Culture, Clarity, Velocity

Erica Stanley
@ericastanley

Director of Engineering,
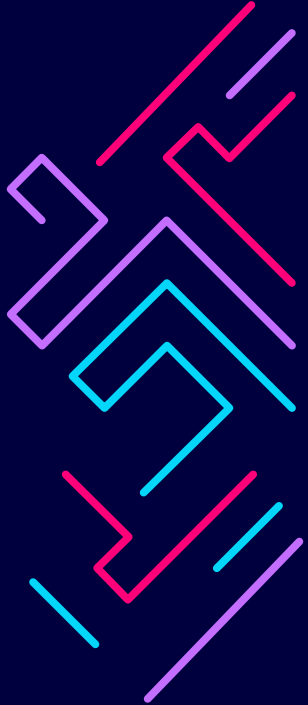Google Play Apps Growth &
Engagement

Introducing Change

A collective understanding that
"what got us here, won't get us there"

How do major changes affect our teams?

- Morale
- Clarity
- Productivity
- Ownership
- Belonging

How often do we leave collective change management up to individuals to figure out?

Carina Gerry
Director of Engineering Quality • SalesLoft

Quick wins help but are not sufficient

01

Culture

Intentional Culture as a Foundation for Change Management and Clarity

Culture Mapping

What do you need to embed in your culture? What do you need to address and disincentivize?

Building Change Readiness into our Culture

01
LEGITIMACY
Find and work with informal influencers

02
OWNERSHIP
Implement change "with" people from earliest stages

03
RELEVANCE
Frame the change as integral to what really matters

04
ATTAINABILITY
Break efforts into a series of small scale changes

05
AUTHENTICITY
Be the change! Translate it into visible behaviors

06
IMPARTIALITY
Establish a neutral change facilitator

From "Getting Employee Buy-In on Organizational Change" by Andrea Belk Olson for HBR
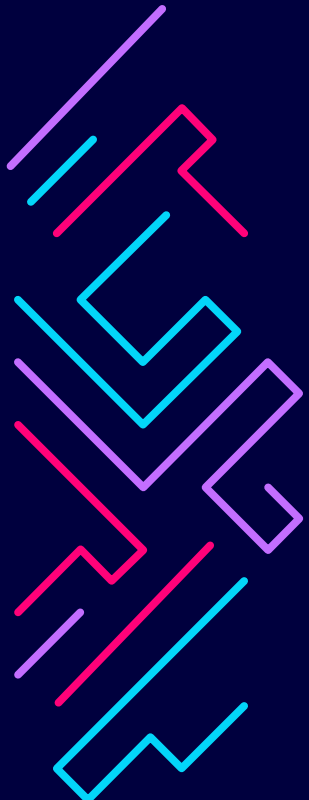
Building Culture for Clarity

High Performing Team

Results
- Highly motivate and stable team
- Consistently hitting objects and result
- Focused on the team results

Accountability
- Poor performance is dealt with
- Team standards the same for all
- People understand and own their work

Commitment
- Clear objectives and priority
- Buy in from the team
- Fully engaged team members

Conflict
- Have healthy team debates
- Work out solutions to issues together
- Challenge poor behaviour quickly

Trust
- Ask for help
- Share weakness and help each other
- Believe everyone is trying their best

Pyramid
- Lack of Results
- Avoidance of Accountability
- Lack of Commitment
- Fear of Conflict
- Lack of Trust

Dysfunctional Team

Result
- High team turnover
- Poor performers
- Focus on own results, not the team

Accountability
Poor performance is tolerated
Lack o ownership from the team
Objectives missed

Commitment
- Keep discussing the same thing over and over
- Wont commit to work
- Unclear objectives and priority

Conflict
- Avoid people
- Avoid problems
- Don't confront issues or behaviours

Trust
- Hide mistakes
- Make assumptions
- Hold grudges

02
Clarity

Enabling Velocity through *Real* Alignment, Communication and Documentation
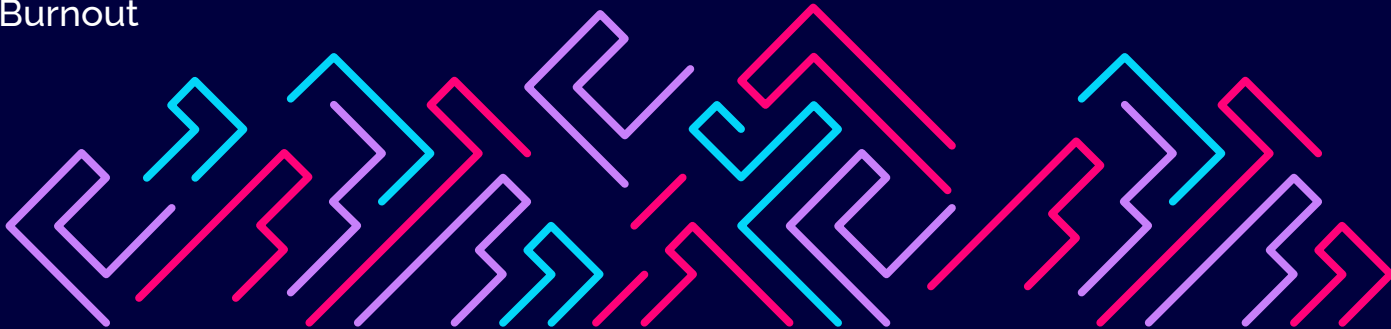
Effects of Clarity on Team

Lack of Clarity

- Recurring obstacles to progress
- Unnecessary Rework/ Throwaway Efforts
- Churn
- Burnout

Clarity of Purpose & Needed Change

- Provides Direction
- Progress with aligned purpose can multiply efforts
- Collective commitment and reward

Best Practices for Bringing Clarity to Change

- Frontload alignment
- Work across large organization often requires top-down alignment
  - Does not mean excluding your team from alignment discussions
- Document and socialize decisions and changes to any decisions
- A cadence of check-ins helps teams move forward with trust
- Encourage open communication and feedback
  - Encouraging feedback requires addressing feedback
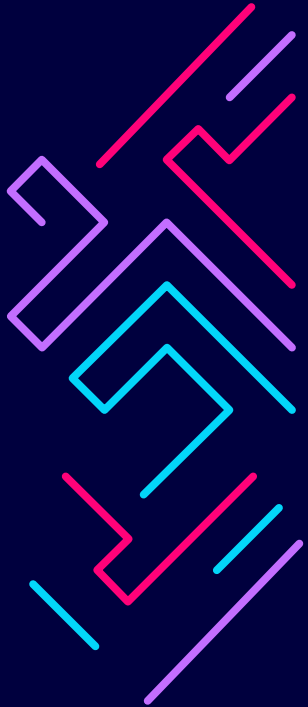
03
Velocity

Collective Speed along an Aligned Direction

Velocity is not:

Velocity != Speed

Speed without aligned direction will not make necessary impact

01

Velocity != Productivity

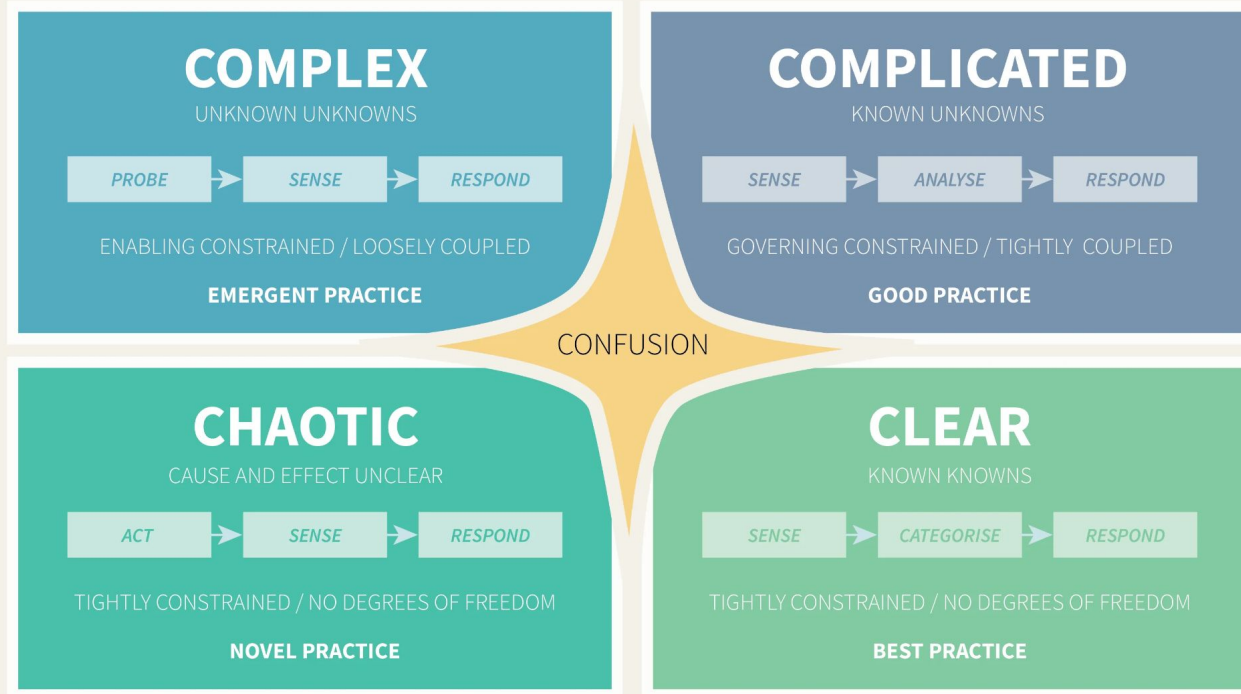The ways we measure engineering productivity don't account for direction and alignment

02

Velocity of Execution vs Velocity of Learning

Cynefin Framework — mutomorro

COMPLEX — UNKNOWN UNKNOWNS — PROBE → SENSE → RESPOND — ENABLING CONSTRAINED / LOOSELY COUPLED — EMERGENT PRACTICE

COMPLICATED — KNOWN UNKNOWNS — SENSE → ANALYSE → RESPOND — GOVERNING CONSTRAINED / TIGHTLY COUPLED — GOOD PRACTICE

CHAOTIC — CAUSE AND EFFECT UNCLEAR — ACT → SENSE → RESPOND — TIGHTLY CONSTRAINED / NO DEGREES OF FREEDOM — NOVEL PRACTICE

CLEAR — KNOWN KNOWNS — SENSE → CATEGORISE → RESPOND — TIGHTLY CONSTRAINED / NO DEGREES OF FREEDOM — BEST PRACTICE

CONFUSION

~~Slow down~~ Lead through change intentionally to speed up.