

# Leadership in Agile Organizations

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"Thirty years from now the big university campuses will be relics. Universities won't survive. It's as large a change as when we first got the printed book."

--Peter Drucker

# “TED has become the new Harvard”

How do you stop a deadly disease that's caused by mosquitoes?

If you were starting a top university today, what would it look like? You would start by gathering the very best minds from around the world, from every discipline. Since we're living in an age of abundant, not scarce, information, you'd curate the lectures carefully, with a focus on the new and original, rather than offer a course on every possible topic. You'd create a sustainable economic model by focusing on technological rather than physical infrastructure, and by getting people of means to pay for a specialized experience. You'd also construct a robust network so people could access resources whenever and from wherever they like, and you'd give them the tools to collaborate beyond the lecture hall. Why not fulfill the university's millennium-old mission by sharing ideas as freely and as widely as possible?

February 27, 2011

## Actually Going to Class, for a Specific Course? How 20th-Century.

New learning technologies prompt a rethinking of traditional course structure



*Jay Premack for The Chronicle*

"There's not really much need for teachers anymore," since so much material is online, says Dekunle Somade, a senior at the U. of Maryland at College Park.

[Enlarge Image](#)

don't want to come to class—and technology is giving students more and more reason not to come."

That leads to a big question: Why even have a traditional college course? Learning outside of this structure engages students more deeply, recent data indicate. Professors talking for 16 weeks or so, assigning readings, and then testing students often appears to yield a bunch of quickly memorized facts that are soon forgotten. In an era when students can easily grab material online, including lectures by gifted speakers in every field, a learning environment that avoids courses completely—or seriously reshapes them—might produce a very effective new form of college.

*By Jeffrey R. Young*

Washington

The first question many undergraduates ask professors on the first day of class is whether they really have to show up.

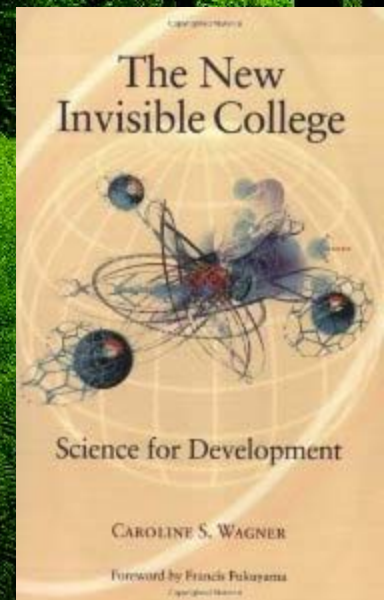
The way they phrase it is a bit more subtle, says Dekunle Somade, a senior at the University of Maryland at College Park. What his fellow students actually ask is: "Will reruns of lectures be available after class, or at least the full set of PowerPoint slides?"

Mr. Somade told me recently that "the general idea is that if I don't have to come to class, I

*“Self-organizing networks that span the globe are the most notable feature of science today. These networks constitute an invisible college of researchers who collaborate not because they are told to but because they want to, who work together not because they share a laboratory or even a discipline but because they can offer each other complementary insight, knowledge, or skills.”*

From a nationally-based “big science” paradigm to a global network: **global science organized as a complex adaptive system**

- Many different interacting elements
- Responds to shifts in the environment
- Participants enter and exit while the whole retains its structure
- Self-organizing (no central administration)
- Emergent (unplanned) activities
- A scale-free network





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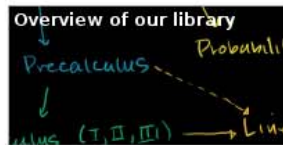
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#### Educational Picture of the Day

##### Pulley system

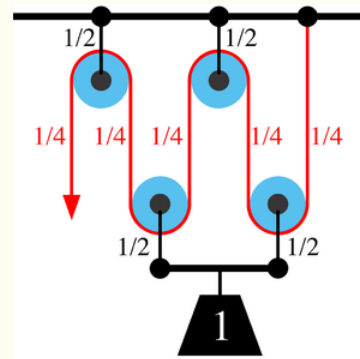


Diagram of a pulley system, demonstrating how pulleys facilitate the lifting of heavy weights. Click on the image for a full size version which you can freely re-use and modify. Print it and use it for your lessons, integrate it into your pages on Wikiversity, or use it in

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2011

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# Courses are Apps, Colleges are Platforms

By [Joshua Kim](#) March 7, 2011 8:15 pm EST

*Courses are Apps, Colleges are Platforms.*

## Courses are like Apps Because:

- Courses and apps are self-contained.
- Courses and apps are experiences, not products.
- As with apps, it is the quality of the courses that ultimately matters most in determining the quality of the platform (college).
- Interactivity and the extent of immersion determine the quality of both.
- Internal consistency and attention the user (student) experience are as important as the content in both.
- Design for low cognitive load ("how do I navigate this course/app?") is important for both.
- Courses are created by professors, apps are created by developers.
- The design of courses and apps is a creative exercise.
- Both courses and apps evolve.
- The quality and popularity of both courses and apps probably follow a similar underlying distribution.

## Colleges are like Platforms Because:

- Courses make-up part of the ecosystem of the college, just as apps make up the ecosystem of the vertical delivery platform.
- A college aggregates courses, a platform aggregates apps.
- The brand of the college or the platform is a signifier of the quality of the course or the app.
- A college aggregates the audience (students), like a platform aggregates an audience (iTunes has 200 million credit card accounts on file).
- Colleges provides a bundled experience (living, learning, classrooms, technology, eating, support etc.), just as platforms combine discovery, payment and delivery (iTunes), with the device (iPad, iPhone etc.).
- Buying the platform (or enrolling at the college) determines which apps (or courses) will be accessible.

*What would you add?*

*How can this analogy help us think about designing better courses, or apps that are mirror or improve our courses? Is anyone closing the circle, and designing an app that is a course?*

The University  
hierarchy  
closed

# The Platform

Edupunk  
anarchy  
open



Facilitates the organization of participants in a network, not a hierarchy



A demarcated “space,” (physical and/or conceptual) that enables groups to self-organize



Enough structure to ensure coherence, but not so much as to prevent self-organization

Permeable boundaries: easy entry and exit

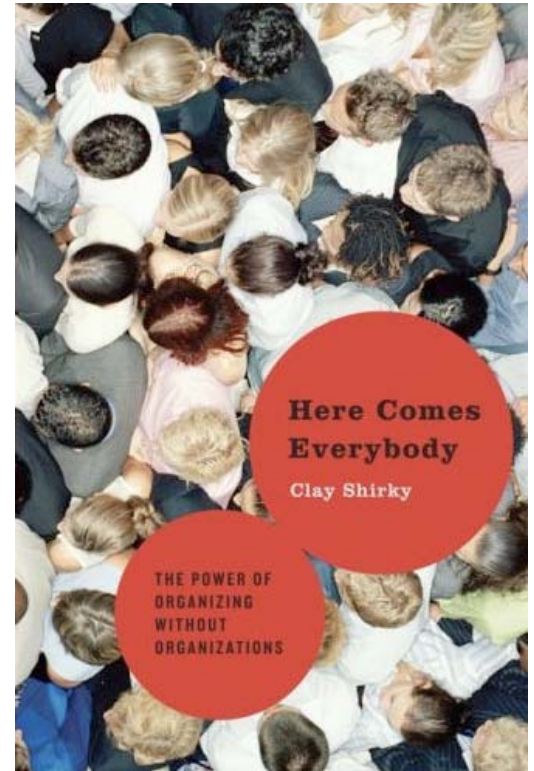
Unplanned activities determined by the interactions among the “inhabitants” of the platform



protean, changeable, homeostatic activities/clusters are born, live, die

“By making it easier for groups to *self-assemble* and for individuals to contribute to group effort *without requiring formal management*, [social networking tools] have radically altered the old limits on the size, sophistication, and scope of *unsupervised effort*.”

--Clay Shirky



...consists of a self-organizing and intellectually fluid curriculum

...is permeable (no formal admissions process)

...consists of voluntary and self-organizing associations of teachers and students

## The university as a platform...

...is governed by “intellectual barter” and makes all knowledge created therein free to anyone

...has a fluid temporal structure: there are no “semesters”; teaching and learning are ongoing activities



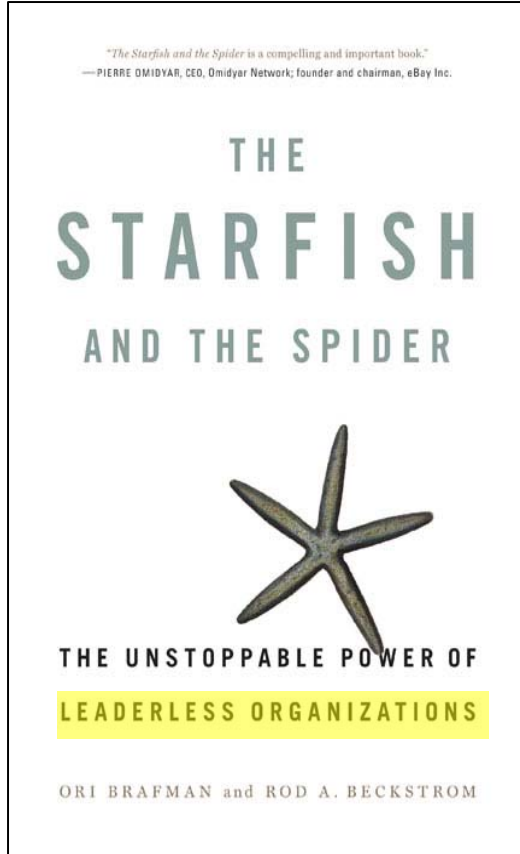
...is not led or managed (not at least in the traditional sense) but “curated” and “cultivated”

MINCU

not planning, but **coordination** rapid assembly, smart mobs, real-time coordination

leaders as “**choice architects**”

“**hosting**” as the fundamental management/leadership value



Centralized	Decentralized
There's someone in charge	<b>There's no one in charge</b>
There are headquarters	There are no headquarters
If you thump it on the head, it dies	If you thump it on the head, it survives
There's a clear division of roles	There's an amorphous division of roles
If you take out a unit, the organization is harmed	If you take out a unit, the organization is unharmed
Knowledge and power are concentrated	<b>Knowledge and power are distributed</b>
The organization is rigid	<b>The organization is flexible</b>
Units are funded by the organization	Units are self-funding
You can count on the participants	You cannot count the participants
Working groups communicate through intermediaries	<b>Working groups communicate with each other directly</b>

**Agile Software Development** is a methodology for undertaking software development projects in which incremental functionality is released in smaller cycles, and work is performed in a highly collaborative manner by **self-organizing teams** that embrace and adapt changes to ensure that customer's needs are truly met.

--Marina Gil Santamaria

Scrum...and scrum master

Scrum is really a project management methodology to facilitate agile software development, **and enable the creation of self-organizing agile teams.**



Scrum = platform

**A Scrum Master** is like a traditional project manager in the sense that he/she oversees the centralization of team communication, requirements, schedules and progress. But it is also very different because his/her main responsibility is **to facilitate team communications and provide guidance and coaching, while removing impediments to the ability of the team to deliver its goals.** Unlike a traditional project manager, the ScrumMaster doesn't direct the team, because an agile team is **based on the philosophy that a team member is committed to the other team members, not to a management authority.**

# What if...?

The University were organized as an agile scrum...

...led by scrum masters...

...who applied the main principles of agile to leadership...

...the leader as curator, the leader as catalyst