Einheit Regained

Dealing With Cultural Drift in Times of High Growth

SCRUM
@SCALE

The Starting State – Ready for Lift-off

- The company was built by two strong founders who nurtured a high-trust, decentralized and cooperative culture.

- Rapid growth resulted in many new employees which led to a breakdown in cultural cohesion.

- Sales stalled, margins evaporated, and veteran employees started leaving the company.

Courtesy of SpaceX – Creative Commons CC0 1.0

SCRUM
@SCALE

The Anti-pattern – Culture Failing to Scale

The founder-inspired culture was unable to adequately scale with the company growth:

- **High latency:** The Scrum Masters – who are also the key contact with the customers – were no longer able to quickly exploit opportunities.

- **Lack of cooperation:** The culture of cooperation turned into internal rivalry between groups of teams.

- **Sense of helplessness:** Employees asking to be assigned to other managers or leaving outright.

- **Einheit lost:** Limited understanding of what others were doing/struggling with. No common outlook.

SCRUM
@SCALE

Einheit [ˈaɪnhaɪt]

"We believe that implicit communication—to communicate through mutual understanding, using a minimum of key, well-understood phrases or even anticipating each others' thoughts—is a faster, more effective way to communicate than through the use of detailed, explicit instructions.

We develop this ability through **familiarity and trust**, which are based on a shared philosophy and **shared experience**."

— *Marine Corps Doctrine Publication 1,* Warfighting*, p. 79*

SCRUM
@SCALE

What was done? – Restoring Einheit

Implemented a Scaled Daily Scrum (SDS) for 8 teams in order to rekindle Einheit with as little resistance as possible.

- Emphasized familiarity and trust in SDS, e.g. by showing (sensible) vulnerability by leadership and focusing on learning ("What have we learned last week?").

- With Einheit restored, teams quickly moved to once again seizing opportunities by themselves.

- More Scrum@Scale patterns were then implemented via "pull" by team members (transformation backlog, Agile Practice, etc.)
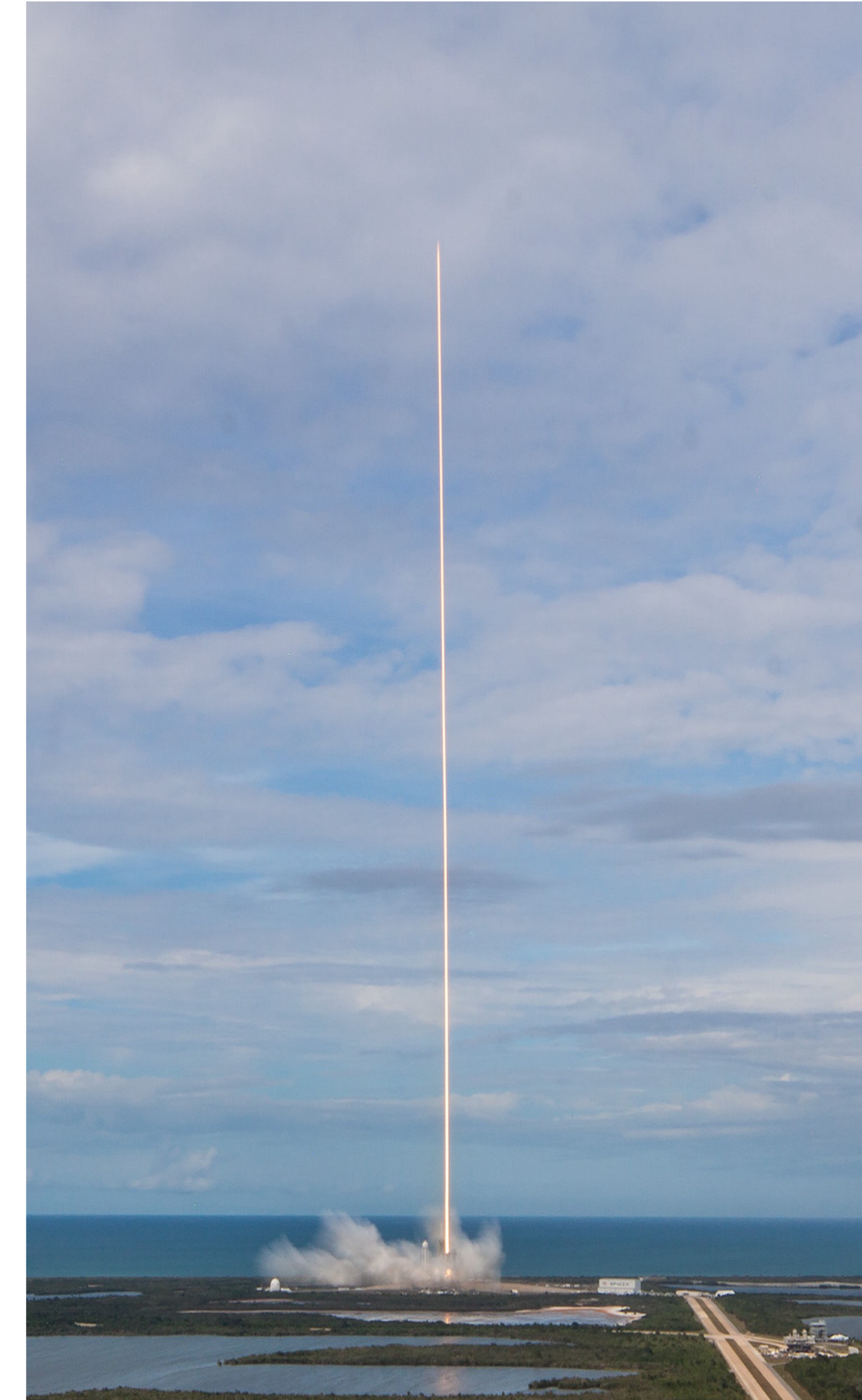

Courtesy US Navy 80116-N-6730G-006 (released)

SCRUM
@SCALE

"I didn't want to "control" my Marines. I wanted to unleash them on the enemy."

— *Col. Mike Wyly, as cited by Chet Richards, in All By Ourselves, p. 61*

SCRUM
@SCALE

Results: Achieving Lift-off

In the part of the company where Scrum@Scale was implemented ...

- total revenue for the group grew by a factor of 8.87 (at significantly higher margins)

- the group was able to increase the prices for its offering by an average of 21%

- employee qualifications and satisfaction substantially increased

Courtesy of SpaceX – Creative Commons CC0 1.0

SCRUM
@SCALE