

ORGANIZING ARMAMENT WORK FOR LEAN PORTFOLIO PLANNING

CONTEXT

AFRL's Digital Capabilities Directorate (DCD) and Munitions Directorate (RW) needed to make better investment planning decisions, but current work priorities were inconsistently defined and prioritized across programs and teams. It was difficult to understand and collaborate cross-program solution design work and see how it "fit together".

CLIENT CHALLENGE

Teams were overextended and struggling with shifting priorities and scope. Overall, there was lack flexibility for urgent, off-cycle funding. There was also poor visibility and transparency into teams' priorities, which blocked process improvement for more frictionless business & operations.

- Teams stretched thin, with priorities & scope constantly shifting
- SDPP Director's Strategic Guidance (DSG) based on "ad hoc, disjointed planning guidance"
- SDPP Concept Definition Phase (CDP) inefficient and delayed, without funding flexibility for off-cycle priorities
- Lack of "dashboard visibility" and transparency
- 90+ inefficient processes, and not sure "where to start"



SNAPSHOT

-  Lean Portfolio Management & Agile Work Decomposition
-  US Dept of Defense
-  Scaled Agile Framework, Jira, Confluence

PAIN POINTS

- Shifting priorities & scope
- Top-down strategic processes too inflexible
- Lack of transparency & visibility across teams

RESULTS

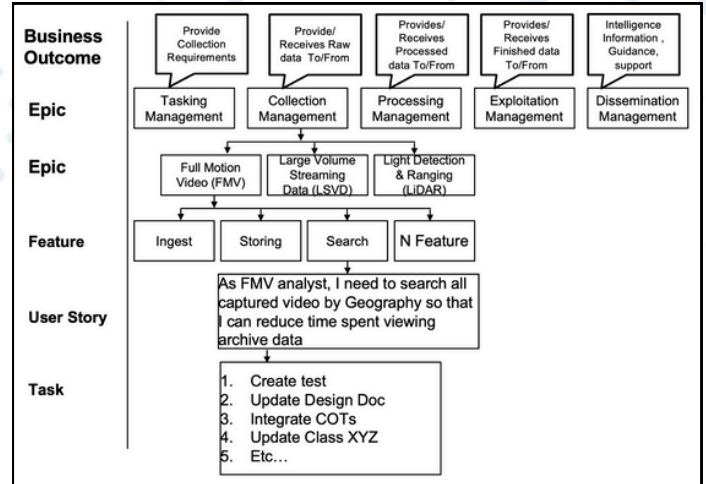
- Eight programs had clearly defined epics and confidence to decompose their own work
- Better visibility & collaboration, across teams and leadership
- Better prioritization of "where to start" optimizing and automating processes

"This is the most visibility we've ever had across our work priorities."

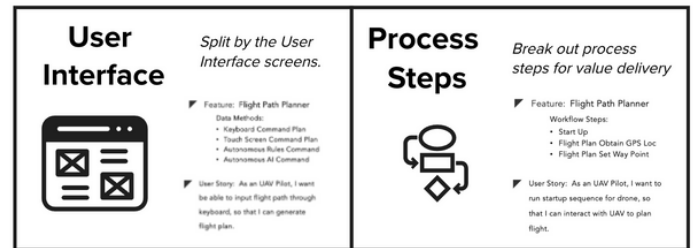
--AFRL/RW Colonel, Digital Transformation Lead

WHAT WE DID

- We interviewed 8 programs to understand their priorities, with side-by-side “epic” writing - big work chunks across 1+ years.
- We helped teams decompose epics into smaller chunks (“features”) – using 10 system engineering “work decomp” pattern cards.
- We helped teams “execute” using tools such as Jira and Confluence, with practical microlearning & hands-on training.
- We provided teams better visibility, leveraging tool data for “automated quads”.
- We provided insight into program “ground” conditions to help process analysis team prioritize UX & process improvement efforts, to “Give More Bench Time Back to S&E’s”.



Example R&D work decomposition



Example Engineering “Work Decomp” Pattern Cards

BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

- Better (more realistic) leadership SDPP planning, based on “demand signal analysis instead of ad-hoc, disjointed planning guidance”
- More flexible pivoting for funding high-priority research initiatives that surface outside the multi-year planning cycle
- RW digital process optimization team had better program “ground conditions” to focus on fixing the “processes that matter most”

WORDS OF ADVICE

No Ivory Towers. The path to Lean Portfolio Management (LPM) for better investment planning cannot operate in an “ivory tower”; it’s important to work with teams to organize their priorities into “big things of value” (epics), and help them connect those to the commander’s intent / objectives.

Teach Them to Fish. It’s also important to help teams become confident to define their own “things of value” and decompose their own work into features by “speaking their language”, so they can self-maintain as ground conditions change.