



# OBSTACLES AND PITFALLS TO EXPERIMENTATION IN ORGANISATIONS

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*Tampere Goes Agile, 5.11.2016*



2007-2014

accenture

A!

Aalto University

M!ND

industry-changing innovations

2015-

ORGANISAATIODESIGN.FI

Agile.fi



Filosofian Akatemia



6Aika

Avoimet ja älykkäät palvelut  
Kuutoskaupunkien yhteistyöstrategia







# EXPERIMENTATION IS...

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## Behaviour

- Bias to action

## Mindset

- Skepticism towards second-hand knowledge
- Trust on empirical evidence
- Willingness to dance with uncertainty

## A set of tools and techniques

- Prototyping
- Experiment design
- Sense-making

**IT IS NATURAL FOR US TO EXPERIMENT**



**ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATION  
AND ADAPTIVE CAPABILITY  
HAVE BECOME NECESSARY IN  
ORDER TO SURVIVE.**



# LET'S TALK ABOUT REGRESSIVE ORGANISATIONS

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*Or how to kill experiments*



# REGRESSIVE ORGANISATION SCORESHEET

## ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

- ☐ Collaboration is actively discouraged.
- ☐ Information is not shared, especially about things that are problematic.
- ☐ Others and their nonsensical ideas are openly criticised.
- ☐ No failure goes unnoticed and unpunished.
- ☐ “*Just stick to the plan*” – after all, it is infallible, and a lot of time was spent on doing it.
- ☐ Emphasis is always on productivity, profitability, market share and especially stock price.

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## STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES

- ☐ No time for experiments.
- ☐ Individual performance is valued and rewarded over group efforts.
- ☐ Constant competition between employees.
- ☐ Experiments and new ideas are not incentivised.
- ☐ An *idea box* that must be used.
- ☐ Strict adherence to processes, protocols and directives, but no such things for experimentation.
- ☐ No formal practices, tools and methods that could be used for running experiments.
- ☐ Experimentation is strictly limited to a specific organisational unit, such as R&D.

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## LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

- ☐ Leaders do not acknowledge other people’s ideas and experiments.
- ☐ Leaders actively discourage others from trying out new things.
- ☐ Leaders are always right, even when confronted with contradictory evidence.
- ☐ Leadership means being solely focused at productivity and output metrics.
- ☐ Leaders have never developed anything new or engaged in hands-on experimentation themselves.

/5

## MANAGING EXPERIMENTS

- ☐ Experiments and development efforts are not made visible.
- ☐ There is no one whose job it is to manage experiment portfolio.
- ☐ Individual experiments are not planned and coordinated.
- ☐ Experiments have no clear goals.
- ☐ The relationship between innovation activities and everyday work is not being communicated and managed clearly.
- ☐ No effort is being put into developing employees’ experimentation skills.

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## RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

- ☐ People fake commitment or outright refuse to participate.
- ☐ People are stuck at their comfort zones.
- ☐ People lack initiative and assertiveness.
- ☐ People are close-minded.
- ☐ People lack courage to try new things.
- ☐ People have low self-esteem.
- ☐ People would rather not try something new at all, than try and fail at it.

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## EXPERIMENTATION KNOW-HOW

- ☐ People can’t explain what counts as an experiment and what doesn’t.
- ☐ People can’t explain what is the purpose of doing experiments in the first place.
- ☐ People don’t know when they should do experiments and when not to.
- ☐ People have trouble thinking big and small at the same time.
- ☐ People don’t approach failure as a learning experience.
- ☐ People have poor experimentation skills, such as prototyping, understanding of the experimentation process, experiment design, and knowledge creation based on collected and analysed feedback.

/6

**TOTAL SCORE:** /38





# ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

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**“IF IT’S NEW,  
TREAT IT WITH  
HOSTILITY.”**

.....  
*Organisational climate*







# ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

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Collaboration is actively discouraged.

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Others and their nonsensical ideas are openly criticised.

No failure goes unnoticed and unpunished.

*“Just stick to the plan”* – after all, it is infallible, and a lot of time was spent on doing it.

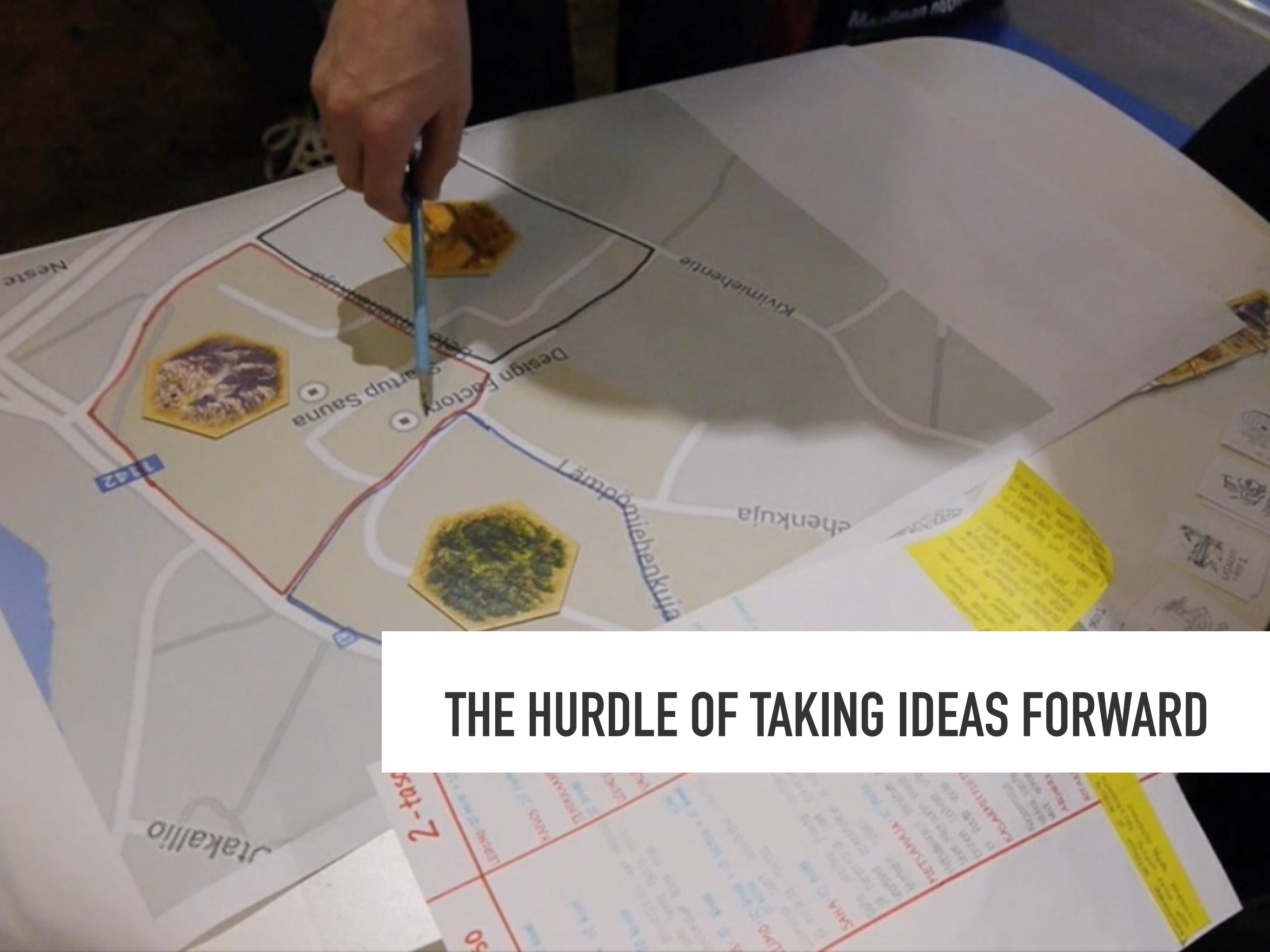
Emphasis is always on productivity, profitability, market share and especially stock price.



**“KILL THEM  
WHILE THEY’RE  
YOUNG AND  
WEAK.”**

.....  
*Structures and practices*





**THE HURDLE OF TAKING IDEAS FORWARD**





# STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES

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Individual performance is valued and rewarded over group efforts.

Constant competition between employees.

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*An idea box* that must be used.

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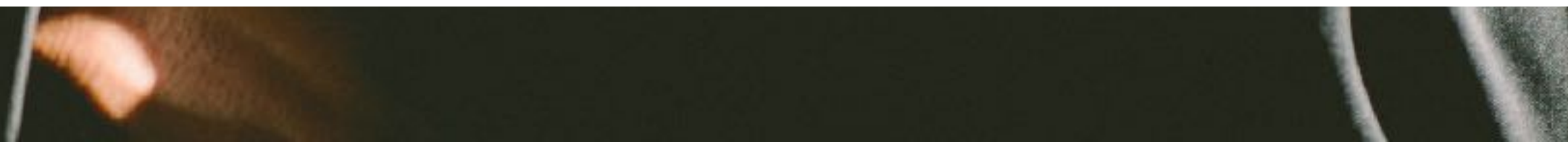
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# MANAGERIAL LEVEL

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**“THIS IS SERIOUS  
BUSINESS.”**

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*Leadership behaviour*







# LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

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Leaders actively discourage others from trying out new things.

Leaders are always right, even when confronted with contradictory evidence.

Leadership means being solely focused at productivity and output metrics.

Leaders have never developed anything new or engaged in hands-on experimentation themselves.



# “WHO’S RESPONSIBLE?”

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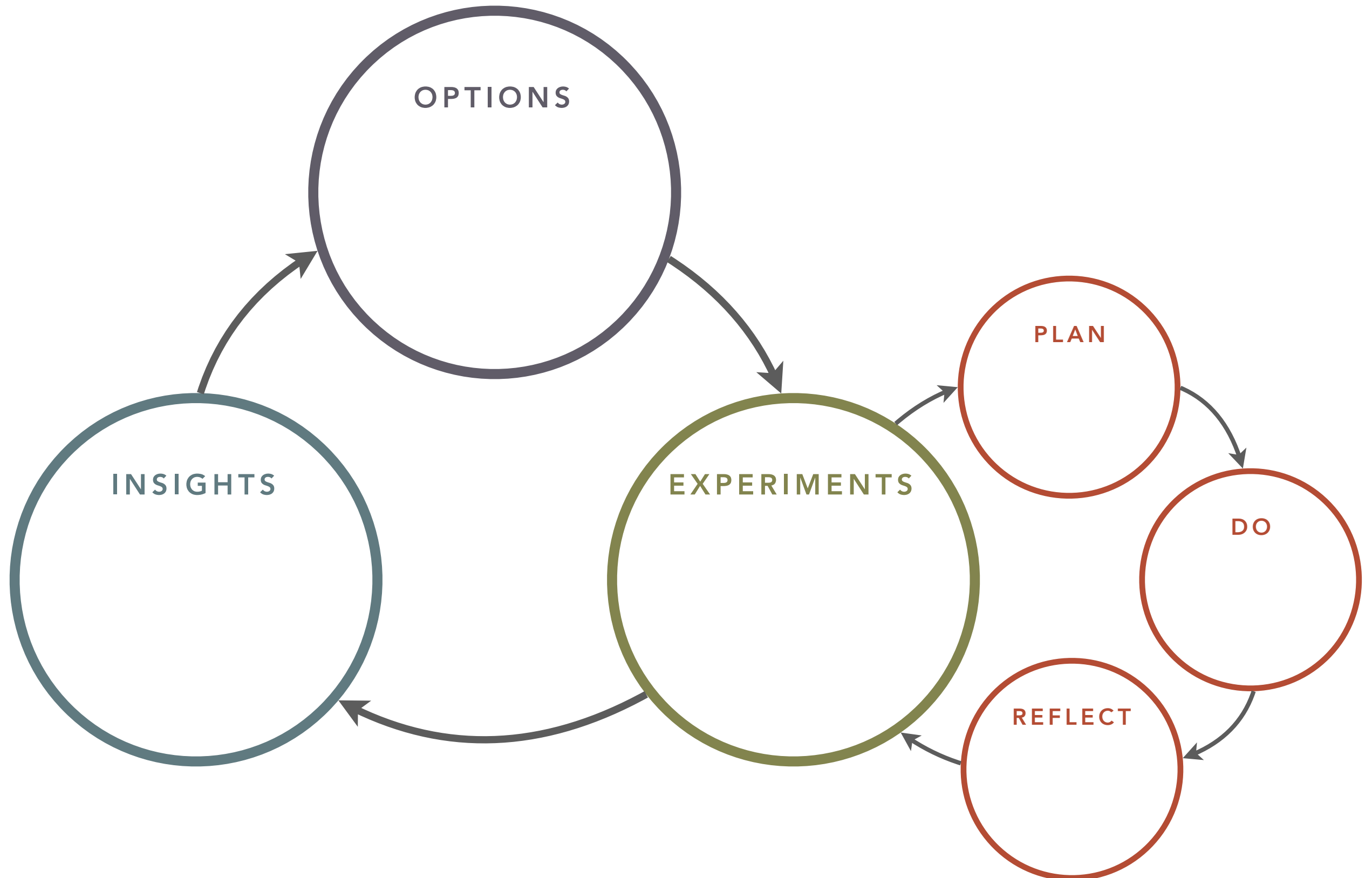
*Managing experiments*





# IS ANYONE IN CHARGE OF THE “LEAN CHANGE CYCLE?”

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# MANAGING EXPERIMENTS

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# INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM LEVEL

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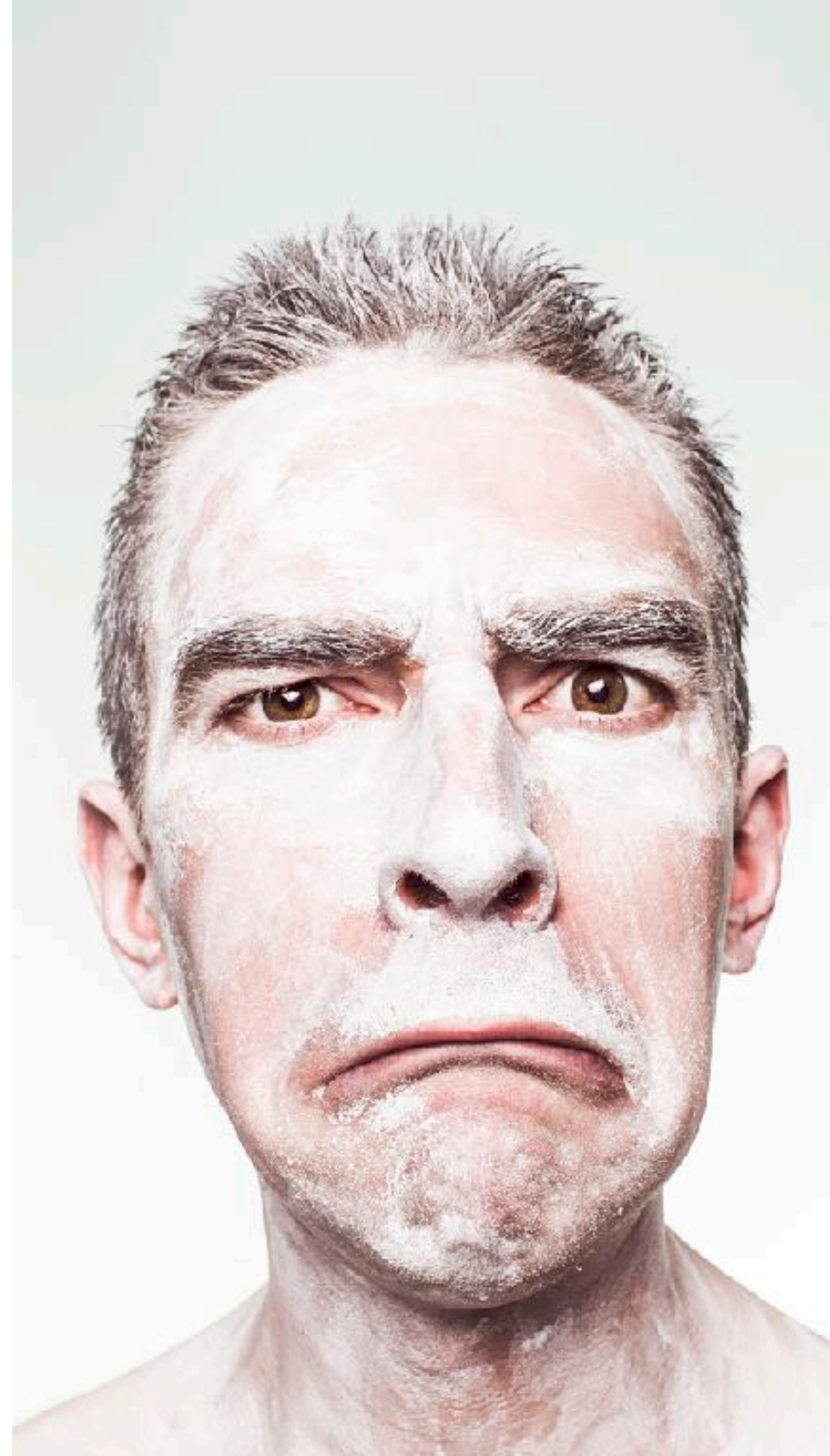




**“NOT GOING TO  
WORK HERE.”**

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*Resistance to change*







# RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

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# “WHAT IS THIS EXPERIMENTATION THING ANYWAY?”

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*Experimentation know-how*







**KEEPING IDEAS OPEN**





# EXPERIMENTATION KNOW-HOW

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## REGRESSIVE ORGANISATION SCORE

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34+ “Welcome to experimentation wasteland.”

27-33 “Abandon hope all ye who experiment here.”

16-26 “We have tried experimentation but not sure we like its taste yet.”

6-15 “Fertile experimentation breeding ground.”

0-5 “Falling off the edge and into chaos any minute now. Maybe.”



“

Adaptability, not efficiency, must become our central competency.

*-Stanley McChrystal: Team of Teams*