

John Lewis Portfolio Management Kanban

Lean Kanban UK, October 31st 2013

Rebecca Shurz (Manager, Project Office, John Lewis Online Selling)

Martin Aspeli (Senior Manager, Deloitte Digital)

Deloitte.
Digital

John Lewis Online Selling at the time

From:

- Legacy, in-house platform
- Small, fast growing online business
- Limited experience of Lean/Agile
- Many small tactical improvements
- Few larger projects

To:

- New e-commerce platform
- Online as a strategic priority
- Need to increase business responsiveness
- Many small, tactical improvements
- Few larger projects
- Features decoupled from replatforming

Initial intervention



Agile training: everyone (PMs, UXers, BAs, Devs, Testers)



Embedding: Mixed teams, real projects



Portfolio management training:
Senior team

First Portfolio Kanban board

Risks & Issues: Identified and In progress

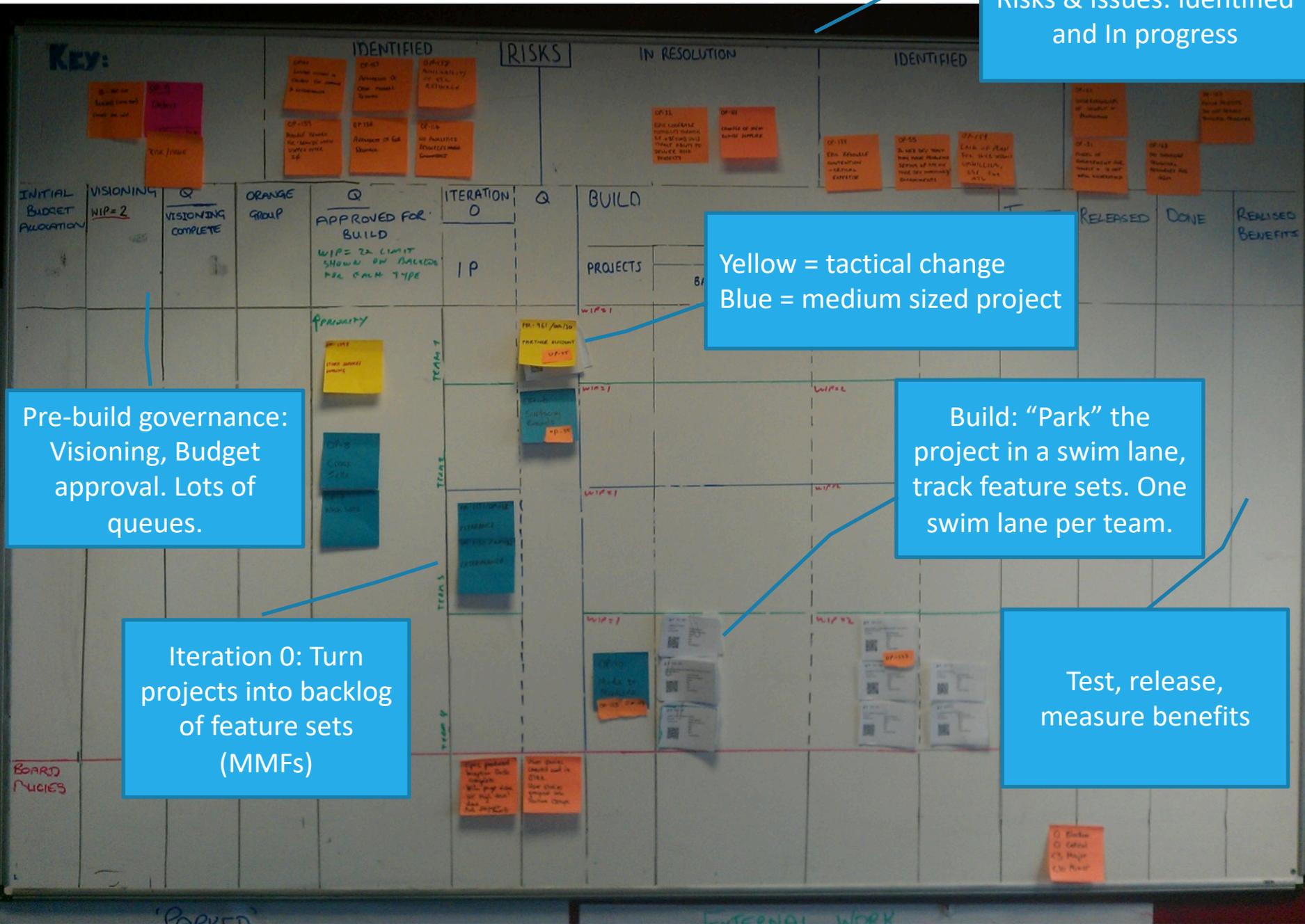
Yellow = tactical change
Blue = medium sized project

Build: "Park" the project in a swim lane, track feature sets. One swim lane per team.

Test, release, measure benefits

Iteration 0: Turn projects into backlog of feature sets (MMFs)

Pre-build governance: Visioning, Budget approval. Lots of queues.



Reaction

What worked well

- Weekly stand-ups
- Visualising progress and blockers in a non-judgemental way
- Conversations!
- “Walk-by” updates to senior team
- Visibility over what is coming next (or highlighting that this isn’t clear)

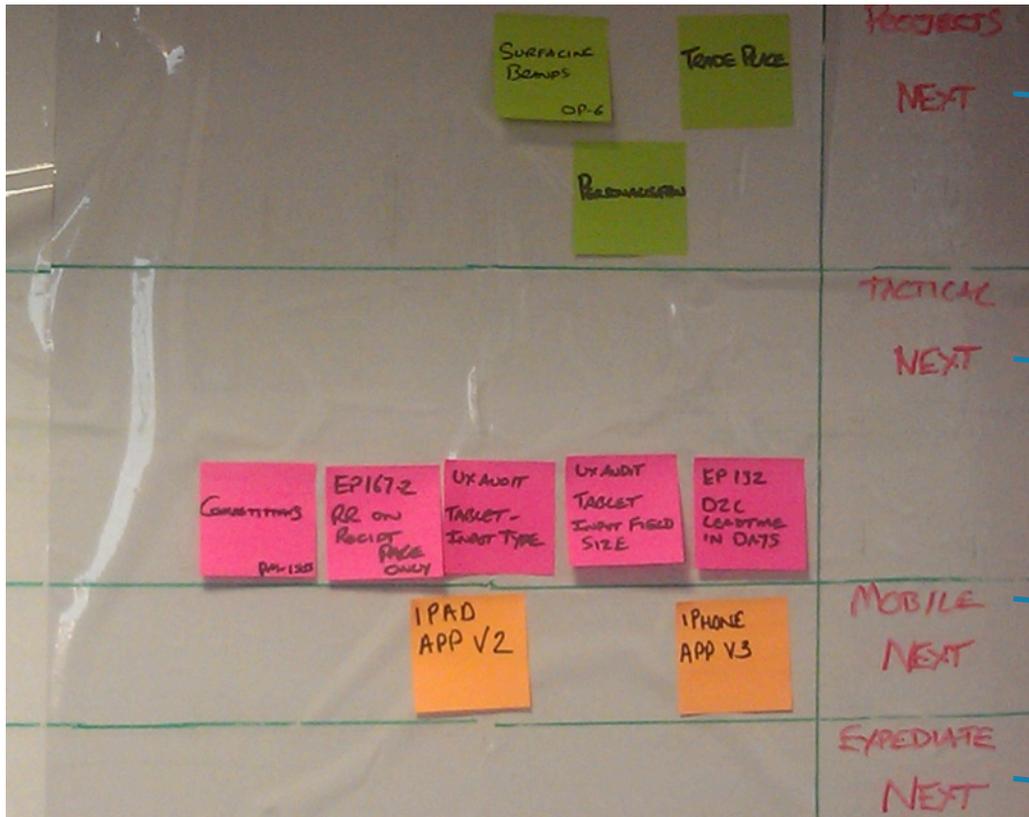
What didn’t work so well

- Pull culture: Works for tactical work, but prioritisation for strategic work sits elsewhere in the business
- Tracking features proved to be too much detail
- Dependencies with other parts of the business working in other ways

Evolution of the board

Backlog

Backlog has shrunk from several dozen to immediate 10 items



Green = Projects

Pink = Tactical website changes

Orange = Mobile (different governance)

Expedite (e.g. production issues)

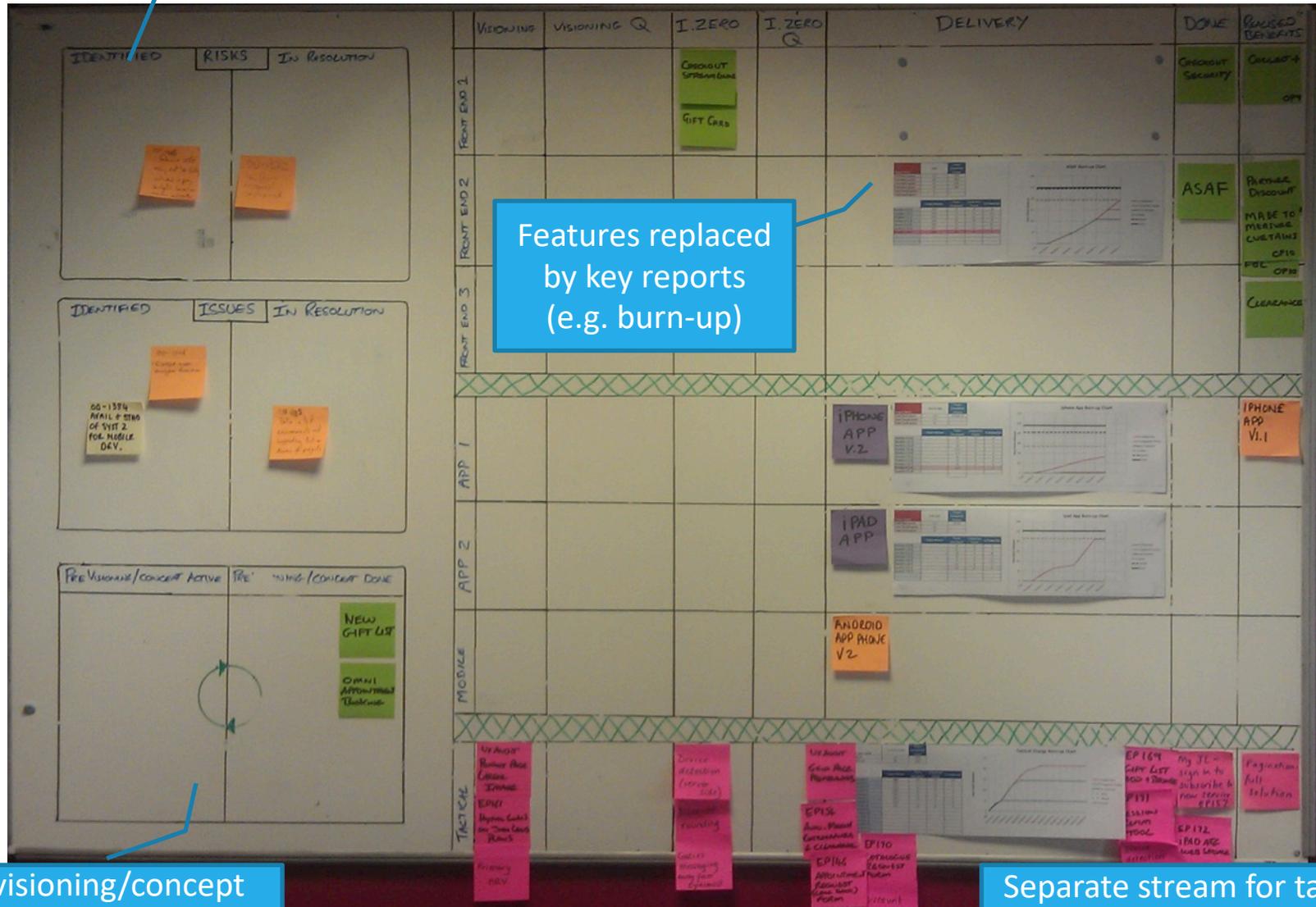
Risks & Issues

Split into front end and mobile, up to three projects each (by swimlane)

Features replaced by key reports (e.g. burn-up)

Pre-visualization/concept stage ("is this even a good idea?")

Separate stream for tactical changes. Often bundled into another release.



Lessons learned

- Start where you have the most control: don't demand to change the whole organisation
- Even a “shallow” implementation of portfolio Kanban can be a big help
- The weekly stand-up meetings are more valuable than the board itself or the process
 - **It is a different meeting than you would have with RAG status reports**
 - **The board prompts good questions**
 - **Be open to iterating and improving the approach / board**
 - **If it hasn't changed for 3 months is there nothing you can make better?**

Q&A

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