

Engaging Leadership in a Lean Transformation

2025 Lean Government Summit

Craig Szelestowski

craig@leanagility.com

March 21, 2025

LEAN AGILITY 

FASTER, BETTER WORK THROUGH GOVERNMENT AND INSPIRED PEOPLE • OUR CORE VALUES: LEAN ADMINISTRATION, PUBLIC EFFICIENCY

Objectives

1. Understand **preventable** reasons why leadership might not buy-in and support a Lean transformation
2. What you as an individual change agent can do to engage leaders
3. Specific roles that leaders can play to amplify a transformation

WHY LEADERS MIGHT NOT BUY IN

Potential Causes

Before Project Begins

- Our credibility as change agents
- Our influence

- Wrong problem
- Lack of understanding of Lean
- Problem/benefits invisible/not compelling
- Lack of peer examples
- Don't know what or how to support

During Project

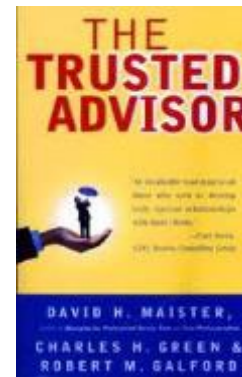
- Lack of ongoing contact with leader

- Finish line in the wrong place

Problem:
Low Leadership
Buy-In and Support

OUR CREDIBILITY AS CHANGE AGENTS

Build Trust



$$\text{Trust} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self-Orientation}}$$

Credibility: I know my stuff; I have a proven track record.

Reliability: I do what I say I will; you can count on me.

Intimacy: I develop close, open, human-to-human relationships.

Self-Orientation: I care about you, and don't put my own needs before yours.

OUR INFLUENCE



*Adapted from
Bradford & Cohen*

Potential Causes

Before Project Begins

- Our credibility as change agents
- Our influence

Problem:
Low Leadership
Buy-In and Support

- Wrong problem
- Lack of understanding of Lean
- Problem/benefits invisible/not compelling
- Lack of peer examples
- Don't know what or how to support

During Project

- Lack of ongoing contact with leader

- Finish line in the wrong place

WRONG PROBLEM?

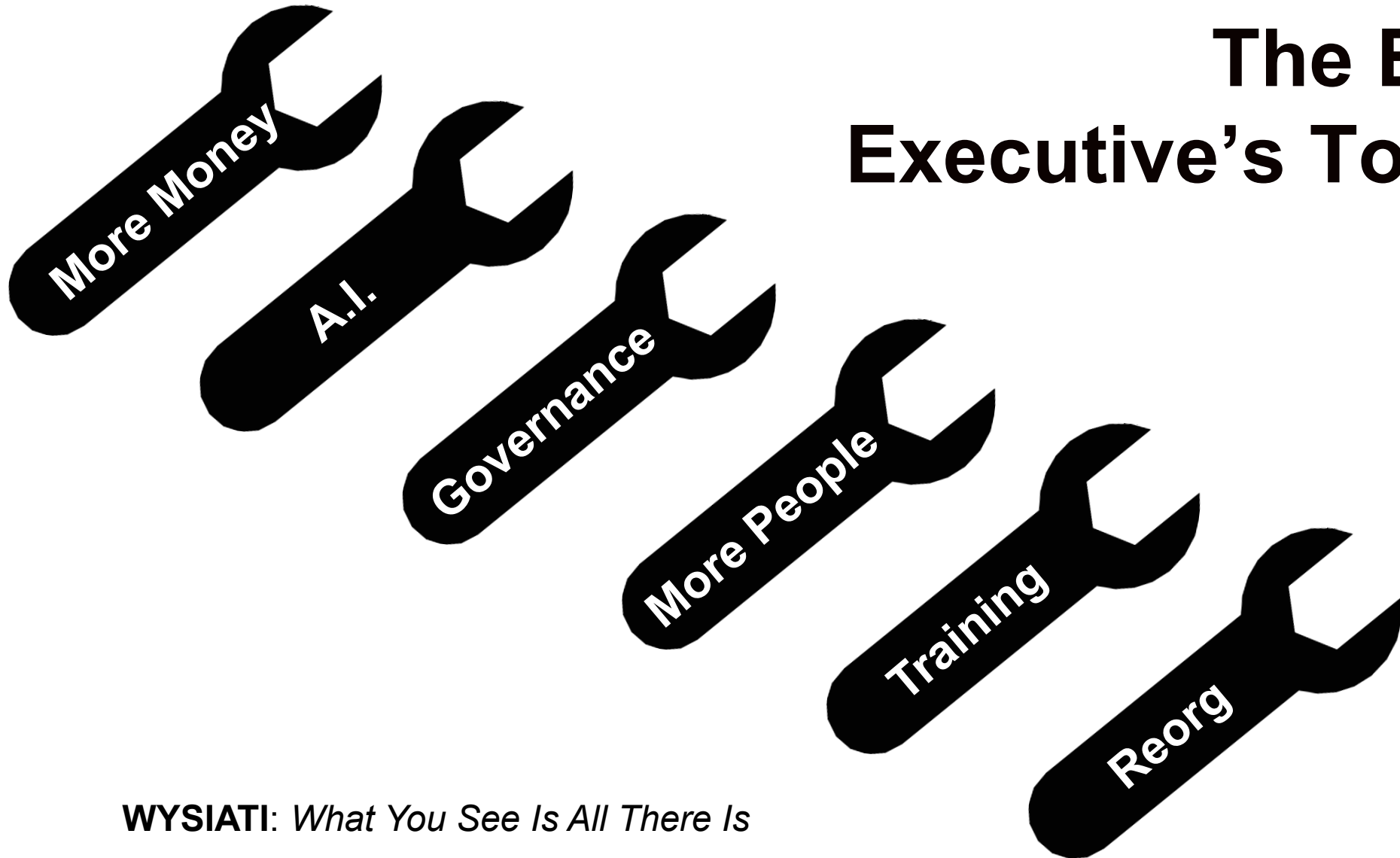


The 3 am test: how does your initiative solve the worries that are keeping the leader awake at night?

**Start with the problem,
not the solution.**

LACK OF LEAN / SYSTEMS THINKING / FLOW UNDERSTANDING

The Busy Executive's Toolkit



WYSIATI: *What You See Is All There Is*

**Does the leader have a solid
understanding of Lean / Systems
Thinking / Flow and how they work?**

**PROBLEM/BENEFITS NOT CLEAR AND
COMPELLING**

Natural Attractors





Successful Pitch

“After 25 previous reviews, the Director returns the approval memo with comments, questions, and clarifications
80% of the time.

If we mapped the process and created a review heat map, we could turn that 80% into 20%.

This would take four days.

What do you think?”

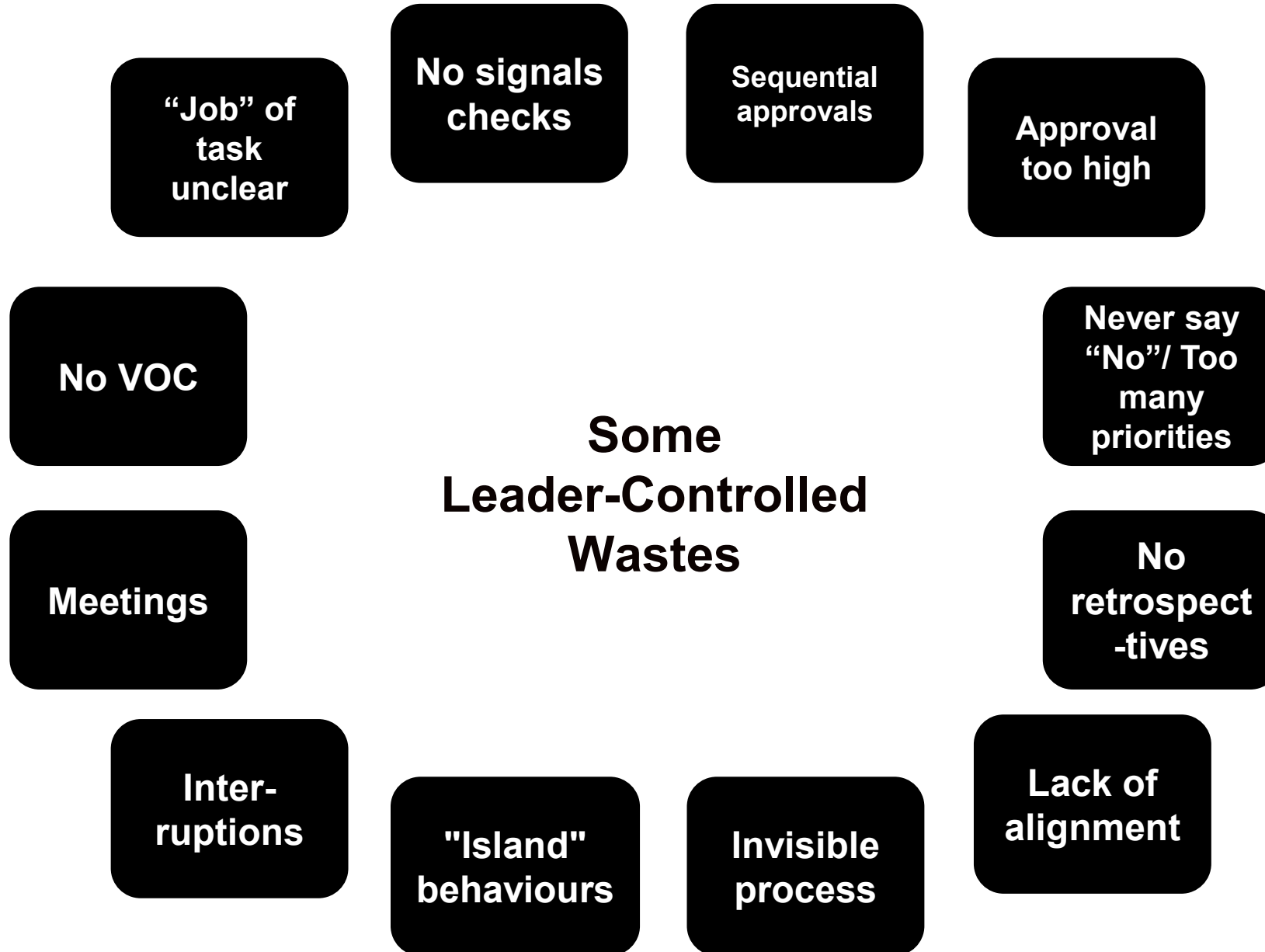
Elevator Pitch 7 S's

1. **Short** – 46 words
2. **Specific** – provided numbers
3. **Surprising** – all of those reviews were for nothing. Really?
4. **Stirring** – frustration – how could this be?
5. **Sound** – numbers well-established
6. **Safe** – low risk, pilot
7. **Saving** – solution to their big problem

LACK OF PEER EXAMPLES



**LEADERS DON'T KNOW WHAT TO
SUPPORT OR HOW TO SUPPORT IT**



Potential Causes

Before Project Begins

- Our credibility as change agents
- Our influence

- Wrong problem
- Lack of understanding of Lean
- Problem/benefits invisible/not compelling
- Lack of peer examples
- Don't know what or how to support

During Project

- Lack of ongoing contact with leader

- Finish line in the wrong place

Problem:
Low Leadership
Buy-In and Support

LACK OF ONGOING CONTACT WITH LEADER

Partial Sponsor DMAIC Gate Review Questions

DEFINE

Problem to Solve,
Project

1. Right team of influencers?
2. Natural Attractors well-communicated and understood?
3. Project plan scheduled in calendars and team has dedicated time? Compressed schedule?
4. Regular check-ins with project lead in my calendar?

MEASURE

Map Process, Gather Data

1. Is there adequate...
2. ...
3. ...

ANALYZE

Find the Root Causes

Regular, short, check-ins with leaders to make sure they're doing the right things to support the project – and to keep them and the project/initiative aligned!

IMPROVE

Plan and Conduct Experiments

1. ...ve I provided feedback on ideas generated by team? ...the ideas create ...across process, or ...at certain points? ...the first ...ment be ...eted the week ...e workshop? ...gh time ...dedicated per week for team to implement experiments?
5. Am I happy with the pace of the project?

CI/CONTROL

Ongoing Improvement Practice

1. Are people following the new process?
2. Is the process visible to all? Are we managing the process?
3. Is ongoing problem-solving evident?
4. What is the risk that we will go back to the old way? What can we do to prevent this?

Potential Causes

Before Project Begins

- Our credibility as change agents
- Our influence

- Wrong problem
- Lack of understanding of Lean
- Problem/benefits invisible/not compelling
- Lack of peer examples
- Don't know what or how to support

During Project

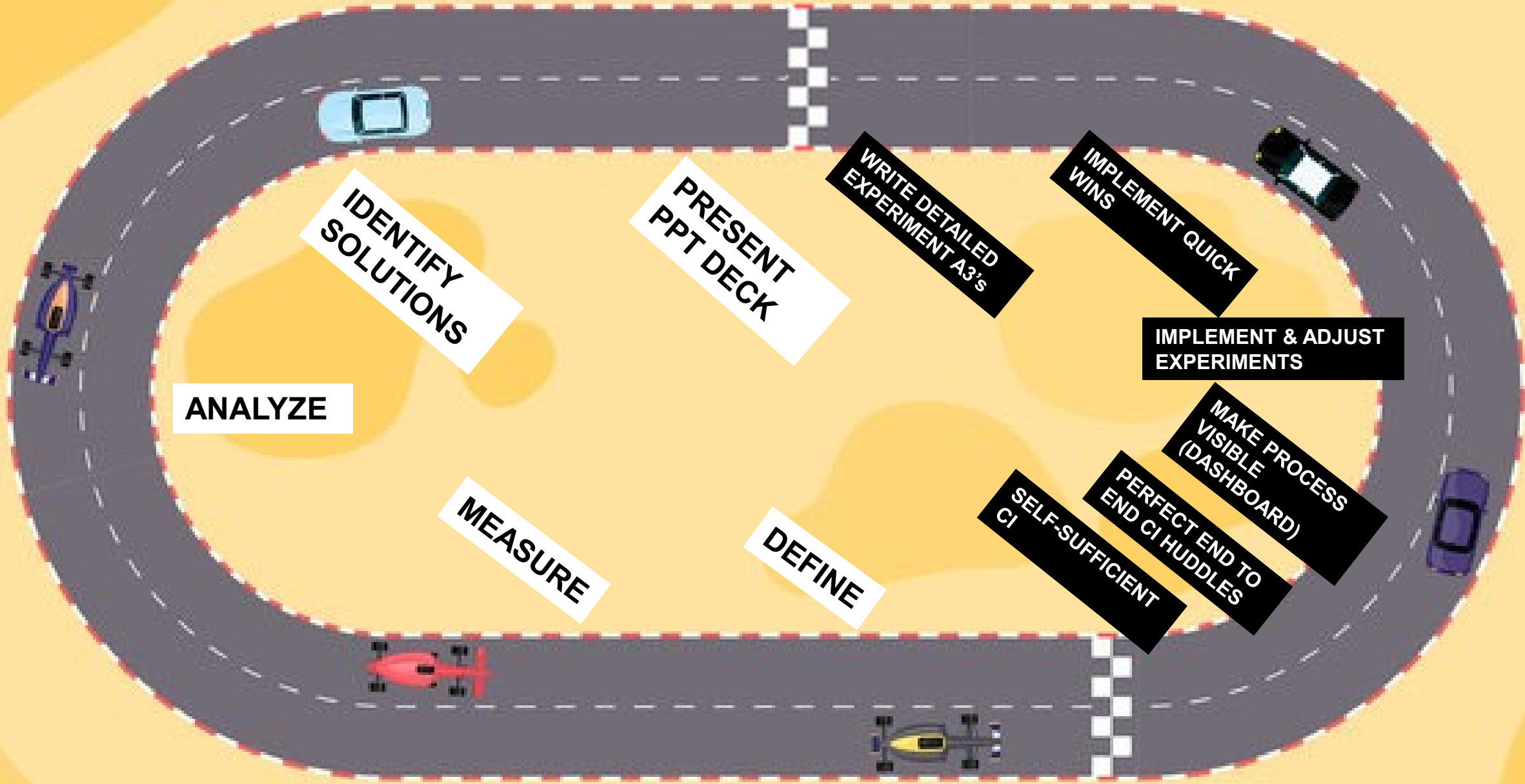
- Lack of ongoing contact with leader

- Finish line in the wrong place

Problem:
Low Leadership
Buy-In and Support

FINISH LINE IN THE WRONG PLACE

FINISH?



ANALYZE

IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

PRESENT PPT DECK

WRITE DETAILED EXPERIMENT A3's

IMPLEMENT QUICK WINS

IMPLEMENT & ADJUST EXPERIMENTS

MAKE PROCESS VISIBLE (DASHBOARD)

PERFECT END TO END CI HUDDLES

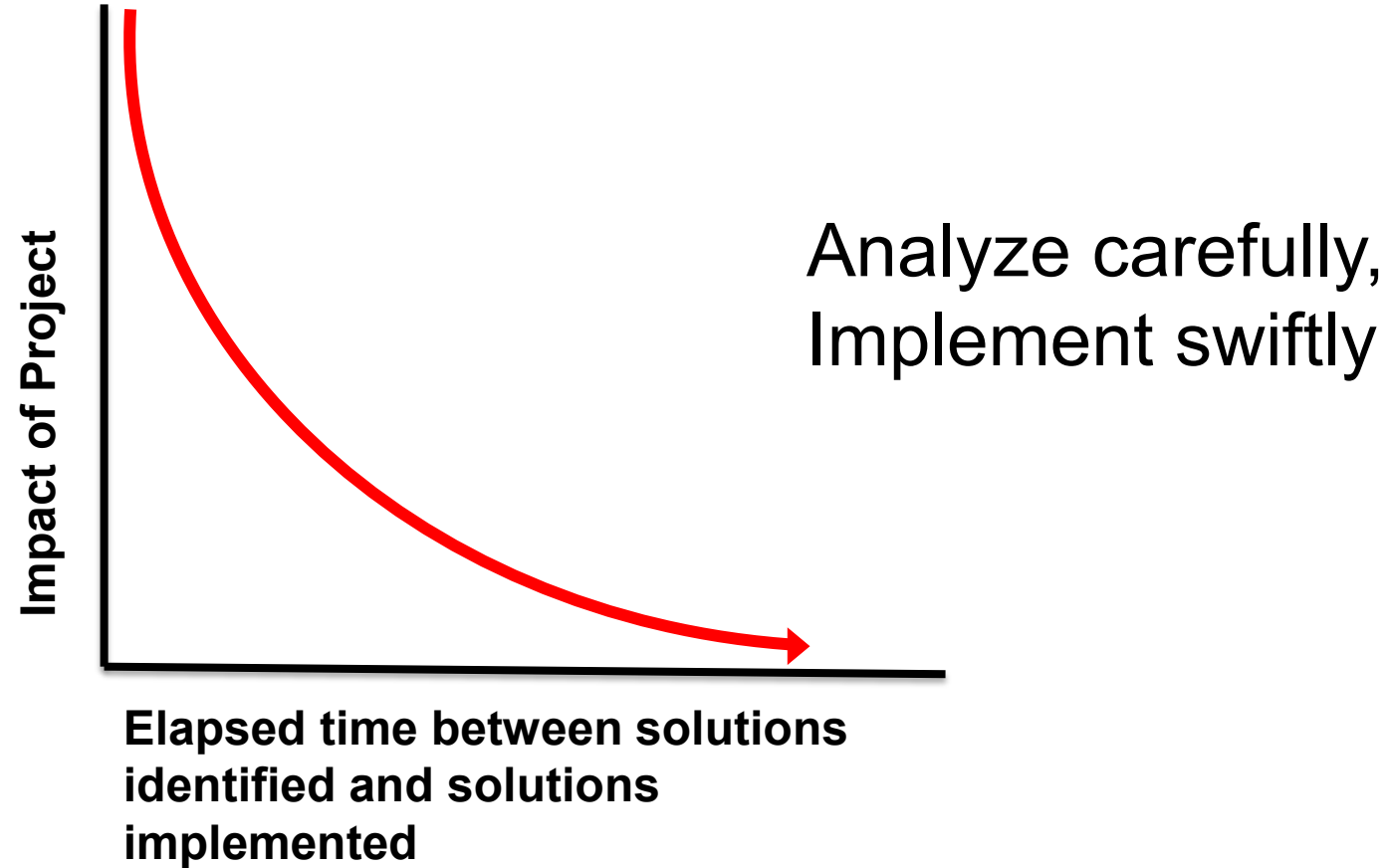
SELF-SUFFICIENT CI

MEASURE

DEFINE

FINISH

The Cost of Hesitation



WRAP UP

Three things you can do next

1. **Start with what's keeping the leader up at night** to ensure you're aligned with their interests/concerns
2. **Build your own credibility** with smaller, successful Lean wins
3. **Get your leaders into Lean training or meeting with successful Lean leaders** to increase their interest, knowledge and capability

Introduction to Lean for Leaders

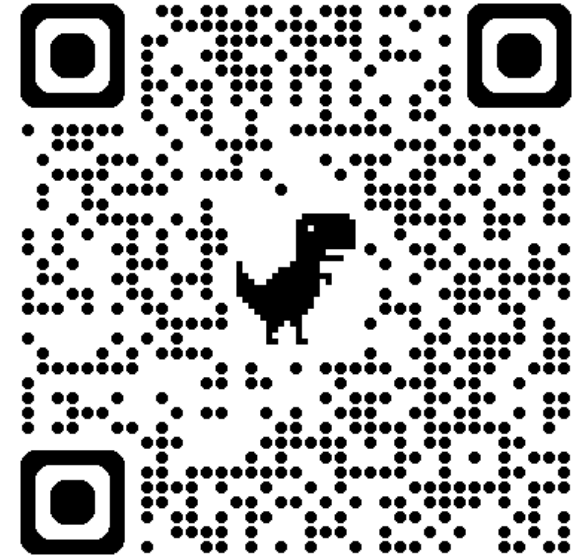
- **June 13, 2025**
- **October 20, 2025**

08:30-16:30 ET

<https://leanagility.com/en/introduction-lean-leaders>

Dedicated course deliveries available.

To receive monthly tips, articles, free webinars and event information:
<https://leanagility.com/en/join-our-community>



leanagility.com

613 266 4653

craig@leanagility.com

Craig Szelestowski

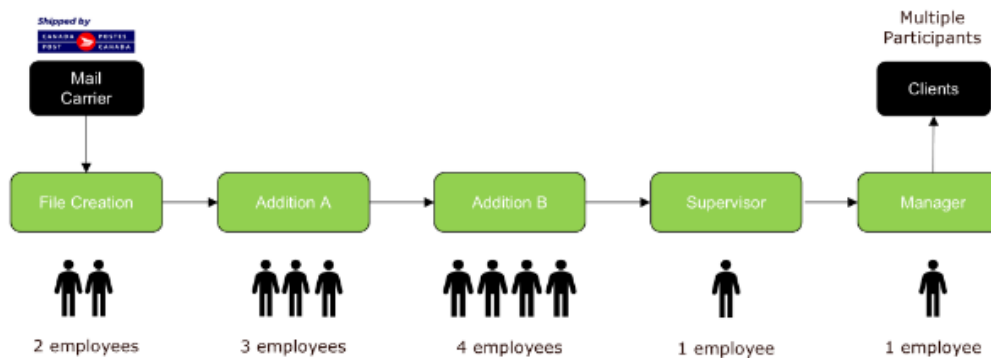
Objectives

1. Understand Lean concepts: how to increase output, quality and employee engagement without working harder.
2. Understand causes of overwhelm for yourself and team, and Lean strategies to overcome them
3. Identify wastes that only you as a leader can eliminate
4. Understand a leader's role and opportunities in making these things happen

Process Simulation

Department of Addition:

Goal: Process 100 files for 100 different clients in 10 minutes.



11 employees in total

© LEAN AGILITY*

Copyright of this material is owned by Lean Agility Inc. Not for duplication or distribution without prior written consent.

100-006 Save and close ✕
Ryan Reynolds

Client name:
Ryan Reynolds

File name: **Colour:**

Write the sum of these numbers together, then sign your name:
A = 58 + 88 + 30 + 29 + 5 **Name:**
A =

Write the sum of these numbers together, then sign your name:
B = 10 + 57 **Grand total = A + B**
B = **Grand total =**

Name:

Confirm that the math is correct and signatures are valid, then sign your name: Confirm that the file name, file colour, math, and signatures are valid, then sign your name:
Name: **Name:**

Creation timestamp: 1729798639405 Approval timestamp: File not approved
 File created at: 3:37 PM

Chats ✕

New message ✍

Craig Player
 Manager

Hello there. This is George Clooney - I'm looking for a status update on my file. I sent it in a while ago - and I'm accustomed to velvet-glove treatment, and am getting frustrated and I feel ignored. Sniff.

Hello Mr. Clooney. Please accept our apologies for your poor client experience. We will get you file ready as soon as possible.

Is it ASAP yet?

Send

Measurements

Status of Files	Role	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3			
Delivered Files	Client	3 / 118	54 / 118	118 / 118			
Time Remaining	Employees	00:00	00:00	00:22			
Work in progress	File Creation	24					
	Addition Team	9	55	40			
	Addition B		3				
	Supervisor		33	23			
	Manager	4	0	1			
	Total	13	115	64	0		
Errors Found	Error Type	Addition	Other	Addition	Other	Addition	Other
	Found by Supervisor	1	0	16	1		
	Found by Manager	0	0	0	8	5	0
	Received by Client	0		0		0	
	Total Errors	1		25		5	
	Interruptions by clients		76		70		0
	Average Elapsed Time per Delivered File		09:05		03:17		00:40

Introduction to Lean for Leaders

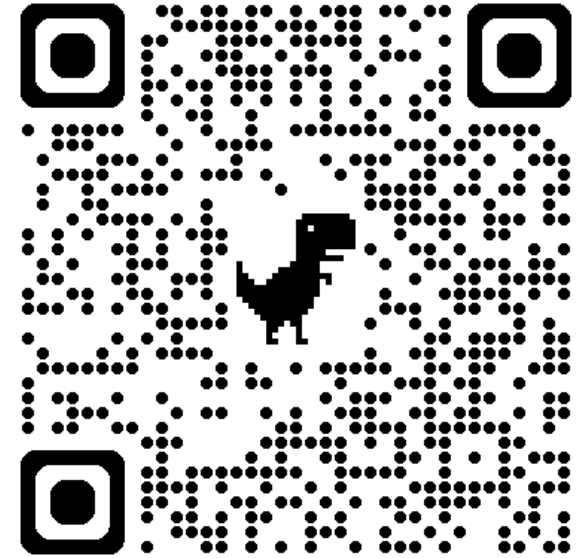
- **June 13, 2025**
- **October 20, 2025**

08:30-16:30 ET

<https://leanagility.com/en/introduction-lean-leaders>

Dedicated course deliveries available.

To receive monthly tips, articles, free webinars and event information:
<https://leanagility.com/en/join-our-community>



leanagility.com

613 266 4653

craig@leanagility.com

Craig Szelestowski