

I have found myself explaining the role of delivery manager a lot over the last few weeks, so I thought I would share that description here [to help others understand it](#).

The term delivery manager is [used to describe an essential set of skills on an agile team and is an agile role](#) used in government as well as ~~and~~ other organisations, mainly within (but not limited to) digital ~~or IT~~ departments. It describes the person [in a skilled, multidisciplinary team on the agile team whose main concern](#) is enabling ~~that team to a team of skilled people to~~ deliver value.

They [do this by creating](#) the right environment for the team [to succeed, helping the team to self organise and creating a culture of learning and transparency](#). The role is a one of a servant leader, ~~they~~ [keep pace through the introduction of relevant agile / lean tools and techniques, facilitate the team](#) and remove obstacles and blockers that might get in their ~~way~~ [of delivery](#). They work closely with the product manager (sometimes known as product owner), but while the product manager is concerned with the vision the delivery manager is concerned with making it happen. The perfect visionary and doer pairing. [It's worth noting that it is important that these two roles are not performed by the same person](#).

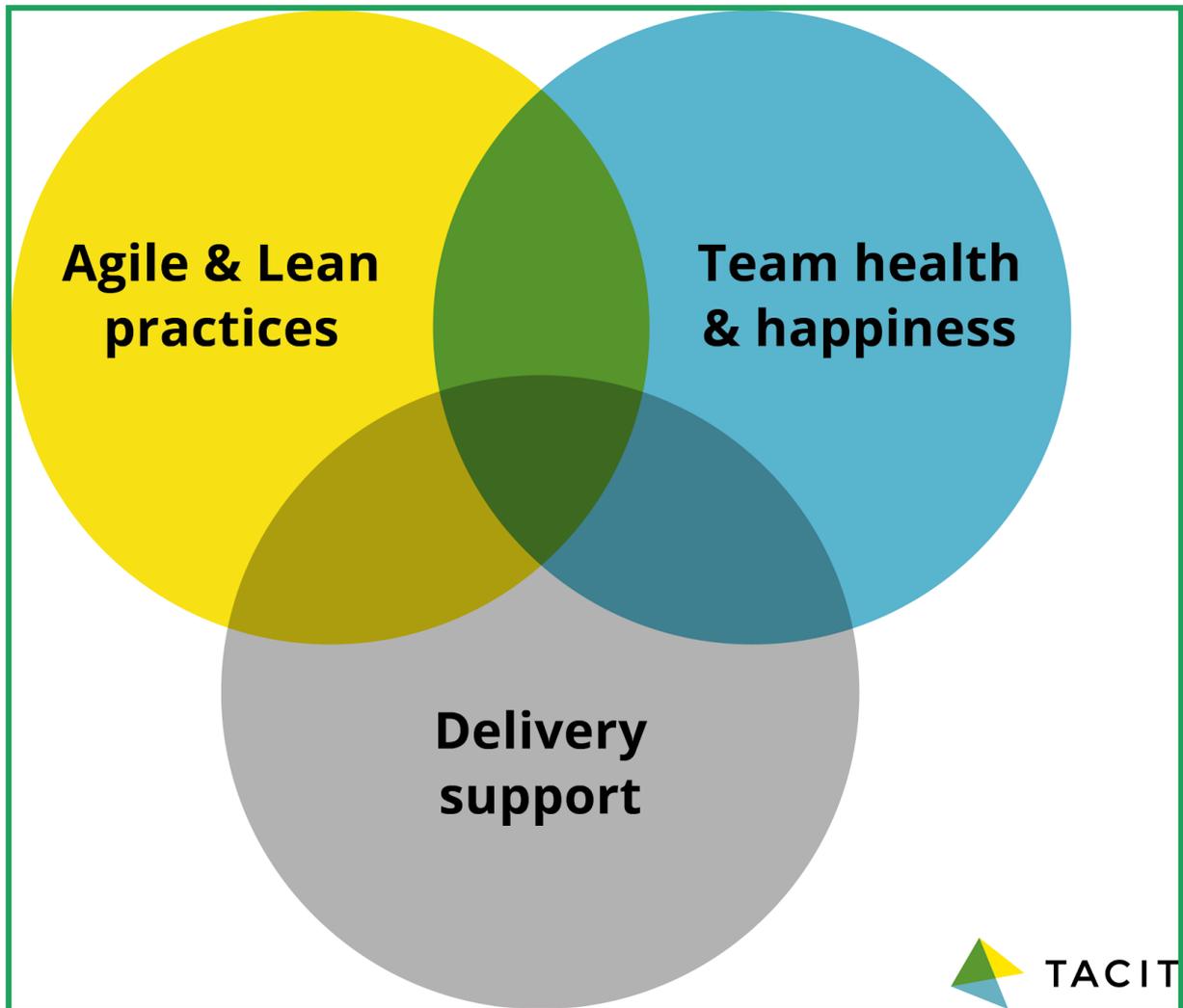
Delivery manager is sometimes used interchangeably with “scrum master” and “agile project manager” although [it is usually a different role and should be considered accordingly](#), ~~in different organisations, these terms might have slightly different definitions~~.

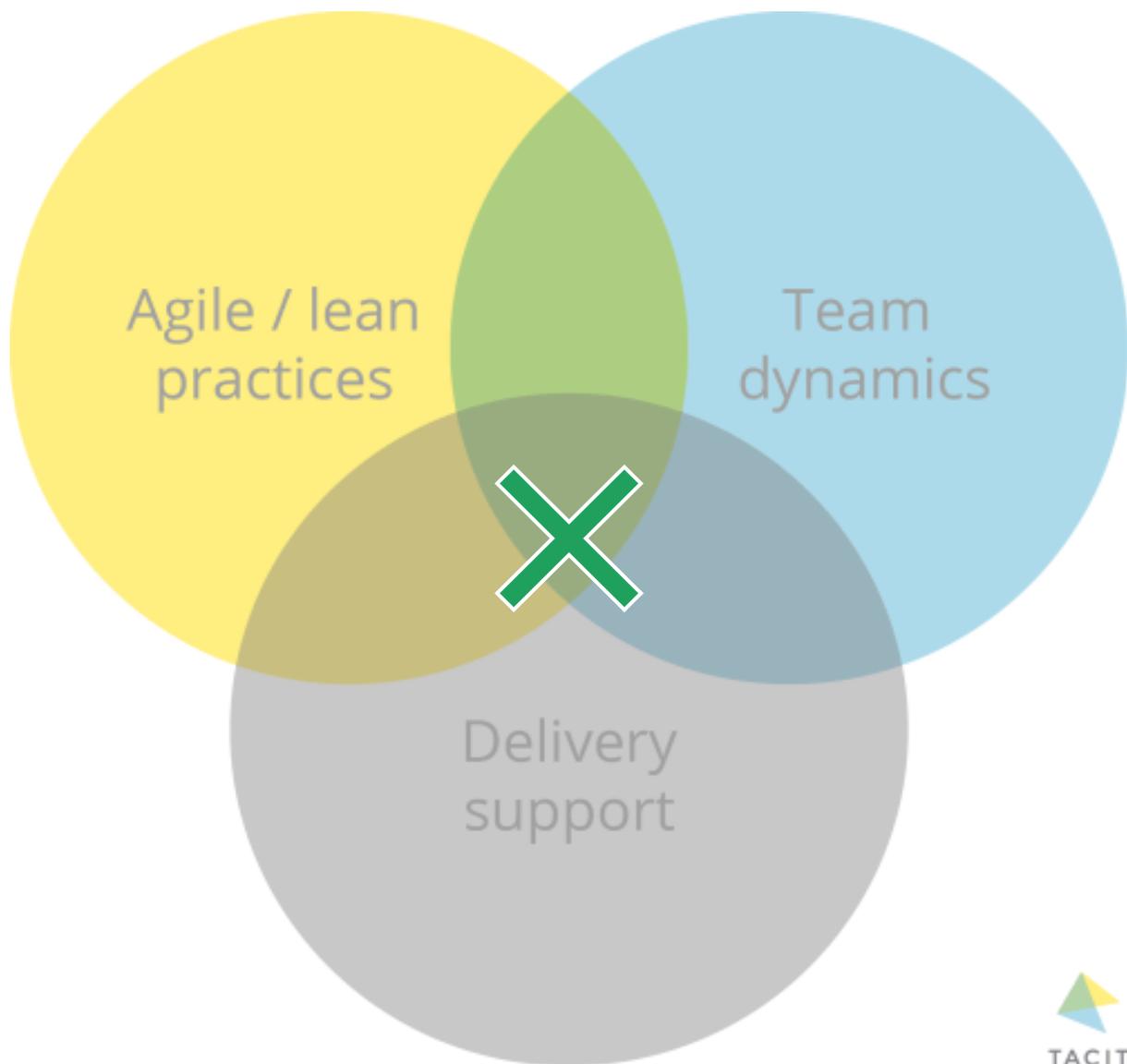
I was the head of role for delivery managers at Government Digital Service (GDS) and since becoming an Agile consultant, I have helped other government departments and organisations hire and develop delivery managers. [The description on the GDS service design manual](#) is a good place to start and over the last few years, I have refined my thinking and the way I describe the role to others.

Aspects of the delivery manager role

Broadly the delivery manager role breaks down into three main areas, these are; Agile ~~&~~ lean practices; ~~Team~~ [health & happiness, dynamics](#) and delivery

support. All these aspects are important and some are easier to learn than others.





Aspects of the delivery manager role

I have summarised each area below.

Agile ~~&/~~ lean practices (*The tangible skills*)

The delivery manager is the person on the team who leads on agile and lean practices. They use a variety of agile and lean tools and techniques in order to help the team ~~keep a delivery and learning cadence that helps to deliver value and~~ remain focused on ~~delivering value against~~ the product vision. ~~They will~~ They will be able to draw upon a range of tools and techniques, and know which ~~techniques to try out when of them to use at different times,~~ to make sure the team are getting the best out of being agile.

A good delivery manager will be skilled at agile and lean, they will be learning new tools all the time, know when to use them and know about current trends

Team health & happiness dynamics (~~the people~~ *softer skills*)

The delivery manager is concerned with the health and happiness of the team members and how they work together. They will encourage and motivate the team and protect them from external distractions and politics so they are able to focus on what they are best at.

A good delivery manager knows that a happy team will produce the most amazing work, they are skilled at building trust, managing team dynamics and motivating people. ~~and understands how to best support people.~~

Delivery support (*the other stuff*)

As there is no formal role for a traditional project manager in an agile team ~~As the role of project manager is removed from a team,~~ there are some ~~project management type~~ activities that fall to the delivery manager. These are often outward facing tasks and may include things like financial tracking, hiring, stakeholder relationships (supporting the product owner), reporting to a wider organisation (particularly relevant if the organisation has not fully adopted agile yet) and anything else that no one else is doing, but is necessary to support the team's delivering value. The delivery manager may challenge existing processes and work with people outside the team to update them if they are slowing the team down or not adding the most value for everyone.

I have seen this aspect of the role supported by another person (~~either inside or outside of the team~~) where the overhead is taking the delivery manager away from ~~Agile & lean practices~~ and ~~Team health & happiness dynamics~~.

The middle of the Venn diagram (*the core skills*)

Sitting in the middle of the Venn diagram are very important skills that span all parts of the delivery manager role like coaching (~~individuals, the team and people outside of the team~~ ~~external people~~), diplomacy, leadership (~~including servant leadership~~), communication and facilitation.

There is a lot more detail behind each of these areas, which I'm happy to discuss further. Different teams will have different needs from their delivery manager,

depending on the make-up of the team and the organisation that the team is within. There may also be a need for a delivery manager to have particular technical skills or understanding of what the team is delivering. I'd be interested in hearing thoughts from anyone that works in this area in the comments below.