Dynamic Work Design
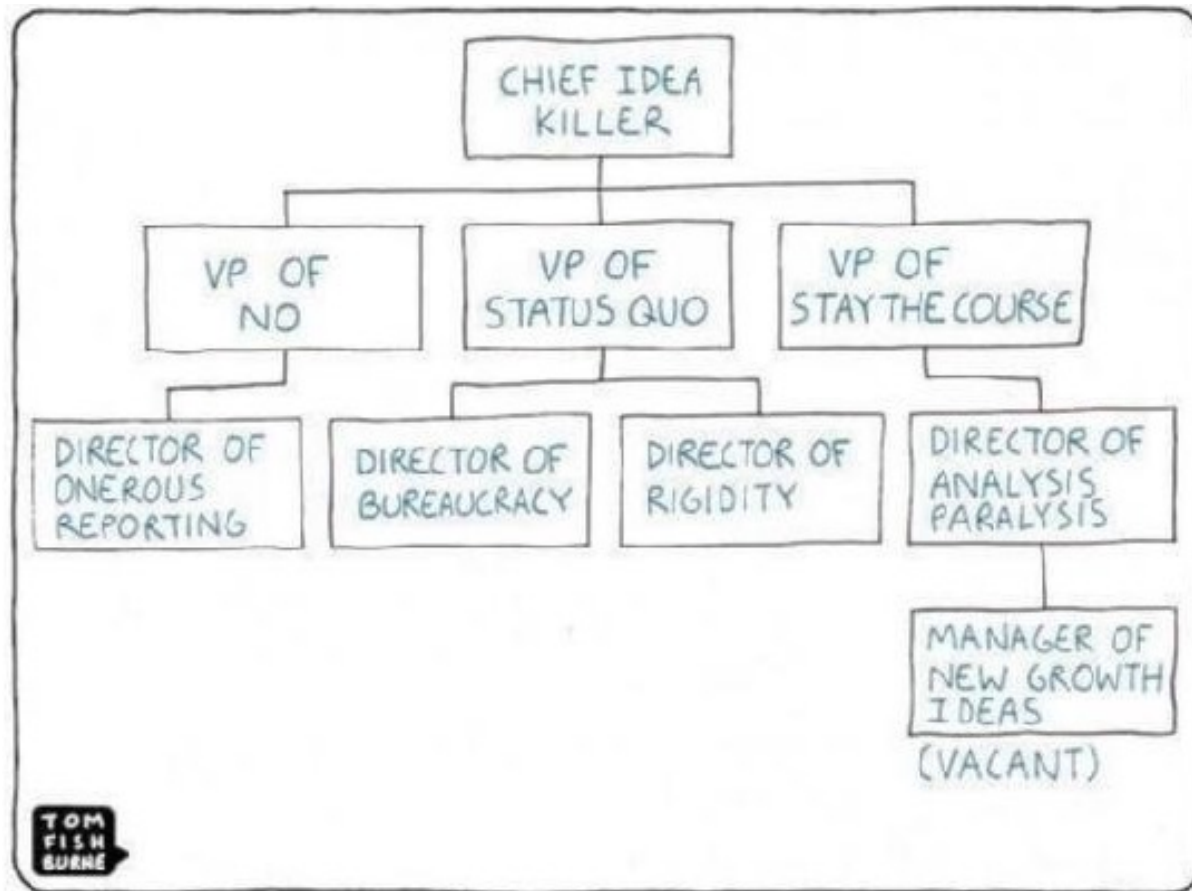
Don Kieffer
Founder, ShiftGear Work Design
Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan Business School
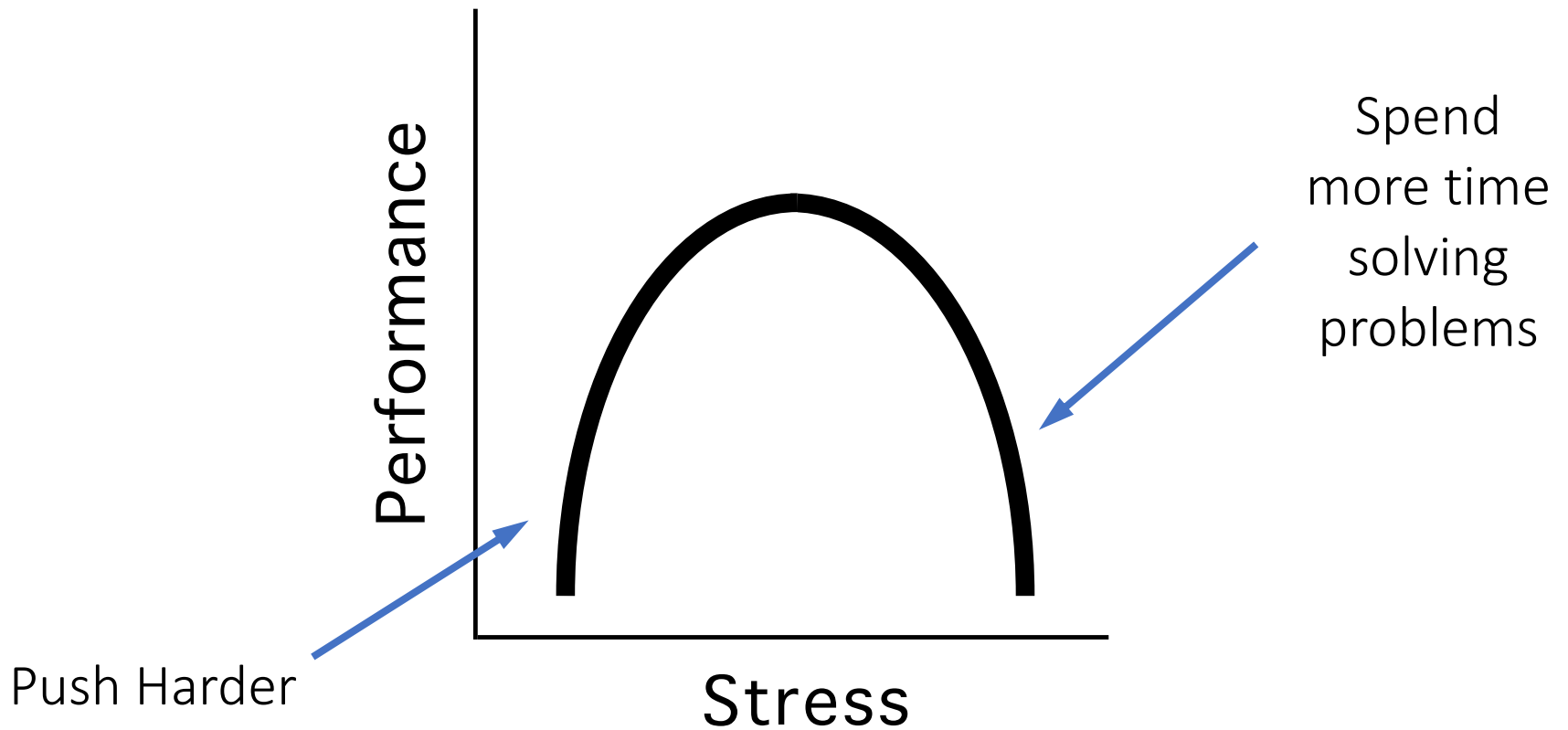
donkieffer@mit.edu   *www.shiftgear.work*
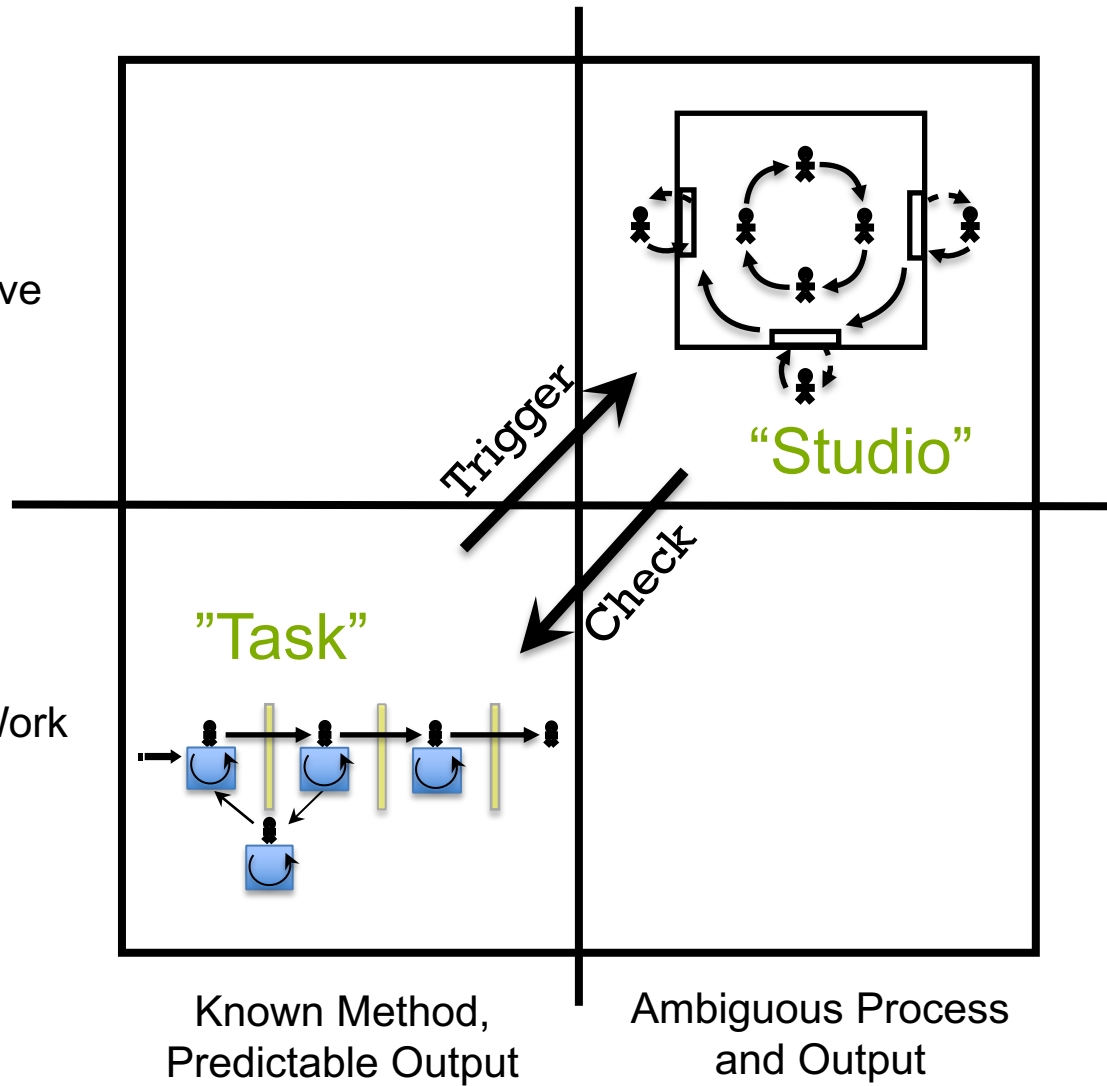
Static Design

Managing Optimal Challenge

Spend more time solving problems

Push Harder

Performance

Stress

The Yerkes-Dodson Curve

Collaborative Work

"Studio"

Trigger

Check

"Task"

Individual Work

Known Method, Predictable Output

Ambiguous Process and Output

SHIFTGEAR
WORK DESIGN

AVT
BUSINESS SCHOOL

The Dual Process Model

Conscious Processing

- We have direct access
- selective and resource limited
- slow laborious and serial
- intermittently analytical
- computational powerful

Requests

"Chunks"

Automatic Processing

- unconscious
- fast, effortless and parallel
- works based on:
  - "pattern matching" – like for like
  - "frequency gambling"– most frequent

MIT
MANAGEMENT
SLOAN SCHOOL

Visual Management

Give "invisible work"
a physical face

Don's rule:

If you can't draw it...

you can't understand it...

and you certainly can't fix it.

Operating an Organization of 5000 People: Strategy on Left – Operating on Right

Design How You Will Work Together
(Best if you post it on the wall)

o Quantify the targets
o Build a plan with the least number of tasks possible
o Define who is doing what task
o Know who to call if you run into a problem
o Decide how often to have a short team meeting to:
   o Check progress against plan
   o Summarize what you have learned
   o Raise and solve issues
   o Adjust the plan
   o Get back to work

Show your targets, metrics, activities, and problems on a wall
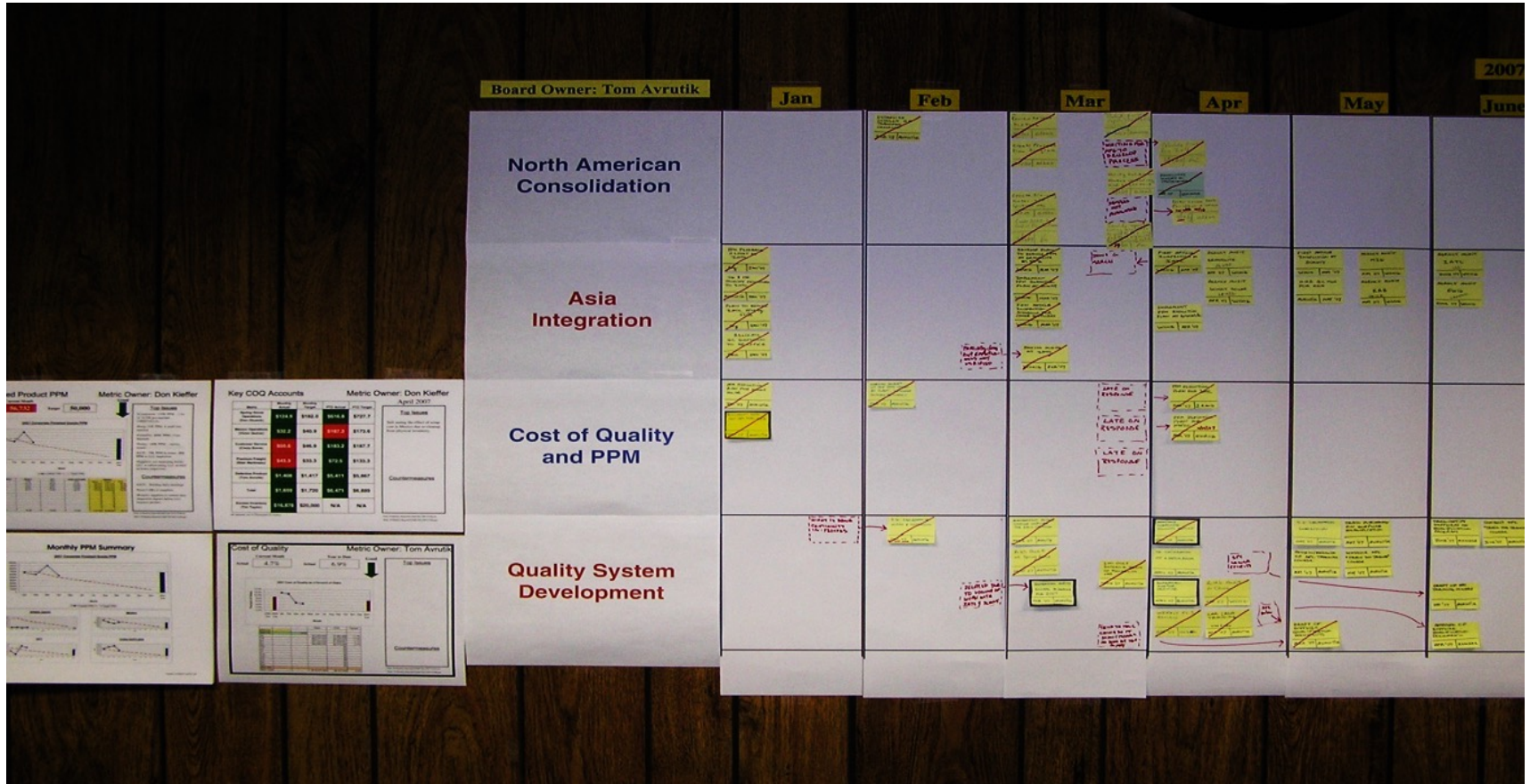
It doesn't have to be fancy to work

Dynamic Work Design: Four Principles
and the questions you should ask yourself about your plan

Reconcile Activity and Intent

Are the targets clear and quantified?
Will my actions produce the results needed to hit the goal?
Are we checking results frequently and adjusting the plan?

Connect the Human Chain

Are the inputs and outputs aligned?
Can I see a problem when it happens?
Who do I ask for help? Who is supposed to respond?

Structure Problem Solving and Creativity

If the activity does not deliver the result, do we stop to check why?
Are there known steps to get to next steps and root cause?

Manage Optimal Challenge

Are we pushing hard enough to test the limits of the system?
Do we have time to find problems *and* address the root cause?