The Power of Inceptions

Lakshmi Ramaseshan

Sr. Agile Coach

Pactolan

A LEARFIELD COMPANY

A little bit about me …

Background:

- Developer 8-10 years
- Leading Agile Teams 12+ years

Core Values:

- Empathy for every person
- Build Trust in every conversation
- Courageous Conversations
- Meet Teams where they are at
- Just Enough Process

Inception Learning Objectives

1. Our Journey & The Why
2. Inception Process
3. Building Fluency

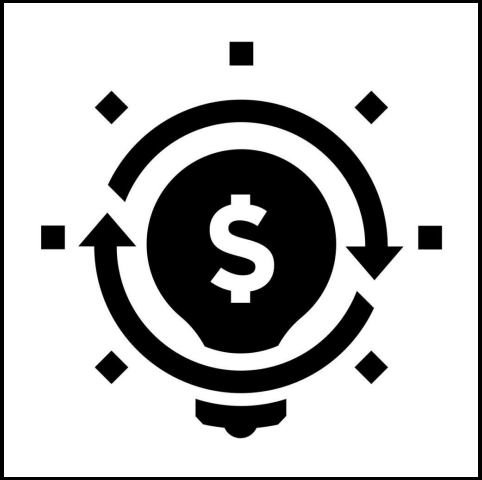
Part I - Our Journey & The Why

- Inception Origins
- A few Pilot Teams
- Observations
- The Why

Our Journey - Origin

Agile projects emphasize the early and continuous delivery of valuable software.

- *How might we workout what should be in a Minimum Delightful Product (MDP) & kick off work efficiently?*
- *How might we ensure the team is creating the product with a "shared understanding" ?*
- *How might we ensure the team is building the product incrementally and has an "effective plan to get to the right outcomes"?*



Our Journey - Origin

"Lean Inception" - born @ Thoughtworks in 2004 (link)

Inception is an opportunity for teams to understand the mission and purpose of the journey they are about to embark on. It sets rules of engagement, boundaries, and protocols so teams can have the freedom and work to their highest potential.

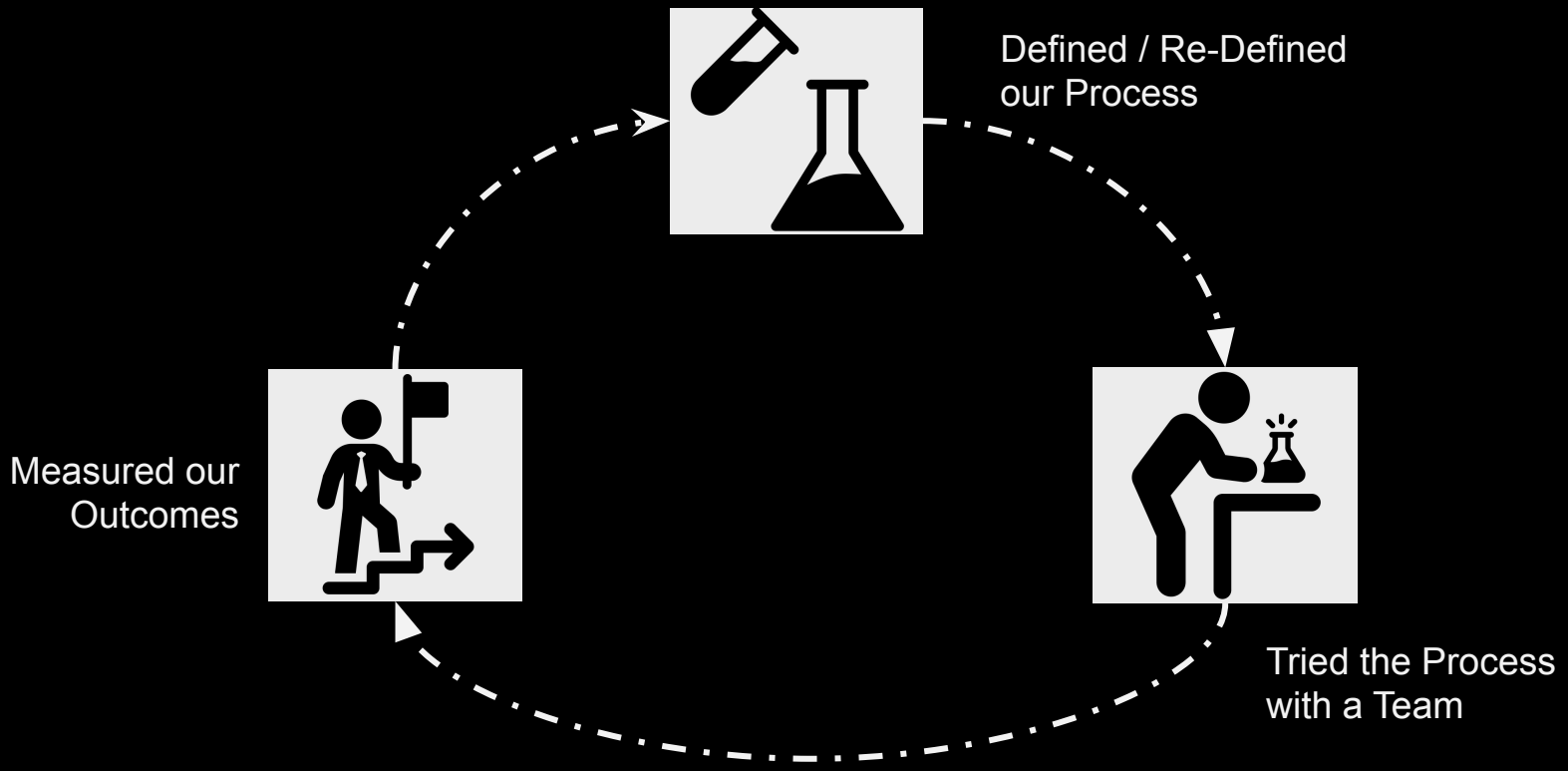
Our Journey - Guiding Principle

Everyone is naturally creative,

resourceful and whole

(1 of 4 cornerstones of the Co-Active Coaching Model)

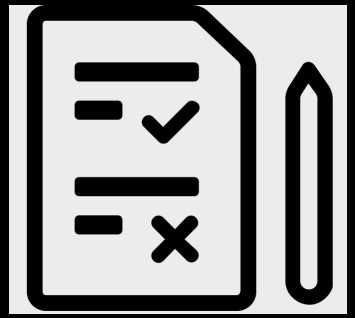
Our Journey - A few Pilot Teams



Our Journey - Observations

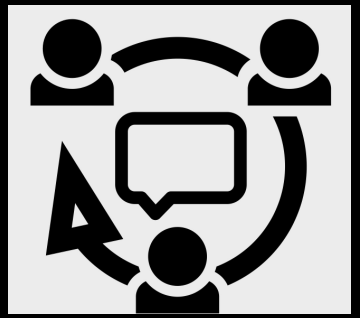
Perception is Reality!

Too Expensive
“Mini-Inception”?



Maturity Assessments

< Clarity
< Purpose



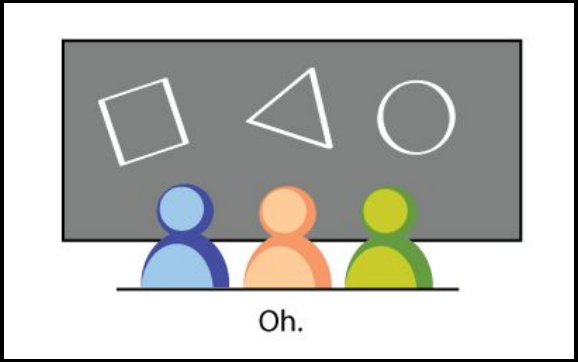
Retrospectives

< Shared Understanding

Our Journey - The Why

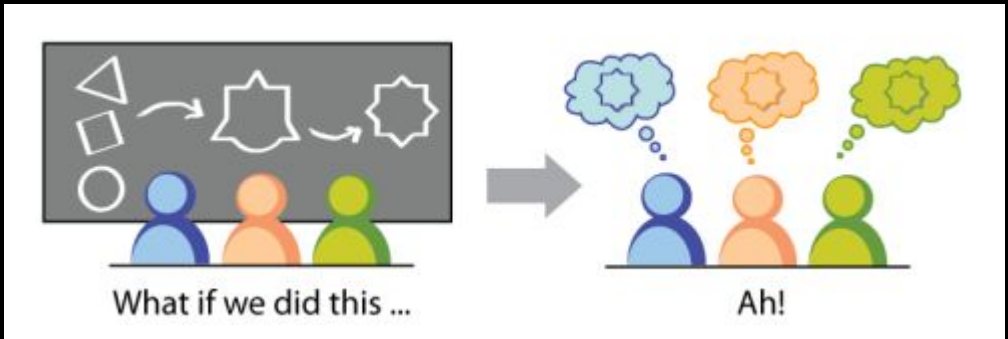
Our Mission : > Clarity & Purpose

Educate organization on value of inceptions



Make it Mandatory

Provide Inception Training



No “mini inceptions”. Mindful of not rushing conversations

Part II - Inception Process

- Layout
- Who Attends
- The Outcomes
- Key Preparation
- Critical Concepts (Customer Journey, Story Mapping & Slicing)

#1 Problem

The single biggest problem in communication
is the **illusion** that it has taken place.

- George Bernard Shaw

Layout

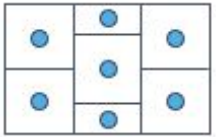
KICK-OFF

PRODUCT VISION

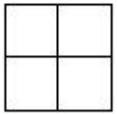
PERSONA

TECH, UX & BUSINESS REVIEW

STORY MAPPING



MDP CANVAS / SLICES



IS - IS NOT
DOES - DOES NOT
DO

FEATURES BRAINSTORMING

CUSTOMER JOURNEYS & FLOWS

SLICING

SHOWCASE INCEPTION

Who attends

We recognize that not everyone needs to be part of the Inception however the goal is to *minimize misalignment*.

Stakeholders/ Leads

Team

Dependencies/ Partners

DevOps/ Data Analytics

The Outcomes

1. “**The Strategy**” - Why
2. “**The Work**” - What
3. “**The Team**” - How

Key Preparation

Are we ready?

- Team Readiness
- Pre-Alignment & Preparation **
- Technical & Product Review

Artifacts ** ***Product/Design***: *Customer Journeys, User Flows*
Technical: *Architecture Diagram, Sequence Diagrams*

#2 Problem

Inception is how to align people

and build the right product

Customer Journey

The customer journey map is a tool to visualize the experience of interacting with your product from the customer's point of view.

Build Customer Journeys

PROJECT: Paciolan MAP: Hotel Website Customer Journey

Katrin Maier, 42, Newport Beach

Married, three children. Likes to travel with family or just with her husband.
Prefers to choose hotel by herself, has several favorite places.

	USER MANAGEMENT			BOOK ROOM			CHANGE RESERVATION		
	Register	Login	Update Preferences	Search for Room	View Room Info	Book Room	View Reservation	Change Reservation	Cancel Reservation
Goals	Register myself as a user on the Hotel website	Login using my username and password & have a way to retrieve my password if i forget it.	Update my contact information, room preferences, payment information details and even upload a profile image of myself	Search for a room by room type, availability and location of room within the hotel. Allow a way for me to search for a room booked by Priceline or other 3rd part travel website.	View Room details easy to see the amenities available including multiple pictures of the room. Make the room information available via API to 3rd part travel websites so the user experience can be seamless regardless of which website the user uses.	Book room details using my credit card. Also allow for PayPal, Google and Apple Pay and booking through 3rd party websites like Priceline, Expedia etc.	Be able to find my reservation by reservation #, username or Full Name on the reservation	Be able to change my reservation by changing the date or changing the room. Also make the change reservation available via an API on 3rd party websites like Expedia, Priceline etc.	Be able to cancel my reservation by calling the hotel or by using the Hotel website.
Touchpoints / Channels	Hotel Website Mobile Phone	Hotel Website Mobile Phone	Hotel Website Mobile Phone	Hotel Website Mobile Phone 3rd Part Travel Site	Hotel Website Mobile Phone 3rd Party Travel Site	Hotel Website Mobile Phone 3rd Party Travel Site	Hotel Website Mobile Phone	Hotel Website Mobile Phone	Hotel Website Mobile Phone
Emotional Experience									
Pain points	Registration processes on Hotel websites are very long. I want to be able to enter my essential information to complete my registration and come back later to finish my profile	Most Hotel websites do not allow you use an email as your username. It is really hard for me to remember all my past logins	Most Hotel websites do not allow you to save all your preferences (especially credit card)						Most cancel reservation systems do not send an email once you have canceled over the phone. Sometimes I've even received a reminder for an upcoming reservation after I've canceled it
Points of delight		I would like a 2-factor authentication mechanism to retrieve my password so I have peace of mind. I would love it if the website allowed Google and Facebook Login so I did not have to create a user.	I always choose the same type of Hotel room when I travel with my family - I want to be able to save preferences like Double Queen Beds, Non-Smoking etc. in my preferences		It would be good if I can see a 360 view of the room and be able to view high quality digital pictures before making the booking				Receive an email clearly stating the cancelation went through. Be able to search for a past reservation on the Hotel website and see that it was canceled
Opportunities for Improvement	• Create a new User	• Create Login Form • Google Account Login • Facebook Login	• Update Contact Information • Update Payment Information • Update Profile Image	• Search by Room Type • Search by Room Availability • Search by Room Location • Search Room availability on 3rd Party Websites (Expedia, Priceline etc.)	View Room Details Show Pictures Make View Room Details available via 3rd party	Checkout w Credit Card Checkout w PayPal A/c Checkout w Google Pay Checkout w Apple Pay Checkout using Expedia.com Checkout using Priceline.com	View by Reservation # View by Username View by Full Name	Change Reservation by Date Change Reservation by Room Change Reservation API Call	Cancel Reservation Online

Zone A (Lens)

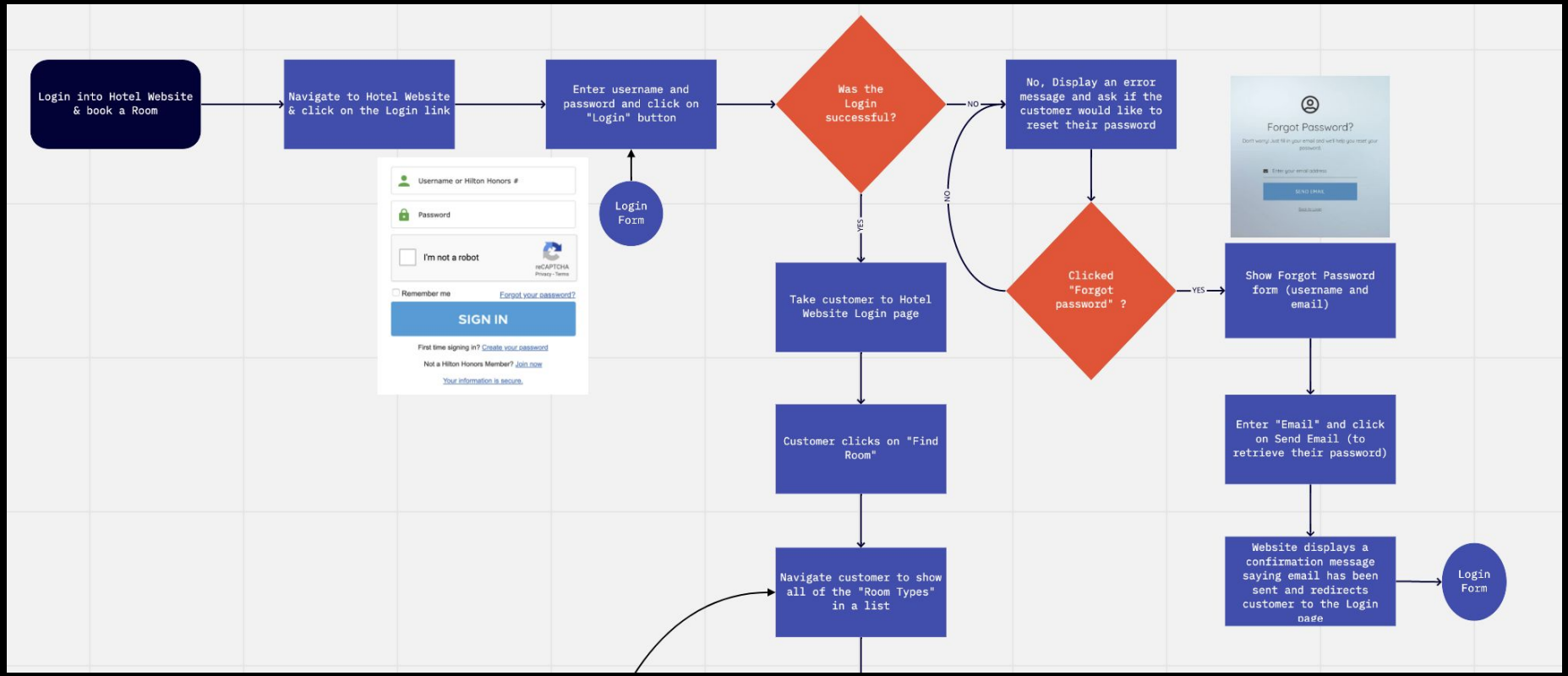
Zone B (Experience)

Zone C (Insights)

User Flow

User Flow (also called UX, Wire or UI Flow) is a set of steps taken by a user to achieve a specific goal in a digital product.

User Flow


Login into Hotel Website & book a Room
Navigate to Hotel Website & click on the Login link
Enter username and password and click on "Login" button
Was the Login successful?
NO
No, Display an error message and ask if the customer would like to reset their password
Clicked "Forgot password" ?
YES
Show Forgot Password form (username and email)
Enter "Email" and click on Send Email (to retrieve their password)
Website displays a confirmation message saying email has been sent and redirects customer to the Login page
Login Form
Forgot Password?
SEND EMAIL
Login Form
Username or Hilton Honors #
Password
I'm not a robot
reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms
Remember me
Forgot your password?
SIGN IN
First time signing in? Create your password
Not a Hilton Honors Member? Join now
Your information is secure.
YES
Take customer to Hotel Website Login page
Customer clicks on "Find Room"
Navigate customer to show all of the "Room Types" in a list

#3 Problem

[When releasing] software incrementally, **how do you choose** a first bundle of features that is both high value and immediately useful?

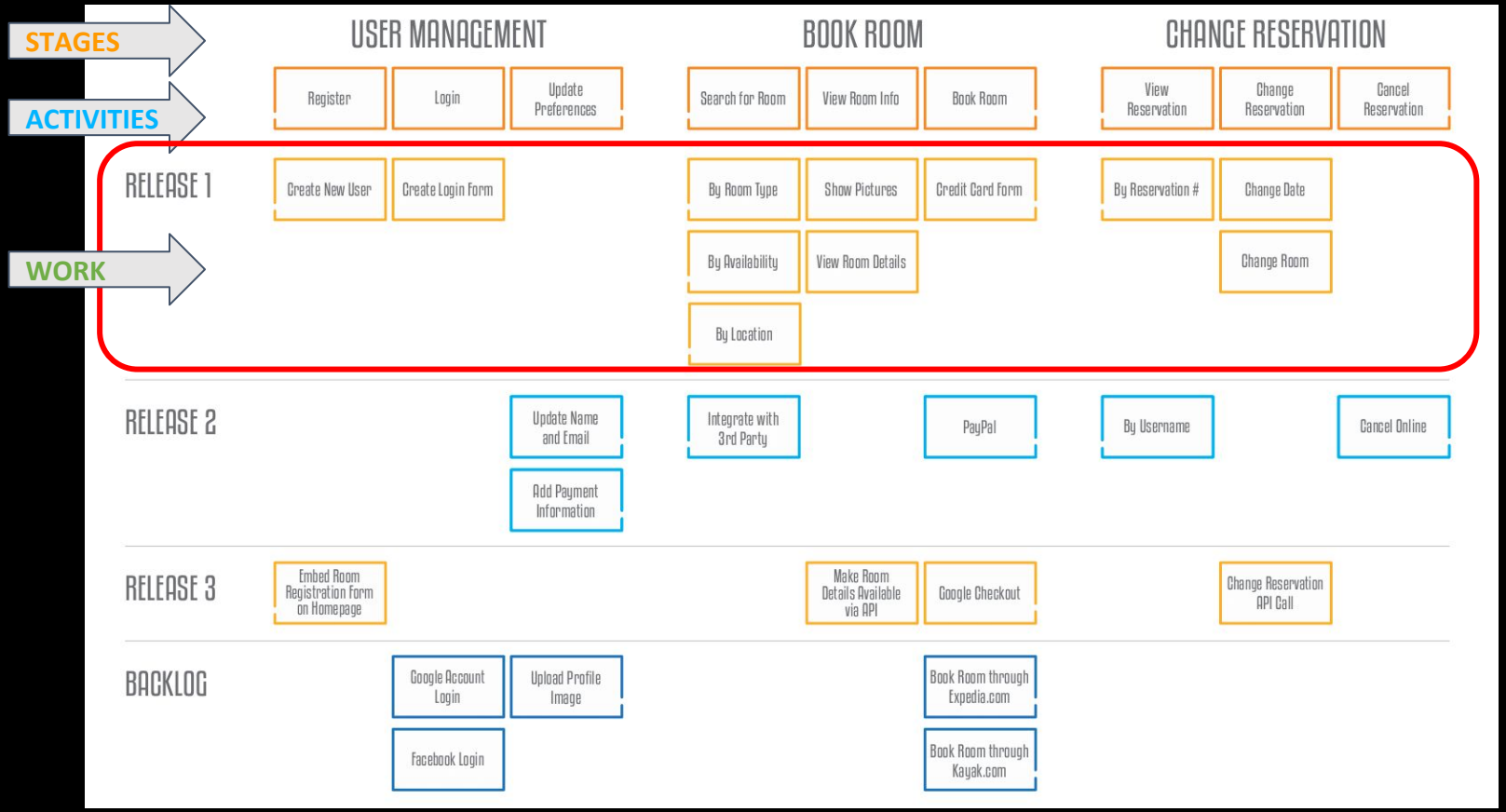
- Jeff Patton

Story Mapping

Story mapping is a method for arranging user stories to create a more holistic view of how they fit into the overall user experience.

Pre Pandemic Story Mapping

Virtual Story Mapping

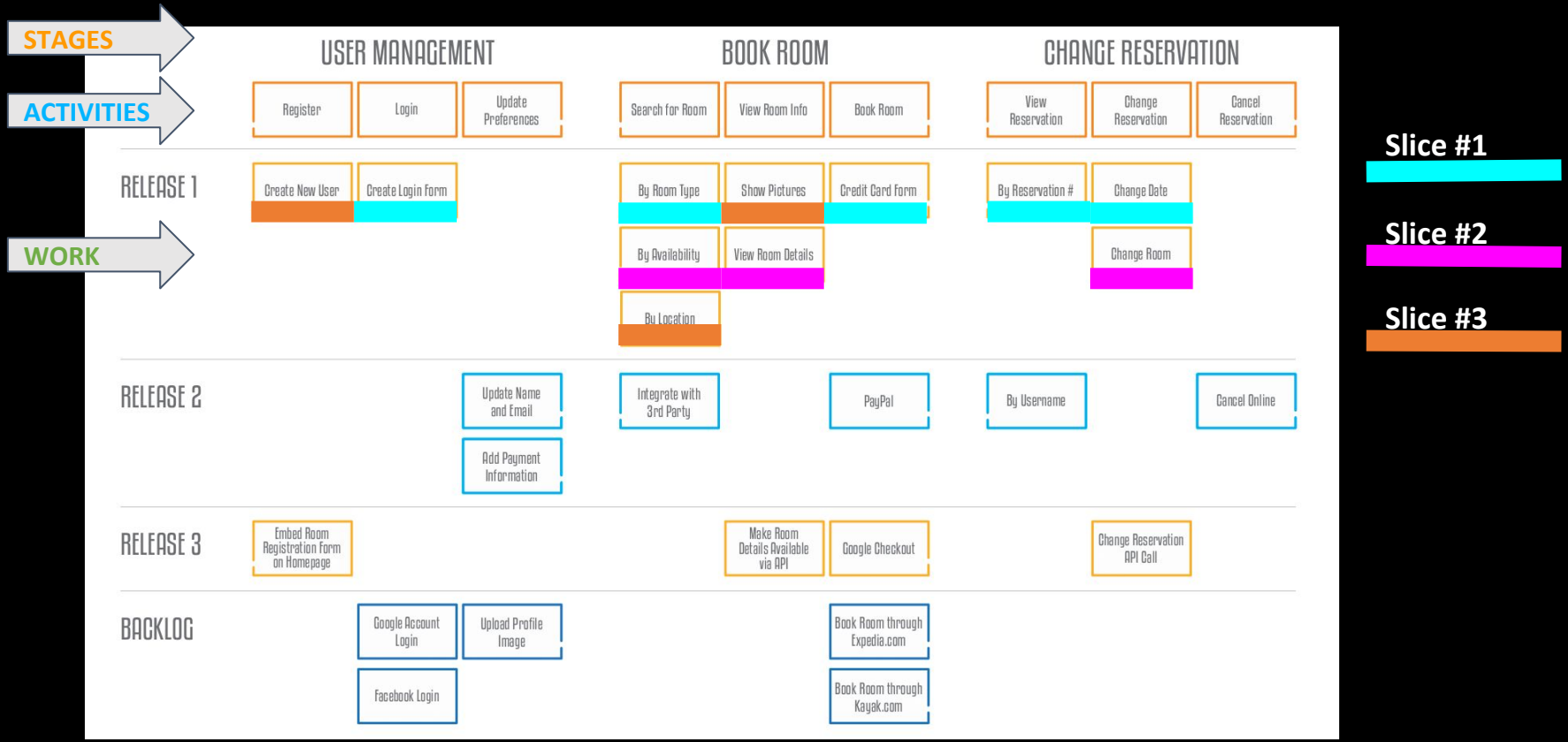


Slices

Slices are increments <u>within</u> a “Specific Release”.

They are proof points which allow us to quickly validate our value and pivot as needed.

Slicing a Story Map



Incremental Delivery

(with Meaningful Slices)

Slice #1

Login into a hotel reservation system, book & pay for a room by searching for a room by “room type” and change the date of the reservation.

Slice #2

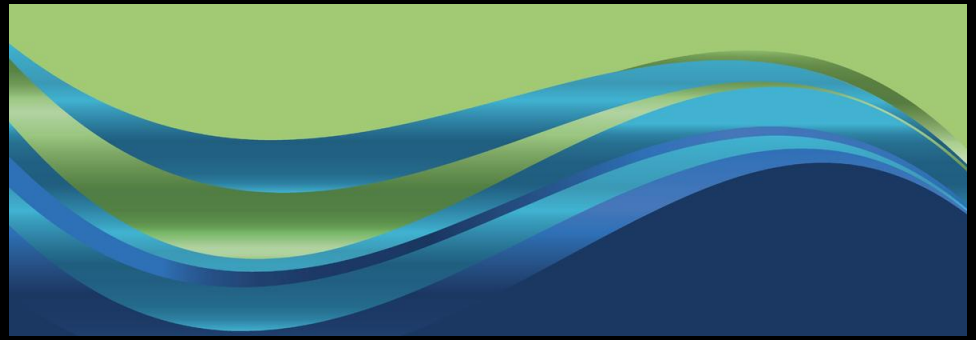
Allow an existing customer to find a room based on room type and find and change the room of their reservation.

Slice #3

Allow a customer to create an account, find a room based on the location of the hotel and ability to view room pictures.

Part III - Building Fluency

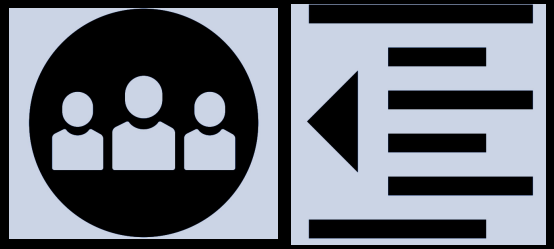
- Good to Great
- What’s after an Inception?



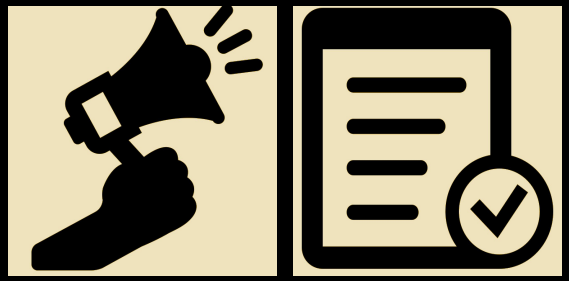
Fluency is how a team develops software when it's <u>under pressure</u>

~ Martin Fowler

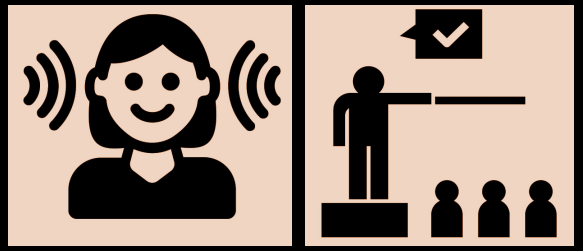
Good to Great



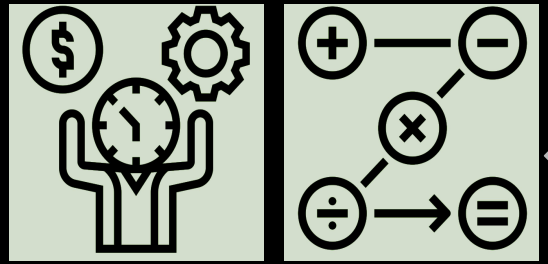
Team Readiness & Pre-Alignment



Great Pitch, Validated Business Outcomes & Detailed Artifacts



Be aware of First Time listeners & encourage Disciplined Collaboration

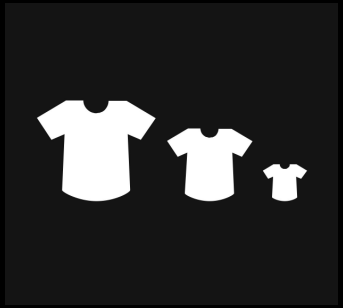


Manage your Time well & Drive to Outcomes

What’s after an Inception?

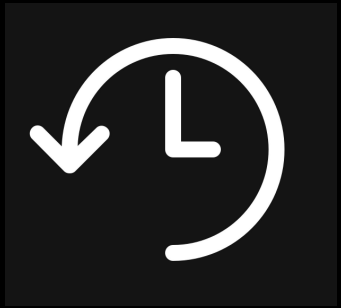
1. Disciplined Discovery

2. Build a Ready Backlog



3. Delivery Incrementally

4. Retrospect Frequently



Questions?