

What Causes Us to Fall Behind? Applying Lean Thinking to Avoid Backlogs

CIPMM National Workshop

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LEAN AGILITY 

FASTER, BETTER WORK THROUGH GOVERNMENT AND INSPIRED PEOPLE • IT'S OUR MOTIVATION, LEAN ADMINISTRATION, PUBLIC EFFICIENCY.

Objectives

1. The major causes of backlogs (variation, overwhelm and waste/failure demand) and how the backlog cycle works.
2. How you can intervene to prevent a backlog from forming
3. Simple tips to get you started, even if you're not the boss.

Definitions: Backlog

“A large number of things waiting to be done”

“An accumulation of something, especially uncompleted work or matters that need to be dealt with”

“A buildup of work that has not been completed in a timely fashion”

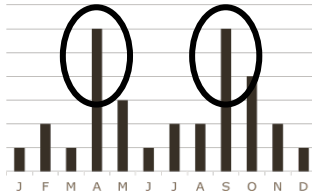
THE BACKLOG CYCLE

How Backlogs Develop

VARIATION

Variation in:

- volume of work
- # of resources available
- skill profile
- complexity of work
- effectiveness of tools
- other?



Human Productivity



UNREASONABLENESS

2. Overwhelmed team, thus reduced productivity



made worse by



repeat Steps 2-5, fall further behind



5. Fewer files finished, a growing backlog



allowing

WASTE

3. Team spends its reduced capacity on non-value added, preventable, work

- Fixing errors
- Clarifications
- Re-drafting
- False starts
- Looking for information
- Unnecessary approvals
- Excessive processing



made worse by



4. Team spends capacity on:
- Client progress-chasing calls
 - backlog reporting



Overwhelm caused by

UNREASONABLENESS

How Backlogs Develop

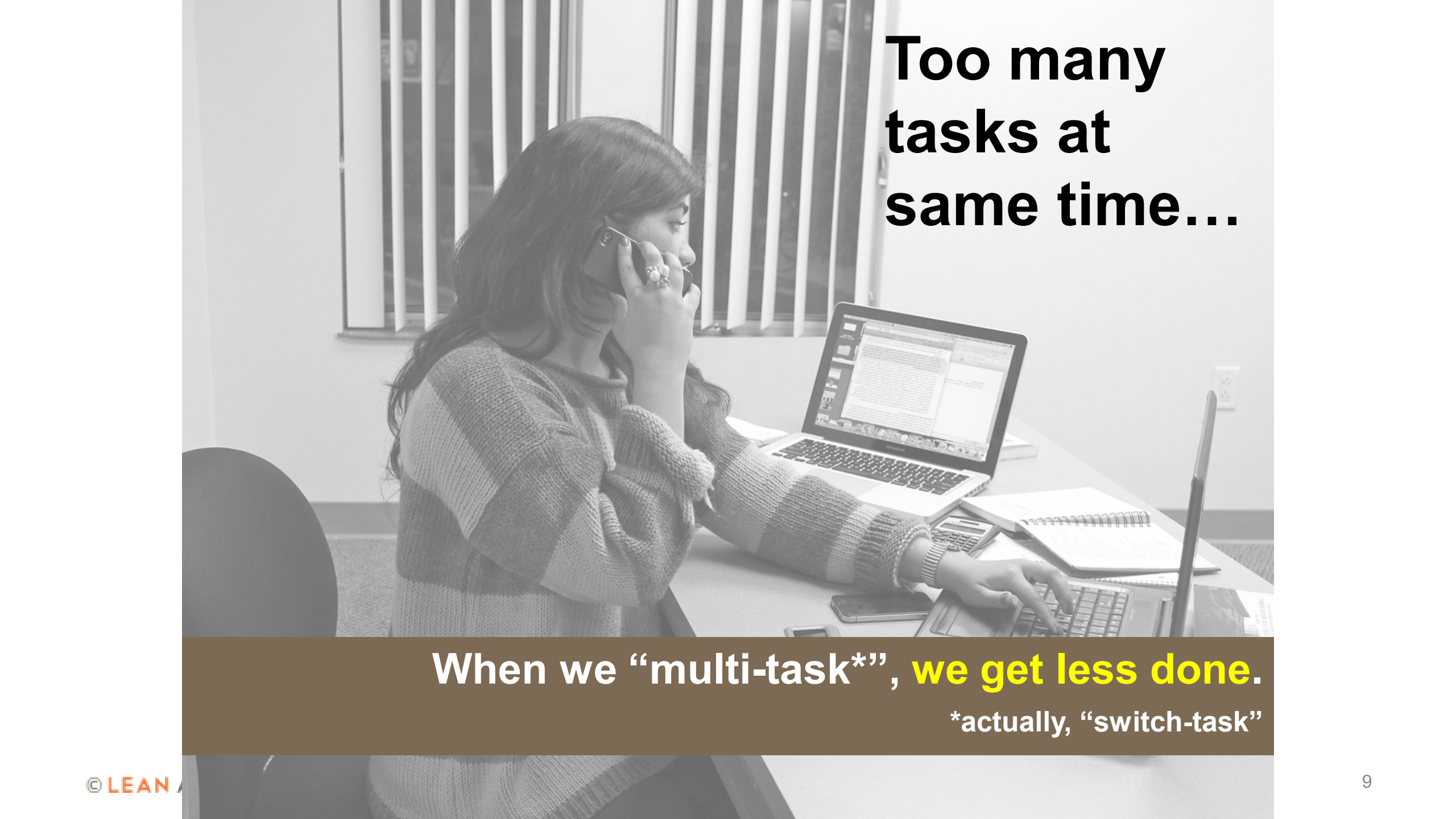


LEAN

↓ files in progress

NOT

↓ people

A grayscale photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a striped sweater, sitting at a desk. She is talking on a mobile phone held to her ear with her right hand, while her left hand is on the keyboard of a laptop. The laptop screen shows a document with text and images. On the desk, there is also a calculator, a spiral notebook, and another laptop. In the background, there are vertical blinds covering a window. The overall scene illustrates multitasking in a professional setting.

**Too many
tasks at
same time...**

When we “multi-task*”, we get less done.

*actually, “switch-task”

Time Yourself



Scenario 1 (**Focus-Tasking**)

1. Write:

Multitasking eats time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

2. Note how long that took.

Time Yourself



0:00.0

Scenario 2 (**Context Switching**)

1. Write one letter, then one number, one letter, one number, etc:

Multitasking eats time

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

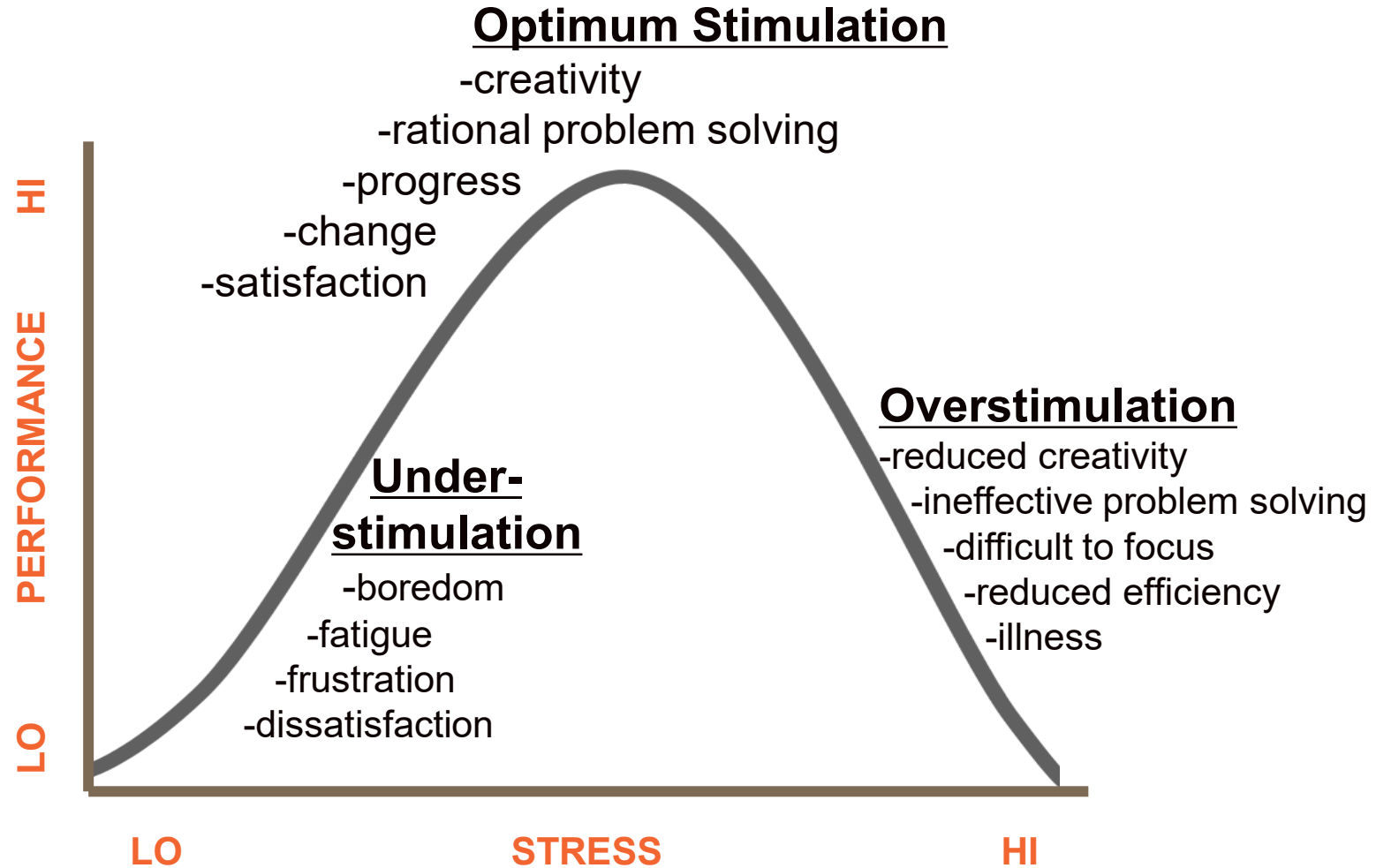
2. Write down how long that took.

Cost of Context Switching

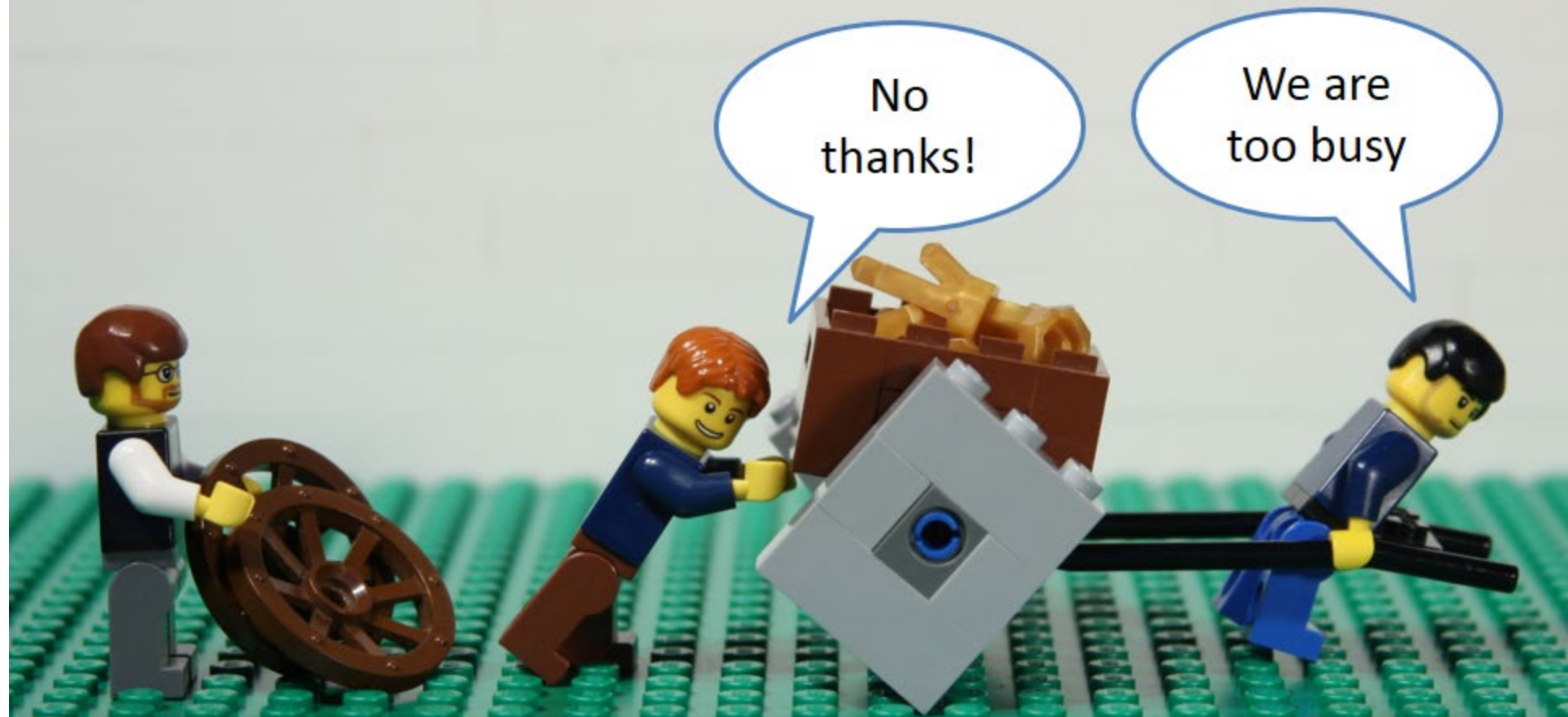
# simultaneous projects	% of time available for each project	% time lost to context switching	Hours per week lost (per person)
1	100%	0%	0 hours
2	40%	20%	6 hours
3	20%	40%	12 hours
4	10%	60%	18 hours
5	5%	75%	22.5 hours

From: Weinberg, Gerald M. *Quality Software Management* (New York: Dorset House, 1991)

Yerkes-Dodson Curve



Are you too busy to improve?



Håkan Forss @hakanforss <http://hakanforss.wordpress.com>

This illustration is inspired by and in part derived from the work by Scott Simmerman, "The Square Wheels Guy" <http://www.performancecompany.com/>



I said my name was Marc with a “C”

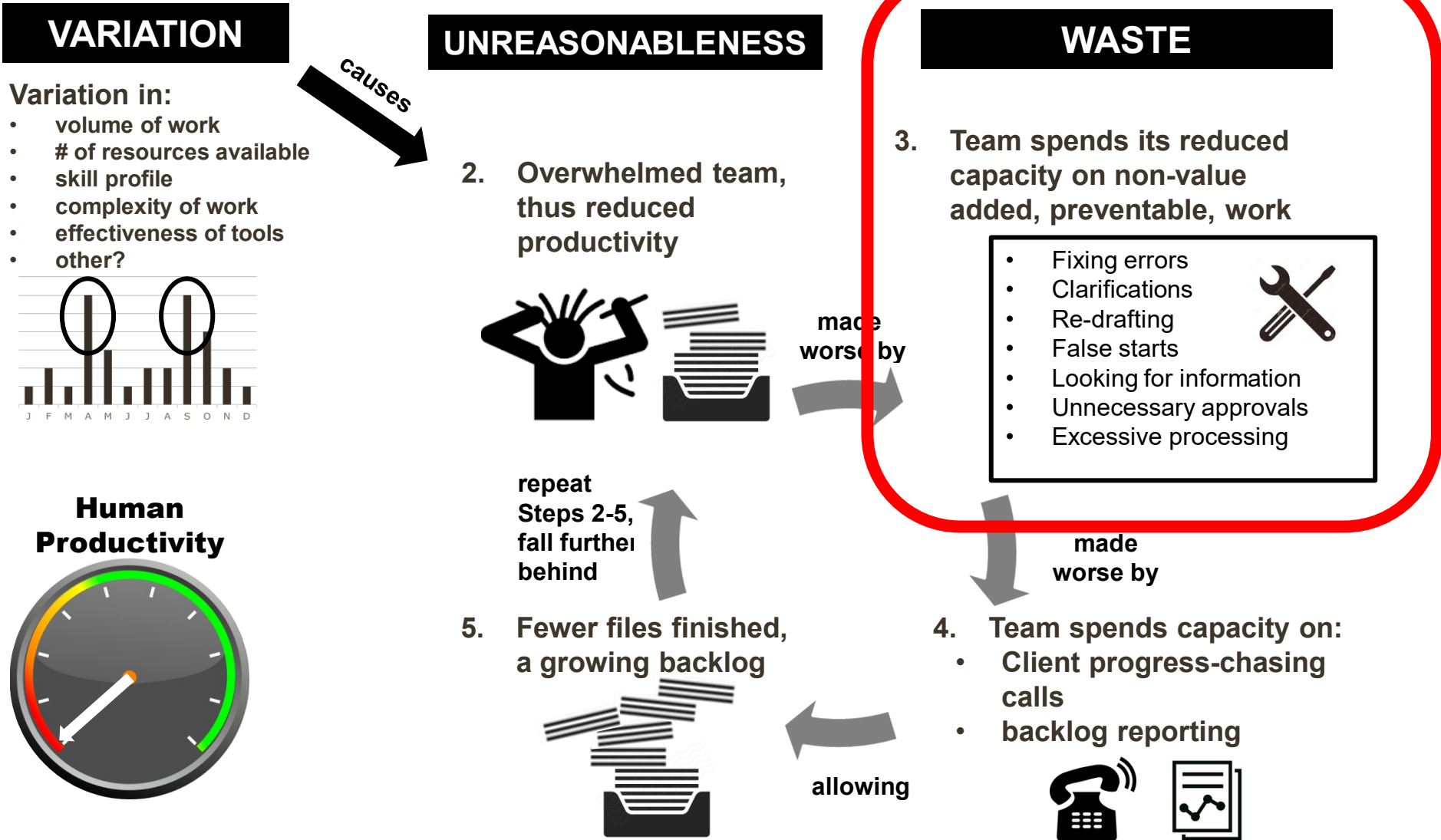


Limit your work-in-progress to increase focus and productivity

Backlogs are also caused by

WASTE

How Backlogs Develop



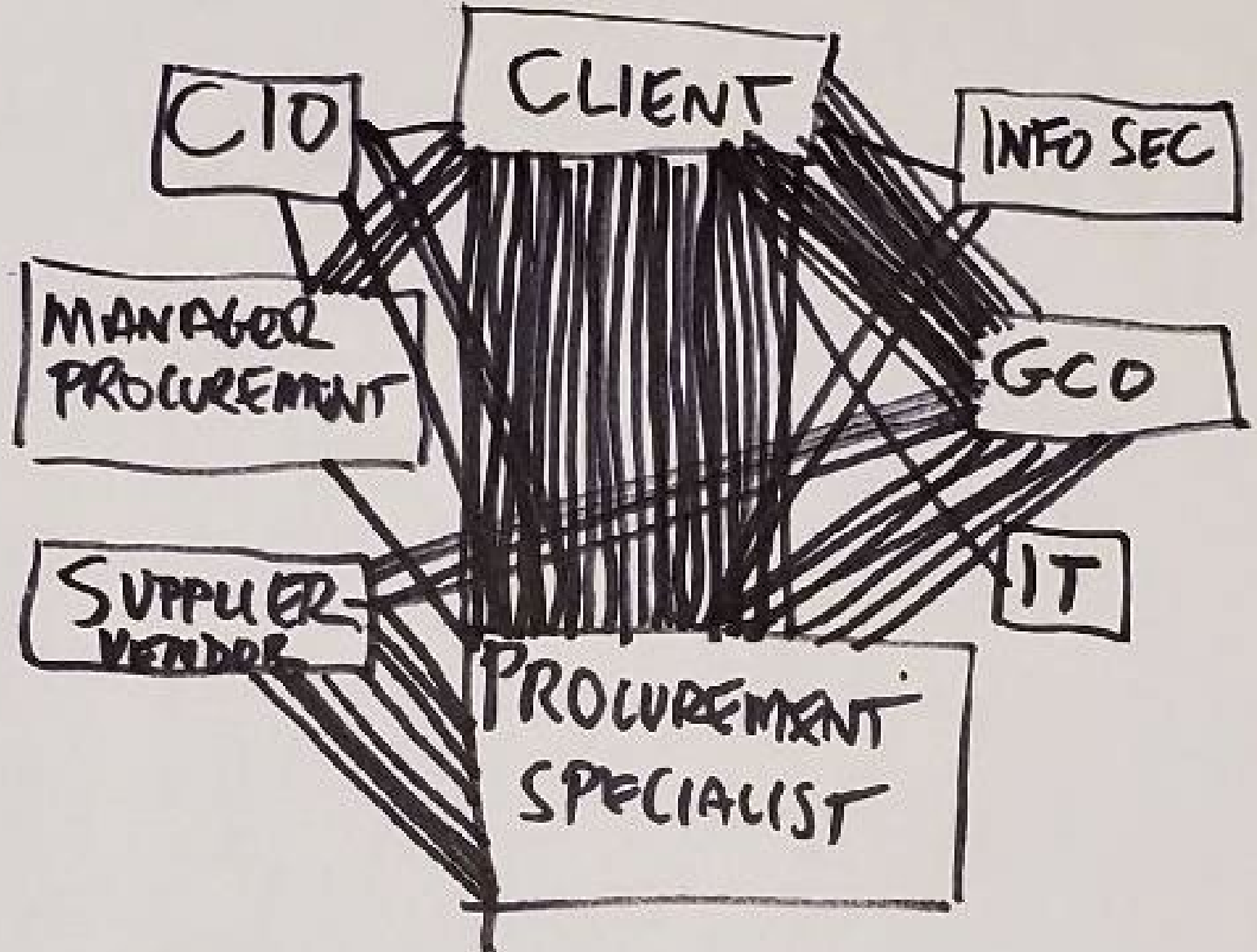
The Problem

Procuring Cloud Software
> \$ 100k

- Approximately 100 steps/handoffs
- 3-5 months of elapsed time
- Unhappy clients, procurement staff
- Procurement staff overloaded
- Slow process affecting delivery of core business

NOW:

- 3 weeks elapsed time from start to finish, by default.
- No heroics.
- Procurement staff happier, less-stressed.
- Clients delighted.



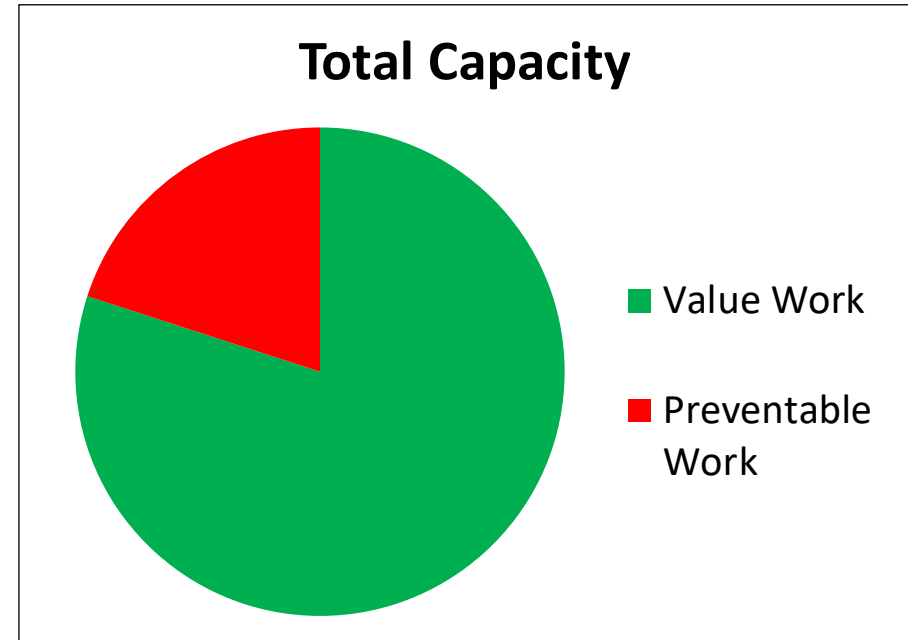
SOLUTIONS

ELIMINATE FAILURE DEMAND

Eliminate **Failure Demand**

Work that is required because something failed the first time.

20-50% of our workload is fixing these problems.



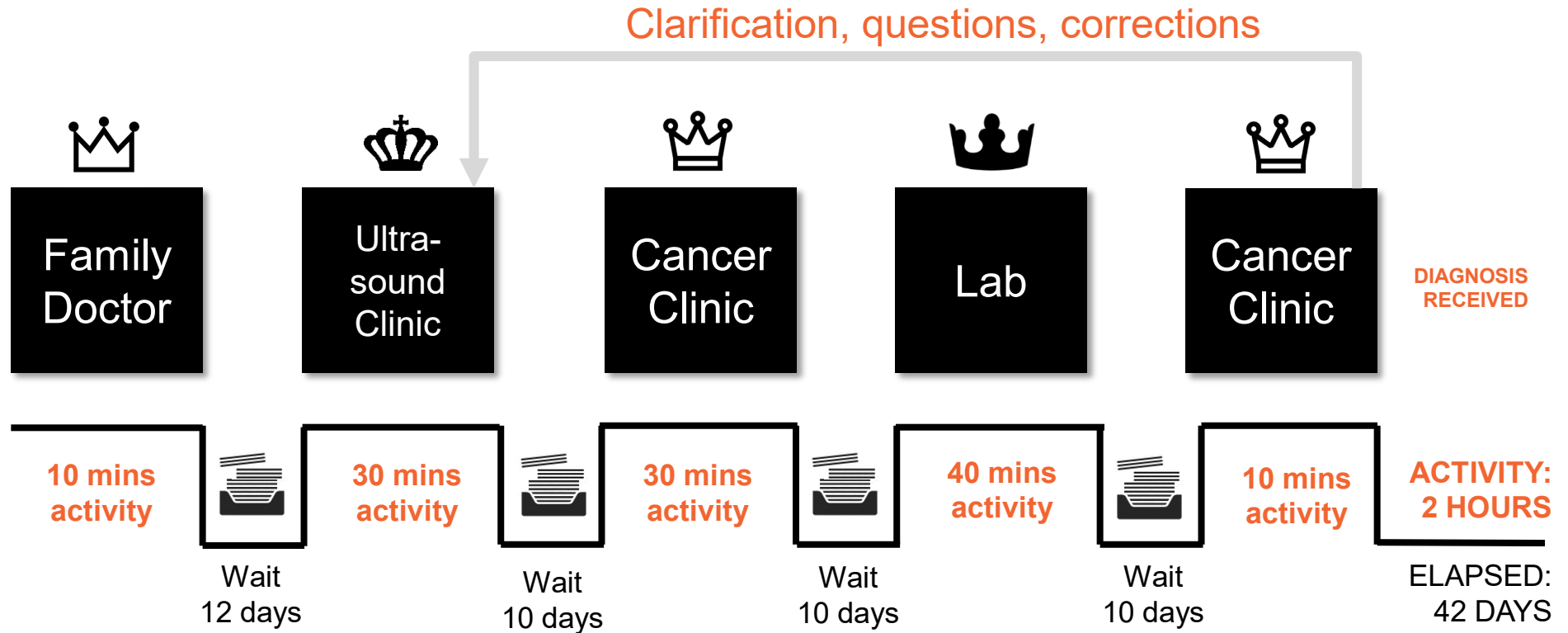
Failure Demand: drains capacity and consumes time but does not add value

Type	Example
1. Something not done	Document, information missing – go find it
2. Something is incorrect	Wrong information, misplaced info – redo it
3. Something is not clear	Unclear instructions, requirements – go get clarification
4. Something takes too long	Chasing progress, answering



FLOW EFFICIENCY VS RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

“Resource” Efficiency



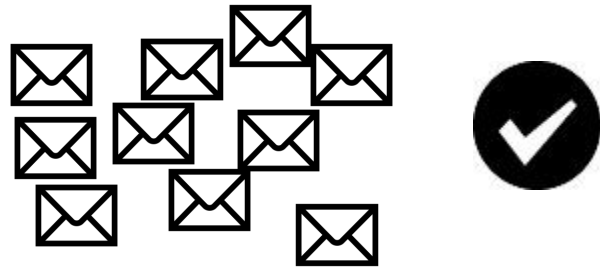
“Flow” Efficiency



Flow Efficiency in Action

THE "ONE AND DONE" HUDDLE

Work with client via email



- Effort: 7 hours
- Elapsed Time: 20-40 days

Work with client face-to-face, "live"



- Effort: 3 hours
- Elapsed time: 1 day

"One and Done" Huddles

- Kickoff with client, including SME and Legal
- Developing/Refining RFS documents
- Bid Evaluation
- Review draft contract

Four things you can do next

1. **Identify and Eliminate Variation** to stop the root cause of the backlog
2. **Experiment with structured "One and Done" huddles** to create flow efficiency – faster, with less effort.
3. **Experiment with eliminating Failure Demand** so that your clients get it right the first time through.
4. **Come to the next backlog session** *How to Eliminate an Existing Backlog* Concurrent Session # 14 Room 110 at 2:30 pm this afternoon

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