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There are lots of potential sources for impediments, depending on the situation you find yourself in.

At the most basic level, Teams are encouraged to track things that slow them down. There are two main sources impediments:

- Tooling will provide for a “Blocker” tag, which the Team will use to signify that there is a problem progressing that particular work item. These will often be discussed at the Daily meeting, and can be identified at any time.
- Retrospective ceremonies aimed at Team improvement will often result in an understanding of something that slows the work down.

In most cases, Teams should be able to work these items themselves. But some issues will be more thorny, more political, more ingrained. In effect these items need to be “escalated”. This is where leadership needs to step in and take responsibility for working the impediment.

What happens with impediments that the Team cannot address will vary depending on context:

- If the Team works to deliver value by itself, then management associated with the Team takes these impediments on directly.
- If the Team operates as part of a Program (a Team-of-Teams) then the first level of escalation for Team impediments is to the Program Team to see if it can be addressed at that level.

This pattern repeats. The Program Team will also track Program level “Blockers” and operate Retrospective ceremonies (sometimes called an “Inspect and Adapt”) where Program level impediments are surfaced. Items that the Program Team cannot work are either escalated to the, say, Portfolio level (if there is one) or is worked directly by relevant management.

Another source of impediments is specific events aimed at improvement. For example, some organizations set up specific Kaizen events aimed at stepping back from the day-to-day work of the organization, to really work systematic improvements. Other organizations use Value Stream Mapping events to really help focus. And, over time, there will just be an increasing awareness of the things that are slowing things down.

No matter what the source we need to be careful about setting up a slow, cumbersome bureaucracy to address the discovered impediment. Speed of response is of the essence here.

FAQ, SSA, Impediment, Removal, Organization

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Last update: **2023/03/10 05:44**