Part A
LESSON 1

Website Manager's Masterclass

Masterclass Part A (Lessons 1-4)

Watch free videos of lessons 1-4 on <u>YouTube</u>

Masterclass Part B (Lessons 5-8)

Introduction

Welcome to the first lesson of this new online *Masterclass for Web and Product Managers*.

My name is Shane Diffily. I created this course and I'm your guide through the series.

The aim of this new *Masterclass* is simple. To equip you with the practical insight and hands-on expertise you need to build a more effective system of online control. For example:

- How to identify the right **tools and processes** (including Agile) needed to supervise increased digital complexity.

- How to define clear **roles and responsibilities** for your team and across departmental boundaries—so everyone knows what they should (and should *not*) be doing and can stop treading on each other's toes.

- How to ensure clarity in **ownership, leadership and authority**, especially in instances of a devolved organisation.

- And, perhaps most importantly, how to create a **Business Case** that can compel senior executives to act—and then implement a project of transformation that delivers on the promise of better management.

Ultimately, you'll learn how to use operations as a new means of **competitive advantage**—so that as traditional disciplines like design and content are gradually exhausted as differentiators, you can continue to stay well ahead of your peers.

Web operations. They're so hot right now!

As you may be aware, the topic of digital operations is currently attracting a lot of attention.

It seems as if its moment has finally arrived. This is encouraging because until recently few commentators were much interested in the details of supervising web.
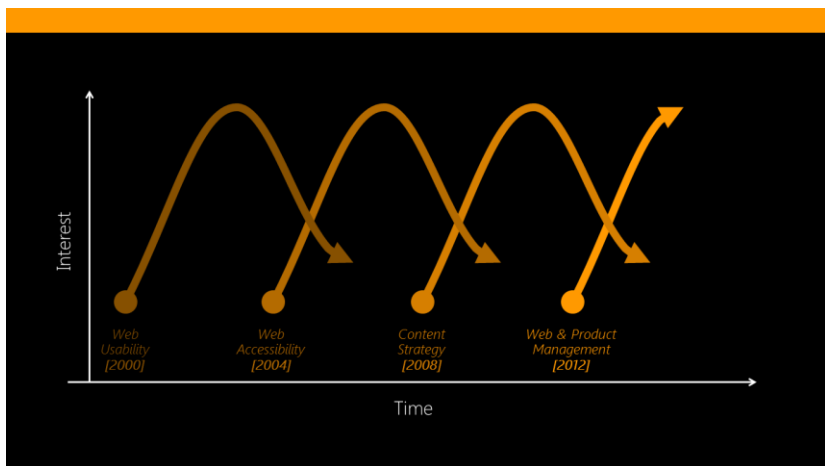
The reason is that there were too many other things that needed fixing first, like:

- Getting the basics of usability right

- Implementing accessibility and,

- Improving content.

And while we must admit that work remains to be done in these areas, a lot of the fundamentals have been put to bed.

As a consequence attention can now switch to how such tasks (and the resources needed to support them) are organised.

And not just for aesthetic reasons. As I have said, the real motivator is **competitive advantage**.

That is (all else being equal) those who are best at online in future will be those who are best at management; because they'll be the ones who can react most quickly to new circumstances, at the lowest cost and in a predictable way.

A well-tuned engine?

But despite this growing interest, the purpose of the *Masterclass* is NOT to convince you to spend **more** time on operations, but in fact to help you spend **less**.

A crucial thing to realise is that management is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

It simply puts order and control on essential activities so that you get on with more important things — like pursuing your online goals.

One way to think of this is like the well-tuned engine of a car, humming away under the hood.

In most cases, you just take it for granted that when you turn the key, it'll always work.

In a similar way, a good system of supervision is equally reliable. It hums along with the efficiency of skilled staff following effective processes.

In fact, it is so good that many outside your team may barely even notice it is there at all—until things go wrong, that is.

The truth is that rather than being graceful machines, many systems of management are quite the opposite; clunking along and in danger of seizing up at any moment.

The reasons for this are twofold.

First, there has been an **historic inattention** to the underlying principles of "Web Governance" in many organisations—an inattention that is only now being addressed.

Through no fault of their own, many teams have been dreadfully underfunded over the years and essentially left to their own devices.

What were once informal systems have calcified into rigid ways of doing things entirely unsuited to modern needs.

And as if that wasn't enough—secondly—all this has occurred against the backdrop of a huge **expansion in ambition**.

While a decade ago the only thing your team had to worry about was perhaps a single corporate site, today even the smallest organization maintains a wide variety of digital presences (including apps, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) aimed at a growing array of devices and each with a large assortment of internal stakeholders and Product Managers clamouring for attention.

The difficulty is that this growth in **volume and complexity** has not been balanced by a corresponding growth in the **resources and leadership** needed to make things happen—causing great instability.

In fact the scale of demands now being placed on people like you often far outstrips your ability to deliver.

There is simply too much to do and not enough to do it with.

Many web and product managers are worked so hard and have so little redundancy, that almost any problem could bring things crashing down, including:

- Quarrels over online ownership—say, between IT and Marketing.

- Shortages in skilled manpower or the right tools.

- Or an inability to coordinate amongst distributed owners.

And yet, despite such issues, staff remain steadfastly dedicated to the job at hand.

I continue to meet people who go above and beyond the call of duty to keep the show on the road, such as working weekends or postponing holidays.

You see, web people want to do a great job. But just like everyone else they have a **legitimate expectation** that senior executives will provide the resource they need to get on with things.

The problem is that this expectation has been largely ignored.

Framework of Governance

So if this situation seems familiar, don't despair.

That's what the *Masterclass* is for.

Over the course of the following lessons you'll learn a new approach to management; one that is based on a *"Framework of Governance"* that distils all complexity into a single model.

This *Framework* is comprehensive, scalable and robust and can help you in three practical ways:

1. First, it describes you all the things you need *to do* to in order supervise any online product or service.

2. Second, it lists all the resources you need *to invest in*, in order to ensure these activities can take place.

3. And third, it can make *predictions* about exactly how to configure this mixture of activities and resources

into a system of control—that can actually deliver stability.

But added to these benefits, probably the best thing about the *Framework* you are about to learn is that it can be applied to any type of product (whether desktop, mobile, social or app) and indeed to any size of product; from a simple intranet for a mid-scale university to the portal of a transnational corporation.
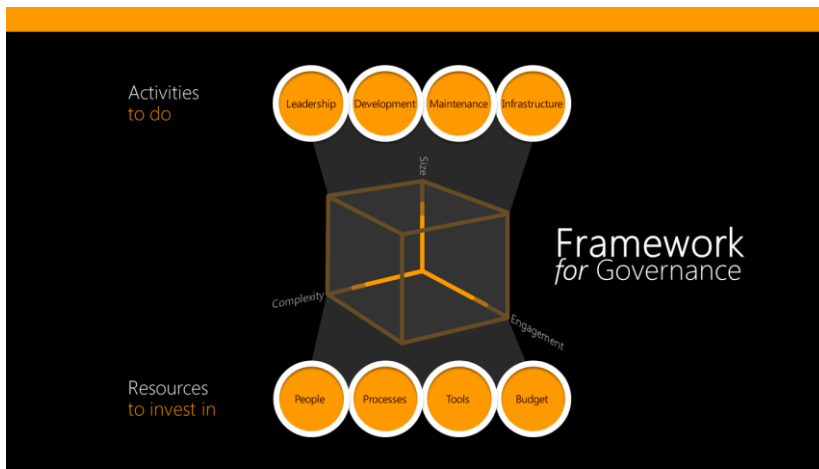
It doesn't matter. The same fundamentals apply.

The *Framework* gives you stability. The stability you need to focus on more important things, like your online goals.

So, where to begin?

Start at the start

Well, first we're going to explore the basics.

What we'll do is define the underlying concept of "*governance*" as it relates to web and product management to identify all the essential activities and resources that come within your remit for operations.

Second, we'll show how by following a few basic rules you can arrange all these various elements into a better system of co-ordination.

And finally, we'll focus in on the **3 Key Factors** that above all else will determine whether the systems you create can actually succeed — or simply repeat the errors of the past.

Of course, I can't promise that this journey will be easy.

Like many you may experience roadblocks, uncertainty or doubts along the way.

But don't worry.

No matter what questions are raised or what issues are brought up, the approach you are about to learn is robust enough that you can keep coming back to it in order to make sense of ever deepening complexity.

So now, let's get on with it.

In our next lesson we'll start at the start, by learning in depth what "*governance*" means and reveal the *Framework* you can use today to begin taking control of online management.
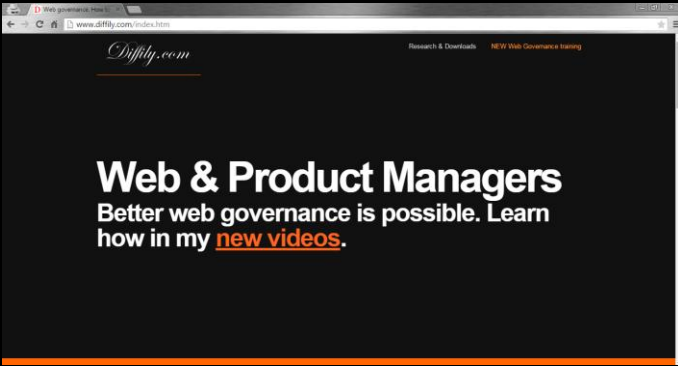
Copyright © Shane Diffily | www.diffily.com