

# Agile + DevOps **WEST**

A TECHWELL EVENT

## **AD41**

Team Health & Collaboration

3:15 PM

## **AD41 - People Operations in a Teal Organization: Tools and Techniques from a Real Journey**

Presented by:

**Amanda Geary and Arlen Bankston**

Lithespeed

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## **Amanda Geary**

Amanda Geary started her career as a research analyst at 4th Wave, a technology consulting firm specializing in research on trends in the IT and communication industry. She then moved on to Freddie Mac and worked with development & testing to analyze market needs and implement product offerings and enhancements within Freddie Mac's automated underwriting system, Loan Prospector. Within Single Family Offerings Management she helped to develop Home Possible affordable products. After taking a break and starting a family, Amanda joined LitheSpeed in December 2012 to help with Sensei product testing and development. Her role has evolved over the past couple years and she's currently in charge of invoicing/finance. She also help to organize LitheSpeed's two annual conferences, Lean+Agile and the Agile DC Executive Summit.

## **Arlen Bankston**

Arlen Bankston is an established leader in the application and evolution of Agile software development processes such as Scrum, Kanban and Extreme Programming, as well as process management methodologies such as Lean and Six Sigma. He is a Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt, Certified ScrumMaster® Trainer and Certified Scrum Product Owner. He has sixteen years of experience, beginning in product design, where he leveraged principles of information architecture, interaction design and usability to develop innovative products that met customers' expressed and unspoken needs. Arlen has led Agile and Lean deployment and managed process improvement projects at clients such as Marriott, Capital One, Neustar, CCP Games, T. Rowe Price, Freddie Mac, and the Armed Forces Benefits Association. Arlen led novel work to combine Lean Six Sigma process improvement methods with Agile execution to dramatically improve both the speed and quality of business results, as well as early integration of interaction design and usability practices into Agile methodologies, presenting and training frequently at both industry conferences and to Fortune 100 clients.



# Teal Enough: Tales from a small company trying to grow, retain culture and be agile

## #TealPOPS

Arlen Bankston  
@LitheSpeed

Amanda Geary  
@MGWhoNo1Follows

# About Me

## Arlen Bankston

- VP and Managing Partner at LitheSpeed
- Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt
- Trainer: Advanced ScrumAlliance classes at Lithespeed
- Current interest = Agile HR



# About Me

## Amanda Geary

- Joined LitheSpeed in 2012 to test Sensei, our retrospective tool
- And then I began...
  - Helping with Finance shortly after...
  - Coordinating LitheSpeed events in 2014
  - Leading Operations team in 2016
  - Co-leading the training practice in 2017
  - Thinking about People Operations in 2018
- On my days off I lead a school garden curriculum program





To make people's  
work more  
productive, valued  
and fulfilling

# Teal, Laloux and Reinventing Organizations

# Laloux's Organizational Levels

	Model	Key Breakthroughs
	<b>TEAL</b> Evolutionary	<b>Self Management, Wholeness, Evolutionary Purpose</b>
	<b>GREEN</b> Culture Driven Organizations	Empowerment, Value Driven Culture, Stakeholder Model
	<b>ORANGE</b> Large Corporations, Charter Schools	Innovation, Accountability, Meritocracy
	<b>AMBER</b> Governments, Churches, Public Schools	Formal Roles, Hierarchies, Processes
	<b>RED</b> Gangs, Mafias, Mercenaries	Division of Labor, Command Authority

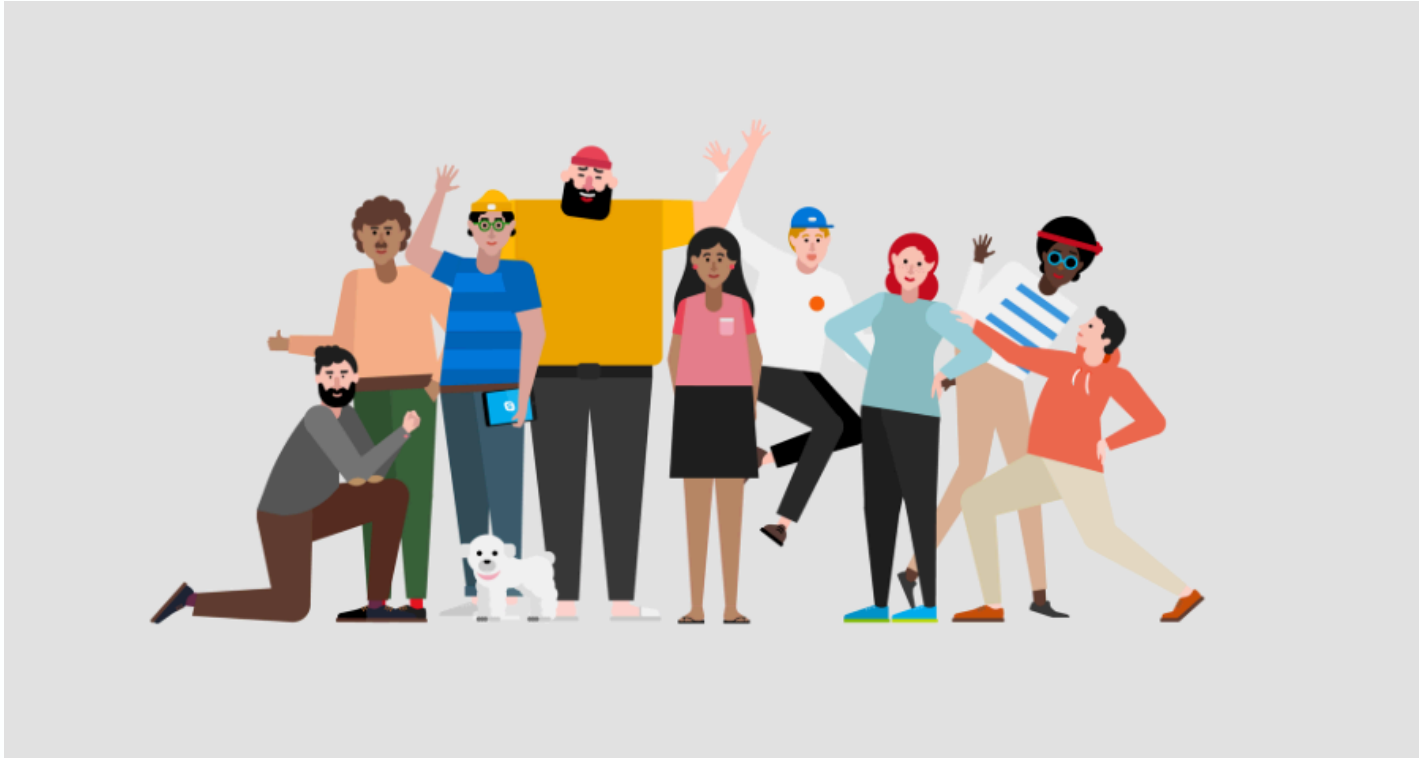
Laloux Model from *Reinventing Organizations*, Image from Philippe Bailleux





# Morningstar Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wvs\\_pgpykmc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wvs_pgpykmc)



“Your system is perfectly designed to give you the results you’re getting.”

-W.E. Deming

# We are changing the system



# Employees Want....

- To be appreciated
- Opportunities to grow
- A workplace that has integrity
- Trust and respect
- Freedom (not micromanagement)
  
- Easy right? We thought so.....



# And because of LitheSpeed's Teal Culture We Have:



- Open workspace
- Flexible work hours
- Flexible vacation
- Autonomy in consulting style with clients (w/transparency)
- Profit Share, Founders Bonus
- Widespread decision making ability
- Ability to grow your personal brand/abilities

But with teal comes  
responsibilities

# Increase Brand Recognition

- Attending meetups
- Speaking at **conferences**
- **Podcasting**
- **Writing** blogs, articles and presenting **webinars**

# Grow Knowledge Base

- **Staying abreast** of the latest relevant trends
- Growing / maintaining **thought leadership**
- **Sharing knowledge**, tools, and experience with others
- Mentoring Colleagues and Clients

# Contribute to Company Culture

- **Professionalism in our interactions**
- **Helpful and respectful to each other**
- **Contribution across the entire value chain from sales, to delivery, to operational support**

# Individual Financial Contribution

- **Personal billability** through training, consulting and/or coaching delivery
- **Sales leadership**, making client contacts, following through & closing on sales
- **Client growth**, expanding footprint at



# Self Management

What does that mean?

# Self Management

As members of a small **Teal** organization without strong job boundaries and it is critical that individuals collaborate in good faith and take on responsibilities and work that may be outside our comfort zone.

This is a difficult transition since it requires people to take responsibility for aspects of the work that have usually been someone else's responsibility.

We want **partners** not **employees**.

“Autonomy without  
Accountability is just  
vacation.”

- Kent Beck



# “New” Teal

**Wholeness:** Yes we are individuals, but we are also part of a larger community. Need to integrate both the needs of the self and the needs of the group.

**Distributed Decision Making:** Decisions do not come from the top, but they aren't made by individuals in isolation either. We need multiple inputs into our decisions (advice process).

**Fiscal responsibility:** Work on providing Slack/flexible off time with billability in mind.



# Open Financials

We are moving to transparent financials across the company

- Open Books
- Open Billability
- Open Profit
- Open Profit Share
- Open Salary Ranges (Sort of)



# A Perfect World?

- Not everyone is on the same page, all the time
  - That's not teal
    - After founder suggestions or process creation
  - You distrust me when I am not in the office
  - I am a lone wolf, community is not for me



# Not an Assembly Line

- We want individuals
  - Opinions, emotions, expectations, disagreements = sometimes messy
- NOT a one fits all solution after all



# People Operations

Hiring/Firing, Advancement, Peer to Peer Feedback/Reviews



# Creation of People Operations

- Not HR
- What is the appropriate balance between leadership, management and individual autonomy at LS?
- How do we create a healthy company culture?



# Company Culture

- Office Fridays
- Blue boxes
- Gratitude every hour
- All hands celebrations
  - Friendsgiving
  - Birthdays
  - Chinese new year



# Experimenting with Feedback

# Feedback: Recognition

## Recognized@LitheSpeed.com

- We are expected to seek/give immediate feedback.
- People can give recognition at any time for great work
  - We excel at this!
    - In fact, we struggle to get anything other than sunshine and rainbows
- Acts as a micro-bonus when we have profit share



# Constructive Feedback - Surveys

- Surveys
  - Personal Feedback Radar
    - Great until....
      - Participation dropoff (time constraints)
      - Anonymous answers (no follow up)
  - OfficeVibe
    - Quick, easy but anonymous (no follow up)

# Constructive Feedback - Quarterly Goals

- Quarterly Goals
  - Everyone has 3 goals
    - Personal (building community)
    - Professional
    - Team suggests a third goal (FEEDBACK HERE)
  - Goals and progress are reviewed each month at All Hands
    - Tied to CLOU (Colleague Letter of Understanding)



# Constructive Feedback – Direct Response

## Conflict Resolution

We are not your parents, **Work it out or ask for help.** We have an internal policy of asking people to give direct feedback and not channel through the founders or **People Operations.**



# Hiring and Firing

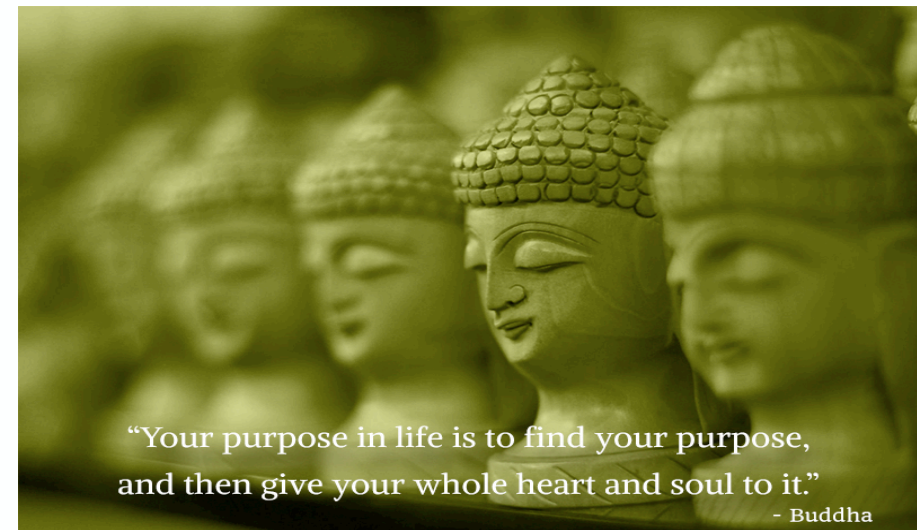
# People Operations: **Hiring**

We believe that **Hiring** is the most important thing we can do. We understand that Great People will do great things and bad fit people will kill morale, cause drama and cost money.

Founders are asked but do not override decisions.

**Employees Hire** but we need to go to founders for **Salary**.

- Interviews
- Skills Demonstration
- Mentor and Shephard Roles





# Peer Onboarding

“Leadership is earned through trust, communication and respect”

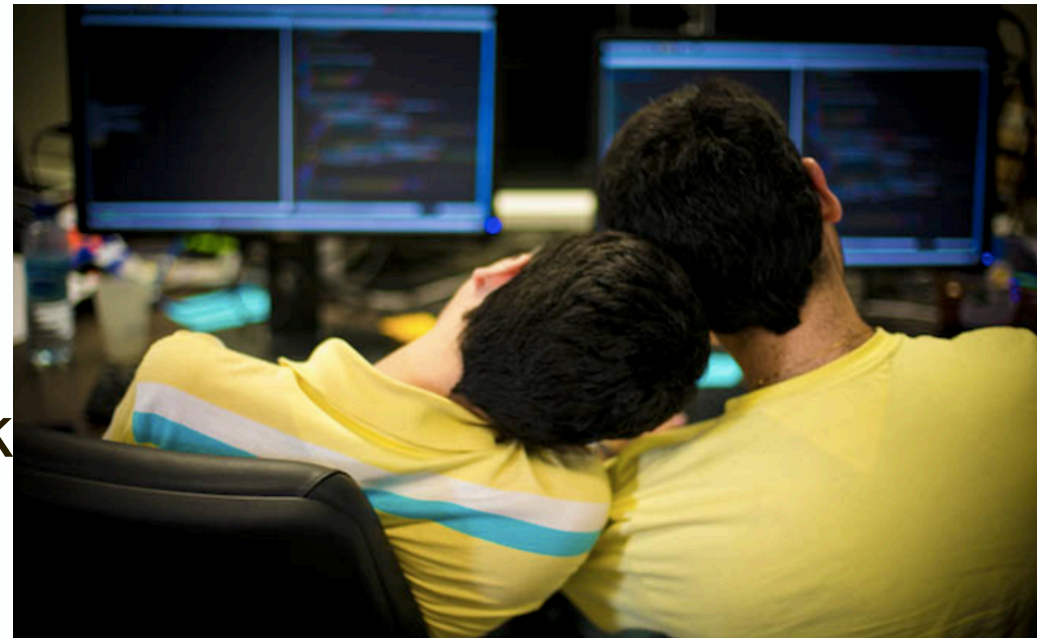
*Doug Kirkpatrick  
Morningstar*

The screenshot displays a project management interface for a peer onboarding process. It is organized into four main columns: RESOURCES, ONBOARDING, DOING NOW, and DOING ONGOING. The ONBOARDING column is further divided into four sub-sections: 'Prior to Day 1', 'Week 1', 'Week 2', and 'Week 3'. Tasks are represented by colored cards with titles and small profile icons. The DOING NOW column has a sub-section 'Onboarding' with tasks like 'Day 1: Review 2018 LitheSpeed Handbook - This is your onboarding guide!' and 'MENTOR DOES THIS: Start Generating A CLOU'. The DOING ONGOING column has a sub-section 'Onboarding' with tasks like 'Prior to Day 1: Set up Account' and 'Day 1: Small upload document to send to AccountSolve Kelsey'.



# Help from Menlo Innovations

- Lets get on the same page!
- New hires and consultants on the bench will be pairing
  - Training, consulting but also...
  - Back office:
    - Scheduling,
    - Sales,
    - Financial analysis
- More immediate/direct feedback

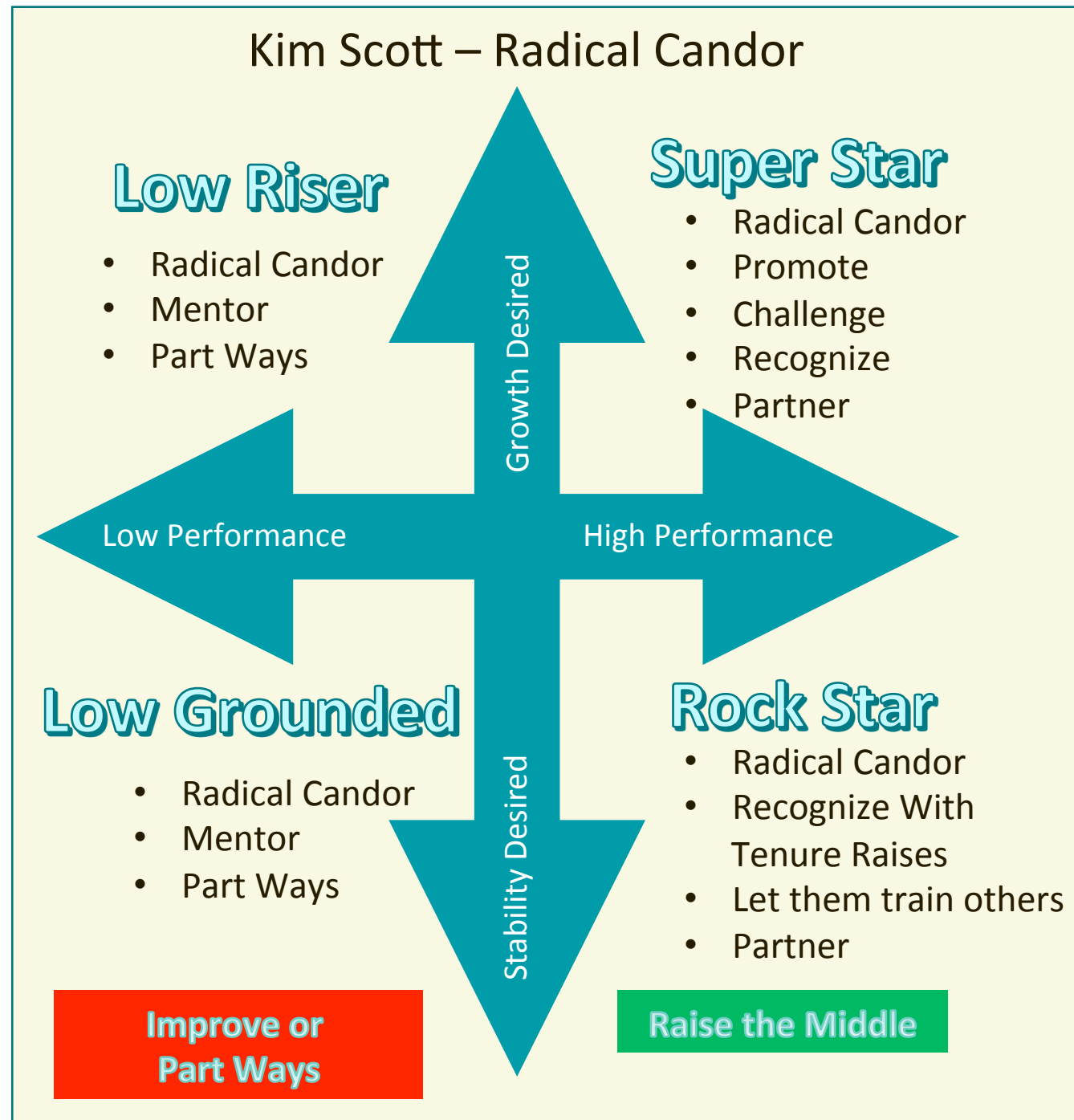


# Experiments.....Future (thank you again..Menlo Innovations)

- Potential hire
- Invitation to co-train
  - Measuring: eagerness to learn, preparation, presentation
- 2 weeks trial run
  - Pair with every local training and/or consulting client
  - On off days, pair with back office folks
    - Customer service, Sales, Finance, Innovation projects
- End of the first week: feedback
- End of two weeks: decision

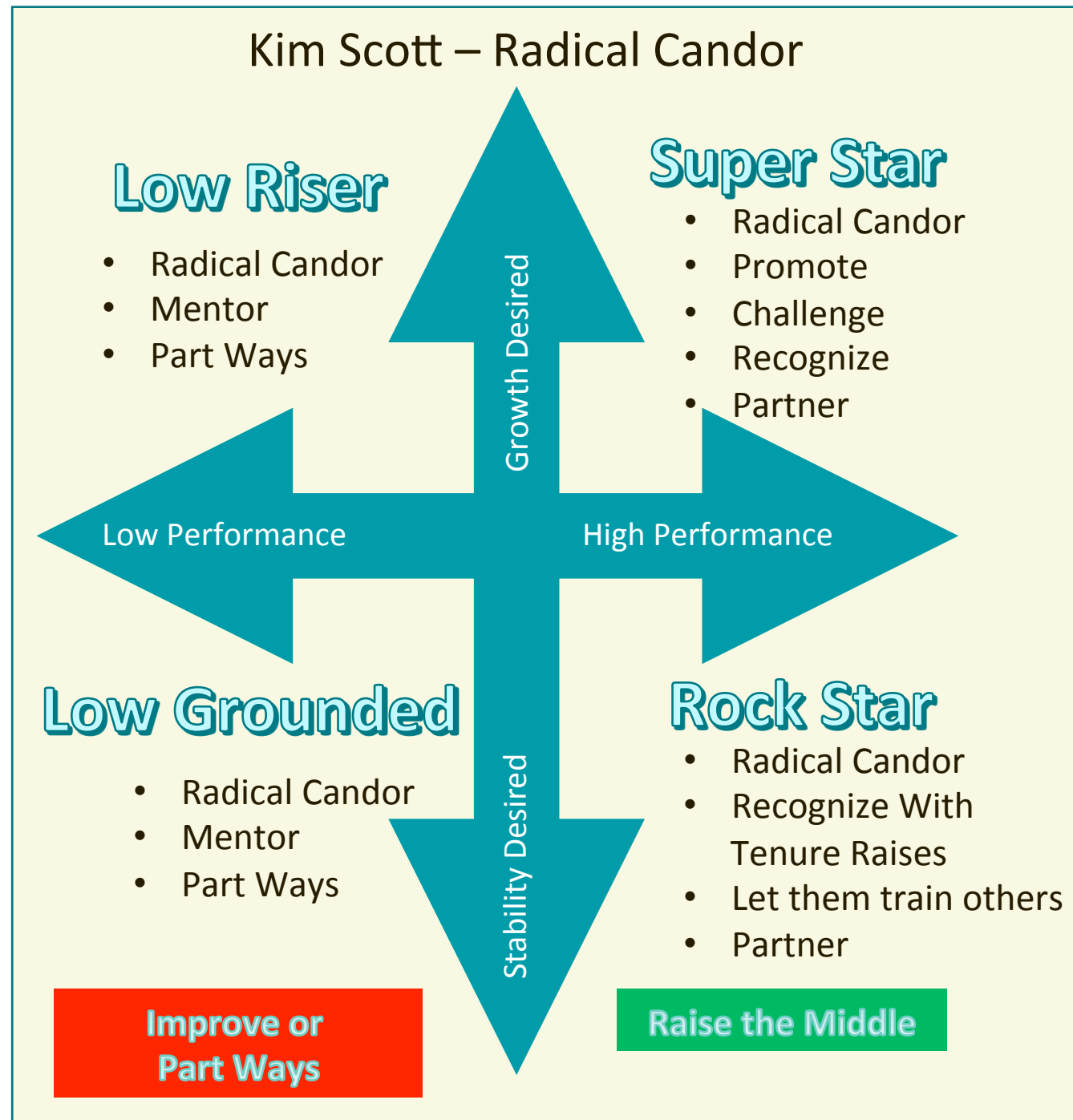
## Advancement

- Focus on raising capabilities and understanding desired growth trajectory
- Work with mentors on ways of advancing in career
- Raises and promotions are still driven by leadership
- Decouple feedback from advancement



## Parting Ways

- Improvement plans when needed
- Hire slowly, fire quickly
  - Part Ways (Us and Them)
    - Subcontractor conversion
    - Package Out
    - Fire when Needed

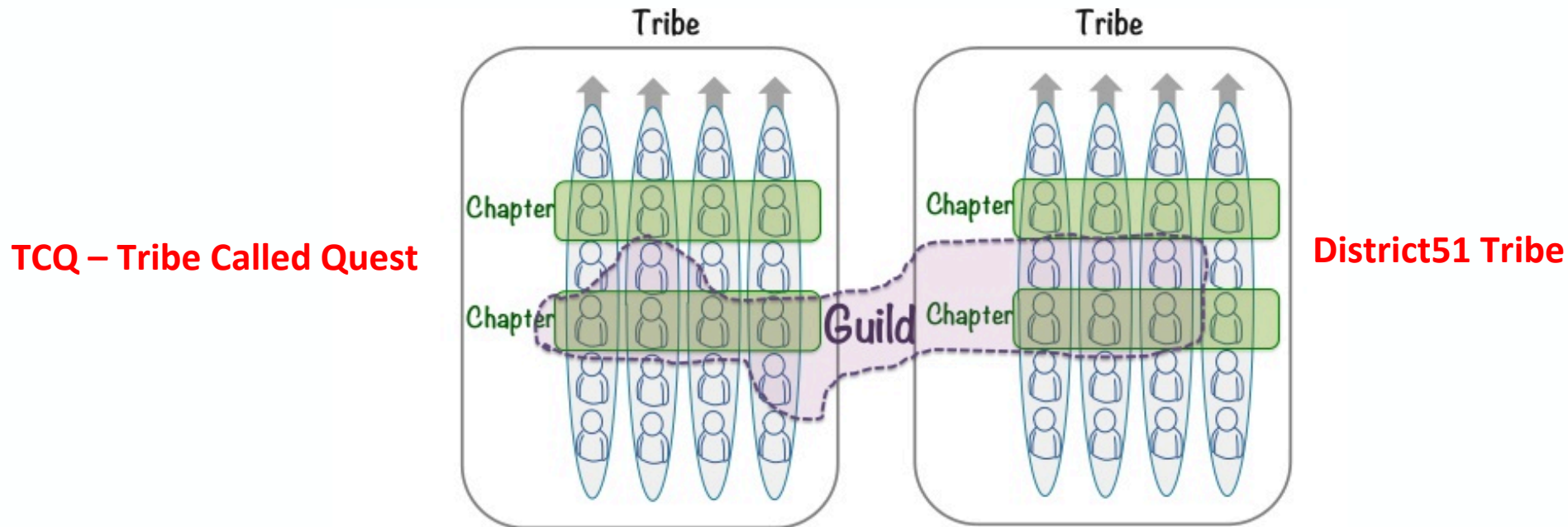


# Organizational Structure

# Take 1: Self Organizing Units

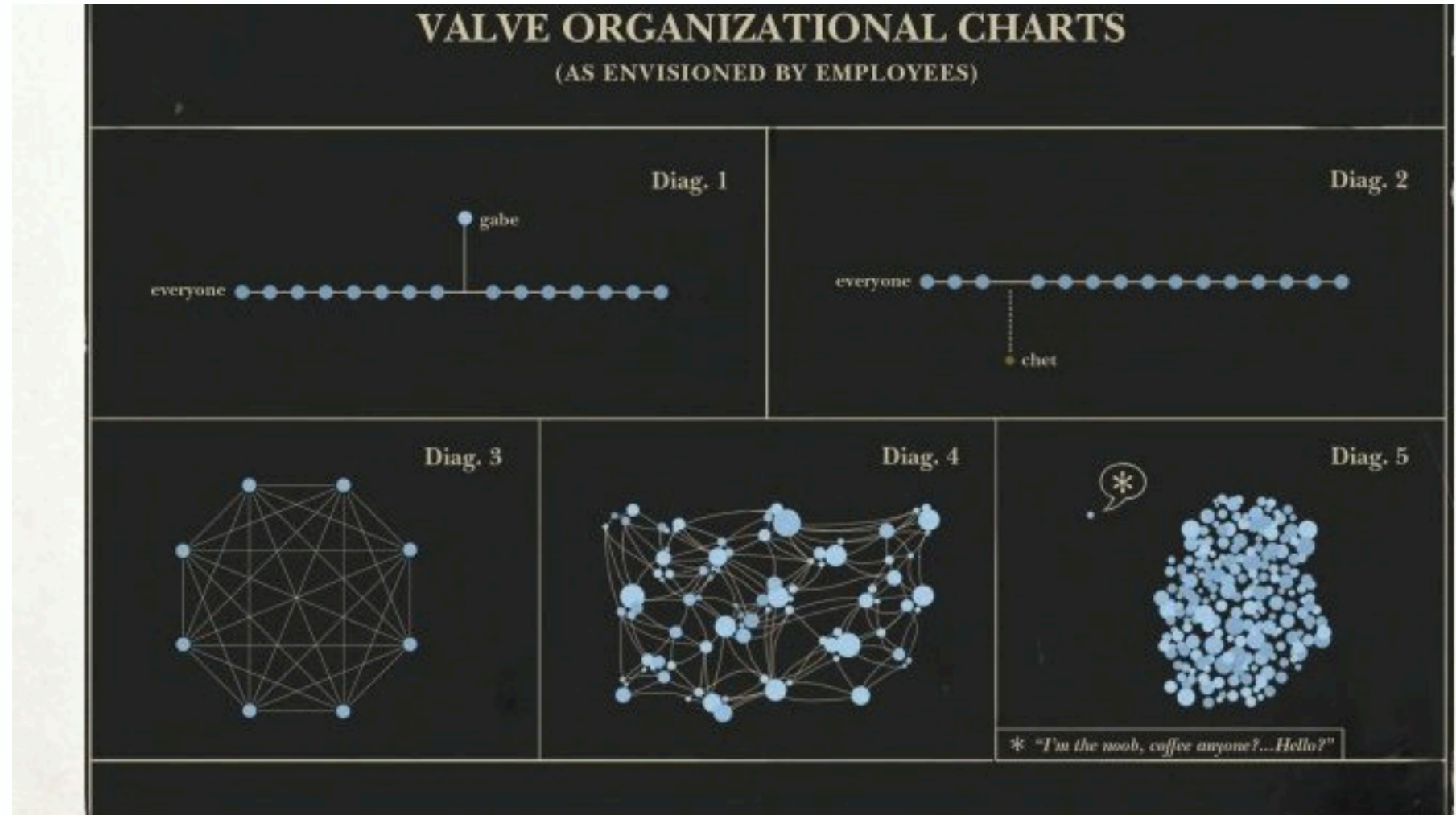
## Tribe Structure

We began using self organizing tribes as our internal structure. They were a mix of delivery and operations. Collaboration between tribes was needed to get things done. Minimum 3 people and a mix of delivery and operations was needed for each tribe.



# Take 2: Welcome to Flatland

- No titles
- Self management
- Financial transparency
- Open salary ranges



Source: Valve Employee Handbook





# Take 3: Practices and Experiences

Our latest experiment is focused around aligning our organizational structure around Customer Experiences and Practices. This has simplified communication and decision making.

- Experiences
  - Lithespeed
  - Customer
  - Partner
  - Brand
- Practices
  - Training
  - Government
  - Digital Transformation

# Common themes?

- **Governance**

- Each Tribe decided how it would run internally.
- Each Practice/Experience has a Practice Lead or Leads.

- **Leadership**

- If no true leader emerged, tribes struggled.
- For Practices and Experiences, leadership is usually nominated and supported by Founders, but not always. Most decisions can be made locally with Advisement. Leadership is expected to be handed off.

- **Two Feet**

- Anyone could move to another tribe or start their own.
- People work with practices and participate in them based on their interests and the type of work they are interested in. Fluidity in practice participation is the norm.

# Speaking of Change, Innovation and Experimentation

- Pick a topic
  - Constructive Feedback
  - Hiring / Firing
  - Pairing
  - Transparency
  - Company culture
- What should you do?
  - Discuss
  - Create experiments for LitheSpeed to try in the next year
  - Share great experiences of your own

# Contact Us

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@agiletoolkit

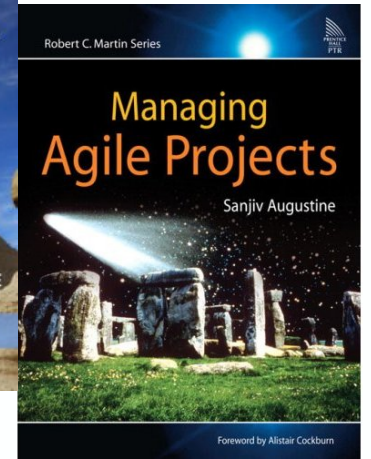
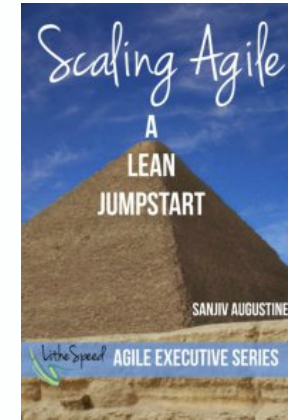
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AGILE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



# Resources

- Morningstar Self-Management Institute CLOU Webinar:  
<http://www.self-managementinstitute.org/clou-webinar>
- TedX, Beyond empowerment - are we ready for the self-managed organization? Doug Kirkpatrick at TEDxChico:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ej4n3w4kMa4>
- The Future of Management is Teal:  
<https://www.strategy-business.com/article/00344?gko=10921>
- Work Rules: Laszlo Bock
- Radical Candor: Kim Scott
- This is How Effective Leaders Move Beyond Blame:  
<http://firstround.com/review/this-is-how-effective-leaders-move-beyond-blame/>