frAGILE(TM)

THE frAGILE DICTIONARY

Corporate terms, translated into the language of organizational survival.

100 terms, and the organizational patterns behind them: unclear ownership, decisions that drift, and work that looks done before it is.

The definitions are exaggerated on purpose. They caricature organizational habits, not every person working inside them.

LIVING COLLECTION. STATUS: STILL ACCUMULATING.

TERM 001 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Acceptance Criteria

The evidence a team agrees will count as done, often requested after the demo has already been scheduled.

TERM 002 / METRICS & MARKETING

Actionable Insights

Evidence packaged for action after the action has already been selected.

TERM 003 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Agile

A flexible way of working, commonly implemented as a rigid calendar of ceremonies for discussing why the flexible work cannot change.

TERM 004 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Alignment

The thirty-second period when everyone agrees on a direction before returning to their departments with five different interpretations of it.

TERM 005 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Architecture

The structural foundation expected to survive every new strategy while remaining firmly outside this quarter's scope.

TERM 006 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Artifact

A document created to prove that a conversation happened, usually moments before another meeting is scheduled to discuss the document.

TERM 007 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Asynchronous (Async)

A communication method designed to let people respond on their own schedule, followed approximately eleven minutes later by, "Just checking if you saw this."

TERM 008 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Backlog

A digital graveyard of low-priority bug reports, minor feature requests, and abandoned dreams that no sprint will ever touch.

TERM 009 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Bake-off

A comparison of two approaches whose scoring criteria become clear only after one wins.

TERM 010 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Benchmark

Studying competitors to understand the market, shortly before rebuilding the exact feature everyone agreed was mediocre.

TERM 011 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Bespoke

A custom fix for one important customer, quietly promoted to a permanent problem for everyone else.

TERM 012 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Capacity Planning

The careful allocation of 100 percent of a team's available time before accounting for meetings, support, defects, dependencies, emergencies, or reality.

TERM 013 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Change Management

The organizational discipline of preparing people for a change they usually discover from the new interface on Monday morning.

TERM 014 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Change Request

A new decision dressed as a small edit until someone traces its effect on scope, testing, and the release date.

TERM 015 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Core Competency

The thing an organization is unusually good at, generally receiving less investment than the new thing mentioned during the latest executive offsite.

TERM 016 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Customer-Centric

A promise to put customers first, subject to the standard exceptions for deadlines, budgets, and decisions already in motion.

TERM 017 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Dark Pattern

Designing a user interface so intentionally confusing that canceling a subscription requires a phone call and a notary public.

TERM 018 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Decision Rights

The explicit answer to who can say yes, who can say no, and who must be consulted, usually discovered after all three have spoken.

TERM 019 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Deep Dive

Spending two hours analyzing a microscopic edge case while the core application actively burns down.

TERM 020 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Definition of Ready

An agreement about what must be clear before work starts, frequently waived for the item everyone calls urgent.

TERM 021 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Deliverable

A tangible output demonstrating progress, frequently confused with progress itself.

TERM 022 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Dependency

Something another team must finish before you can finish your work, ensuring that neither team's delivery date can ever be discussed with confidence.

TERM 023 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Discovery

The disciplined process of learning what should be built before building it, ideally conducted before everyone has already decided what will be built.

TERM 024 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Dogfooding

Using your own product internally to experience exactly what customers experience, followed by explaining why the internal experience is somehow different.

TERM 025 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Ecosystem

A collection of separate, poorly connected software products sold as a unified suite.

TERM 026 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Edge Case

A user behavior considered statistically insignificant until the user experiencing it is sufficiently important.

TERM 027 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Empowerment

Giving a team full authority to decide, pending review by everyone who previously had it.

TERM 028 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Epic

A Jira ticket so vaguely defined and massive in scope that it slowly swallows three consecutive quarters of roadmap space.

TERM 029 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Escalation

The formal process of adding progressively more senior people to an unresolved problem until the original problem becomes secondary.

TERM 030 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival)

A date requested before enough information exists to provide a date, and therefore provided anyway.

TERM 031 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Feature Creep

The gradual addition of individually reasonable requests until a simple application requires a flight manual.

TERM 032 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Firefight

Urgent work performed to resolve an emergency while postponing the non-urgent work intended to prevent future emergencies.

TERM 033 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Flywheel

A circular diagram in a presentation slide used to make a basic sales loop sound like physics.

TERM 034 / METRICS & MARKETING

Frictionless

A marketing claim applied to a checkout flow that currently requires three redirects, SMS verification, and a password reset.

TERM 035 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Gap Analysis

A structured comparison between where your product is and where everyone suddenly remembers they wanted it to be.

TERM 036 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Go-Live

The moment a release stops being a plan and meets users, support queues, and the assumptions left in the launch checklist.

TERM 037 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Go-To-Market (GTM)

The coordinated effort by Product, Sales, Marketing, Operations, and Support to discover they each had a different launch date.

TERM 038 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Governance

A collection of meetings, approvals, committees, and decision rights created to ensure important decisions are made deliberately, eventually, or elsewhere.

TERM 039 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Graceful Degradation

A system's ability to fail politely while the incident channel becomes considerably less polite.

TERM 040 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Greenfield

A clean slate on which to rebuild the same approval process that made the previous system impossible to change.

TERM 041 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Headwinds

Conditions outside the organization's control. Frequently discovered near the end of a difficult quarter.

TERM 042 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Heuristic

A practical rule of thumb used when perfect information is unavailable, later presented in PowerPoint with sufficient confidence to resemble perfect information.

TERM 043 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

HiPPO (Highest Paid Person's Opinion)

The ultimate decision-making framework that overrides all user research, A/B testing, and logical reasoning.

TERM 044 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Hypercare

The post-launch period in which unresolved decisions arrive as urgent support tickets.

TERM 045 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Impact

The measurable difference created by an initiative, usually described most enthusiastically before anyone agrees how it will be measured.

TERM 046 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Incremental

Shipping in small increments, each celebrated as a major milestone until somebody asks whether the destination has changed.

TERM 047 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Intake

A structured process for receiving unstructured requests from people who have already promised them to someone.

TERM 048 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Iterative

Improving something through repeated cycles, assuming the second cycle survives the roadmap.

TERM 049 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Jira

A system for making work visible by transforming human effort into rectangles.

TERM 050 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Job To Be Done (JTBD)

A useful way of understanding what customers are actually trying to accomplish, occasionally expanded until understanding the framework becomes its own job to be done.

TERM 051 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Kicking the Can

Postponing the same critical fix until its original estimate qualifies as historical documentation.

TERM 052 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

KPI (Key Performance Indicator)

A metric considered important enough to appear on an executive dashboard and stable enough to be redefined when necessary.

TERM 053 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Lean

The removal of process waste, occasionally measured by the number of forms required to approve removing a form.

TERM 054 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Legacy Code

Software everyone wants to replace, provided the replacement causes no downtime, costs nothing, and was finished last quarter.

TERM 055 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Market Validation

Evidence that customers actually want something, ideally obtained from customers who are neither relatives nor currently employed by the company.

TERM 056 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Microservices

Dividing one application into independently deployable services, then creating a standing committee to coordinate their independence.

TERM 057 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

MoSCoW Method

A prioritization tool where stakeholders label 95% of items as "Must Haves" and ignore the remaining letters.

TERM 058 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

MVP (Minimum Viable Product)

The smallest version capable of testing a meaningful assumption, frequently interpreted as the smallest version everyone can tolerate apologizing for.

TERM 059 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

No-Code

Software that allows people to create applications without traditional programming, thereby moving several traditional programming problems somewhere less visible.

TERM 060 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Non-Negotiable

A requirement declared fixed just as the team discovers nobody wrote down why.

TERM 061 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

North Star Metric

The single measure intended to orient the organization toward long-term value, supported by approximately 47 additional measures.

TERM 062 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Offboarding

A carefully documented departure process that discovers the departing employee owns half the team's automations.

TERM 063 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Offsite

A meeting held somewhere expensive enough that ordinary meetings briefly feel strategic.

TERM 064 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

OKR (Objectives & Key Results)

A framework connecting ambitious goals to measurable outcomes, traditionally rediscovered near the end of each quarter.

TERM 065 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Pain Point

A genuine customer problem that becomes progressively more dramatic as it moves closer to a sales presentation.

TERM 066 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Parity

Rebuilding every mediocre feature your competitor has so users can be equally disappointed by your platform.

TERM 067 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Pivot

A strategic change in direction made after new evidence emerges, or immediately before old evidence becomes impossible to ignore.

TERM 068 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Post-Mortem

A structured examination of what went wrong, conducted in a psychologically safe environment where everyone already knows exactly what went wrong.

TERM 069 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Proof of Concept (PoC)

A temporary experiment created solely to demonstrate feasibility and therefore naturally considered for production.

TERM 070 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

QBR (Quarterly Business Review)

A quarterly review that explains every variance except the decision needed for next quarter.

TERM 071 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Quality Assurance (QA)

The systematic effort to discover whether software behaves as intended before customers perform the same research independently.

TERM 072 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

RACI Matrix

A matrix that assigns responsibility, accountability, consultation, and information so precisely that nobody is quite sure who can say yes.

TERM 073 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Readiness

The organizational condition achieved immediately before discovering three things nobody realized were required.

TERM 074 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Refactor

Improving the internal structure of software without changing its external behavior, making it simultaneously essential to engineering and nearly invisible to everyone funding it.

TERM 075 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Release Readiness

The state declared after the code is finished and before anyone checks whether support, training, rollback, or operations got the memo.

TERM 076 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Retrospective (Retro)

A recurring meeting dedicated to identifying how the team can improve, including several improvements first identified during the previous retrospective.

TERM 077 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Roadmap

A visual plan of what will happen, with its assumptions filed in the notes nobody opens.

TERM 078 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Scope Creep

The quiet, steady expansion of a project's requirements until a simple patch turns into a complete system rebuild.

TERM 079 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Silo

An organizational boundary that functions perfectly until a customer needs two departments to solve the same problem.

TERM 080 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Single Source of Truth

The authoritative location for information, alongside the spreadsheet, Slack thread, PowerPoint, Jira ticket, SharePoint page, and copy someone saved locally.

TERM 081 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Spike

A time-boxed investigation intended to reduce uncertainty, occasionally concluding with a professionally documented increase in uncertainty.

TERM 082 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Sprint

A fixed period for completing selected work, followed by another fixed period containing some remarkably familiar selected work.

TERM 083 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Stakeholder

Anyone whose input is essential, whose priorities are urgent, and whose decision rights remain under active discussion.

TERM 084 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

Synergy

The predicted benefit of working together, most reliably observed in PowerPoint before the teams have met.

TERM 085 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

T-Shirt Sizing

Estimating complex work using clothing sizes so everyone can disagree about effort without becoming distracted by numbers.

TERM 086 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Technical Debt

The future cost created by today's expedient technical decisions, making it one of the few forms of debt routinely approved without a repayment schedule.

TERM 087 / METRICS & MARKETING

Thought Leadership

The public sharing of expertise and original thinking, plus several observations about leadership that were previously available on coffee mugs.

TERM 088 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

UAT (User Acceptance Testing)

The last scheduled chance for users to discover what the requirements meant before the release date discovers it for them.

TERM 089 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Unblock

To remove an obstacle preventing progress, commonly accomplished by scheduling a meeting with the person who did not answer the message.

TERM 090 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

User Story

A concise description of user value written in ordinary language before acquiring fourteen acceptance criteria and three technical dependencies.

TERM 091 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

UX (User Experience)

The discipline of making a product intuitive until seventeen non-negotiable requirements arrive from six departments.

TERM 092 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Value Add

Extra features thrown into a contract for free because the customer threatened to switch to a competitor.

TERM 093 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Value Proposition

The compelling reason customers should choose the product, polished until everyone can recite it and nobody can explain it.

TERM 094 / PRODUCT & STRATEGY

Velocity

A measure of how much work a team completes over time, most useful until somebody decides it should become a target.

TERM 095 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Water-Scrum-Fall

Quarterly commitments at the top, two-week sprints in the middle, and a release train that still waits for permission to leave the station.

TERM 096 / METRICS & MARKETING

White Paper

An authoritative industry report whose final finding is that you should enter your corporate email address.

TERM 097 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

WIP (Work in Progress)

A permanent state of existence for seven different features that will sit 90% complete for the next six months.

TERM 098 / MEETINGS & GOVERNANCE

X-Functional (Cross-Functional)

Gathering eight people from different departments in a room to guarantee that no single person has authority to make a decision.

TERM 099 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Zero-Day

A previously unknown security vulnerability for which no fix yet exists, traditionally discovered at the exact moment everyone responsible becomes unavailable.

TERM 100 / ENGINEERING & DELIVERY

Zombie Ticket

A ticket closed six months ago that returns with the same defect and a new release number.