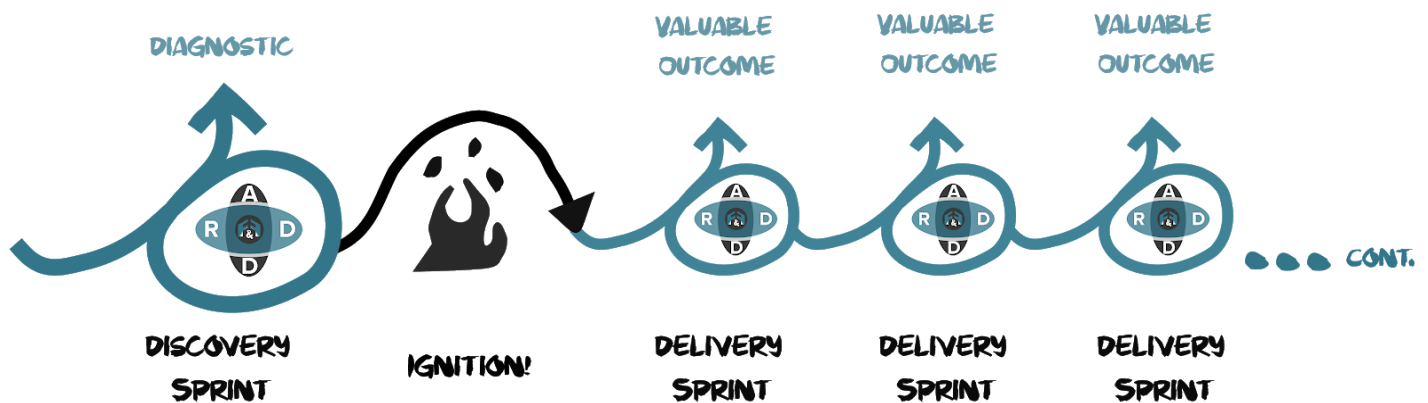


Traditional lean thinking applied differently

Taking a look at our approach to improvement

SPRINT BASED DELIVERY



“Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into smaller jobs.”- Henry Ford.

This quote by Henry Ford, re-iterated by countless others after him, is common sense. Regardless of the name or branding you give it, we (the royal we) learned a very long time ago that meaningful progress is made through **focused, iterative action** taken towards a **worthy ideal** (vision). In our context, we could dress it up by saying that we solve a complex problem by breaking it down into its component parts, exploring them in the context of the broader system and vision, and prioritising the key leverage points (smaller problems) to address first in our pursuit of the vision. I prefer the simple nature and intent of Henry’s statement!

Why pretend to try and know everything at the beginning of an initiative when you don’t? Why lock people into commitments (time, cost, deliverables) that they either don’t buy-into and/or don’t understand and consequently impose constraints that limit the possibility and ultimately the value-add of their work? Why wait 6-12 months or longer to see any sort of meaningful output? Whilst detailed commitments and plans give the impression of clarity and intention, they’re often a comfort blanket (or straightjacket) disguising a false sense of security. If we can shift our mindset to focus on the **outcome** we are aiming to achieve,

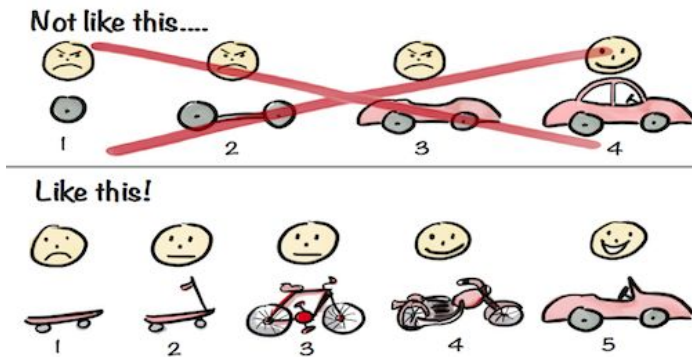
and empower our teams to make meaningful, demonstrable progress towards that outcome and actually enjoy doing it, isn’t that the whole point? We believe so.

In a previous post, we talked about our **ADDR framework**, which helps guide our thinking and application in an iterative manner. Please refer to our post titled “*Lifting the hood on our framework: ADDR*” for further information. We now would like to lift things a level up, and explain **how** we apply the ADDR framework to drive purposeful and impactful change in a continuous way, as opposed to a traditional big-bang project way. We adopt a sprint-based delivery approach to achieve this.

Sprint-Based (iterative) Delivery:

What is a sprint? Sprints are in vogue right now, but you could also call them iterations or **time-boxed events** with a shared commitment to delivering something of value to the customer at the end. The length of a sprint varies depending on the context and nature of the outcome, but they typically run for 2 weeks. A sprint has a goal (desired outcome), a committed and empowered team with all of the required capabilities to achieve that goal, and a business owner (product owner) to guide the team and own/represent the broader vision. At the end of each sprint, the intention is that the outcome is realised by the customer/client. *(continued over page)*

Take this simple example below created by Henrik Kniberg to demonstrate two different approaches towards solving the problem of a customer wanting to travel more quickly from point A to point B.



Henrik Kniberg

Via the traditional approach (top), we can spend time designing the perfect vehicle and then make the customer wait 4 months to receive it. That is, they have to wait for any solution, which they may or may not even like at the end. Alternatively, we can give the customer a skateboard tomorrow which gets them from A to B sooner (albeit inefficiently), and then gradually improve and enhance it over time based on their actual feedback! Interestingly, the end product might end up being quite different from the original vision. Which is great, unless you locked yourself into a vision 6 months ago that can't change! A sprint-based or iterative delivery approach not only allows you to deliver value sooner but also to adapt and improve your vision based on **feedback** from the customer.

So, sprints are the mechanism by which we breakdown work into meaningful chunks, and continuously deliver value over time. We then apply the ADDR framework within each sprint to ensure we remain aligned to the broader vision and continuously improve/reflect on the process. This is **continuous improvement** in practice. For our engagements, we typically have two types of sprints which we explain below. They are discovery sprints and delivery sprints.

The Discovery Sprint:

"Let's just get in there and do something, now!"... said everyone, at some stage or another. Jumping into the wheel and running full pelt with little actual progress isn't always fun, but it sure gives us something to do. Taking a walk-up to the balcony and seeing things for what they truly are with objective eyes isn't always as easy (assuming you're not living up there). For us, that is where we like to start. We

care about what a company is, and what it is intending to be. A discovery sprint is an opportunity to establish a shared understanding of what is really going on, and to align on what we are trying to achieve. We always prefer to begin an engagement with a dedicated discovery sprint.

A discovery sprint may entail things like:

- ❖ Analysis (diagnostic) of the current state
- ❖ Workplace (front line) observations
- ❖ Opportunity identification
- ❖ Scoping/framing sessions
- ❖ Strategic reviews
- ❖ Opportunity prioritisation
- ❖ Foundations training (e.g. lean & agile)

The goal of the discovery sprint is primarily to provide an informed **backlog** of prioritised opportunities to take forward into delivery. Secondly, it is to identify the members of the sprint **delivery team**, including members from the clients' business. Our intention is to leave behind a legacy, not just an outcome. If the team can carry on delivering value after the engagement ends and we leave, win!

Delivery Sprint:

A delivery sprint is a focused event with the intention of delivering something of value to the end customer. We differentiate it from a discovery sprint, as there is greater emphasis on **delivery** as opposed to exploration. However, every delivery sprint also entails some element of discovery and reflection, otherwise, we risk putting up the blinkers to just get @#\$% done.

The beauty of delivery sprints is that you can have as few or as many as you like. You can also stop whenever you like, and still benefit from the value that has been delivered to date (as opposed to waiting until the end of a big project for any outcome). In simple terms, you are buying the focused attention and ability of a highly capable team to deliver something that matters each sprint. Sometimes that outcome might not be hit, and that's ok. "A sprint would only be a failure if the team didn't deliver anything and didn't learn from it." - Mike Cohn. At the end of each sprint, there is a showcase event in which the team presents the outcome of the sprint to the client/customer. The feedback of the client/customer is taken on board and actioned immediately where possible in the following sprint.

If you would like to learn a little more about sprints and our way of working, please get in touch with me at nik@fireandflint.com, or via our website at fireandflint.com.