

A scenic photograph of a stone archway spanning a river. The arch is constructed from large, dark stones. To the right of the arch, there is a large, tall stack of logs. The river reflects the arch and the surrounding greenery. The text is overlaid on the image.

Feed Success & Starve Failure: Continuous Product Management

INDUSTRY 2019

Elizabeth Ayer
@ElizAyer

**My favorite senior PM
interview question:**



**Tell me about
something you built
that you *really*
shouldn't have.**



“I have never made a bad decision because I’m such a great PM”



Translation

“I’ve never had real responsibility”

or

“I never stuck around to see what happened with my crummy decisions.”

A woman with dark, curly hair and glasses is laughing heartily while sitting at a laptop. She is wearing a light-colored, patterned sleeveless top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A black office chair is visible behind her.

**“I had responsibility,
I was wrong, and I
learned.”**



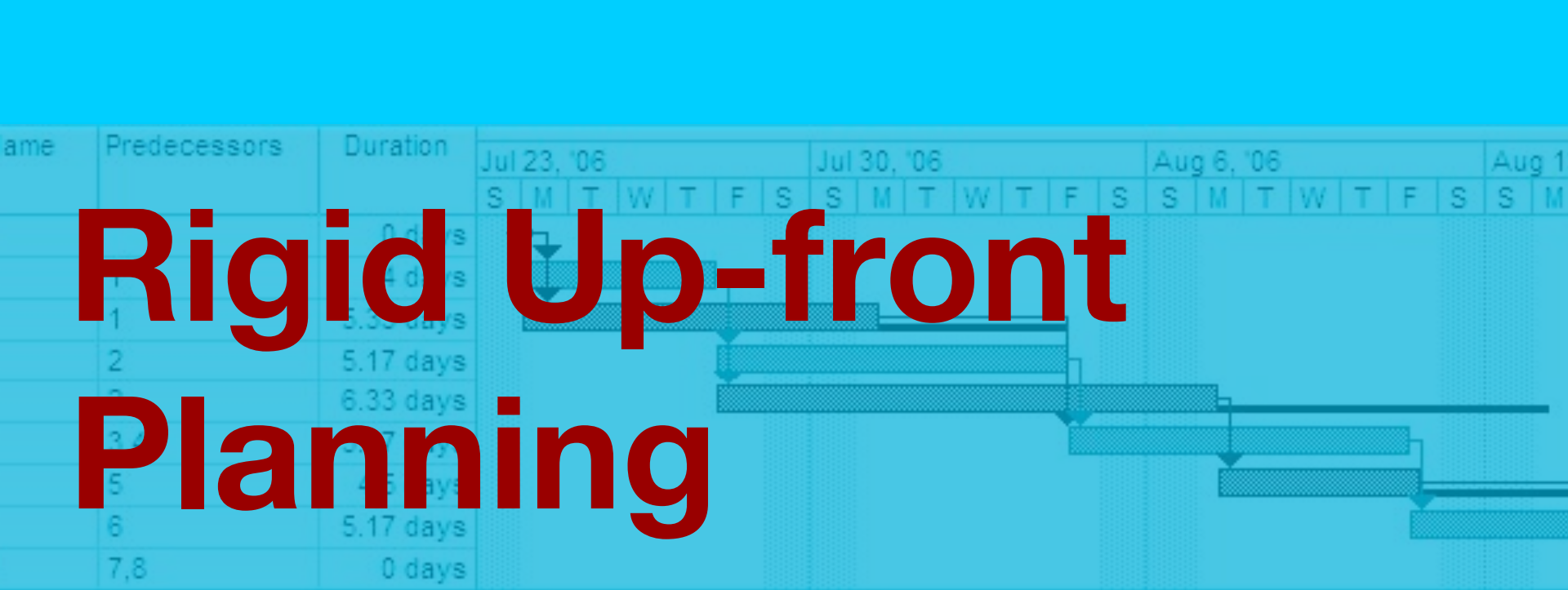
**The world of Product
is changing**



“I’ve failed small and corrected, and it’s saved me a lot of big failures.”

Continuous product management

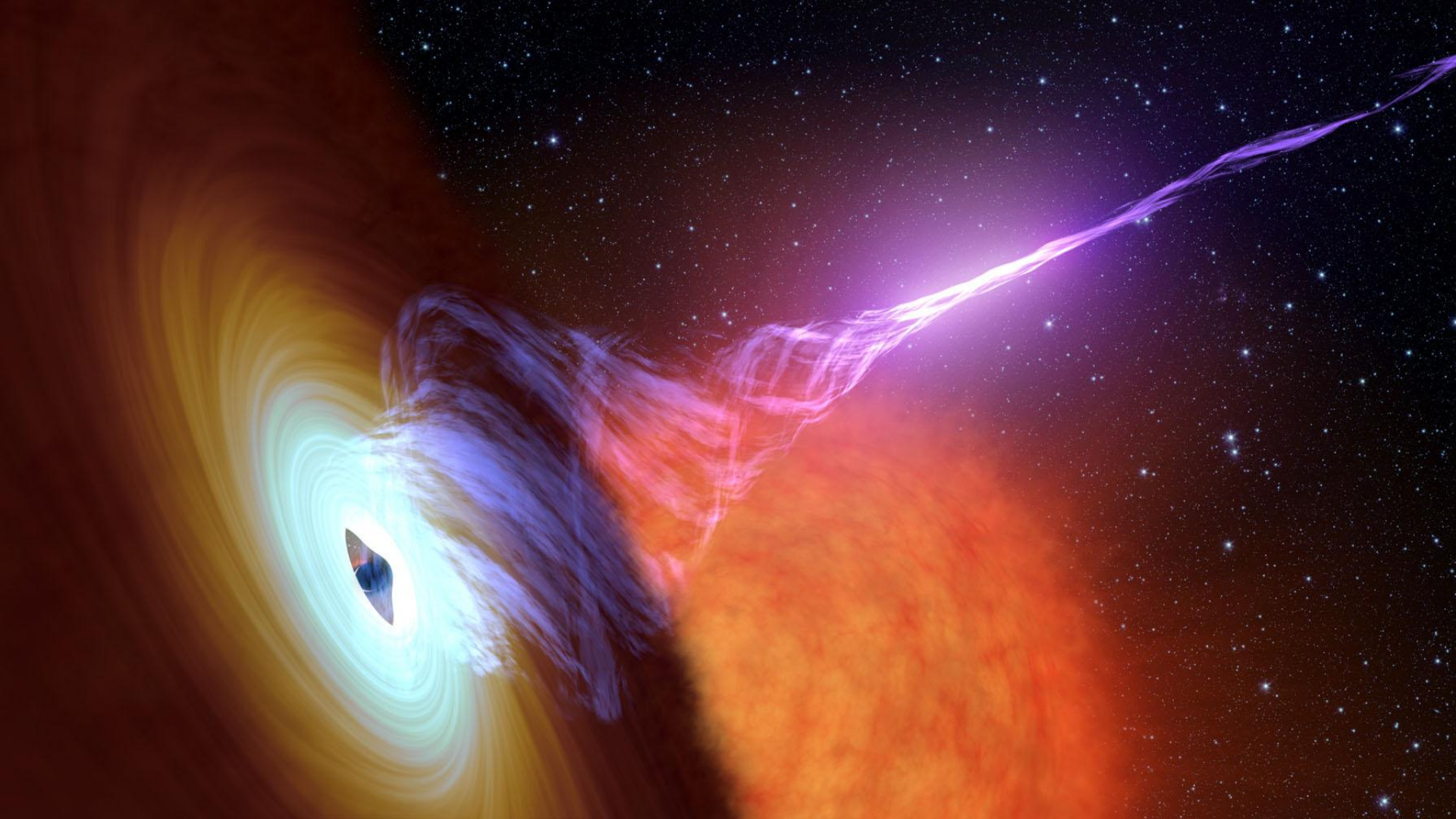




The background image is a Gantt chart with a grid. The columns represent dates from July 23, '06 to August 6, '06. The rows represent tasks with durations ranging from 0 days to 6.33 days. Arrows indicate dependencies between tasks.

Rigid Up-front Planning

... the opposite of **Continuous Product Management**



1800 F St



GENERAL SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION



Medicaid enrollment another troubled, expensive Oregon IT system

Updated Jan 09, 2019; Posted

Comm

By [Jeff Manning | The Or](#)

By [Jeff Manning and I](#)

A project dubbed by or
information technology
escalating costs, a bur

The \$166.7 million effo
led to delays for tens o
Authority spent three y
more than four times t

The Department of Human Services just entered into a \$100 million no-bid contract with [REDACTED], lead developer of the ONE system.

It is the first step in a larger move to expand electronic enrollment for food stamps and other state assistance programs. Total cost: \$241.3 million.

At this rate, the ONE system will eventually surpass the cost of its disastrous predecessor, Cover Oregon, which failed to launch despite a \$300 million investment. Cover Oregon was supposed to serve both as a health insurance exchange and benefits enrollment system.



13% of large government software projects are successful.

Source: [State Software Budgeting Handbook](#)

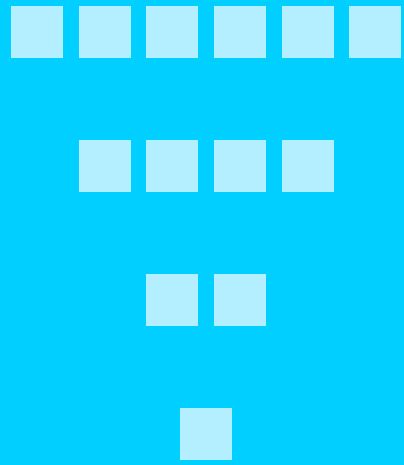
The other 87%...



A photograph showing the interior of a car. A man with short brown hair and a goatee, wearing a blue polo shirt, is in the passenger seat looking towards the driver. The driver is a woman with long dark hair, wearing an orange top, who is adjusting the rearview mirror with her right hand. The car's interior features black leather seats and a dashboard with a navigation screen. Outside the windshield, a white SUV is visible in a parking lot.

**We're driving instructors for
government product managers**

Photo by State Farm
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/statefarm/1527631101/>



**18F coaches people
to solve big problems
in small pieces**



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZK_fnS62Lk&t=520



**Lagged feedback
makes you oversteer**

Key struggles

**1/ How do you steer
your product smoothly?**

Key struggles

2/ How can I encourage senior leadership to a continuous mindset?



**Continuous Delivery
enables fast feedback**

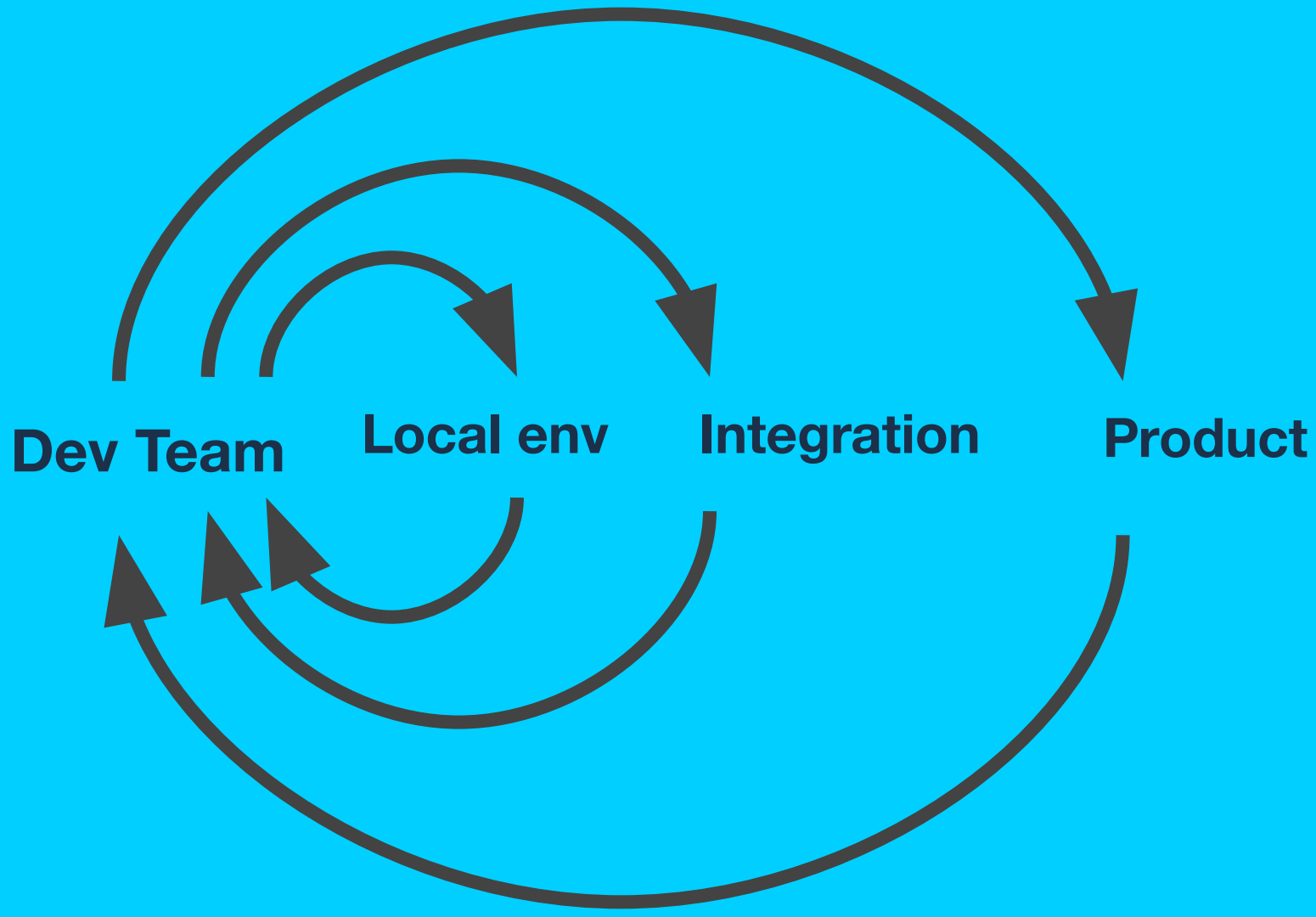
CONTINUOUS DELIVERY

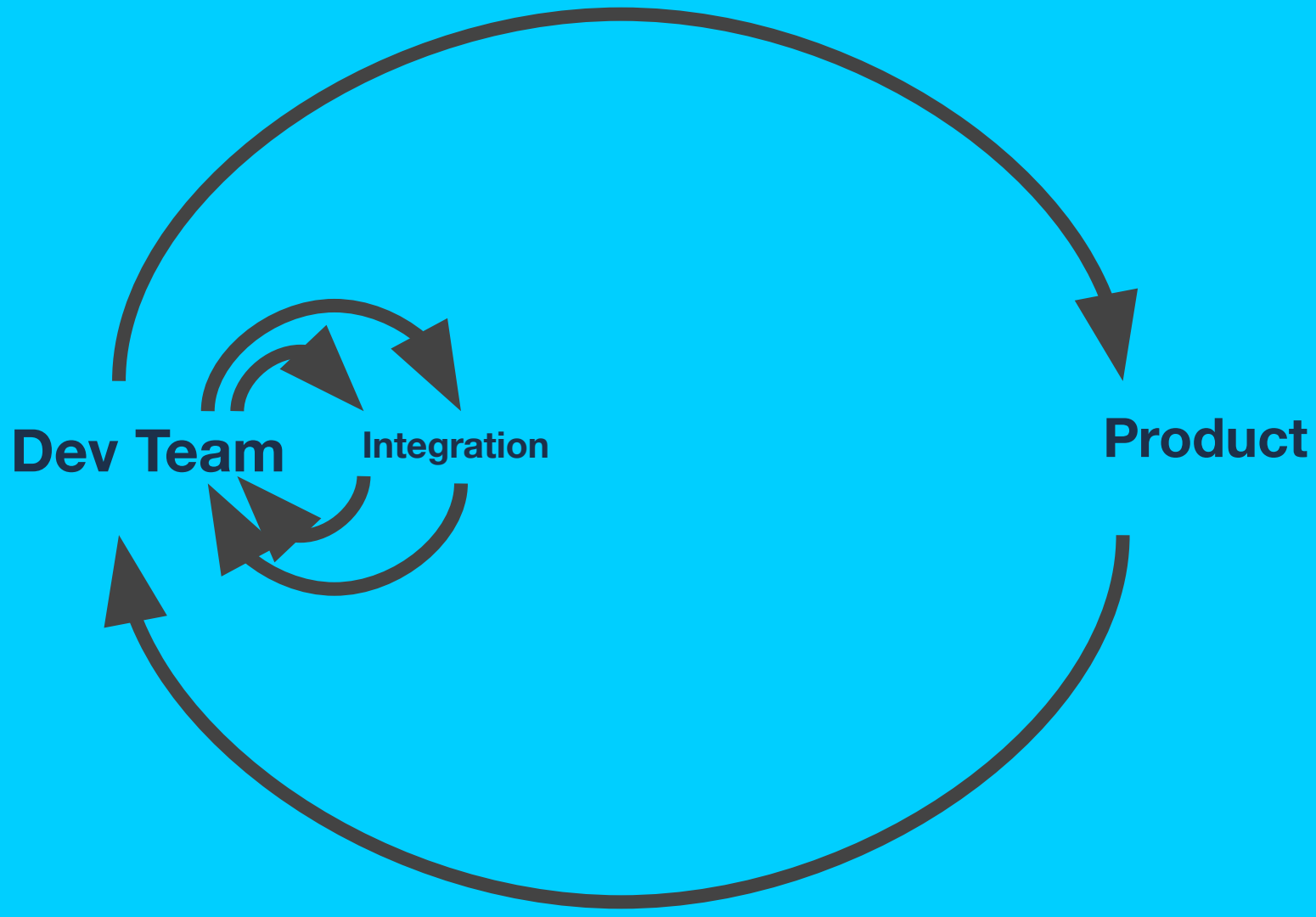


Principles

There are five principles at the heart of continuous delivery:

- Build quality in
- Work in small batches
- Computers perform repetitive tasks, people solve problems
- Relentlessly pursue continuous improvement
- Everyone is responsible





What can I change?

What can I change?

Practices

Culture

**First let's talk about
practices**



190513
125070

190513
125070

EXIT

EXIT

User Research

Features

Prioritization

Roadmap

Measuring Results

Continuous Discovery

Marty Cagan
Oct 24, 2012

I have written recently about how product teams do **product discovery in parallel with product delivery**. I have also written about how teams sometimes like to **time-box their product discovery** work.

What I'd like to write about in this article is an increasing trend I am seeing towards both continuous delivery and continuous discovery.

Continuous Delivery is an increasingly popular notion today. The concept has been talked about by many teams for a few years now, but now there are actually quite a few teams really doing it.

Nearly all product teams today do continuous build. The principle here is that if there are build problems, it is really good to find them sooner rather than later, so typically builds are initiated the moment changes are committed.

What we don't know

PERMISSIONS

- Currently, who in the team has access to what?
↳ Why's that?
- How are setup with other team tools?
e.g. Jira, TeamCity, SQL Monitor
- Will active directory be sufficient for all users as a way to restrict users?
- Are users already setup this way?
- Do users want to restrict creating images or access to the source databases?
- Can any create a user and put it together they want? (scripting to do that)
- Do users need access to help from all team members?
- Do users need databases that they can...

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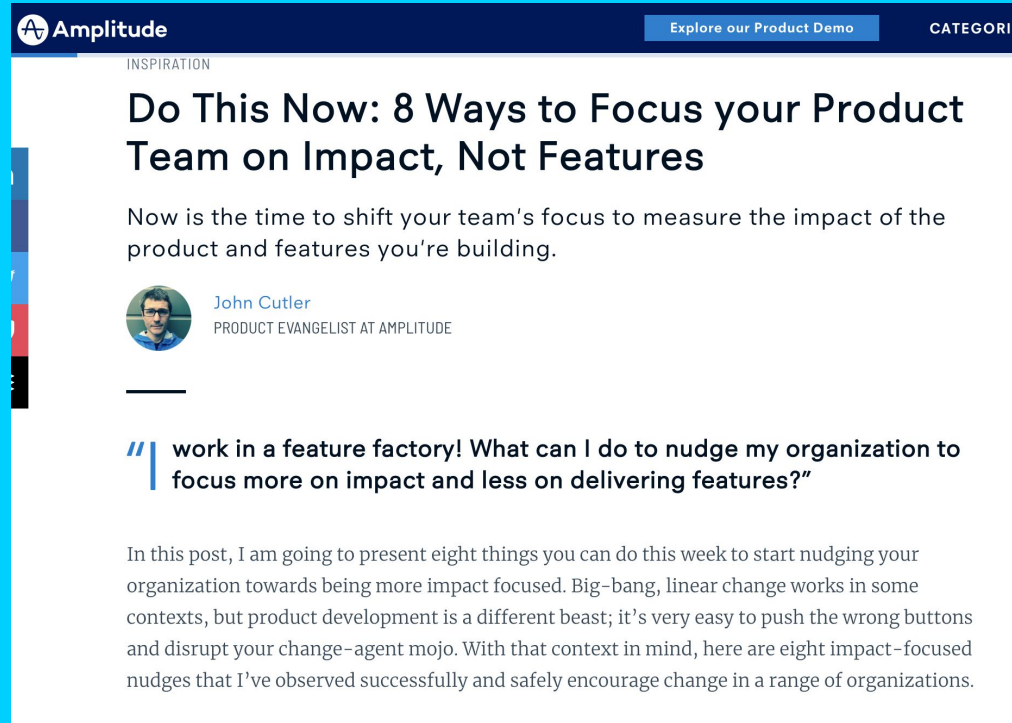
User Research

Features

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Measuring Results



The screenshot shows a blog post on the Amplitude website. The header includes the Amplitude logo, a navigation link 'Explore our Product Demo', and a 'CATEGORI' label. The post is categorized as 'INSPIRATION'. The title is 'Do This Now: 8 Ways to Focus your Product Team on Impact, Not Features'. The author is John Cutler, Product Evangelist at Amplitude. A quote is featured: 'work in a feature factory! What can I do to nudge my organization to focus more on impact and less on delivering features?'. The main text begins with 'In this post, I am going to present eight things you can do this week to start nudging your organization towards being more impact focused. Big-bang, linear change works in some contexts, but product development is a different beast; it's very easy to push the wrong buttons and disrupt your change-agent mojo. With that context in mind, here are eight impact-focused nudges that I've observed successfully and safely encourage change in a range of organizations.'

Amplitude


Explore our Product Demo

CATEGORI

INSPIRATION

Do This Now: 8 Ways to Focus your Product Team on Impact, Not Features

Now is the time to shift your team's focus to measure the impact of the product and features you're building.

 John Cutler
PRODUCT EVANGELIST AT AMPLITUDE

—

“ work in a feature factory! What can I do to nudge my organization to focus more on impact and less on delivering features?”

In this post, I am going to present eight things you can do this week to start nudging your organization towards being more impact focused. Big-bang, linear change works in some contexts, but product development is a different beast; it's very easy to push the wrong buttons and disrupt your change-agent mojo. With that context in mind, here are eight impact-focused nudges that I've observed successfully and safely encourage change in a range of organizations.

<https://amplitude.com/blog/focus-product-team-on-impact>

**“Fire bullets, then
cannonballs”**

-Jim Collins, *Good to Great*

**Feed success,
starve failure**


User Research

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Measuring Results

 **The Black Box of Product Management** PRODUCT MANAGEMENT THEORY STORIES FROM SHIPPING

The Black Box of Product Management
Shining light on the PM discipline

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 8.8K



Prioritizing work within a project

A ruthless mindset to determine: Is this absolutely necessary to do?

The nature of prioritization is different during the execution of a project. It's chaotic. Decisions are needed everyday, and you don't have time analyze each one as deeply as we did when prioritizing between projects. It's also a more emotional time for a team, as real customers are going to be impacted, and their reputation may feel on the line.

The only way to combat the speed and chaos of building products is to develop a ruthless mindset, one that is constantly aware of the work a team is doing and challenges them on the necessity of that work.

<https://blackboxofpm.com/ruthless-prioritization-e4256e3520a9>

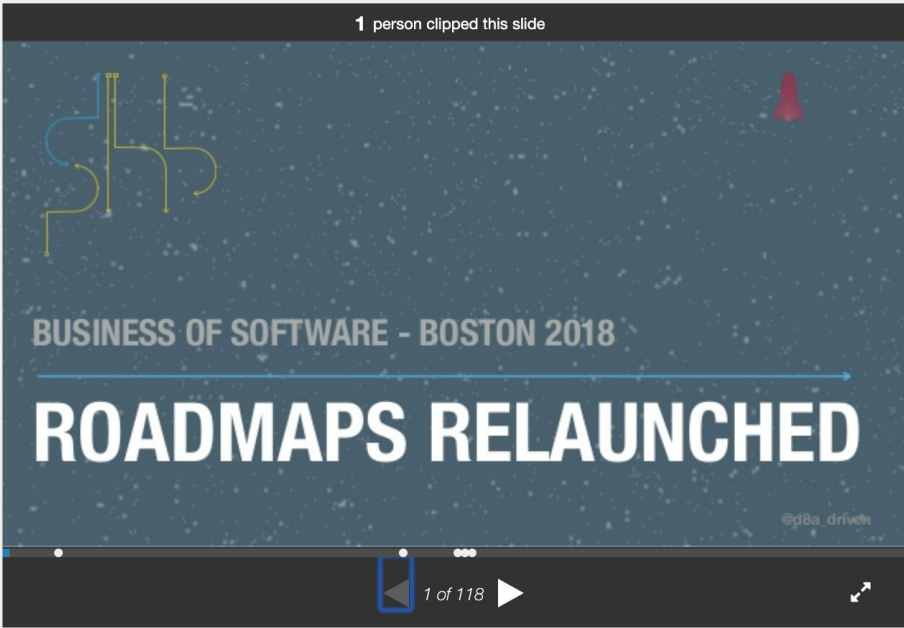
User Research

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Measuring Results



1 person clipped this slide

BUSINESS OF SOFTWARE - BOSTON 2018

ROADMAPS RELAUNCHED

@d8a driven

1 of 118

Roadmaps Relunched Bruce McCarthy

540 views

The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a dark, starry background. At the top left, there is a diagram with blue and yellow lines. The text 'BUSINESS OF SOFTWARE - BOSTON 2018' is in a light grey font, and 'ROADMAPS RELAUNCHED' is in large, bold, white font. A blue arrow points to the right above the title. The bottom of the slide features a navigation bar with a play button, '1 of 118', and a share icon. The video player interface includes a '1 person clipped this slide' notification at the top and a view count of '540 views' at the bottom right.

<https://www.slideshare.net/marklittlewood/roadmaps-relaunched-bruce-mccarthy-workshop-bos-boston-2018-tesla>

User Research

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1. It's a process, not an event.

Measuring performance is not a brainstorming workshop, an external consultant's report, or a dashboard app. It's a process of thinking about the difference you really want (e.g. a goal), how you'd notice that difference, how you might quantify that difference, and how you'll monitor the difference as it unfolds.

Understand the essential steps in any performance measurement process, and don't skip any of them.

2. Measure to learn and improve, not compare and judge.

Buy-in, ownership and engagement are the hardest things to get with measuring performance. And the root cause is almost always that measures are used to compare people or groups to others or to standards or benchmarks, or to judge them as either good or not good enough. Measurement achieves nothing good if people aren't behind it. But it achieves amazing things if it helps everyone learn and improve.

Stop measuring people and teams and instead let them measure to improve their own processes.

<https://www.staceybarr.com/measure-up/11-important-memes-of-performance-measurement/>

**Now let's talk about
culture**



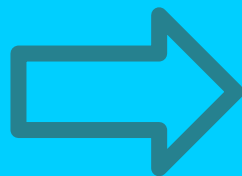
**Product people
consistently
underestimate their
impact on culture**

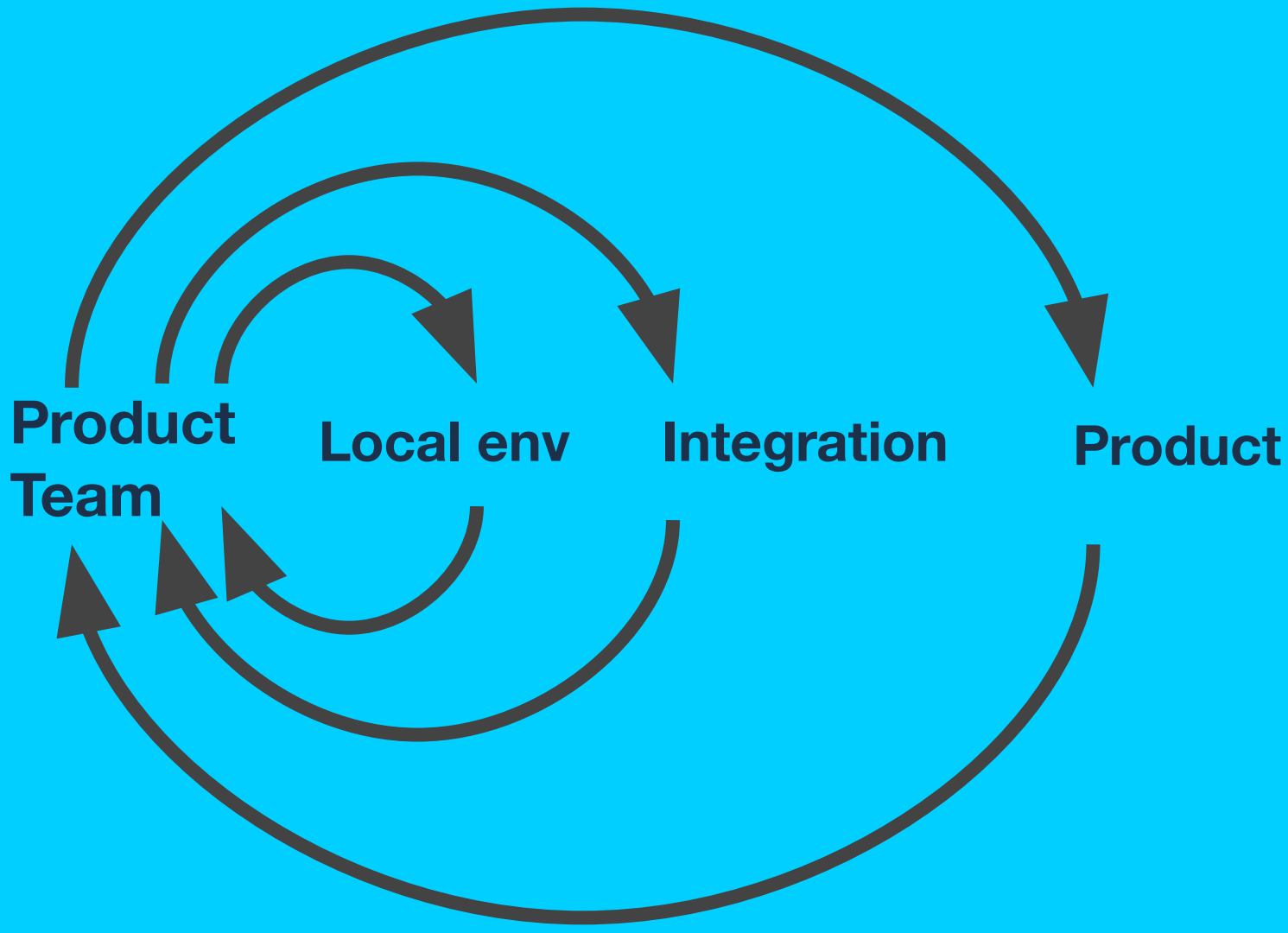
Embarrassing storytime...



?* &!

**“They just want us to
ship s****”**





- 1/ Outcome focus**
- 2/ Shared responsibility**
- 3/ Empowerment**
- 4/ Effectiveness**

Key struggles

2/ How can I encourage senior leadership to a continuous mindset?

CONTINUOUS DELIVERY



Principles

There are five principles at the heart of continuous delivery:

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- Everyone is responsible



Procedia Economics and Finance

Volume 26, 2015, Pages 729-736



Beyond Budgeting - A High-hanging Fruit The Impact of Managers' Mindset on the Advan

Thomas Heup

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Beyond Budgeting - A High-hanging Fruit

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)00831-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00831-X)

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Abstract

Beyond Budgeting is an alternative management control systems which evolved in the late 1990s. Even though the Beyond Budgeting



Beyond Budgeting
Enabling business agility

About

Membership

Beyond Budgeting Advisory

Events

Resources

What is Beyond Budgeting?

'Beyond Budgeting' means beyond command-and-control, that is more empowered and adaptive.

Beyond Budgeting is about rethinking how we manage in a world where innovative management models represent a competitive advantage. It is also about releasing people from the suffocating control systems, trusting them with information, to reflect, share, learn and improve. Above all it is about enabling many leaders who have built and managed 'beyond budgeting'.

The word 'budgeting' is not used in its narrow sense of planning and control, but as a generic term for the traditional command and control management model (with the annual budget process at its core).

<https://bbri.org/what-is-beyond-budgeting/>

Beyond Budgeting

- enabling business agility

Leadership principles

- 1. Purpose** - Engage and inspire people around bold and noble causes; **not around short-term financial targets**
- 2. Values** - Govern through shared values and sound judgement; **not through detailed rules and regulations**
- 3. Transparency** - Make information open for self-regulation, innovation, learning and control; **don't restrict it**
- 4. Organisation** - Cultivate a strong sense of belonging and organise around accountable teams; **avoid hierarchical control and bureaucracy**
- 5. Autonomy** - Trust people with freedom to act; **don't punish everyone if someone should abuse it**
- 6. Customers** - Connect everyone's work with customer needs; **avoid conflicts of interest**

Management processes

- 7. Rhythm** - Organise management processes dynamically around business rhythms and events; **not around the calendar year only**
- 8. Targets** - Set directional, ambitious and relative goals; **avoid fixed and cascaded targets**
- 9. Plans and forecasts** - Make planning and forecasting lean and unbiased processes; **not rigid and political exercises**
- 10. Resource allocation** - Foster a cost conscious mind-set and make resources available as needed; **not through detailed annual budget allocations**
- 11. Performance evaluation** - Evaluate performance holistically and with peer feedback for learning and development; **not based on measurement only and not for rewards only**
- 12. Rewards** - Reward shared success against competition; **not against fixed performance contracts**

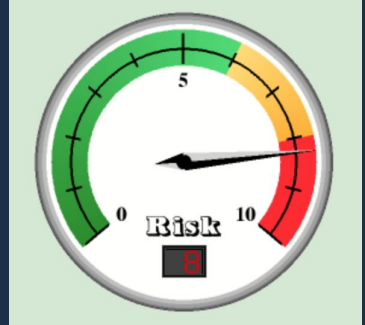


This is how they see us

Change travels at the speed of trust.

— Steven Covey (?) via @DanHarley3

As a *leader*, I need to know *critical information* so that I can *avoid getting caught off guard*.



As a ***leader***, I need to know ***options*** so that I can ***guide*** ***decisions based on context only*** I have.



**When you're in a position
to change things....**



Safe travels

Continuous Product Management

INDUSTRY 2019

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