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Startup tools and approaches

Managing chaos

ALPSP seminar: Innovate or Perish
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zapnito

Who we are



Jon Beer

CTO & Co-founder, Zapnito

15 years in the big corporate world

5 years in the startup world



Jen Thoroughgood

CPO, Zapnito

14 years in the big corporate world

4 years in the startup world

“The biggest difference between working in a startup & working in a corporate?”

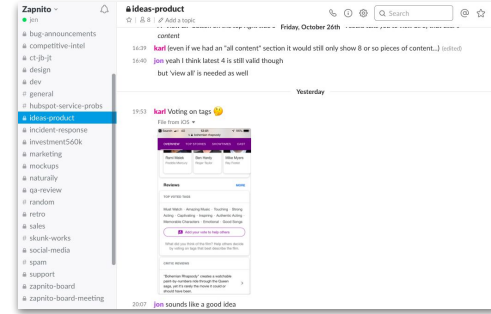
“More flip flops”

“More beards”

Email & meetings

vs.

Slack



- Suck all your time
- Hard-to-follow email chains
- Laboured 'innovation' sessions
- Requires creativity to be scheduled

- Start-up cliché
- Instant chat
- 'Ideas' channel
- Brainstorm when inspiration strikes

Pros of Slack

- 🕒 Doesn't force innovation: happens naturally
- 🗨️ Creates a record of ideas
- 👤 Participation is optional

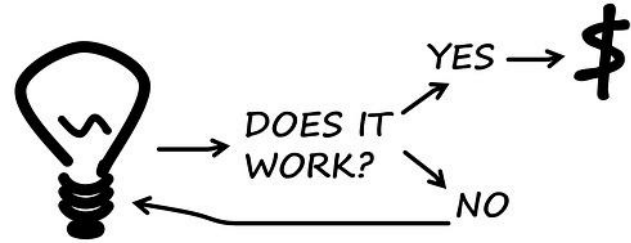
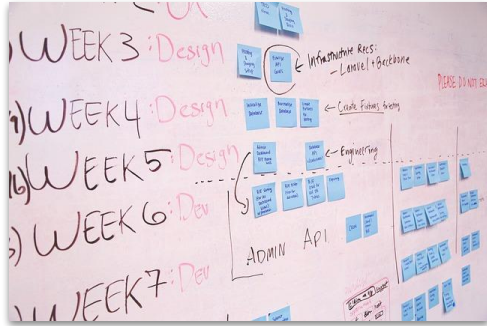
Cons of Slack

- 🕒 Interrupts your day
- 🗨️ Responses are less considered
- 👤 Not as likely to lead to action

In the future

vs.

Right now



- 5-10 year business plans & forecasts
- Rarely accurate: increasingly hard to predict the future
- Hinder market responsiveness

- Short-term goals: 6-12 week cycles
- Sprints & skunkworks
- Respond to reality rather than predictions

Pros of right now

- Less time planning, more time doing
- Able to seize opportunities as they arise
- Learn fast from failure: ok to change your mind

Cons of right now

- Risk of changing course too often
- Easy to be distracted from core business
- Less reflection & accountability

Defined roles



- Role profiles
- Long-term objectives
- Avoid 'stepping on people's toes'
- Leads to siloed thinking

vs.

All hands on deck



- Job descriptions referred to rarely
- Take on work without being asked
- Working together to shared goals
- Ideas can come from any area

Pros of all hands on deck

- 🕒 The best ideas often come from fresh eyes
- 🕒 People solve problems wherever they see them
- 🕒 People less likely to seek challenges elsewhere

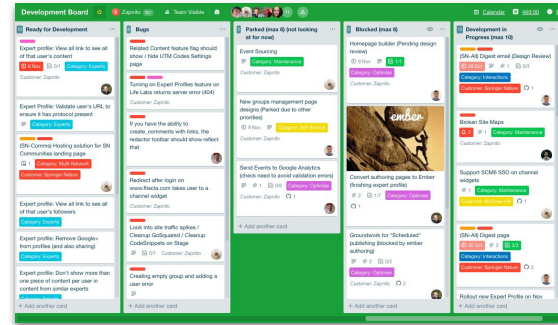
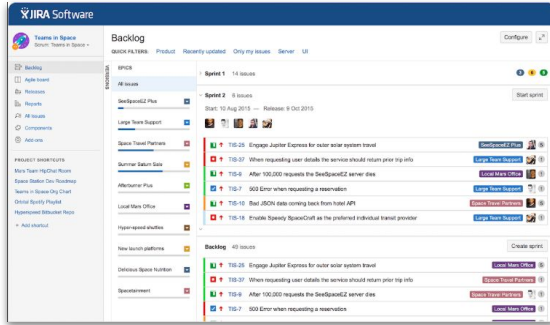
Cons of all hands on deck

- 🕒 People can be distracted from core focus
- 🕒 Risk of overstepping
- 🕒 Easy to take on too much

Corporate Agile

vs.

Startup Agile



- Estimates
- Jira
- Used by dev teams only
- More time spent planning than doing

- No estimates
- Trello
- Not just for development work
- Highly responsive workflow

Pros of Startup Agile

- Consistent approach across dev & commercial
- Low-tech, means less time grappling with systems
- Cheap!

Cons of Startup Agile

- Scope creep
- Easy to be distracted by new ideas
- Tendency to underestimate effort

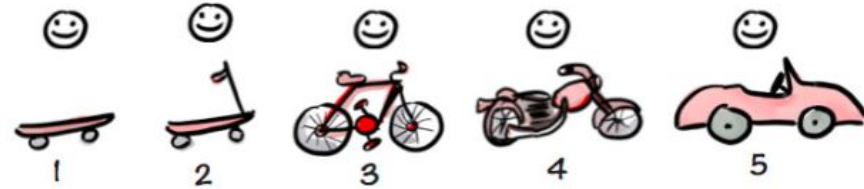
UAT



- Don't release without user approval
- Slows down the process
- Feedback not always 'real'
- Hard to achieve a consensus

VS.

MVP



- Get to market quickly
- 85% is good enough
- Quickly generates improvements and new ideas

Pros of MVP

- 🕒 Testing is done in the real world
- 👥 Feedback from a larger audience
- 🕒 Fail fast and improve quickly

Cons of MVP

- 🕒 Move on too quickly to the next thing
- 🕒 Work remains 85% done
- 🕒 Users not as invested in new features

Databases



- Rows on a spreadsheet
- Limited contact; communication en masse
- Innovate based on assumptions

vs.

People



- Fewer customers; named individuals
- Speak to & meet them daily
- Innovate to meet the actual needs of real people

Pros of people

- Specific, detailed feedback throughout
- Innovation becomes part of customer service
- Customers committed to the new product/feature

Cons of people

- Easy to be taken off course by one voice
- Harder to achieve consensus & to say 'no'
- Customers can feel too in control

The toolkit for innovation

1. Routinely question the status quo
2. Trello for Kanban (iterate until it fits)
3. Slack (with some rules)
4. Rework (by 37 Signals)
5. Beards (fake if necessary)





Thank you

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