

# Table of Contents

<b>Focus More on the Detailing and Executing the Plan than on Planning and Alignment (Anti-pattern)</b>	3
<b>Consumer</b>	3
<b>Description</b>	3
<b>Impact</b>	3
<b>(Potential) Remedies</b>	3
<b>Examples</b>	4
<b>Want To Know More?</b>	5



# Focus More on the Detailing and Executing the Plan than on Planning and Alignment (Anti-pattern)

Or “We need more planning so we can execute!” Or “We need a detailed, accurate plan!”

## Consumer

- Product Manager
- Release Train Engineer (RTE)
- Product Owner
- Scrum Master
- Teams
- Program stakeholders

## Description

Quarterly Program Increment (PI) Planning is becoming quite prevalent in the industry. Although this is a good thing when performed for the right reasons with the right mindset, there are many anti-patterns lurking. The primary anti-pattern is making the outcome a committed plan that is “locked in” over the planning process itself. The focus in this case is more on the detailing and executing the plan rather than on the planning process and resultant alignment.

## Impact

Over emphasis on creating and committing to a plan can lead to the intent of locking in the plan. Excessive push-back on changes to the plan can occur as events unfold (e.g., business priorities change, early value of features do not materialize). This leads to the plan being more important than the value it delivers.

## (Potential) Remedies

A wise transformation consultant once said that he'd like to change the words “plan” and “planning” to

“align” and “aligning”. PI planning is about collaboration and alignment more than creating a plan. If we keep this in mind as we go through the planning process we will see greater alignment that can be leveraged when our plan needs to change for the greater good.

“Planning is everything, the plan is nothing.” – Dwight Eisenhower

It’s a reality that plans change but it doesn't mean that planning is wasteful. In fact, the opposite is true. Planning that's outcome focused, engages a broad group of stakeholders and participants and continually applies inspect and adapt techniques will result in improved outcomes versus a static plan.

We could also look to committing to a “forecast” vs. committing to a “plan”. This implies that we understand that break-ins are inevitable and other higher priority work may impact the plan throughout the PI.

When you lock into a plan it limits the organization from adapting to changes in priority based on market conditions and business opportunities. To mitigate, keep some available capacity for teams to absorb new work and be prepared to adjust their work schedules based on new information.

The key is collaboration, collaboration, collaboration! PI planning is meant to facilitate collaboration both within a program team and with its external stakeholders. Program management (Prod Mgr, RTE, PO's) should seek out portfolio and program level stakeholders well ahead of a PI planning event to get a feel for potential new work.

Transformation coaching needs to focus more attention on the portfolio and program levels to help facilitate the appropriate collaboration and foster a systems thinking mindset. Our organization needs to develop the proper habits and cadence which will lead to improved alignment across the system of delivery. This will lead to more effective PI planning, fewer break-ins and improved system flow of value.

## Examples

- Many traditional cultures of large organizations historically focus on analyzing a situation, developing a plan and executing on that plan until complete. You hear people say that they need to “lock in the plan”. This terminology seems to harbor some of our old ways of working with little room for inspecting and adapting.
- Many traditional project managers share frustrations with their inability to get work items started due to missing a PI planning event. They have been told that “we just completed our PI plan. Come back in 3 months”. While it's understandable that program teams want to deliver on their commitments, there needs to be some level of awareness for potential break-ins, especially as we continue to line out our new way of working.

# Want To Know More?

- Source: [What Kinds of Problems Do you Typically See As The Organization Transforms to Agile / Lean?](#)

[AntiPatterns](#), [Smells](#), [Organization](#)

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