

**PROGRAMMERS MAYBE FROM MARS,
CUSTOMERS MAYBE FROM VENUS,
BUT WHY DOES EVERYONE THINK THAT
PROJECT MANAGERS
ARE FROM
URANUS?**

A workshop Facilitated
by Clarke Ching and Graeme Thomas

Who are we? Where are we from?

Nelson, New Zealand

Clarke Ching

From Mars but moved
to Uranus, via Venus

Author of
“Rolling Rocks
Downhill” (to be
published 2008) and
“Rocks into Gold” (to
be published 2009)

Graeme Thomas

From Mars

Doesn't think
intelligent life exists on
Uranus.

Our Learning goals

1. We will demonstrate a simple way to model conflicts

2. We will then model several conflicts –
“It annoys me when my Project Manager ...”

3. We will uncover the “core conflict” between managers and their development staff.

4. We will tie all these pieces together.

Our 1st Assumption

Most people just want to
do a good job.

Including your manager(s).

Don't you?

Our 2nd Assumption

Most problems, conflicts and dysfunctions are caused by

“the system”

The System:

- policies
- procedures
- expected behaviours
- the measurement & reward system
- the culture
- ...

rather than by bad intentions.

An example of assumption 2



This System is "designed" to have long queues ... how would you change it to avoid the queue-rage?

Our Learning goals

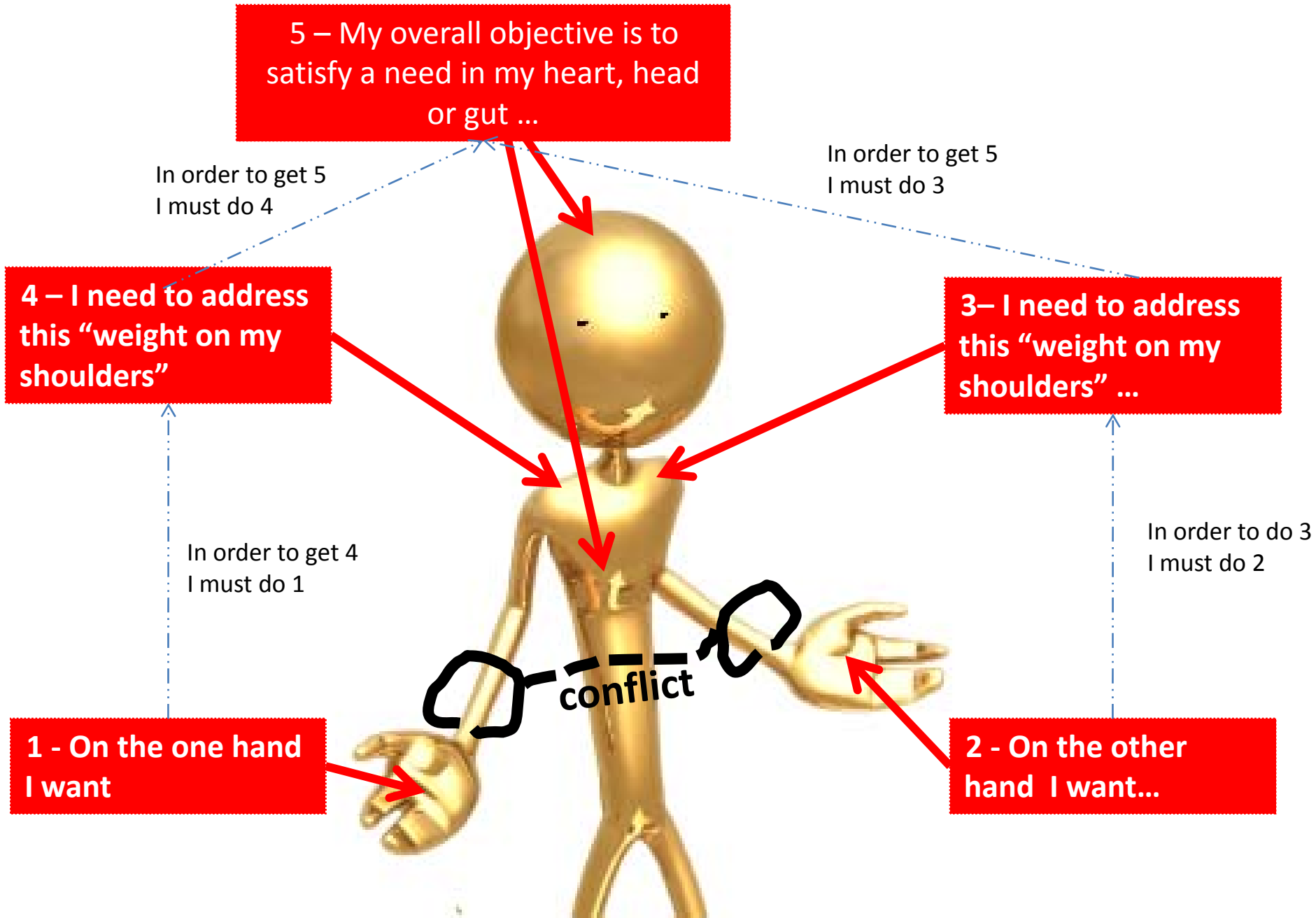
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Conflict Calisthenics - the anatomy of a conflict



Conflict Calisthenics - Graeme's Conflict

5 Keep my wife and family happy.

In order to get 5
I must do 4

In order to get 5
I must do 3

4 – Get home quickly

3– Be safe and legal

In order to get 4
I must do 1

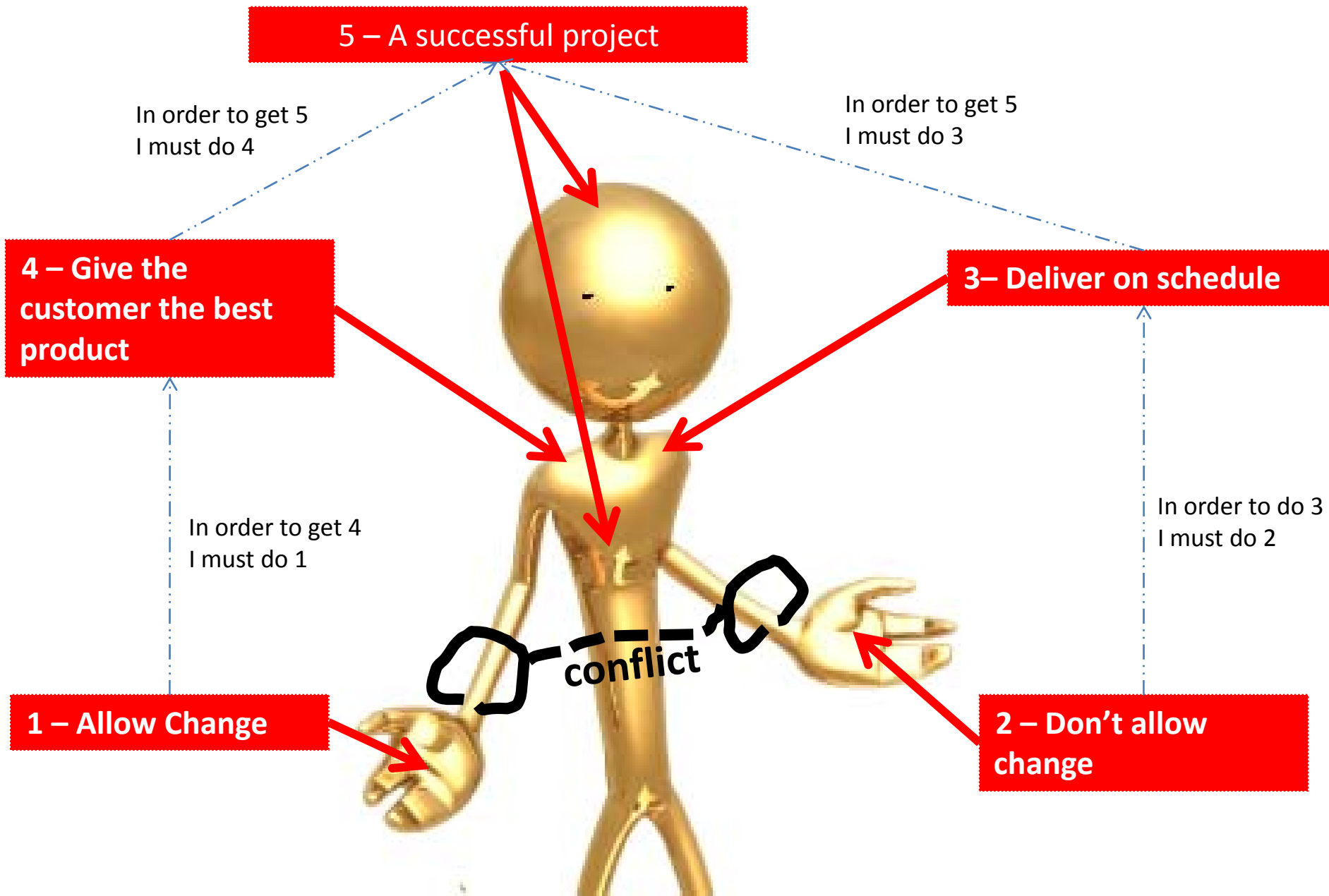
In order to do 3
I must do 2

1 – Call wife to say
"I'm late" while
driving.

2 – Pull over before
calling wife to say
"I'm late"

conflict

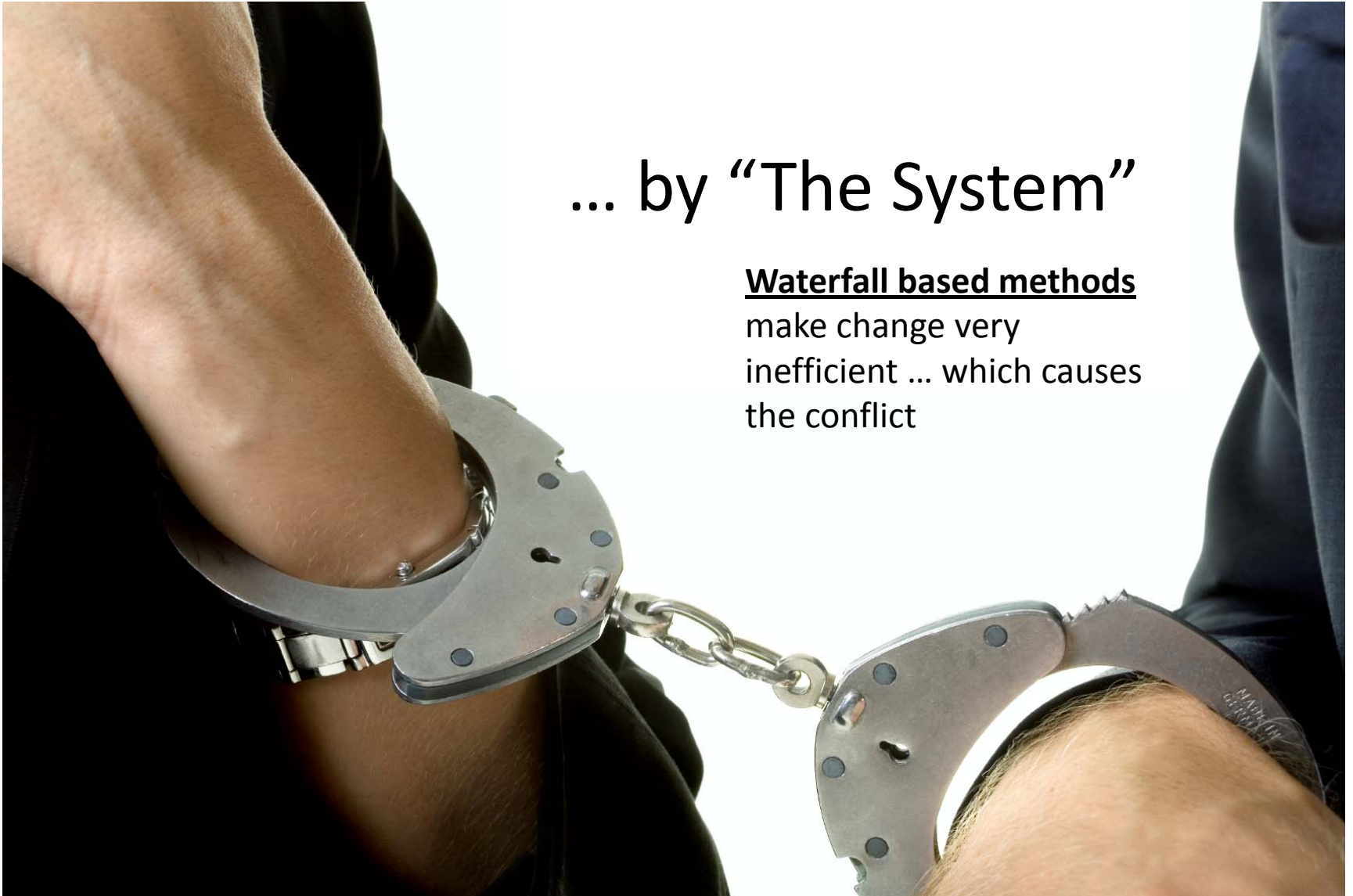
The anatomy of a waterfall conflict



Our hands are tied ...

... by “The System”

Waterfall based methods
make change very
inefficient ... which causes
the conflict



Our hands are freed by changing the system



Agile methods make change efficiently ... which breaks the conflict

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26 things that annoy “me” about my PM

- The plan is right not reality. Happens in any system that has a plan.
- Inability to use a dictionary to look up what "estimate" actual means. Happens in any system.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager is more concerned with administrative trivia than software development.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager is more concerned with appearance than quality.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager shows a total disregard to the long term implications of whatever decision they've arbitrarily taken.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager seems to believe they are the only ones capable of talking to customers.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager actually believes they know more than you.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager believes the success of the project is their doing and any failures are due to someone else.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager believes the success of the project is their doing and any failures are due to someone else.
- As an analyst I find it really annoying when my project manager actually believes they have made a significant contribution to the success of a project.
- Why do PMs use estimates that weren't done by the developers who are going to do the work OR by people who've never been developers
- I hate it when PMs throw resources at projects when things are going bad.
- I hate it when PMs stick to the original requirements even though it means we will build a crap product
- I hate it when PM is inflexible about changing the plan - even when it is obviously wrong
- I hate it when we p off our customers by not changing the requirements to suit them
- PM keeps bugging us with unsolicited suggestions and questions, trying to help us, when he is really just distracting us from solving the problem
- PMs don't give us enough background
- PMs give us too much background - i.e. non technical stuff
- They don't consult when making promises to clients, especially on timescales.
- They don't understand what's easy to change and what's hard.
- They don't really do very much... just e-mail and attend meetings and mostly the e-mails are technically inaccurate (and obviously I work hard)
- Most of the processes they implement just don't make any sense, and they don't appreciate being told so.
- They don't understand what a story point really is
- They don't understand the developing is an art and the difficulty of a job isn't known at the start so I cant give a hard deadline
- They don't understand the cost-quality-scope trade off

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Or ... do you have your own annoyance?

Fire up Excel

- Go to the excel worksheet
- Fill out “conflict 1”, “conflict 2” and “Conflict 3” tabs.

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Fire up Excel

- Go to the excel worksheet
- Fill out the list tab and determine the core conflict.

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The Core Problem?

- How Managers measure success CONFLICTS with how their staff do

AND

- How Development staff measure success CONFLICTS with how their managers do

The Core Problem?

- How Managers measure success CONFLICTS with how their staff do

This is a “systemic” problem that manifests itself as a “people” problem.

To fix this we must ensure that the “conditions of satisfaction” for all parties are aligned – not conflicted.

AND

- How Development staff measure success CONFLICTS with how their managers do

The Solution?

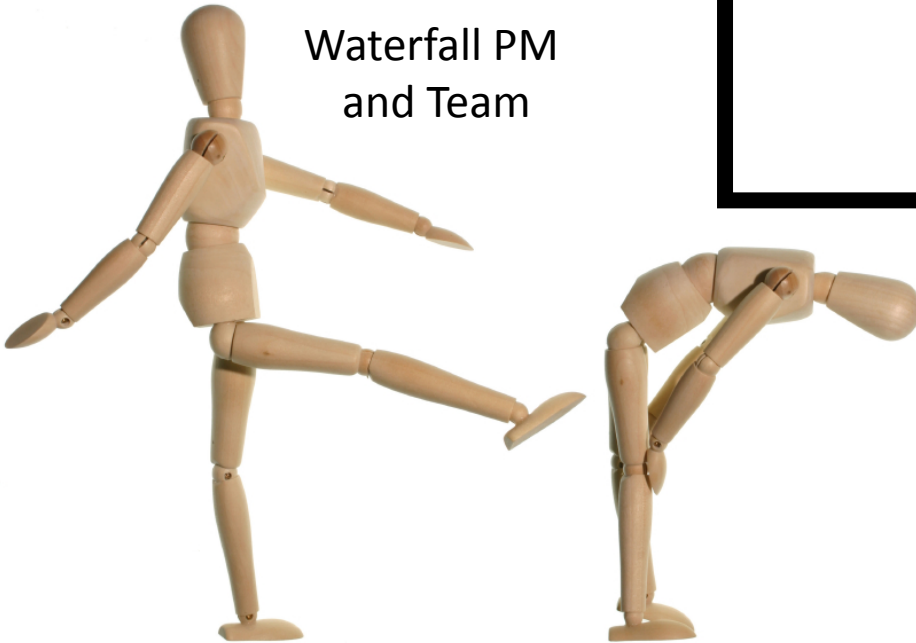
- Change the system so that
 - the project manager's *conditions-of-satisfaction*
 - don't conflict with
 - the development staff's *conditions of satisfaction*.
- Do it on a “Grand Scale”
- Do it on a case by case basis.

**Grand scale –
replace
Waterfall with
Agile**

Agile Manager and Team



Waterfall PM
and Team



Case by Case: Don't Wrestle, Dance.

- Confront each conflict – nicely and politely.
 - Assume that the PM just wants to do a good job – **just like you.**
- Whenever you get a difference do the “conflict calisthenics” on it?
 - Understand their request and their concerns (the weights on their shoulders).
 - Share your understanding of their concerns
 - Share your concerns.
 - Confirm you share a mutual purpose (head, heart, gut)
 - **Seek to satisfy their concerns and your concerns**
- Warning
 - some conflicts are easy to resolve
 - Some are hard.
 - The first step is to understand why they exist.

Contact us



Don't ask if the glass is half full.
Don't ask if the glass is half empty.

Ask for a Bigger
Glass

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