

Ain't no cure for the Distributed Blues

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*A long time ago, in
a trading firm
far, far away
(in Chicago)*



How do you design a trading firm?

1. Get some traders
2. Get some analysts
3. Get some operations
4. Get some technology
5. Get some programmers

Go!

How do you set up a new office?

1. Hire smart people
2. Trust them
3. There is no step 3

How do you grow a trading firm?

Very slowly

Then very quickly

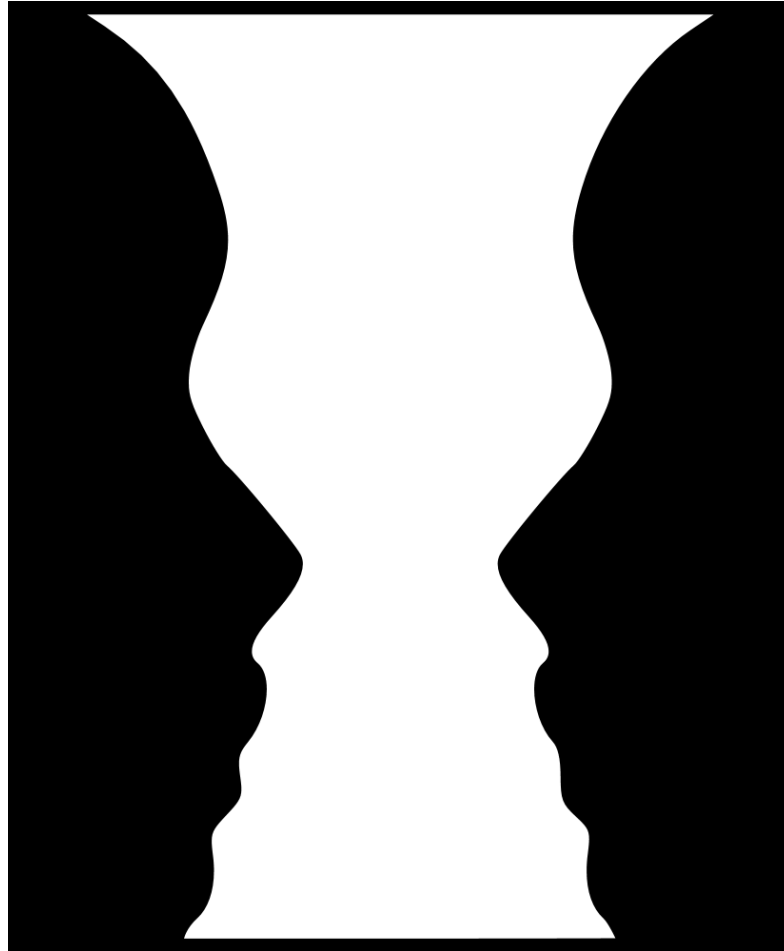
Then very slowly

← You are here

Episode 1:
The Phantom
Menace
(of waste)



You can't "see" waste



But it's there!

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cup_or_faces_paradox.svg

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Indicators of hand-off waste

Smart people taking “surprisingly long”

Relay roles

Everyone is busy, everyone is waiting

Lots of metrics, no useful data

Measuring “busyness” rather than results

How do you address that remotely?

You don't

No really, you don't

“If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Episode II:
Attack of the
Clones



We introduced DevOps

“What’s a devops?”

“How do you hire a devops?”

“Why do they want to turn us all into that?”

What if I want to stay a specialist?



We promoted process automation

“Now they want to turn us all into SEs”

“I don't want to *craft software*, just get this done”

Enforced pairing came across as policing

Oops

We introduced ideas from Lean and ToC

“They want us all to read *The Goal!*”

(Ok, that’s a fair cop)

...and *The Art of Systems Thinking*

*Episode III:
Revenge of the
Sith*



*Episode III:
Revenge of the
Seth*



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The CIO puts his money on the table

Replaced Tickets system – impacting all ITS

400+ requirements condensed to 6 themes

– 3 month PoC reduced to 3 weeks

Development and steering from Chicago

Development and steering from London

Conway's law is the default state

The result

Major hearts-and-minds initiative

Roll-out is pulled as much as pushed

Embedding ops into dev

dev... plus... ops

there should be a word for that

Embedding dev into ops

Automation is key

Lots of quick wins

Ops guys see obvious low-hanging fruit

Dev guys see obvious low-hanging fruit

It's like they were made for each other!

I had a bit of an awakening

Realised software is only part of the solution

People are tribal

Then there was book club

I can't tell you about book club

Episode IV: A New Hope

(Lean thinking)



ITS is (necessarily) specialised

Created order out of chaos

Became more and more efficient

...until work needed to move between silos

Are we still doing the right thing?

Getting a new server is painful

Takes ~7 weeks

Involves ~8 teams

and physically moving things around!

Step 1: measure

VSM: Plan -> Do -> Check -> Adapt

How long does each task take?

How much waiting between each task?

Calculate total work time and total elapsed time

Ratio of really little number to really big number

94%

Two changes reduced the time by half

Identified by the process owner

Implemented by the team

36 days down to 12 *with less effort*

– local buffer means ~2 hour delivery

Now we're cooking!

Meanwhile...

Purchasing team

- asks themselves: what's our value?
- focus on relationships with vendors
- assigns single owner for each request

Service desk

- assigns single owner for each issue

and there was much rejoicing!

*Episode V:
The Empire
Strikes Back*



...accompanied by wife and puppy



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Human factors are everything

...or rather puppy factors



Ten weeks of syncing up

Lots of pairing

– opened the floodgates

Lots of 1-1 coaching

Lots of really good coffee

Serendipitous connections

*Episode VI:
Return of the
Jedi*



*Episode VI:
Return of the
Puppy*



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What we got right

Daily 1-1s with CIO

– 2.5 hours/week x 40 weeks = 100 hours

Focusing on hearts and minds

Trusting people to figure things out

What we got right

Lots of syncing up

“Prove it” culture – nothing out of bounds

Leaving the egos at the door

“Strong opinions weakly held”

What we got wrong

Out of sight...

You can't "make" people pair
– even if your intentions are good

A remote "pairing station" is a lonely thing!

What we learned

You know what, it just might work!

Even when you know it's going to be difficult...

There ain't no cure for the Distributed Blues

Thank you

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