Honey, I shrunk the backlog

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Product Tank, Exeter

https://www.allankelly.net/book-draw/

Audience participation time

https://www.allankelly.net/book-draw/

Do you have a Product Backlog? – Hands up

- Keep your hand up if…
  - Your backlog will be done this quarter?
  - Your backlog will be done this year?

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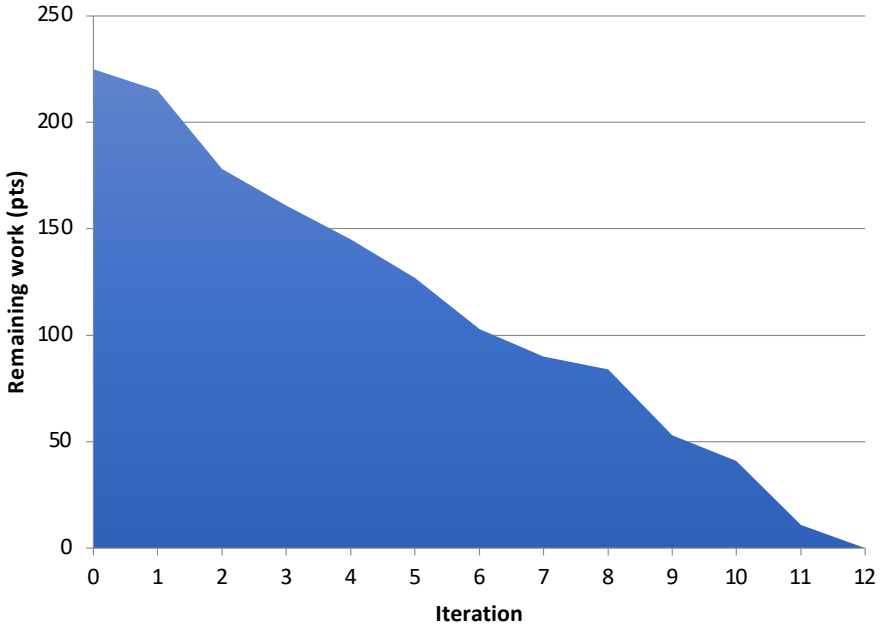
Who can tell me…

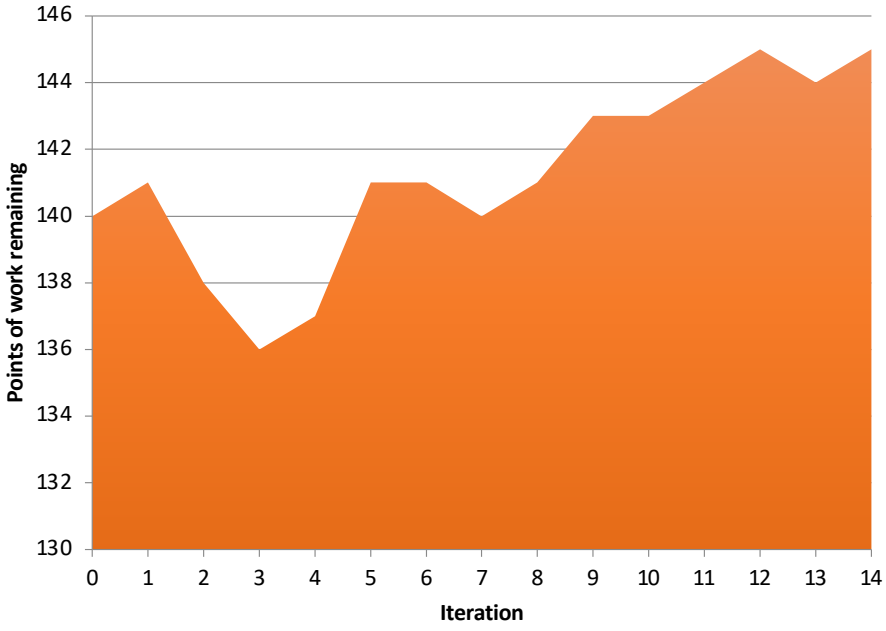
- Your team's velocity?
  - e.g. how fast your are doing backlog items
- Your backlog growth rate?
  - % growth on average each month

Backlogs….

Should look like this



Usually look like this



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Spoiler…

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Nuke the backlog

You have nothing to lose but your burndown charts

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We should …

- Stop global warming
- Feed the world
- Create world peace
- Do everything in the backlog

Road to hell is paved with good intention

Backlogs are comfort object

transient objects

Time to let go of childish things

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Cost of adding a backlog item? ~$0

Cost of saying "No"? Hours & hours, $thousands

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6 months later…

Marooned backlog items corrode trust

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Our problem is not having ideas for backlog items

Problem #1 is delivering the backlog

Problem #2: meeting backlog expectations

Backlogs don’t scale

Backlogs work well in the small

e.g. Sprint backlogs & near future (weeks)

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The backlog, a bottomless pit

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And the new stuff…

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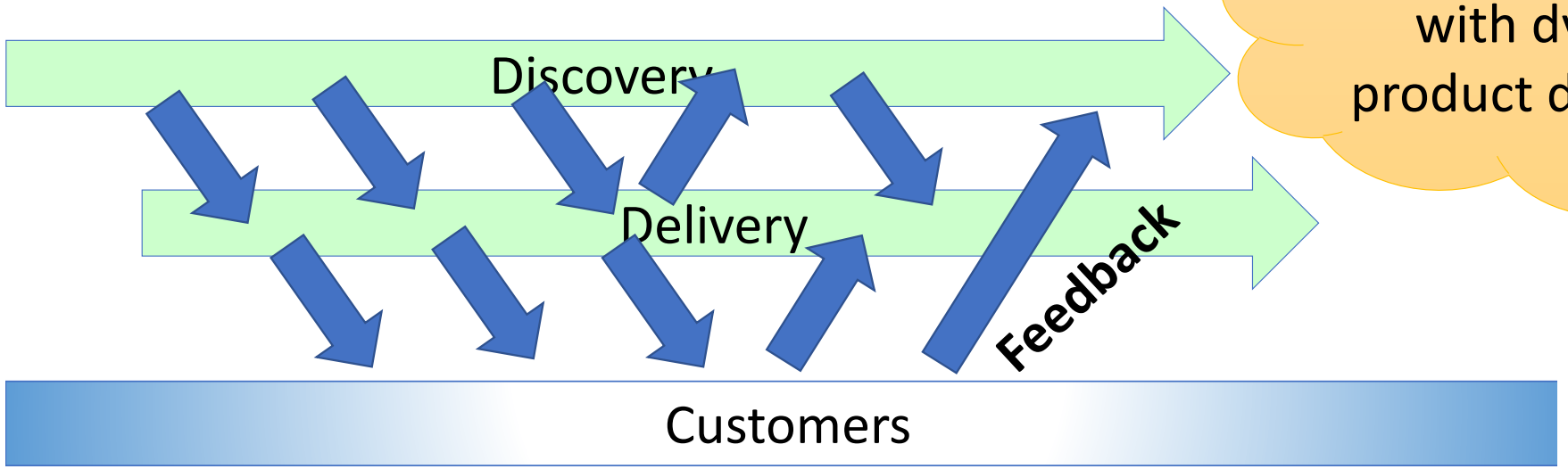
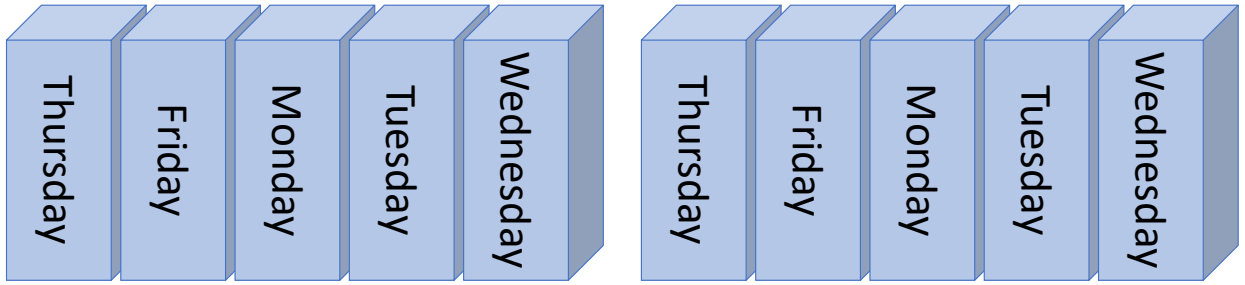
Dual-track Agile with discovery





How does an existing backlog fit with dynamic product discovery?

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And OKRs…

Objectives and key results

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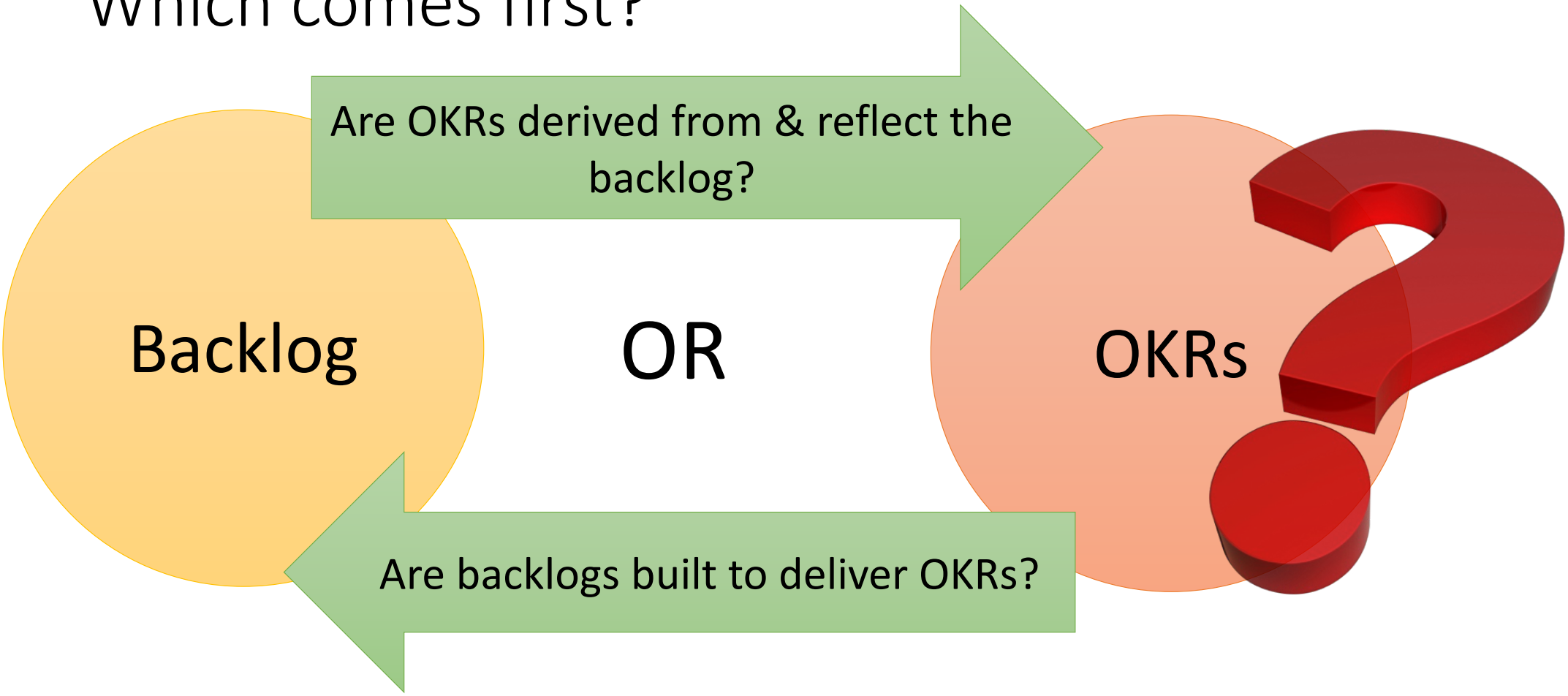
Which comes first?



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Thought experiment

What would you do if you lost your backlog?

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Life without a (product) backlog

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Day-1

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Purpose
Level 1 goal

Why does this company exist?
How do we benefit <u>society</u>?

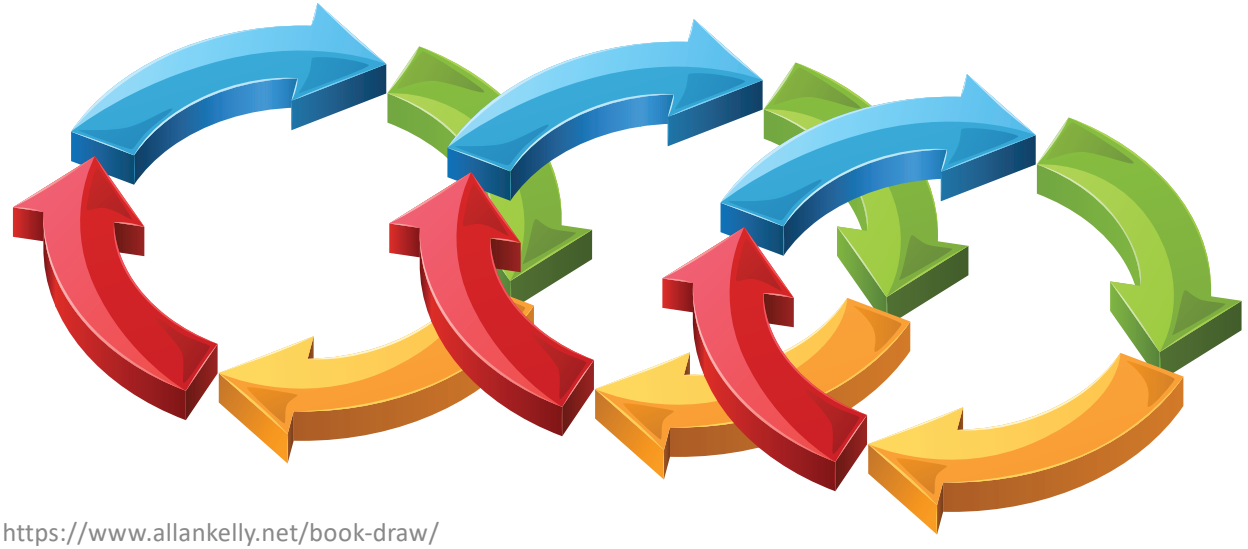
True North

Mission(s)
Level 2 goals

What is our mission?
1 company mission or,
multiple missions & teams

Level 3 Goals

- Reset every 3 months
- Nuke the backlog
- Re-assert missions
- Start again, day-1



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Replace backlog with a

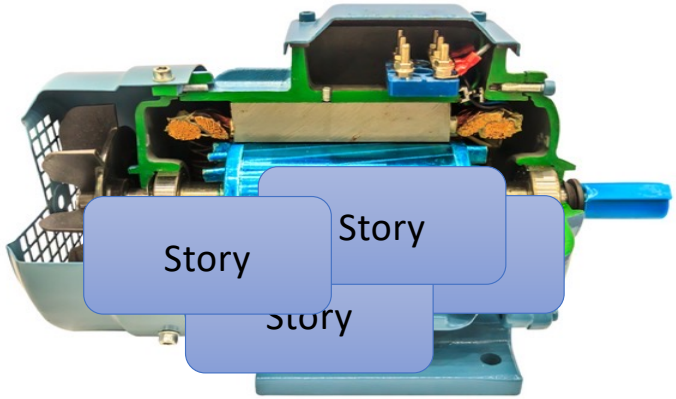
Just-in-Time story generator

Lead with:

- Purpose
- Mission
- True North

Implement with:

- OKRs
- Product Goals
- Day-1 thinking
- Jobs to be done



Create the stories that advance you towards your goals

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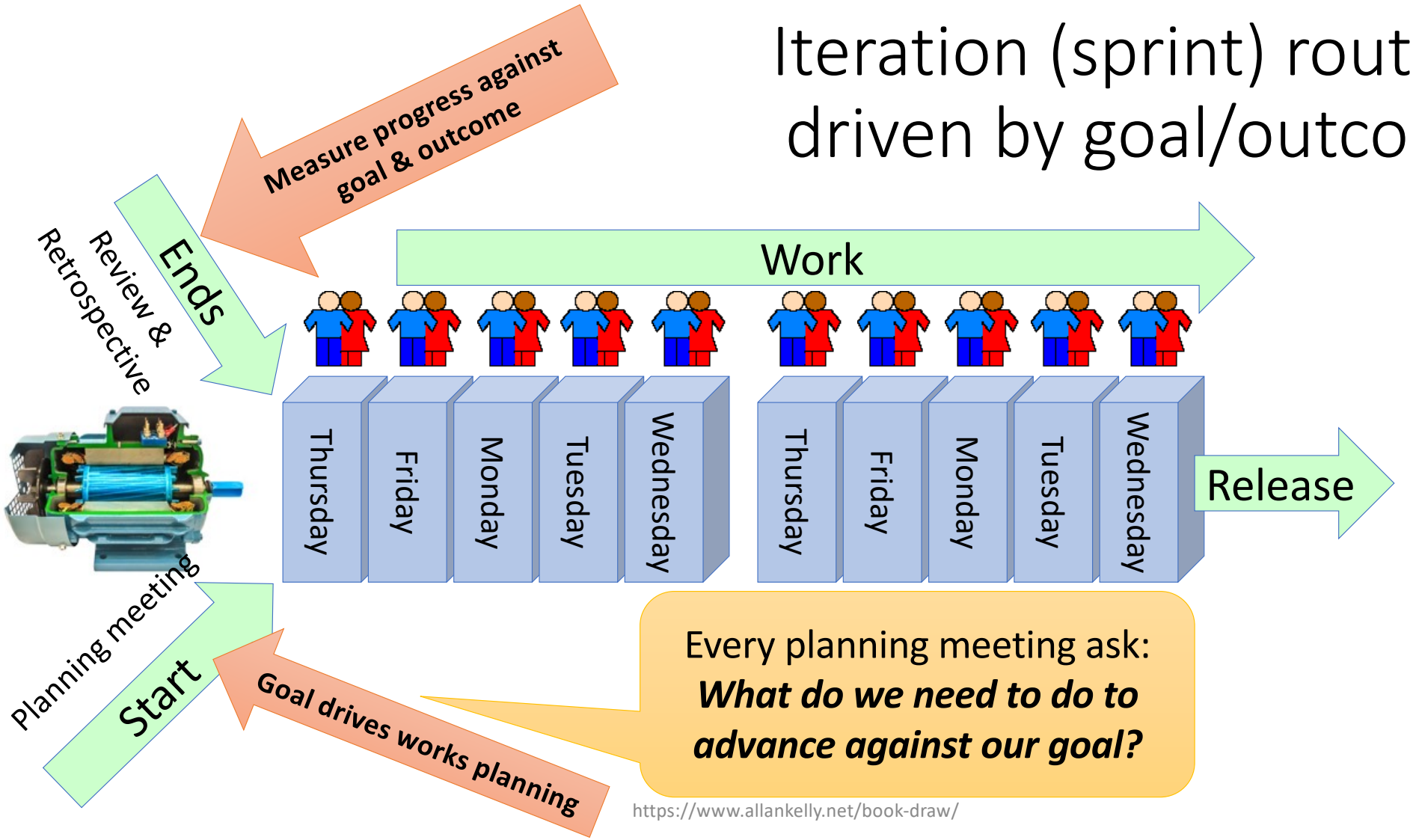
Iteration (sprint) routine driven by goal/outcome



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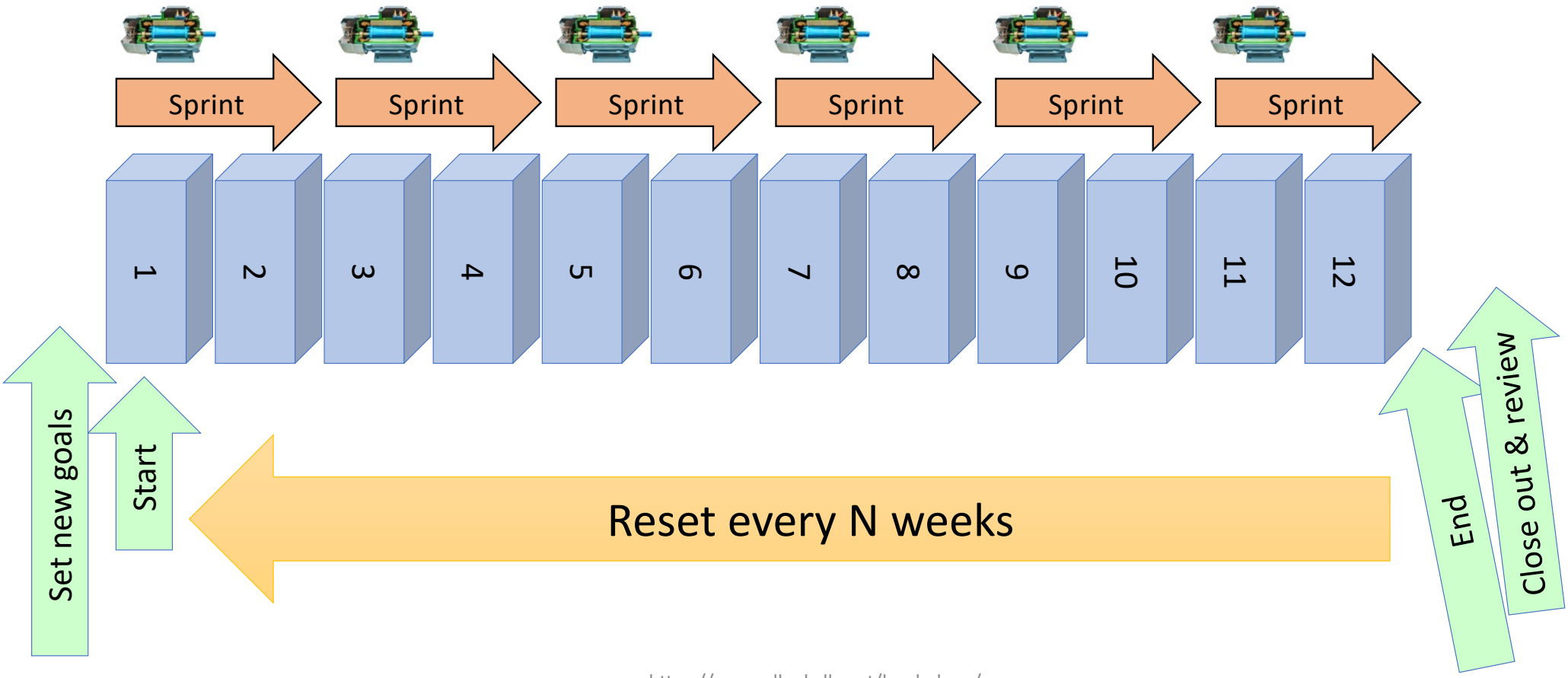
Super Cycle



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Work within timeboxes

Ask not:

How long will it take?

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Ask:

What can we do in the time we have?

- This week
- 2-week sprint
- 3-month quarter

Lead with Goals

Work follows goals

Goals follow strategy

Focus on goals, and little else

Objective Driven Agile

ODA

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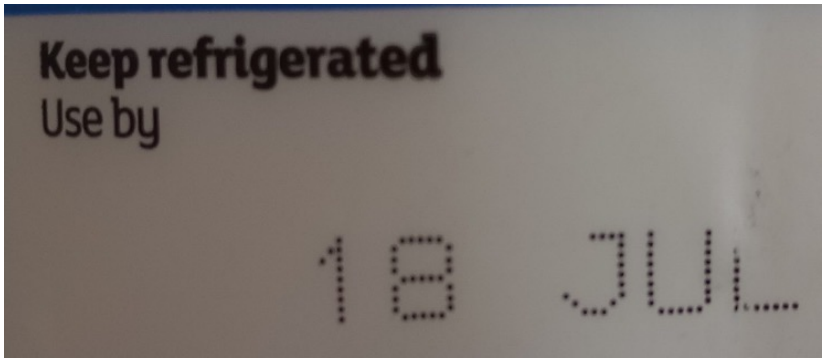
Until you *Nuke the Backlog*…



1. Put “good ideas” somewhere else
   - Create a separate list of things which are worth remembering and which you might do in future
2. Write an expiry/use-by date on any item which does go in the backlog
   - Items will naturally time out
3. Set objectives & be guided by objectives over backlog
   - Every 10 weeks rewrite objectives
   - Scrum people: emphasis Product Goal & Spring Goal over backlog
   - Work with objectives and let the backlog fade away

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Goals over backlog
Objective Driven Agile

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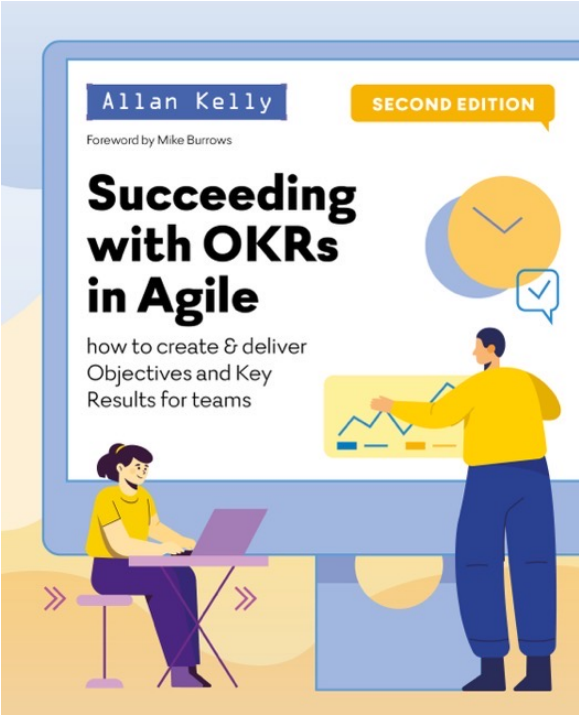
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