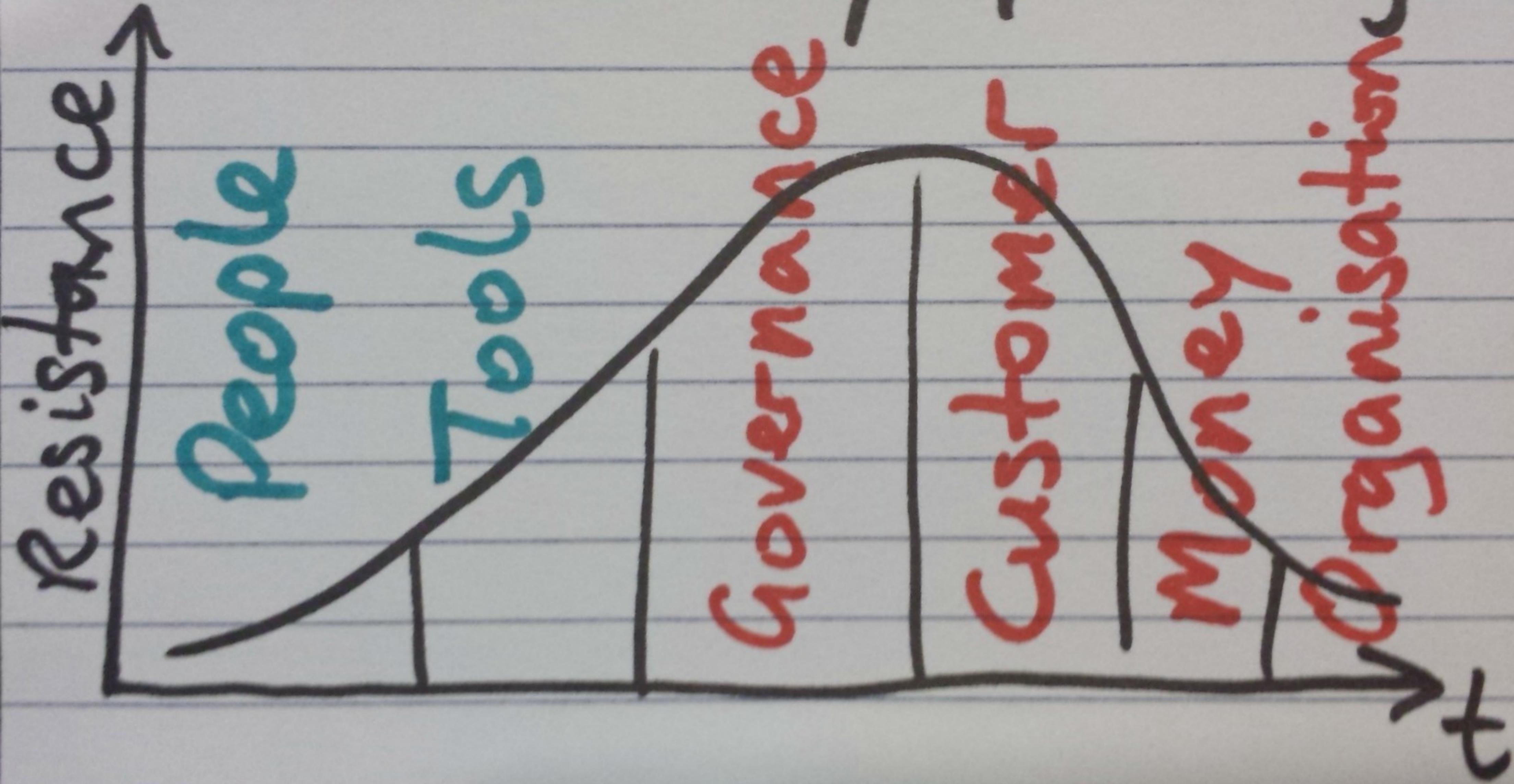
Stage 6: The Organisation breaks

# Agile Adoption Patterns

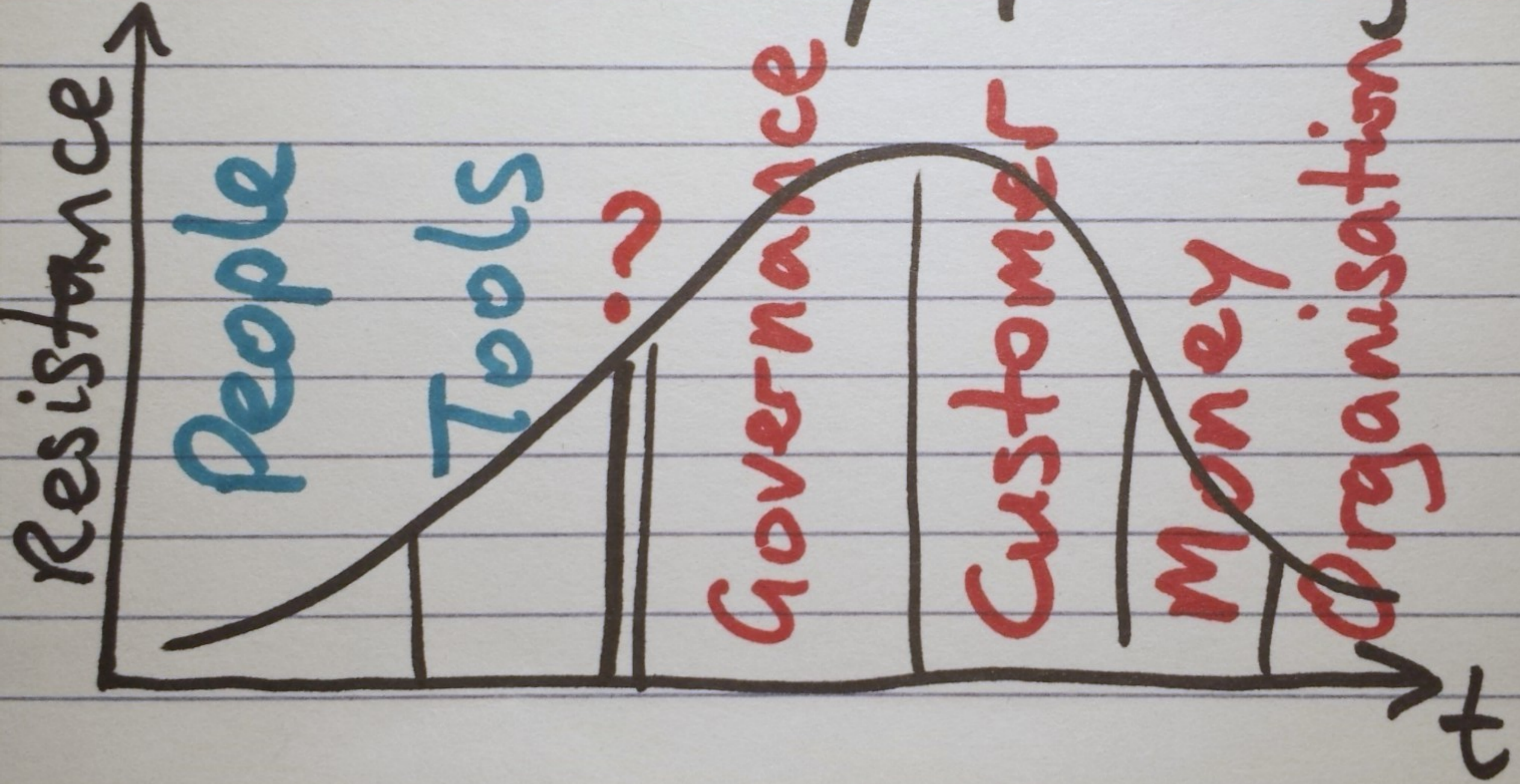
- Richard Durnall, 2009

- Stage 1: The People breaks
  - Stage 2: The Tools breaks
  - Stage 3: The Governance breaks
  - Stage 4: The Customer breaks
  - Stage 5: The Money breaks
  - Stage 6: The Organisation breaks
- Key

# The Journey of Change



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What do we mean by Governance?



What do we mean by Governance?

Execution

What do we mean by Governance?

Delivery Assurance

Execution

What do we mean by Governance?

Governance

Delivery Assurance

Execution

What do we mean by Governance?

Portfolio  
Management

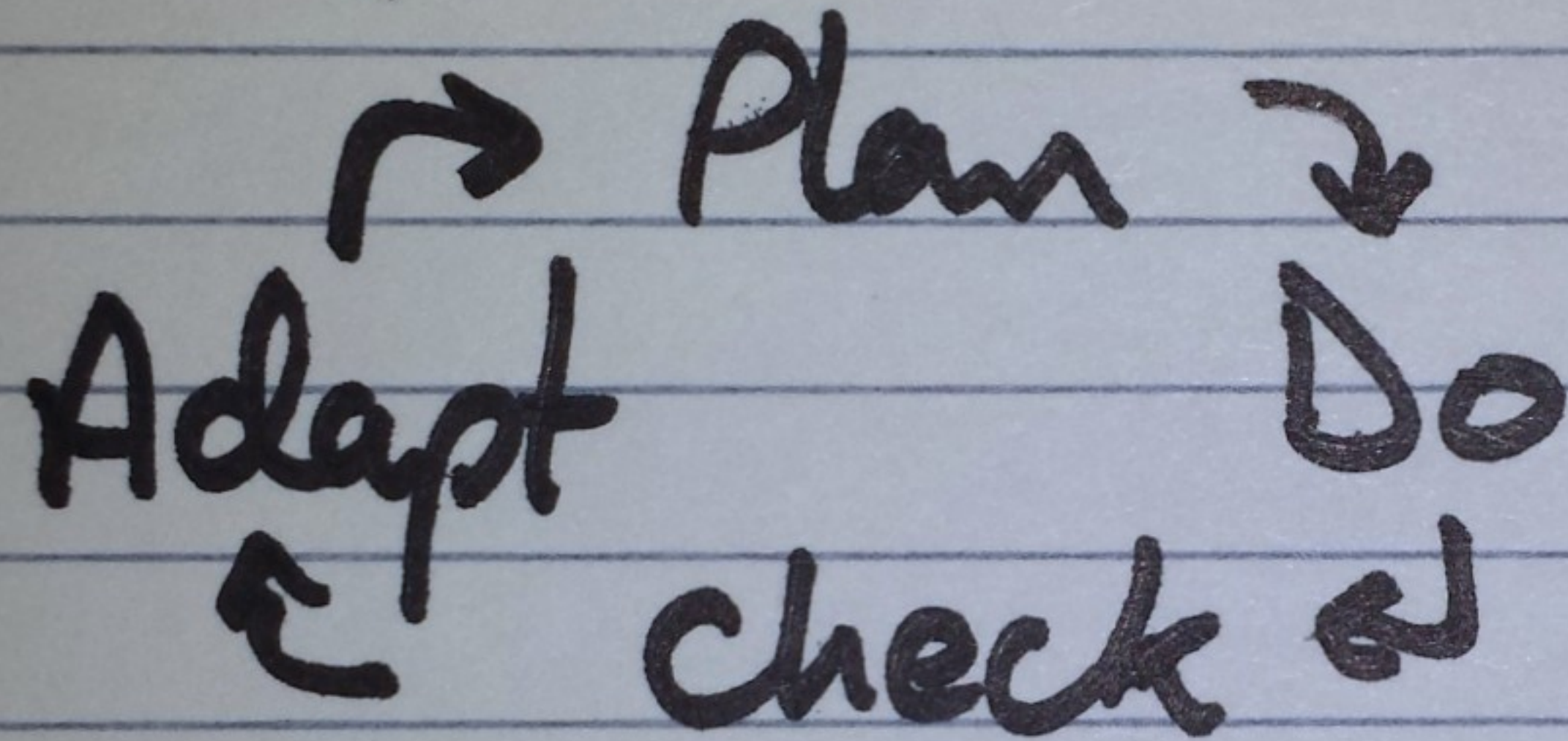
Governance

Delivery Assurance

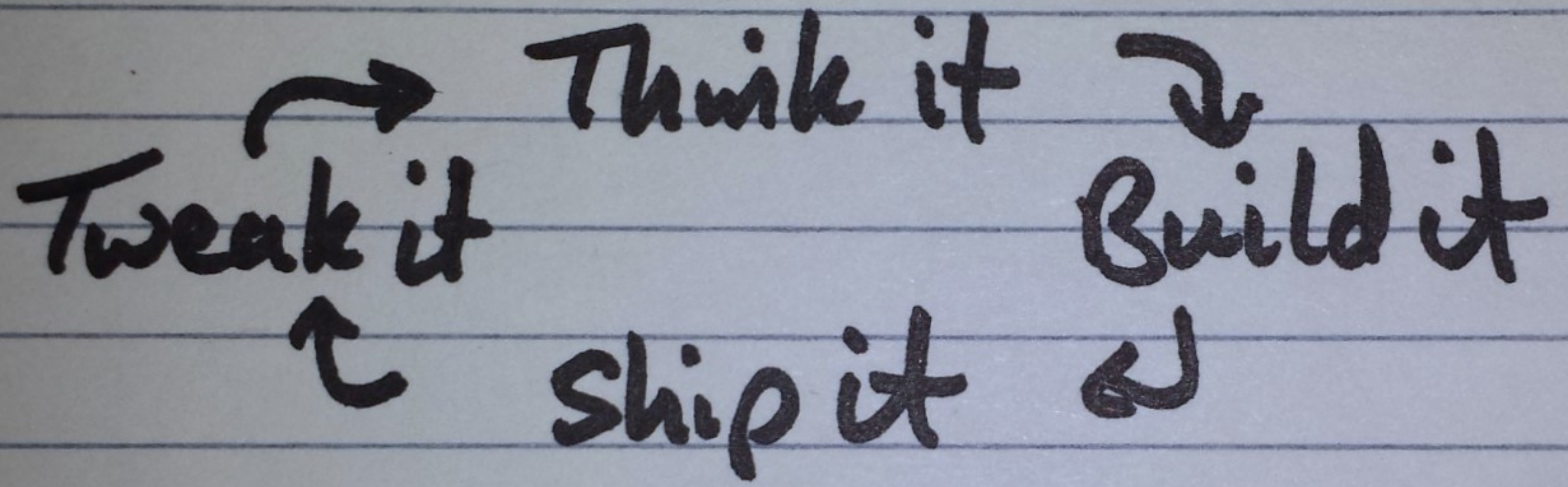
Execution

What happens in Execution?

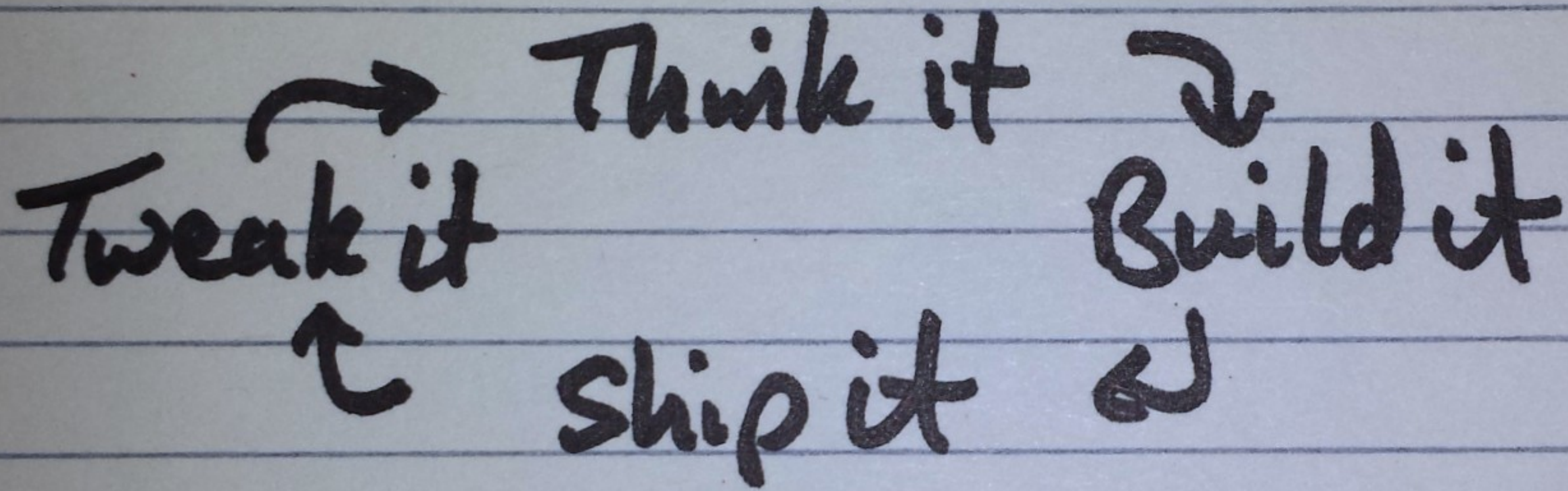
# What happens in Execution?



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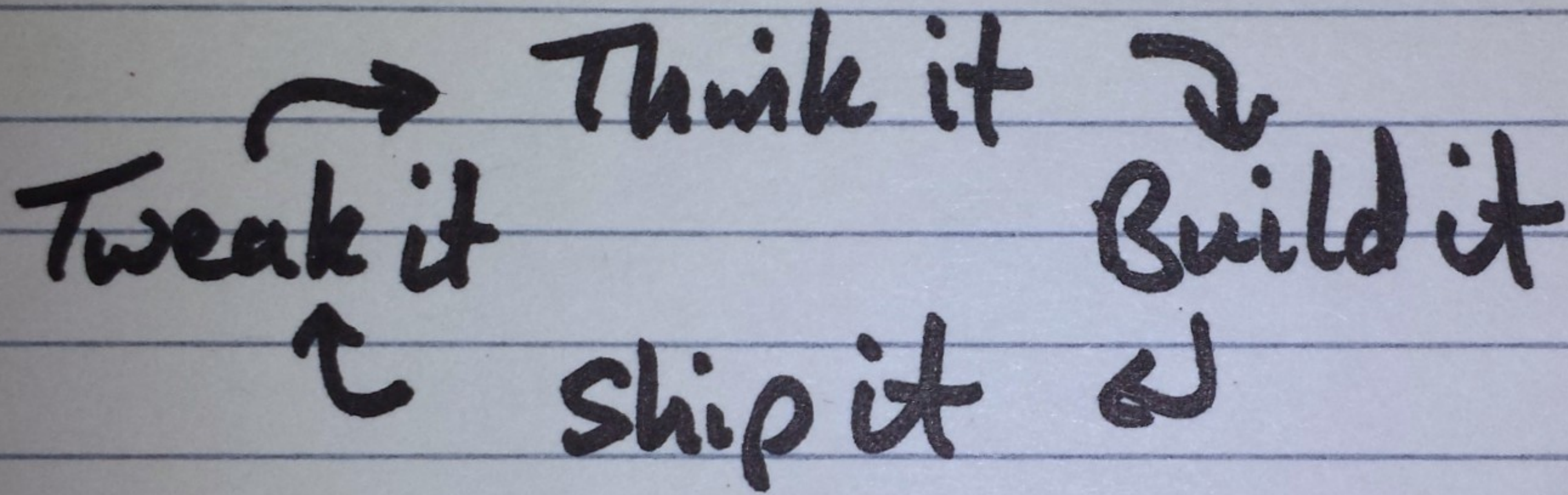
What happens in Execution?



Team-scale, locally optimised



What happens in Execution?



Team-scale, locally optimised

We're good at this!

What happens in Delivery Assurance?

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- Cross-team concerns

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- Product trade-offs

# What happens in Delivery Assurance?

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- Technical trade-offs

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- Cross-team concerns
- Product trade-offs
- Technical trade-offs

We're sometimes good at this

What happens in Governance?

What happens in Governance?

- Organisational concerns



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- Organisational concerns
- Investment trade-offs

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- Organisational concerns
- Investment trade-offs
- Portfolio balancing

# What happens in Governance?


- Organisational concerns
- Investment trade-offs
- Portfolio balancing

We rarely experience this

Surfacing the right information  
Governance



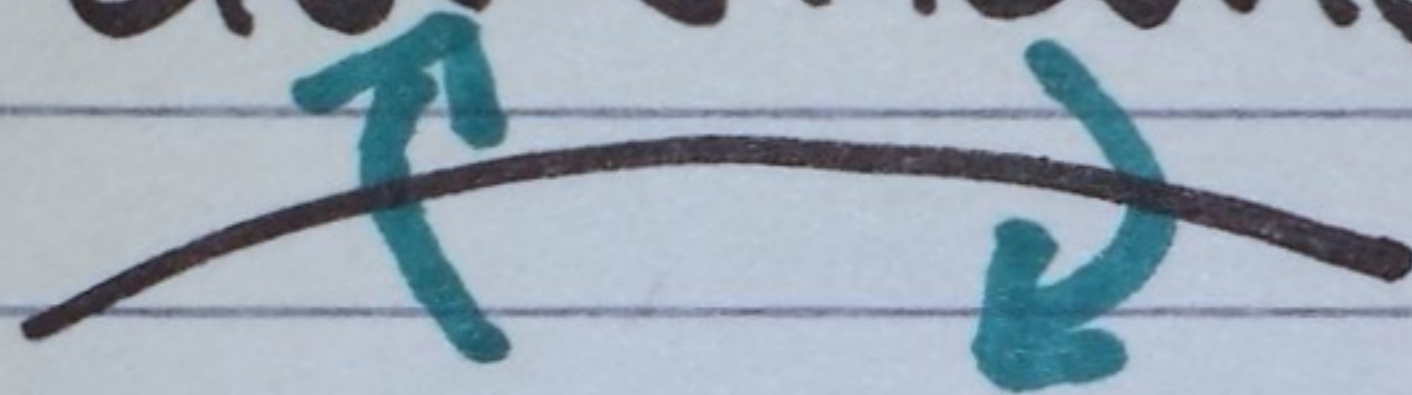
Delivery Assurance



Execution

Surfacing the right information

Governance



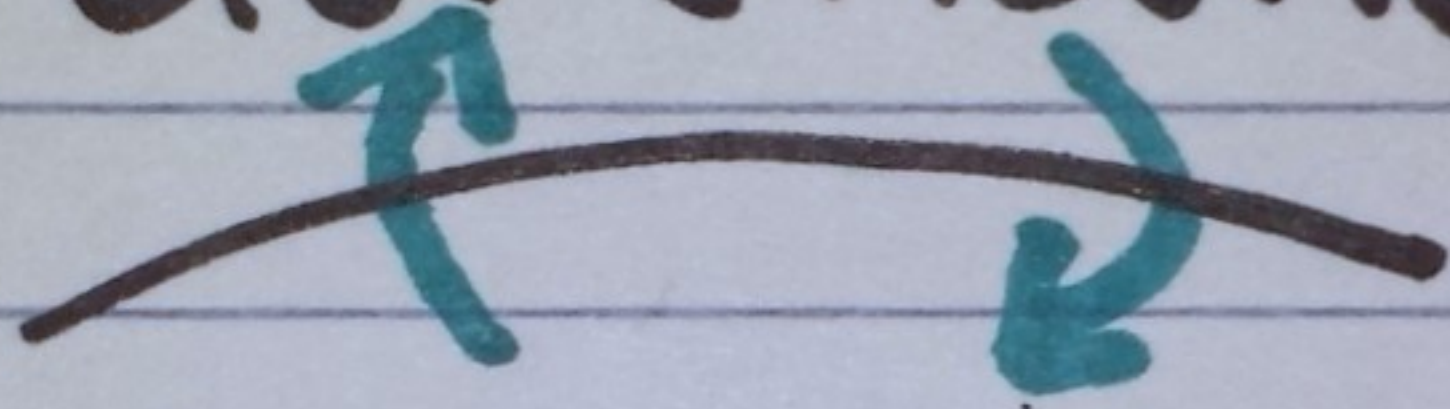
Delivery Assurance



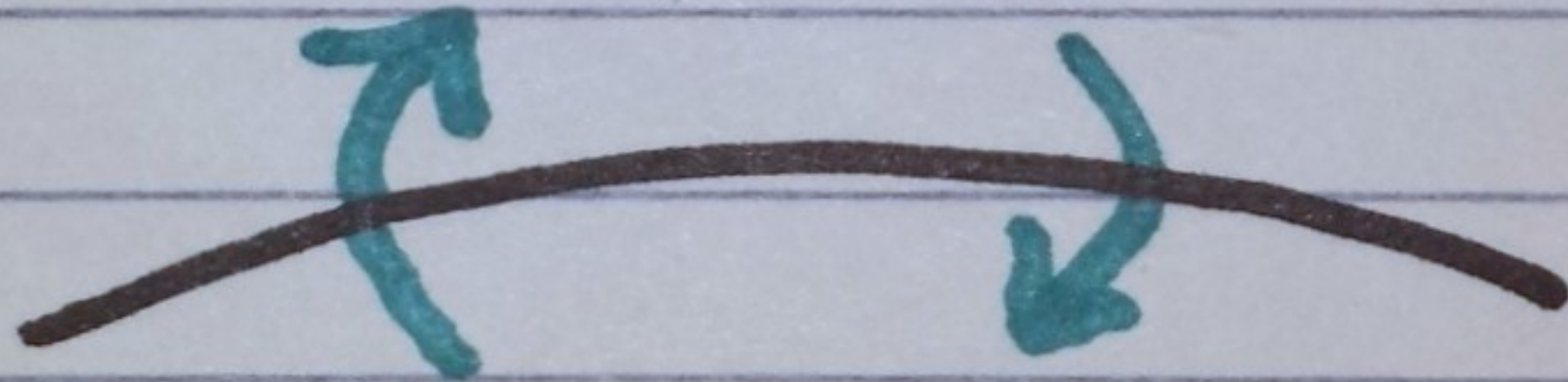
Execution

Surfacing the right information

Governance



Delivery Assurance



Execution

What matters to Delivery Assurance?

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"Have we learned anything new that might materially affect the delivery?"



What matters to Delivery Assurance?

"Have we learned anything new that might materially affect the delivery?"

"Are we nearly there yet?!!!"

What matters to Governance?

What matters to Governance?

"Are our investments aligned with our objectives?"

What matters to Governance?

"Are our investments aligned with our objectives?"

"Is there anything we should be doing differently?"

Contextual Consistency

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Create and share a clear vision

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Establish guiding principles

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Create and share a clear vision

Establish guiding principles

Requires strong, consistent leadership



# Contextual Consistency

Local decisions guided by  
global principles

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Transparent, accountable  
decision-making

# Contextual Consistency

Local decisions guided by  
global principles

Transparent, accountable  
decision-making

Strong, collaborative leadership

Contextual Consistency:

Given the same context  
and the same constraints  
we are likely to make  
the same decisions

# Some of my Guiding Principles

Never the Expert!

Look for action where the

Share Your Toys ☺☺

Difference is Data

Travel in Pairs

Wrapping Up

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Scaling is more than just  
small things bigger

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Scaling is more than just  
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We need guiding principles and  
strong leadership



# Wrapping Up

Scaling is more than just  
small things bigger

We need **guiding principles** and  
**strong leadership**

Crossing the Chasm of Credibility  
is hard!

Thanks for listening!

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