

The "Self-Organization" Principle

The team decides how to get the work done. The manager sets the boundaries of the field and the goal of the game, but does not run around the field for the players.

The Essence: The team decides how to execute the work that the business has prioritized. The manager defines the boundaries of the field and the goal of the game, but does not move the players' feet for them.

How It Works in Practice

In a traditional system, the manager assigns tasks directly: *"This person does this, that person does that."* In a self-organizing team:

- **The manager brings the backlog** — a list of tasks sorted by business value.
- **The team decides among themselves who takes what:** *"I'll take this, I'm the expert here"* or *"I'll help here to learn."*
- **The team estimates timelines** and commits to delivering a specific volume of work during the sprint.

Three Pillars of Self-Organization

1. **Competence:** The team must possess all the necessary skills to complete the task without external help.
2. **Trust:** If the manager continues to check every single step, self-organization dies instantly — employees simply revert to waiting for orders "from above."
3. **Shared Goal:** The team must understand *why* they are doing this, otherwise everyone will drift toward their own individual motives.

The Role of a Middle Manager

Your job is to manage the context, not the people:

- **Boundaries:** You define the rules of the game — for example, budget limits or security compliance requirements for the solution.
- **Resources:** You provide the team with everything they need so they aren't distracted by bureaucratic red tape.
- **Facilitation:** You help them reach an agreement if they get stuck. You do not make the decision for them; instead, you ask questions like: *"How does this decision bring us closer to our sprint goal?"*

What This Gives a Middle Manager

- **Scalability:** You can lead multiple teams simultaneously because you are not bogged down in the day-to-day operations of every single task.
- **Speed of Reaction:** The team resolves issues on the spot without waiting for your approval.

- **Quality Through Accountability:** When a person chooses a task themselves and promises to deliver it, their internal commitment is much higher than when working under micro-management.

The Middle Manager's Commandment: If you want your team to become self-organizing, prepare for more mistakes than usual at first. Your job is to weather this transition period without falling back into control-freak mode. Responsibility is only born when people have the right to make mistakes.