Dear MIT Sloan Alumni Online Attendees:

Thanks so much for taking the time to watch the virtual program last week. Your attention is very much appreciated.

There were several questions that I didn't have time to get to, so here is some additional information and a few extra thoughts:

Potential Follow Up Resources:

I just put up a new blog post that will give you some more information on visual management. You can find it here:

http://shiftgear.work/lets-get-visual-visual-management-and-dynamic-work-design/

We also have a working paper (that will eventually appear in the *Sloan Management Review*) that covers the work with the Broad Institute, which you can find here:

http://shiftgear.work/using-dynamic-work-design-help-cure-cancer-diseases/

Finally, the digital visual management tool that I mentioned is called iObeya. Obeya means (I am told) "big room" in Japanese and the Toyota shorthand for their visual management systems. We have just started developing our own iObeya boards to test the technology, and so far we are impressed. You can learn more about them here:

http://www.iobeya.com/en/

Questions:

Nelson, thank you so much for your time. This webinar was fantastic. We are using SCRUM at my workplace which is good for visualizing. Although it looks similar to the concept you showed today, could you comment on similarities and differences?

> Used correctly, SCRUM is a great approach and a very nice example of using a more dynamic approach to work design. I am just finishing a new paper on how SCRUM connects to the DWD principles. It should be ready for reading soon.

> For now, the two key elements of SCRUM from a design perspective are the regular, structured check-ins amongst the team in the form of daily stand up meetings and the customer meetings at the end of every sprint interval. By dramatically upping the check-in frequency over traditional waterfall, SCRUM greatly increases the dynamism of the development process. SCRUM typically uses a pretty simple visual representation, listing tasks in three categories: To Do, In Progress, and Done. This is great and is a nice example of both DWD principles one and four, Reconcile Activity and Intent and Manage Optimal Challenge.

I'm not an expert in software engineering, but I sense that the next evolution of SCRUM might benefit from two enhancements: be a bit more clear about the rules for escalating a task so that the team can use its precious time to focus on what's important and better representation of how the specific project fits into the larger portfolio. I am working with one organization that executes its sprints pretty well but is struggling to match those outputs to what is really needed.

My last piece of advice is don't be beholden to the SCRUM orthodoxy. Adjust the visual tools to fit YOUR work. Good luck!

How does this differ from Business Process Management?

BPR covers a wide range of tools. One of the benefits of Dynamic Work Design (we hope) is that it pulls the essential elements of the major BPR approaches into a single, simple, unified approach for making work better. If you have experience in Lean or Six Sigma or any kind of Agile approach, you will see elements of it in DWD. The benefit, hopefully, is a more general framework and supporting tools that you can use for all types of work, not just manufacturing or software development.

We are trying to come up with a more granular/robust process of funneling our ideas from initiation (phase 0) to development start. Any ideas? The industry is automotive and we are following the Advanced Product Quality Planning phase gate process.

I don't know all the details, but I suggest four related things:

Visualize—gets all of your ideas on a wall somewhere.

Prioritize—order them based on effort required to evaluate and potential impact (the 2x2 matrix I showed in my slides).

Focused Iteration—Dedicate all your resources to evaluating a few top priorities as quickly as you can. Most upfront processes are overloaded, and people investigate too many things at once so it takes forever to get results. Failing fast requires moving fast.

Check in Regularly-- Most upfront R&D processes move too slowly and leaders don't check in often enough. Good luck!

How granular should one get; I've seen Gant charts in hours and weeks, is there a right balance? Should you track hours or projects?

Great question. Every visual management board should start with a clear purpose. Usually when you start, it will be helping the team allocate its resources. You will have to experiment to get the right granularity, but knowing the purpose should guide you. A board helps you see problems, so ask yourself how much detail do I need to spot a problem that's important to me? If one of your reports is ten minutes behind in a task, you probably don't need to know. If she is a day behind, that might be relevant, and a week behind is almost certainly a problem. Let that dictate the detail. As discussed

above, SCRUM dictates a daily check in, but software moves pretty quickly. The level of detail will ultimately depend on how quickly your work moves.

Thanks. I think we are focused on some initial implementations, but one of my fears is the long term success of the initiative. We have lots of resources focused on "expediting" the change for a few instances, but how can we learn what organizational...changes might sustain the initiative long term?

Tough and good question. In my view, the key is focusing the change down to very specific behaviors that can be monitored.   Visual management is great because the behavior change is very tangible—we are going to sit in front of the board once a week and review our progress. Without that specificity, change usually fades away. When I teach I often use something called Nelson's Law, which is:

"Organizational change efforts don't produce change unless someone in the organization actually does something differently."

The key to sustainability is getting as focused and specific as you can about how people need to behave differently. "Don't take on too much" will probably not have much effect.   "We only work on four projects at once" is more likely to be helpful. Good luck!

My organization has R&D projects that can take multiple years to complete. Does this process work well for these type of projects?

It definitely works! Even better - in our experience, using visual management and pull can help you make those projects move a lot faster. One of our lead users did a big R&D project in two and a half years using visual management when the predecessor projects, which had been managed via software, took almost seven. User results may of course vary, but really seeing how work moves (or doesn't) through your organization can sometimes unlock very big gains.

I manage a business in two locations. Do you recommend physically duplicating VM in both locations where it applies to both offices?

That is a tough one. If possible, I would suggest trying it out in one location first. But if that is not feasible, then physical duplication might be worth a try. Moving to the digital tool will eventually make your life a lot easier, but it's worth practicing with pencil and paper to build the skills first.

We have long known that in many organizations the truly significant work that gets done is accomplished through the 'informal organization' - relationships and alliances that provide cross terms in the static org chart. Dynamic org instantiation?

Another great question! You are exactly right. Much of what happens in real organizations is accomplished through informal connections, and often the key to success is knowing who really has the expertise for a particular question or task (something that isn't shown in the org. chart). And you are right, the informal

organization often responds far more dynamically than the formal one. That said, lots of work (including my earlier stuff on the Capability Trap and Firefighting Dynamics) suggests that the informal organization is a double-edged sword. It can be very efficient, but it can also lead to lots of undesirable behaviors such as work-arounds and secret projects. A great way to understand Dynamic Work Design is to think of it as trying to capitalize on that dynamism by making the underlying work more visible. We find that once the work is visual, peoples' natural propensity to solve problems often leads to big gain with little additional formal structure.

Many knowledge workers don't want to feel like production workers and can resist having their output managed this way. How do you keep them motivated in this context?

This is a real challenge and it's not limited to knowledge workers. Even people working in factories often resist the notion that their work can be routinized or designed. One of the places that Dynamic Work Design extends beyond traditional process management is in recognizing that all work is a mix of creative and routine elements. We have found several design elements that can make this work better and be more palatable to the people doing it. This is all described in a working paper that is *almost* done. So stay tuned!

In the meantime, the key to selling these ideas is often to help creative people recognize that if you clean up and redesign the routine parts of their jobs, they will have *more* time for the creative parts that they really enjoy. A good visual management process executed in an hour or two per week can often replace hours of mind numbing project review meetings.

What are your suggestions on how to introduce this concept to a team who needs it but has concerns that this will cause them to lose freedom of "expedition" and their ability to get special attention on their requests?

Another common challenge. Managers often assume that the people doing the expediting do so because they really enjoy it. And they aren't entirely wrong. It does feel good to wade into a completely chaotic system and manage to get something done. That said, the human cost of working this way every day is often significant—long days, excess stress, email at all hours and through the weekends, and, ultimately, unsatisfied customers.

So, I suggest two things:

First, "pull" doesn't mean you lose the chance of prioritizing; it just means you only do it before a job enters the system. Make sure that is clear.

Second, start with the points of "pain." What is the clearest evidence that the process doesn't work as currently operated? Nobody likes being late or dealing with frustrated customers. If you can develop some energy around confronting those challenges then you are well on your way! Good luck!

Nelson Repenning