Project management 101 *by Zavanak*

11. ORGANISATION AND APPROACHES

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11.4 Unconventional approaches

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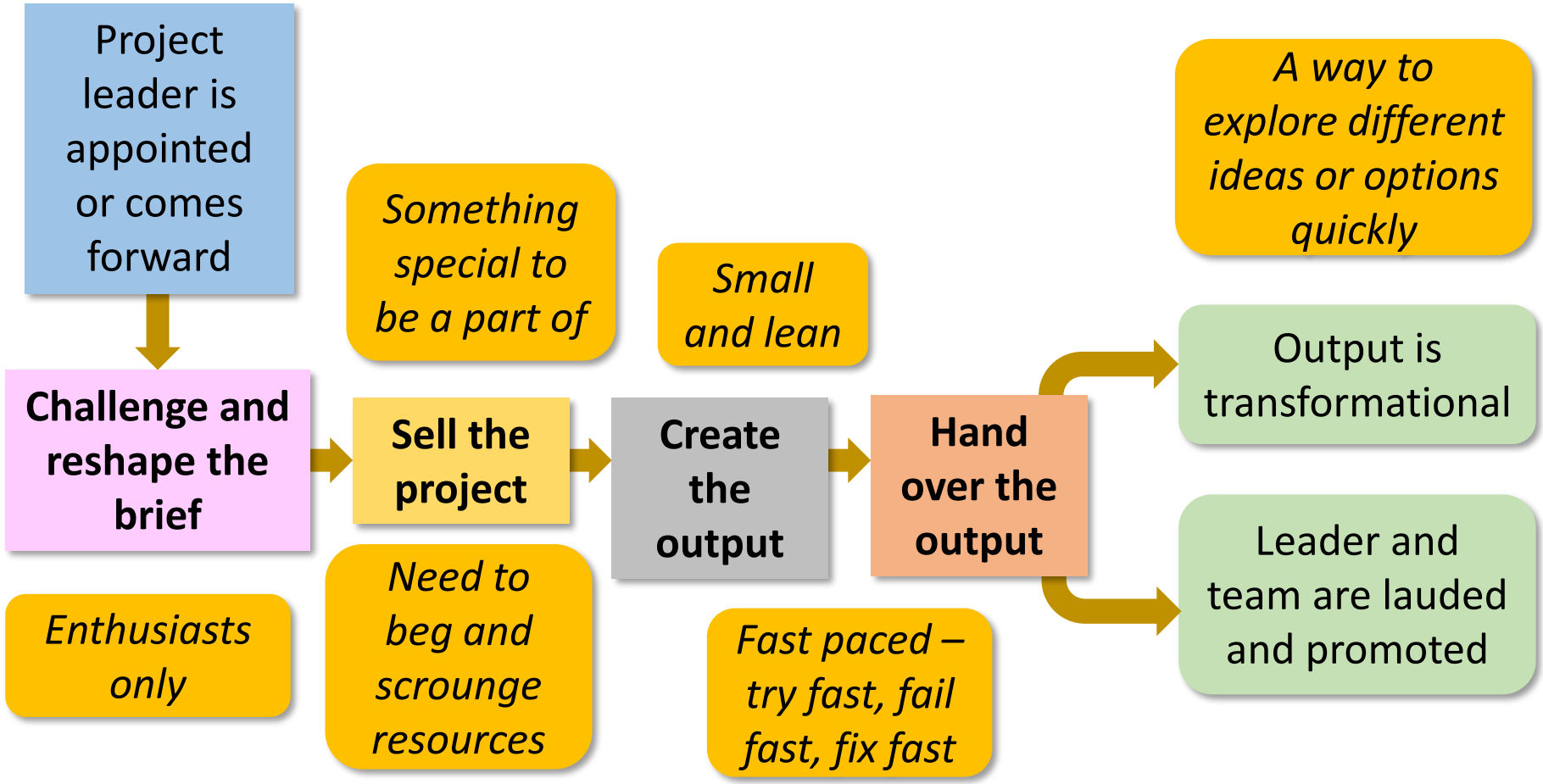
The Wow! project

A radical route promoted by Tom Peters



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The special project unit

Set up deliberately to achieve results which the traditional organisation could not.

Often given a secret ground-breaking project, with a charismatic leader in charge.

Lockheed Skunk Works established in 1940s, under Clarence 'Kelly' Johnson, to produce a radical new warplane in record time.

Went on to develop a series of extraordinary aircraft, including this U2 spy plane.

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Features of the special project unit

- A very high degree of autonomy, with the boss being answerable only to the most senior executives in the parent organisation
- **Physical separation from the day to day operations and other projects**
- Having the minimum number of people, supported by the leanest possible project office
- **Timely provision of time and cost data, limited reporting, but thorough documentation of the project**
- Streamlined design release, quality and other procedures
- **Strict control over who has access to the project**
- A reward system based on contribution to the project
- **Real trust between the customer, the project team, and all suppliers and partners, that allows commitments to be made without full contracts in place**

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Crowdsourcing

Harness the expertise and time of a dispersed set of people to undertake a project.

Open-ended endeavours – like Wikipedia

Large scale research efforts – like citizen science

Delegating microtasks from a large project – like Amazon Mechanical Turk

Tapping expertise outside a conventional workforce – like Riversimple

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Organisation culture affects the project approach

An organisation that has used waterfall methods for decades will not switch to agile overnight, even if project performance is poor.

Neither will it adopt a novel environment without very strong support from a powerful executive.

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