Herding cats – How to build and run a large distributed team of experts

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How does this work?

- There’s two parts: this session and a BoF @ 16:00, room 2.05 Palladium
- During the session, just ask or tweet @joonaski
- Any remotely related discussions welcome at the BoF
Contents

1. Context
2. Leadership & culture
3. Communications
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1980
Ex-coder, Agile practitioner & trainer
M.Sc. (econ), 2005
Uusi Suomi, 2007
Wunder, 2009
Rebound Business Ltd, 2018
Super simplified history of Wunder

- Founded in 2009 to create an international, Agile, high quality Drupal services provider
- Finland and Latvia 2010–2012
- Sweden, Benelux, UK, Germany through an alliance in 2012
- Focus on Wunder as FI, EE, LV, UK, DE from 2016 onwards
- Eight years of profitable growth, ending for my part in 8M of revenue and 135 staff in Feb 2018
Background: Belief systems

Theory X and Theory Y
Theory X and Theory Y

How do humans function? Management and motivation

Theory X:
- External motivation
- Supervision
- Individual carrots & sticks
- Work for money

Theory Y:
- Drive and internal motivation
- Self esteem and fulfilment
- Cooperation
- Personal and individual
Be brave, be different

Following convention is a safe way to mediocrity
Go your own way

- There is no one right way to run a business, although there are a thousand wrong ones.
- Don’t reinvent wheels where it can be avoided. Copy, steal, experiment, improve, adapt.
- Companies should stand up for what they believe in.
- All businesses are broken. It’s ok.
Make change a normal state

It’s never going to finish anyway
Everything changed in less than a decade

This is how things were in 2009

- Drupal 5 was mainstream
- 90%+ of the web was desktop
- There was no iPad
- Responsive Web Design didn’t exist
- Agile was anything but mainstream

- Open Source was perceived a non-credible choice
- CSS was hand-written,
  JavaScript was not a profession
- Websites ran on physical servers,
  which took weeks to order and install
What about 2023?
What about 2023?

What is Drupal used for, what fades out? What competencies are needed for building a web app?

What’s the interface between a human and the web?

Is most development done in companies or freelancer networks?

What’s your core competency, why is your company still alive and kicking?
Stop trying to control your company.

Steer, support, lead
Replacing control mechanisms

The problem with control: it makes people leave their brains at home and act dumb.

Control can be achieved without policies and rulebooks using transparency.

Transparency increases trust, which in turn decreases need for control.

How would a corporation work with no travel policy? What if you gave everyone a credit card?
How can everybody lead?

In order to make smart decisions, one needs authority, knowledge and ethics

- **Ethics** (values, norms) you hire, train and retain
- **Authority** can be given and practiced
- **Knowledge** is the laborious part

**THIS TOOK US A WHILE:**
Data != Knowledge; investment needs to be made to increase knowledge in everybody
Invest in increasing knowledge

💡 When everybody makes decisions, everybody needs knowledge regarding the business.

📊 People cannot be expected to draw knowledge from data. That’s also very inefficient.

📈 One of the most important jobs for the leadership in a self-directing organisation is increasing knowledge in others.
Setting goals and aligning with them

In order to answer the questions mentioned before, the common goals need to be simple and explicit.

- What is the goal (vision)?
- How should it be reached (and how not)?
- What’s my role in all of this?
My answer: V2MOM

- A powerful vision and alignment tool for organisations and individuals in it. Simple, intuitive, effective.
- Same template works for company, teams and individuals.
- Innovated at salesforce.com, a ton of easy-to-follow resources found online.

V2MOM
Vision, Values, Methods, Obstacles, Measures
Communication

Bear with me a little while longer
Crises and catastrophes

☁️ They happen. Deal with them first and learn when the storm settles.

🏛 Always provides a moment of truth for the organisation

ℹ️ Trust-based organisation is in many ways more vulnerable to abuse than control-based. It’s a feature.
Communications is hard

- An international organisation sets some extra challenges: no common native language, different cultures, no possibility to physically meet.

- **Perceived proximity**: culture, language, sex, age, interests

- Things get bad **really easily** with communications methods that lack richness, because blanks get filled by bad stuff.
Hierarchy of mediums

The gaps between mediums are often wider than we realise

In-person meetings

Videoconferencing

Audio calls

One-way video messaging

Instant messaging

Homing pigeons

Smoke signals

Email

MUCH UNDERUSED

WAAAAAAY OVERUSED
Thank you.

Discussion at 16:00, room 2.05 Palladium

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