



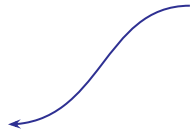
Lead Effectively While Preserving Team Autonomy with **Growth Boards**

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Enterprise Experience 2020

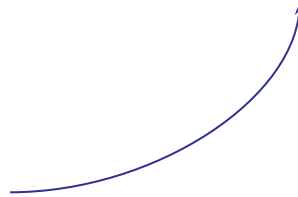


Me!



VMware Pivotal Labs

Where I work!



A group of people in a meeting or classroom setting. A man on the left is pointing at a whiteboard. Several people are seated in the center, and a man on the right is standing with his arms crossed. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint.

Business vs IT

A group of people in a meeting room, with one person pointing at a whiteboard. The scene is dimly lit, and the image has a dark blue overlay. The text "Project to Product Teams" is centered in white.

Project to Product Teams

A group of people in a meeting room, with a man pointing at a whiteboard. The scene is dimly lit, and the image has a dark blue overlay. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

Instead of prescribing features, we give the team a problem to solve and a business metric to improve.

A group of people in a meeting room, with one person pointing at a whiteboard. The scene is dimly lit, and the image has a dark blue overlay. The text "Redefining the 'team'" is centered in white.

Redefining the "team"

A group of people in a meeting room, overlaid with a dark blue filter. The text is centered over the image.

Agile Software Development goes hand in hand with empowered, self-organizing product teams.

"If I'm not defining requirements for my teams anymore,
how do I make sure they're going to hit our goals?"

"Great, I have all these empowered product teams. How do I keep them accountable and provide feedback?"

“If I’m funding the team, and not the project scope, how will I know that I’m getting return on that investment?”

"How will I, as a leader, know what teams are working so that I can transfer important context to other teams or programs?"

Project

Pre-defined solutions
and scope are funded

Time and resources are
committed

Product

The team is funded on
a rolling basis





A group of people in a meeting room, with a man pointing at a whiteboard and others listening.

Introducing.. Growth Boards!





Lean governance tool borrowing from Venture Capital

Investors

Funding, manage a portfolio of investments, provide guidance and expertise

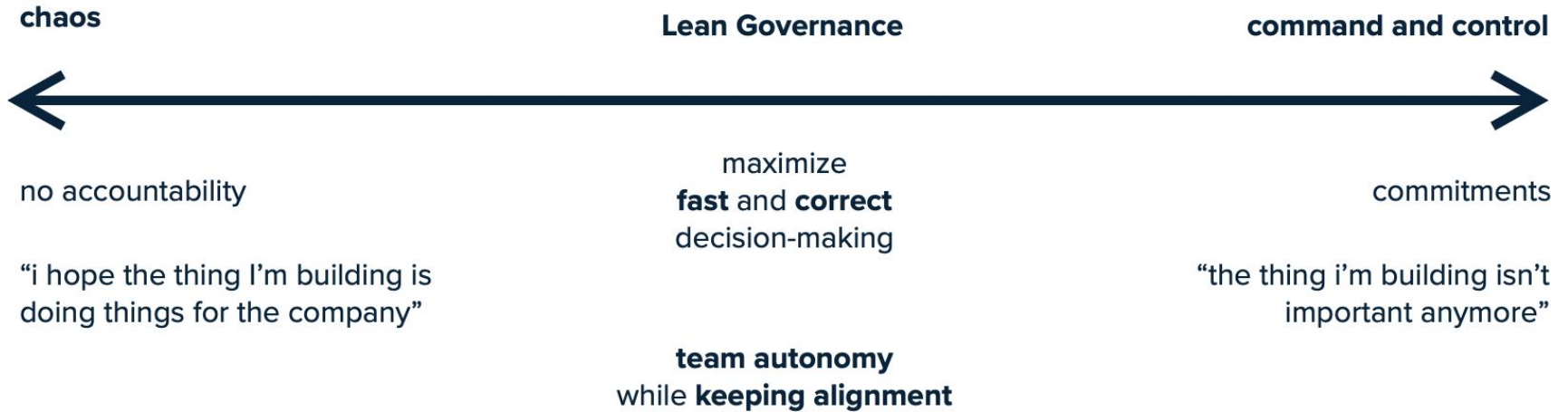
Startup

Responsible for discovery and development of new business

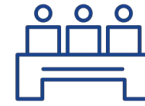
Borrowing the venture capital investment mindsets and mechanics

- Empowered, autonomous startups
- Periodic accountability check-ins
- Emphasis on the portfolio of investments
- Emphasis on metrics-driven decision-making
- Emphasis on leading indicators of success

What is Lean Governance?



Anatomy of a Growth Board - **The People**



The Board

(aka the leadership/investors)

- Each Governance board is accountable for part of the overall company strategy
- Makes decisions about funding allocations
- Helps team solve issues that arise and removes roadblocks to success
- Facilitates *autonomy* while ensuring alignment and continuous learning

Designers are here too!

The Team

(aka the presenters)

- Cross-functional group who can collectively solve the problem
- Size varies, but likely at least 4, no more than 8
- Teams working in problem space present to board

Designers are here!

Anatomy of a Growth Board - **The Presentation**



Content

- Identity / Vision
- Customers
- Problem Areas
- Initiatives (Bets) / Milestones
- Learnings / Experiments
- Team Health
- Blockers / Asks

Outcomes

- Pivot or persevere
- Change in funding
- Identify additional support
- Other decision-making (that lies outside of the product team's purview)

Logistics

- Could be quarterly, or less
- Typically around 2 hours
- Best with a third party facilitator

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Case study

Case Study - Federal Client

The Context

Organization

18 product teams (autonomous, cross-discipline teams)

split across **3 portfolios** (product areas)

in **1 branch** (line of business)

Challenges

Product teams lacked clear strategy, metrics, and understanding of the business and user value they deliver, independently and within the larger system

Leadership, fearful of breaking trust, lacked ways to provide feedback to teams, as well as important context on the broader value stream.

Leadership lacked a way to compare products (and portfolios) objectively so that they could make informed decisions on funding and staffing.

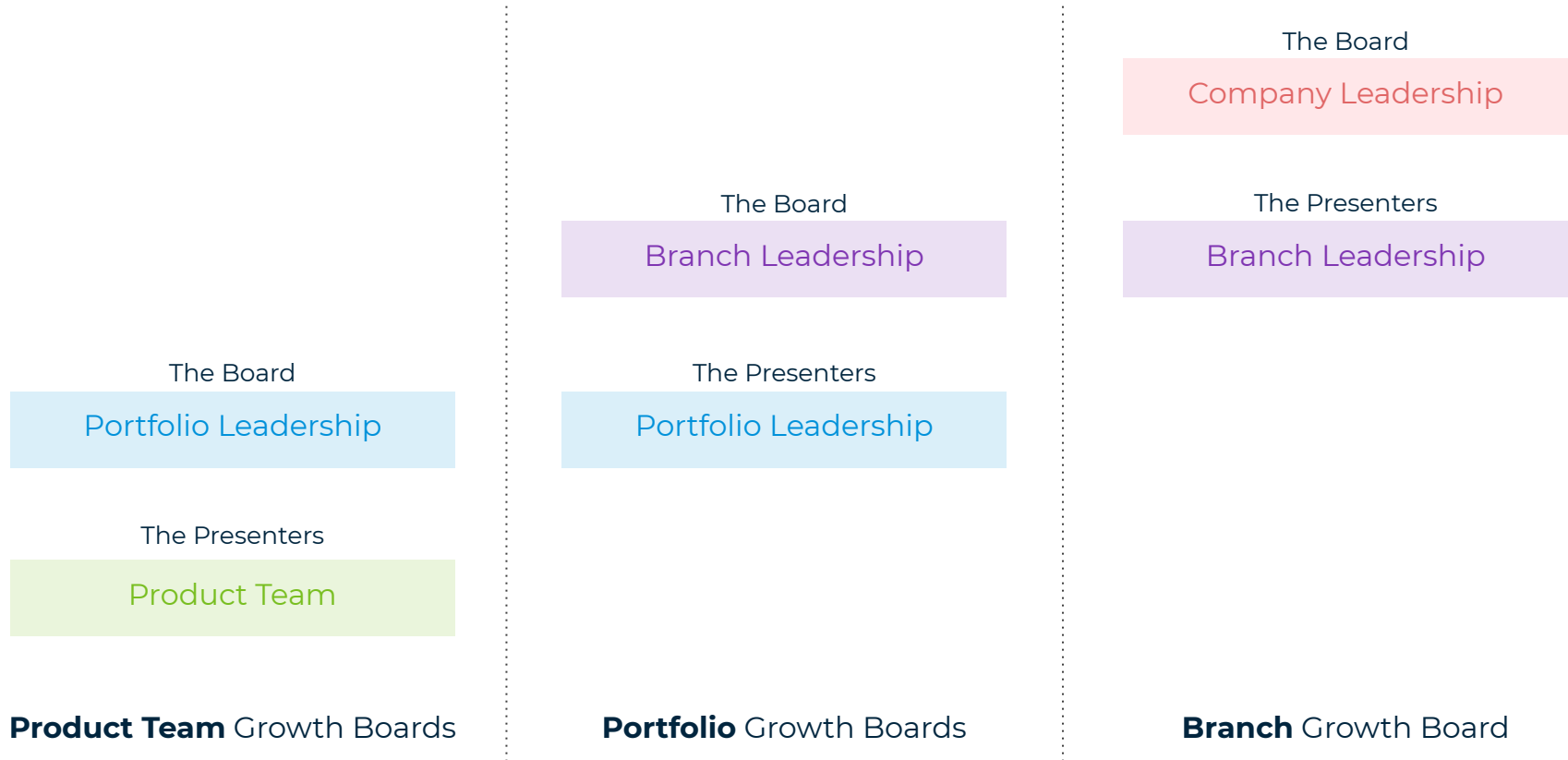
How might we create a lean, repeatable process for surfacing this information between teams and leaders?

The Solution

Introduced Quarterly Growth Boards meetings in Feb 2019

Case Study - Federal Client

3 Levels of Growth Boards





Team working through a **Service Blueprint** together in preparation for their Growth Board presentation



Client leader
co-facilitating a
Metrics Workshop
for several teams

Case Study - Federal Client

Product Team Presentation Content

The Content

- Identity / Vision
- Customers
- Problem Areas
- Initiatives (Bets) / Milestones
- Learnings / Experiments
- Health
- Blockers / Asks



What that presentation looked like for this org

- Vision Statement
- Personas
- Service Blueprint
- Roadmap / Product Metrics / How your work fits into Portfolio OKRs
- Learnings / Experiments
- Team Health Metrics / Software Delivery Performance Metrics
- Blockers / Asks (staff up/down, clarification on strategy)



Product team presenting their vision statement for the board and others from the leadership team.

A group of people in a meeting room. One person is standing and pointing at a whiteboard. Several others are sitting on stools, listening. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint.

What did we learn?

Case Study - Federal Client

What did we learn from the first iteration of Growth Boards

"If I'm not defining requirements for my teams anymore, how do I make sure they're going to hit our goals?"

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What went well

- GBs are an effective way of aligning teams and leadership while preserving team autonomy and providing leadership direction
- GBs enabled direction change (pivot/persevere decisions) sooner and more objectively on the basis of agreed-upon success measures
- GBs are an effective forcing mechanism for teams to focus and align amongst themselves

Case Study - Federal Client

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What didn't go as well

- Pushback from teams saying it took up significant time to prepare
- Follow up was ad-hoc and teams felt like they were left hanging on the final decisions and asks of leadership

Case Study - Federal Client

Checking in today

- Continues to run Growth Boards, without us!
- Growth Board members (leadership) improved on lean decision-making, feedback, and follow-up practices
- Teams have evolved the presentation format and content to make it their own
- Teams spend less time preparing

A group of people in a meeting room, with a man pointing at a whiteboard and others listening.

Agile at scale is not chaos!

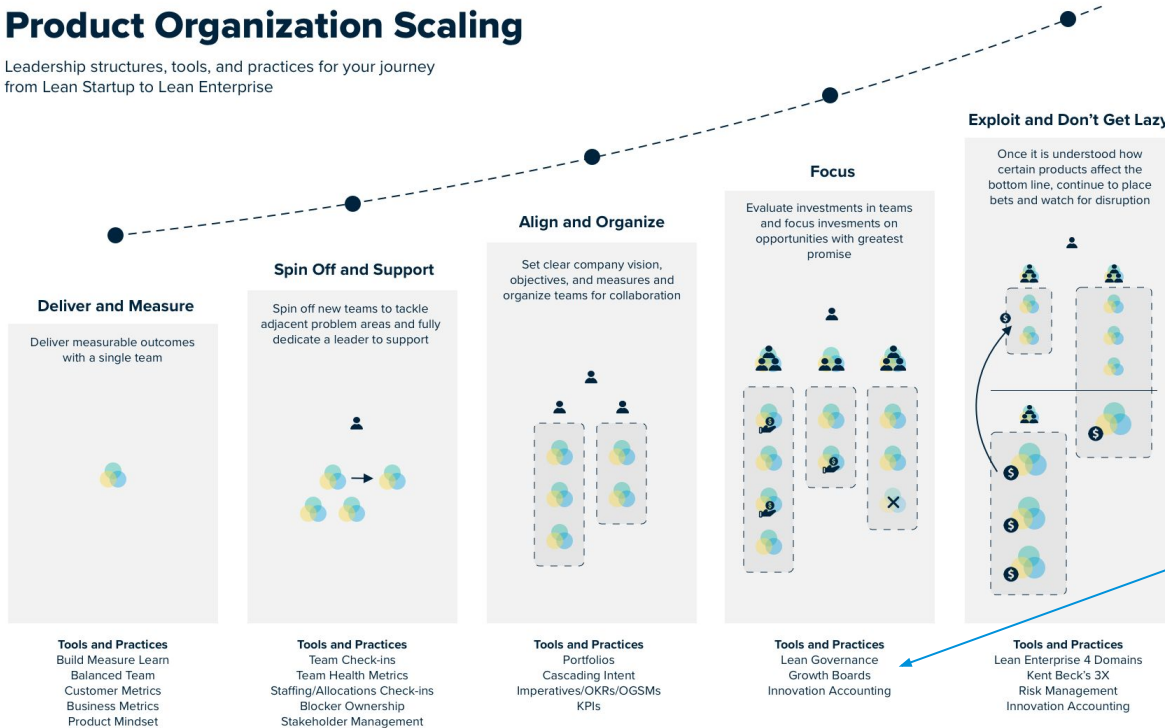
A group of people in a meeting or workshop setting. A man on the left is pointing at a whiteboard. Several people are seated in the center, listening attentively. A man on the right is standing with his arms crossed, looking towards the group. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor environment like a conference room or office.

Accountability

You should probably have this other stuff first

Product Organization Scaling

Leadership structures, tools, and practices for your journey from Lean Startup to Lean Enterprise



Today's talk



So... what's next?

So... what's next?

Questions to reflect on if you're an **individual contributor**

- Is your definition of success accomplishing design work and deliverables or are you only successful when the software is delivered / outcomes are achieved?
- Are you able to tie the work you're doing each day to broader company strategy?
- What business metric is your design work driving towards?
- How much does your team cost your company? Is it a worthwhile investment?

Questions to reflect on if you're in a **leadership or management role**

- Where does your leadership style or organization fall in the spectrum between command and control and chaos?
- If more chaos, do you know what your teams or designers are working on? Is that work aligned to your organization's objectives?
- If more command and control, how long does it take to make decisions in your organization? What decisions could be left to teams or individual designers to figure out?
- What are ways you could bring Venture Capital and Growth Board mindsets into existing status update meetings?

External Links and Resources

Short form (articles, presentations)

- [To Innovate Like a Startup, Make Decisions Like VCs Do](#) by David Kidder and John Geraci
- [How to Run Product Portfolios at Scale](#) by Barry O'Reilly (Mind The Product)
- [Why big companies squander good ideas](#)
- [What's the ROI of Innovation?](#) by David Binetti

Long form (books)

- *The Startup Way*, Eric Ries
- *Lean Enterprise*, Jez Humble, Joanne Molesky & Barry O'Reilly
- *New to Big*, David Kidder



Thank You

Twitter: [@ohhodesign](https://twitter.com/ohhodesign)