

How to avoid digital disarray



A 'cat herder's' perspective

@webpackets



A bit about me...

- Organising digital delivery since 2005
- Large & small projects - large & small budgets
- In experienced & inexperienced teams
- Nice clients, tricky clients, inexperienced clients
- I'm now working in a small digital team at Good Things Foundation - a charity funding & supporting a network of centres & volunteers helping the socially & digitally excluded
- I love my job



Why is disarray a bad thing?

- You achieve less in the midst of chaos
- The focus is on the chaos & not on users, value, or quality
- It's uncomfortable for most people
- It propagates a unhealthy work environment

Whose job is it to tackle disarray?

Spoiler alert...
it's yours, it's everyone's

This is why we're doing this
& this is what's a priority

Product owner / client

The requirements look like
this, but there's more work
to do here

Business analyst

This is the context we're
working in - this is what
value & success look like

UX researcher / designer

If we're working here, this
will impact here & here &
maybe here too

Test analyst

This is the best way to build
this, it will allow us to
improve it over time

Developer

etc...

“This is a new year,
A new beginning.
And things will
change.”

Taylor Swift

- Accept change **will** happen
- Don't worry about change that you **can't** control
- Don't worry about change that you **can** control
- Work hard on skills to help you deal with the impacts of change
- Trust that you and your team will deal with whatever happens in the best way you can
- Don't be afraid to ask others for help



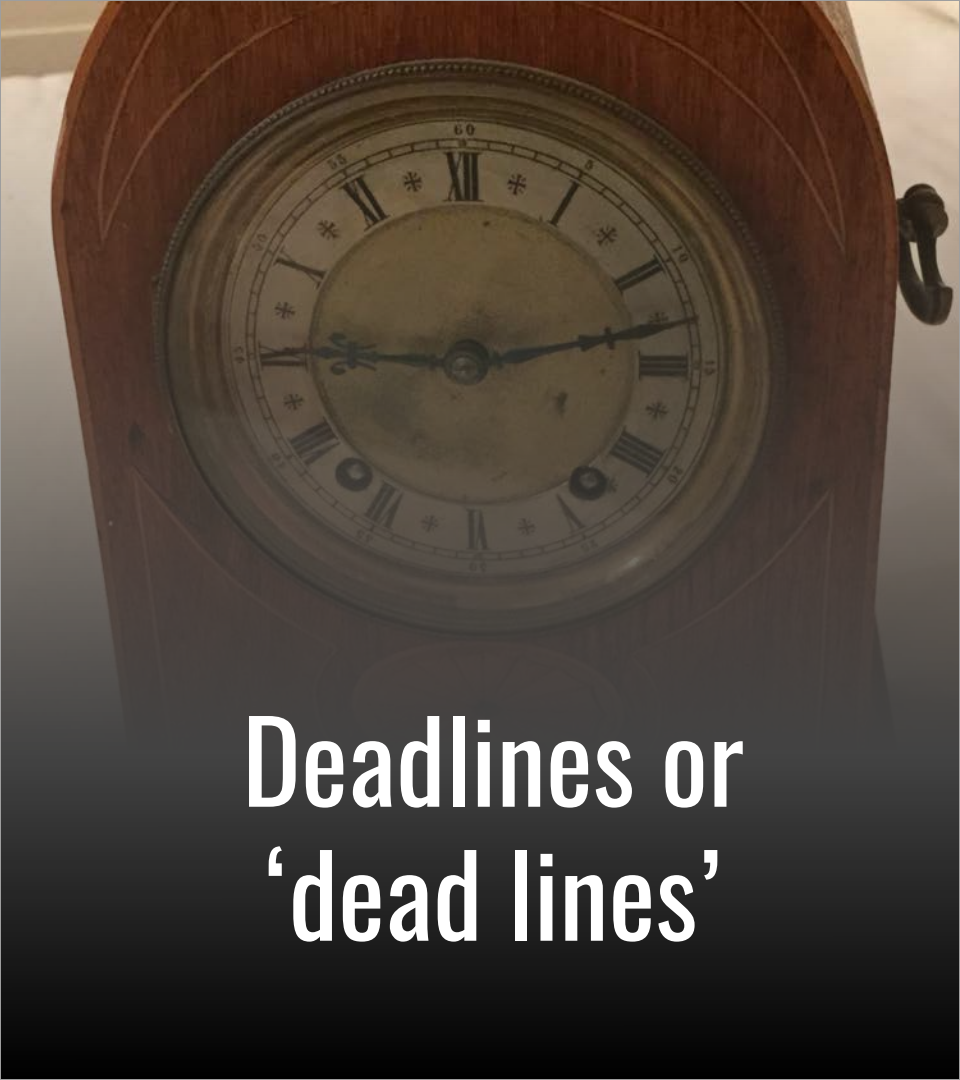
What about those *'unhelpful'* interventions?

- Don't react negatively
 - Listen - try to see the others point of view
You need to understand the 'why' behind it
 - Talk about your understanding & start to discuss the impact - be honest but respectful
 - Suggest alternatives - maybe there's an easier way to achieve X; maybe we should test the change with users - it may be better
 - Agree the new 'lay of the land' - what does success look like now?
-




“Just ‘ship’ it”

- If this is the first time you’re talking about it not ‘shipping it’ on time - **it’s really too late**
- Be honest
- Talk about impact in their language
- Talk about what you can get live
- Remember most people, even clients, prefer it ‘working’ than ‘broken’
- If you promise to deliver on another date make sure you can stick to it




Deadlines or 'dead lines'

- A deadline is just an agreement to do X by Y date
 - Review them as you do requirements, scope & budgets - as things change
 - Deadlines help others - other people will have dependencies on what you're doing
 - How do they do their job without knowing what is likely to come when?
 - **It's not the deadline's fault if you set or allow unrealistic expectations to thrive**
-



So what skills will
help me with
all this?

- Communication skills
 - talk early, talk often, talk in their language
- Listening to understand
- Problem solving & analytical skills
- Influencing & negotiating skills
- Organisational skills
- **Resilience**



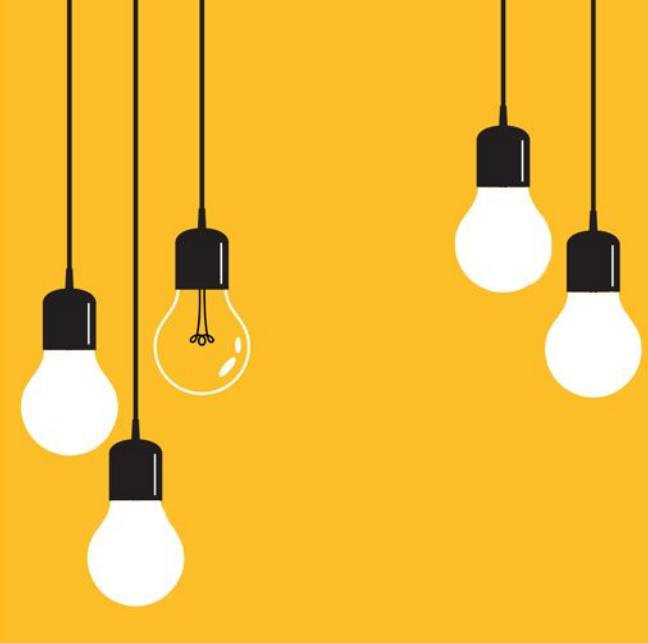
What does a disarray free environment look like?

- It's where teams & organisations do their best work
 - It's not about staying still but organised change
 - It supports listening, frequent communication & understanding
 - It's psychologically safe - trusting, honest, forgiving, & engenders confidence in others
 - It may still be challenging but it will 'feel easier'
-



How to avoid digital disarray?

- Listen & communicate often so you minimise gaps in understanding on solutions, on progress
- Recognise change will happen - expect it, plan for it & skill up to deal with it
- Don't be afraid to talk about change, to talk about the impacts of change & to negotiate what 'delivery' looks like now (solution, scope, timescale, budget)
- **Don't worry**



@webpackets