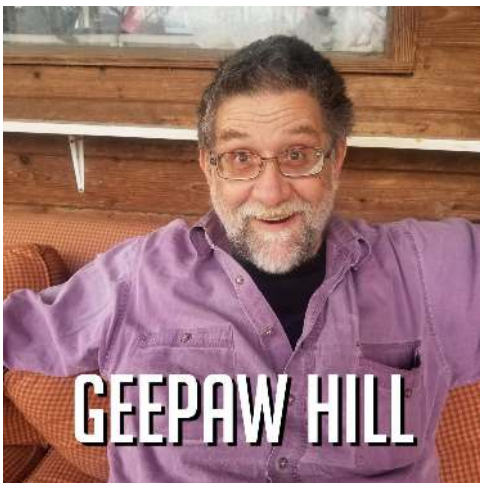## "Better."

How can we help our software teams get stronger? Faster? Smarter? Happier? More positive and more productive?

There are lots of ideas about what changes we might *desire* to make, ranging from process to policy to procedure to skillset. There's no problem in finding proposed changes. No, the problem is in helping your team to actually *make* any given change.

Leading Technical Change (LTC), is a course designed to focus on **how to make change**, not which change to make.

The Course

My name is GeePaw Hill, and I have been helping software development teams to find the path to "better" for just over 25 years. I've worked with over a hundred teams, in every flavor of software development.

I have helped dozens of teams adopt – and *adapt* – new ideas to their particular circumstances. And there are always custom circumstances.

Now, I am wanting to share what I have learned, in a short, intimate, live, remote course, "Leading Technical Change" (LTC).

LTC is composed of 4 2-hour sessions, distributed across a single week. Each offering of the course is limited to just 6 attendees.

In those 8 hours, LTC develops the theory of change, then offers a variety of hardcore techniques, and finally, case-by-case analysis and advice about the real change-problems facing each attendee.
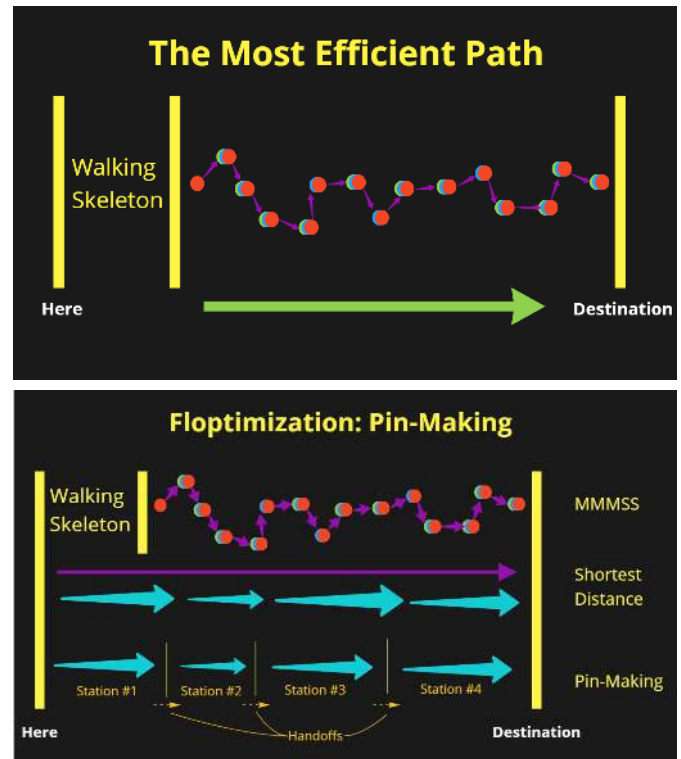
The Theory of Change

Many people, conceiving of some change they want to make, focus all of their attention only on the "what" of that particular change. But successful change, *any* successful change, depends at least as much on the "***how***" as on the "what".

The theory of change we'll be working with in the course is based around research on "cognitive frames", the short-hand pre-assembled bits and pieces that actually underlie most day-to-day action. We can't eliminate frames (and we wouldn't want to), we can only change their shape.

Doing that involves three abstract strategies:

1. Take many more much smaller steps.
2. Optimize for the humans.
3. Make Change Normal.

From these three broad strategies, we can develop specific, powerful tactics to increase the likelihood that our changes will really work, and really stick.

The Technique Of Change

The course comes with what we call the Techniques Bundle. This is a collection of actual practical tips and tricks. Some of these will be familiar, some new, but all will make more sense when interpreted within the theory above. Each technique is a headline and a one-page description. Here are five, chosen at random.

- *Easiest Nearest Owwie First:* There are small problems and big ones. Fix the small ones before you approach the big ones.
- *Create Experiences, Not Arguments:* Actual lived experience is the most powerful persuasive force there is.
- *Use Locally Grounded Lightning Talks:* High-speed talks, 15 minutes at a time, based in real day-job situations, stir conversation and build community & consensus.
- *Dot Votes Are Data:* You can gather and objectify real information for your team using even very simple and lightweight approaches. It's cheaper, faster, and every bit as objective.
- *Get A Heavyweight To Bless An Activity:* Everyone in the c-suite knows what it is to "bless" an experiment, or a learning session. Ask them to spend 5 minutes telling the team they approve of yours.

There are currently more than 30 techniques in the bundle, and we add new ones all the time, based partly on what comes from the final element of our structure, the advice.

The Practice of Change

Just as all of us are simultaneously alike in some ways and different in others, so, too, with change problems: They're all alike. *And they're all different.*

The course is restricted to just six attendees for each offering, and there's a reason for that: it gives us the chance to work not just with theory or memorizing a catalog of practices, but with *applying* what we've learned to the actual change situations that are confronting us right now.

Over the four days, each of the six attendees will lay out their change case for us. What they want, what they've tried, what they're thinking of trying. We'll pitch in, a team of seven, to help add to and elaborate on the next few steps towards that change.

Many of the former students have said this was the most valuable part of the experience: actual interaction with others, to lend ideas, support, and energy to go back to work newly excited and invigorated. And here are a few of the other things they've said:
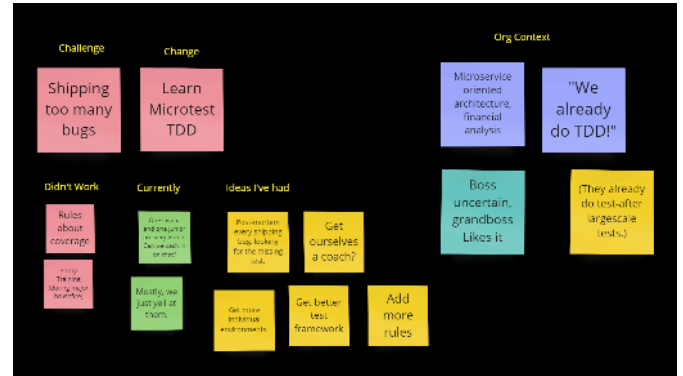
A masterclass in leading without authority. Intensely practical and focused on outcomes, you leave with a toolkit that you can start applying immediately.

 – Jenny Wanger, Product Operations Consultant and Owner @ Avenir Design

Gee Paw's bag of technique is amazing to start as seeds and keep making progress from there. One doesn't need to wait long to rip fruit from it, it starts showing its impact in hours or days.

– Lead @ Biznovare

"Leading Technical Change" gave me a new way of thinking about change. I gained insight about people behavior and new ideas of how to influence teams of geeks in the way that actually works. I appreciated GeePaw's wisdom, wit and kind approach and really enjoyed learning from him.

– Lada Kesseler, Lead Software Developer at Logic2020

LTC was a surprisingly humbling experience, because change is truly very personal. The only one I can actually change is myself. So this was much more about me changing my approach to others than about me making others change.

– Martin Larsson, Learning Consultant

Leading Technical Change is a thought provoking and pragmatic course on change for technical groups.

– Howard S. Fear, Principal Engineer