

A Pattern Language for Handovers

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In 2007 issues with handovers became apparent in Japan, when many people from the Baby Boomer Generation retired simultaneously. Most business people are familiar with the concept of a handover. Although effective handovers are crucial for seamless business operations during personnel changes, the preferable elements for a handover are ambiguous and not well researched. This motivated us to examine this topic. We held a workshop on handovers to assess actual problems due to undesirable handovers. The results were used to elucidate three handover anti-patterns, which identify concrete problems of handovers. To mitigate the problems, we found a pattern language for handovers by analyzing three anti-patterns. Herein, we outline a pattern language for handovers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The life cycle of large software systems inevitably includes personnel changes. A key factor in seamless personnel changes is to successfully transition (handover) responsibilities as people leave the company or transition to another area within the company. In fact, the handover of software is one of the most critical stages in the software life cycle [V90]. Despite its importance, handover problems are not well studied [AM10a] and many undesirable handovers occur in business daily [KHY16]. One study mentioned that insufficient knowledge of the successor is one of the main problems in a handover [AM10a], while another found that the information sharing process contains complex problems [GE08]. Although concrete solutions for handover problems, would be invaluable to businesses, such solutions have yet to be investigated.

Previously, we identified handover problems using anti-patterns. We presented three handover anti-patterns at Asian PLoP 2016 (*Unsupported to review, Background is unclear, and Necessary knowledge is omitted*) [KHY16], which were confirmed by questionnaires sent to businesses on 23 April 2016. By analyzing the anti-patterns, their origins became clear. We noted that one of the main causes of an undesirable handover is the failure of a predecessor to communicate clearly with his or her successor. This led to us examine which patterns or pattern language would be useful to assist with handovers.

Pattern languages are used to provide desirable solutions based upon known best practices. They help guide a solution given the context and problem domain. Although the concept of pattern languages has primarily been applied to architecture and software fields, it has been applied to various fields such as cooking [YSAAT16], and child development [ATTET16]. Herein it is used to present desirable handover solutions. Our patterns are written as a mixture of the Alexandrian Pattern and Fearless Change Pattern forms [JR16] [MR] [MR15]. The context, problems, solutions, and forces are written with stories. We start out each pattern with a quote, followed by a brief description of the pattern. We then use a scenario to describe the context, problem, forces, and solution. This storytelling form, which is similar to that presented in the Fearless Change patterns can be easily understood. To describe concrete stories, we assume a fictitious company, Waseda Co., Ltd.

These patterns are intended for anyone involved in a handover process. The scenarios herein assume a system department, but we expect that even those without a system's background may find the paper useful since a handover is a common business concept. Concrete scenarios are used to help the reader understand the use and interactions of the patterns. For this paper, the scenario we used to illustrate the patterns is when someone transfers within a company. However, these patterns should also be applicable to other contexts such as retirement and job changes.

Also note that there is an assumption that there is time to do the handover with the person transferring within the company such as a few weeks or a few months.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 defines our concept of a handover using an activity diagram, which expresses the actors and each actor’s activity. Section 3 introduces concrete scenes where the pattern occurs for a fictitious company. Section 4 outlines the pattern language for handovers using a pattern map and presents three of the patterns in detail. Section 5 introduces a case study related to the pattern language proposed in this paper. Finally, Section 6 concludes this paper and outlines potential future works.

2. CONCEPT OF A HANDOVER

A handover is a process of transforming responsibilities and knowledge from the predecessor to the successor [AM10a] [AM10b]. Because handovers occur frequently within most organizations, they are a persistent problem in business. Some handovers are straightforward and simple, while other become very complex. In general, a handover has three phases (preparation, during handover, and after handover) and up to three actors (predecessor, successor, and preferably a third party). The predecessor, successor, and third party are all employees within the organization. The best scenario occurs when sufficient time is allotted for an incremental handover with a lot of mentoring. In this case, it is possible to extend the handover over a longer period and might only involve the predecessor and the successor.

Oftentimes you have to do the handover in a much shorter amount of time. In this paper we will examine these shorter handover situations. In these situations, the third party becomes an important role. The third party is someone who is concerned and responsible for the handover, for example the manager of the project. For each phase, each actor completes specific tasks.

Handover activities can be decomposed into the following nine steps (see Fig1)

- (1) Predecessor’s preparation activity
- (2) Successor’s preparation activity
- (3) Third party’s preparation activity
- (4) Predecessor’s during handover activity
- (5) Successor’s during handover activity
- (6) Third party’s during handover activity
- (7) Predecessor’s after handover activity
- (8) Successor’s after handover activity
- (9) Third party’s after handover activity

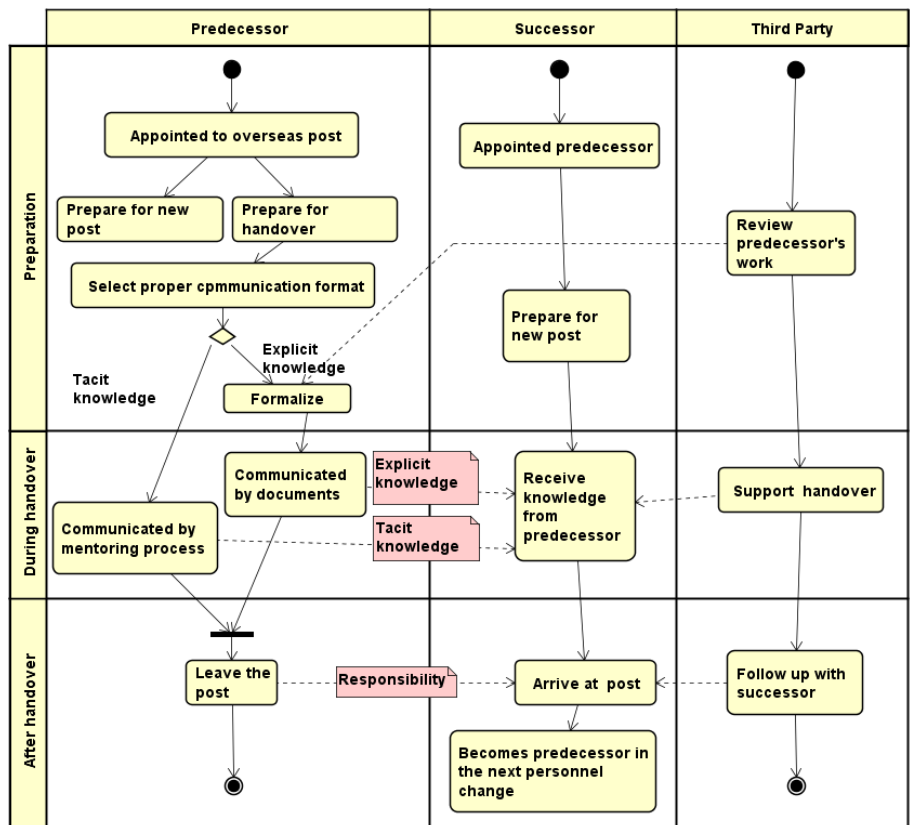


Figure 1. Handover activity diagram

In the preparation phase, the predecessor chooses the knowledge to be shared and formalizes explicit knowledge into the proper form to be communicated. The successor prepares for the new post (e.g., by studying or receiving formal training to understand the knowledge to be communicated by the predecessor). Note that, selected knowledge consists of explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. The explicit knowledge can be formalized and documented in some formalized fashion.

Tacit knowledge contains formless elements like experiences and ideas, which are best shared through a mentoring process (i.e., pairing up and sharing the knowledge while the successor performs the tasks). Some explicit knowledge can be difficult to formalize because it is complex and requires a lot of time to characterize. In this case, it is best to share this explicit knowledge through a mentoring process. It is important for the predecessor to select an effective form of communication for the handover process.

Ideally a third party reviews any formalized knowledge documented by the predecessor. During the handover period, the exchange of knowledge between the predecessor and the successor occurs. The predecessor communicates the knowledge, which the successor receives and comprehends. The third party assists by supporting the predecessor during the handover of knowledge to the successor. After finishing the handover process, the successor assumes the predecessor’s responsibilities. Since the successor might be unfamiliar with the job, the third party follows up regularly with the successor answering any questions they may have.

3. SCENE

In this section, we outline the concrete scene we used to describe our patterns. Each pattern has a scenario to explain its contexts, forces, problems, and consequences. A concrete scenario helps make the pattern language for handovers understandable. In addition, a concrete scenario can be used to evaluate the performance [JRA14]. Thus, we find this to be an effective method to explain each pattern.

3.1 Example Scenario

Hiro works at Waseda Co., Ltd., which is one of the largest companies in Japan. Its business focuses on system auditing and consulting. Hiro belongs to the internal system department and is responsible for the development, operation, and maintenance of internal systems. He has been in charge of the financial system for a long time (see Fig 2). However, he is being transferred overseas. Kei, a mid-level employee, has been appointed as Hiro’s successor. Before leaving, Hiro has to handover knowledge of the financial system to Kei.

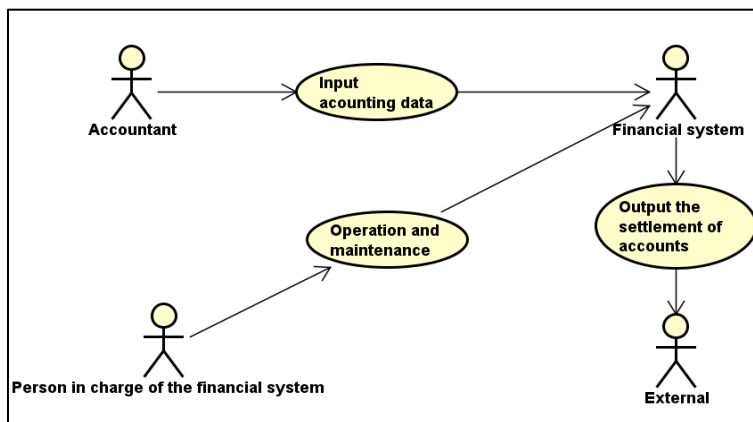


Figure 2. Use case of the financial system.

The financial system was developed in Java about ten years ago. It is one of the biggest internal systems in Waseda Co., Ltd. Hiro has been in charge of the system since its inception. The system outputs the settlement of accounts for external auditors and the government for tax purposes. An accountant in charge inputs accounting data. The system must be revised when the tax law and other requirements change. Additionally, scheduled maintenance also causes downtime of the system.

3.2 Characters

In the following examples, the handover consists of the activities of three actors (predecessor, successor, and third party), but there are four characters: predecessor (Hiro), successor (Kei), and the third party role is shared by two people (Joe and Yoshiaki). Each character plays a unique role (Fig 3).

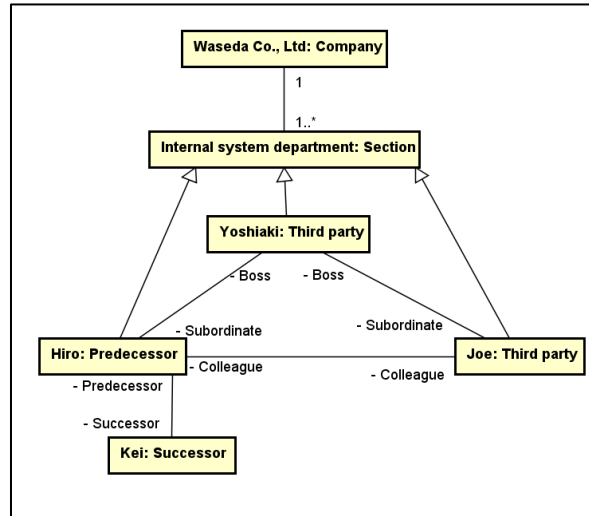


Figure 3. Role of each character

Hiro, who is a veteran worker in charge of the financial system for a long time, is being transferred overseas. Although Hiro is staying within the organization, he is moving to a different department, and possibly in another location. He will not be directly involved with the financial system after the handover, but he can answer questions from the successor. Kei is a mid-level employee, who has been appointed as Hiro’s replacement. She has been an employee of Waseda Co., Ltd for a couple of years, but in a different department with Hiro. Joe is a veteran worker and a colleague of Hiro. He also works for the internal system department but is in charge of a different system. Yoshiaki is a responsible person in the internal system department. He is the project manager of the financial system and Hiro's boss.

4. PATTERN LANGUAGE FOR HANDOVERS

In this section, we introduce a concrete pattern language for handovers. The pattern language consists of 25 patterns and is distributed over the following 9 sections: Predecessor’s preparation activity, Successor’s preparation activity, Third party preparation activity, Predecessor’s during handover activity, Successor’s during handover activity, Third party during handover activity, Predecessor’s after handover activity, Successor’s after handover activity, and Third party after handover activity (Table1). Each pattern belongs to a specific section.

Table 1. List of Handover patterns

Who/When	Preparation for handover	During handover	After handover
	Intention for responsible handover		
	Handover is not a temporary thing. Predecessor must catch a handover as a responsible project.		
Predecessor	Spread of knowledge Share knowledge with third parties.	Apprentice Make successor to imitate predecessor’s action.	Extra-inning for completion of the handover Contact a successor to respond in what predecessor was not able to communicate during handover.
	Professional writer for documentation Ask a good writer to create handover documents	Questions checking the successor’s understanding Check the successor’s knowledge by asking some questions.	
	Understandable contents Make a list to arrange it what is written in which document	Handover in a different room Move to a different room while communicating with the successor.	
	Update history Confirm the revision status by update history	Incremental handover Enhance the contents the handover while getting indication repeatedly	
	Quick correspondence for the review Deal with the review immediately	Mentor for successor Face the handover for consciousness to raise the successor during a handover period.	
	Check by other similar documents Utilize other similar documents frameworks when verifying knowledge is not omitted		
	Review for the documents of handover Have third parties verify documents objectively		
	Third party	Timing of appointment Allow sufficient time for the handover	Firewall for handover Protect a predecessor from sudden work in order not to premeditated transfer being interfered with
Successor as capable as the predecessor Appoint successor just as capable as the predecessor			Supporting developing successor Help successor while he is not used to the new post
Mercenary Appoint external person, if there is no proper person inside			
Successor	Preparations for lessons of the handover Study the duties content of the predecessor before a handover and make a point not to understand clear	Immediate questions on the unclear spot Ask a question immediately on the spot to not leave vagueness.	Neighboring excavation If there were no data in the handed over document, survey other data
			Witness for the knowledge Ask the person who seems to have neighboring knowledge
			Secure an emergency contact Successor must exchange the contact address of the predecessor to keep in touch

The Patterns are used in combination to deal with handover problems. There are six combinations: substantial handover, reliable handover, agile handover, follow up handover, traceable handover, and stable handover. Each combination deals with specific handover problems. For instance, the substantial handover combination deals with a low quality handover by enhancing communication between the predecessor and the successor. It prevents unexpected omitted knowledge and background information. By using the combination, we can avoid two anti-patterns, *Necessary knowledge is omitted* and *Background is unclear*. Figure 4 shows the structure of each combination and what problem the patterns deals with.

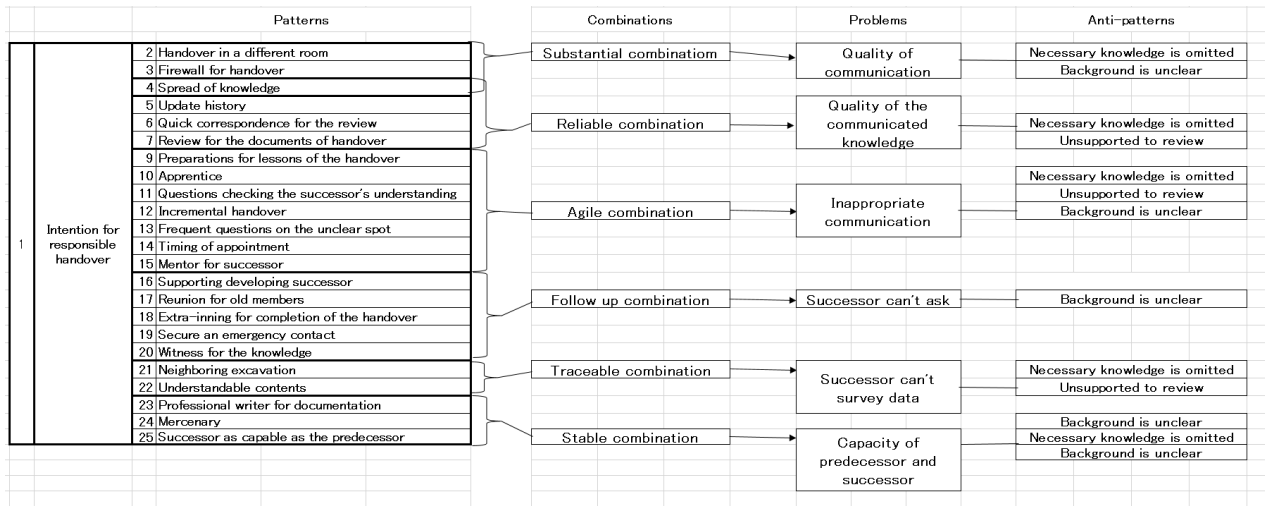


Figure 4. Map of Handover patterns

The substantial handover combination enhances the quality of communication between the predecessor and the successor, realizing a quality handover. The reliable handover combination focuses on preventing inaccurate knowledge from being handed over. It enhances the quality of shared knowledge and helps makes it more reliable. The agile handover combination enables the predecessor and the successor to communicate appropriately. The follow up handover combination helps the successor gain support from the predecessor and the third party. The traceable handover combination provides a survey for the successor as it assumes that some knowledge is unintentionally omitted. The stable handover combination aims to ensure a reasonable handover.

We found these patterns by first analyzing 3 anti-patterns previously discussed followed by studying handover issues and talking with businesses that have dealt with handover problems. The procedure of identifying the patterns is described in Figure 5.

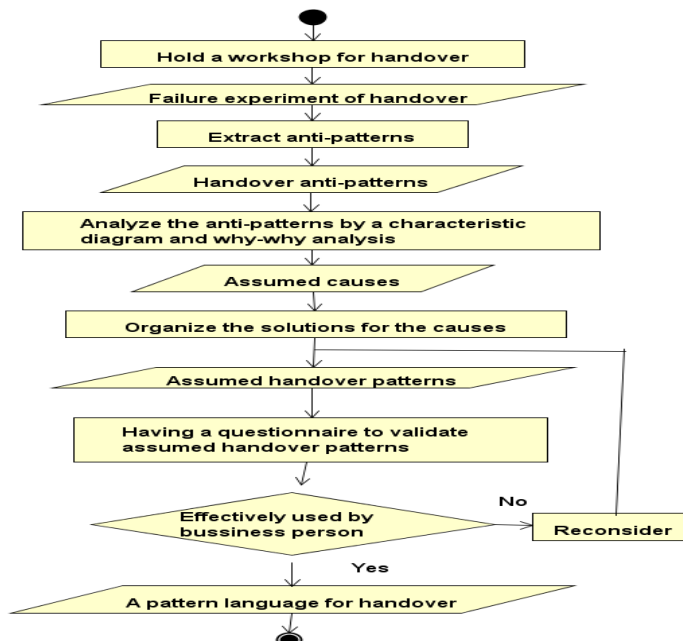


Figure 5. Procedure of identifying the patterns

We originally held a handover workshop, where we collected data on handover experiences. Most participant recollected failures, which helped us find our three handover anti-patterns. These were subsequently used to identify concrete handover problems. By analyzing the anti-patterns, we noted root causes and outlined them as problems and solutions. To validate the patterns, we created questionnaires and targeted businesses to validate the handover patterns. In the questionnaires, we explained each pattern’s success story and asked the respondents to indicate whether they have had similar experience. This questionnaire focused on the three patterns presented in this paper (*Spread of knowledge*, *Handover in a different room*, and *Firewall for handover*). Our questionnaire confirmed that these patterns can be effective for handover operations (see Section 5). We plan on validating the other 22 patterns through various questionnaires in industrial settings in the near future.

4.1 Spread of knowledge

“We need not only 1st hand, but also 2nd and 3rd hands”— Katsuhide Nomura (Famous Japanese baseball coach)

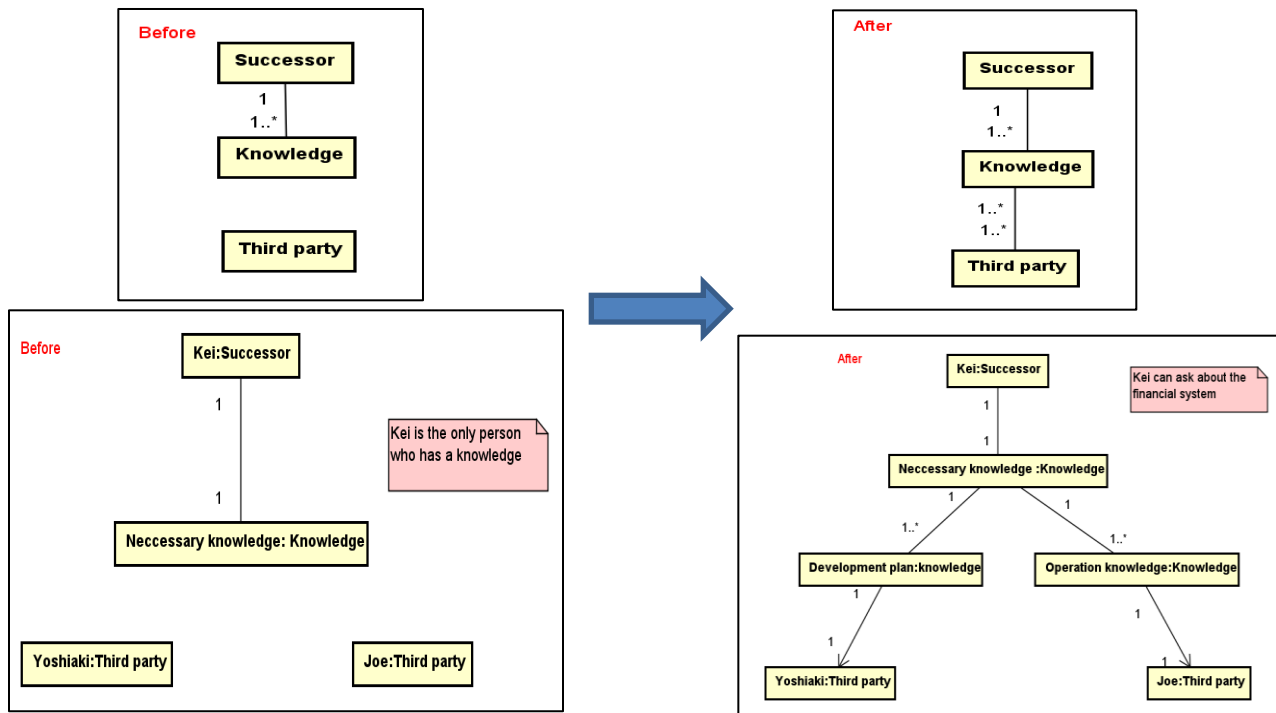


Figure 6. Spread of knowledge

In the preparation phase, the predecessor prepares to handover the system by sharing basic knowledge about the system to third parties. This helps the predecessor prepare and to ensure important details are covered (Fig. 6).

In this scenario, Hiro spreads his knowledge of the financial system to Joe and Yoshiaki. Because Hiro has been in charge of the financial system for a long time, only he knows all the details about the financial system. Although Hiro is the expert, he finds out that he will soon be transferred overseas and his successor will be Kei, who is currently a mid-level employ with less experience and knowledge. Because Kei has never worked on the financial system, she does not understand the business side or any of the implementation details of the financial system.

How can Hiro best support the handover process in order to transfer enough knowledge to Kei so she can take over the financial system?

Because Hiro is the only expert of the financial system, no one can completely check his handover documentation. Kei has very little knowledgeable about the financial system.

Compared with Hiro, Kei is less experienced and knowledgeable about system development. Kei also might need some help after the handover. It is hard to know how much handover will help Kei know enough to be able to take over the responsibilities of the financial system.

There are some people who understand parts of the financial system and are also responsible to make sure the system is maintained properly. However they do not know all of the details of the financial system.

Hiro does not have a lot of time to prepare for the handover and cannot create detailed documentation of the system. Thus, he need to make best use of his limited time to communicate as much about the system as possible before his transfer.

Hiro has no reservations communicating his knowledge about the financial system to Joe and Yoshiaki because there is a horizontal atmosphere in the organization and he has a long trusting relationship with both. However, both Joe and Yoshiaki are busy with many of their normal job duties so they have limited time.

Therefore:

The predecessor, Hiro, starts to organize his knowledge about the financial system and begins to share core knowledge about the system to responsible third parties before the handover such as Joe and Yoshiaki.

To assist with the transition, it is important that those who will still be responsible for the financial system have a better understanding of the system's details, enabling them to aid in the handover process. As he prepares for the handover, Hiro starts by spreading knowledge about the financial system to others. Hiro first shares with Yoshiaki, who is the project manager of the system. Because Yoshiaki has other tasks, it is impossible for Yoshiaki to become an expert of the financial system. Thus, Hiro also shares details about the system with Joe. Hiro defines the roles of Joe and Yoshiaki as actual operations and future visions, respectively. Among their other tasks, Hiro discusses their roles, and both become more knowledgeable about the business side and the technical side of the financial system. Although neither is an expert, together they become fairly knowledgeable about the system and are capable of reviewing Hiro's documents. Before the transfer, Hiro communicates the role of Joe and Yoshiaki to Kei. After the transfer, Kei can ask Joe for help about the technical side, and Yoshiaki about the business side.

The *Spread of Knowledge* can sometimes be done informally throughout the day. For example, during a daily chat the predecessor can share some knowledge with the third parties and responsible people. However, this *Spread of Knowledge* will often not contain detailed information. It is important that the predecessor shares knowledge with more than one person.

The predecessor should choose a third party who has at least a basic understanding of the system that is being handed over. In this scenario, Joe and Yoshiaki are in the same section with Hiro, and they have some responsibility for the financial system. During this *Spread of Knowledge*, the third party gains a better understanding of the system and can apply this knowledge in their everyday work. The predecessor needs to make sure that each third party's knowledge is clear so that they will be able to share it with the successor. Note that Spread of Knowledge is not the spread of responsibility. There will still be a single point of responsibility for the system, which in our scenario is the successor Kei.

The *Spread of knowledge* can also help to find reviewers of the handover documentation. The *Group Validation* [JN05] and *Creator-Reviewer* [Li00] assist with the *Spread of knowledge* because they recognize the need for a third party. Thus, *Spread of knowledge* is a necessary condition for: *Review for the documents of handover*, *Handover in a different room*, *Firewall for handover*, *Supporting developing successor*, and *Witness for the knowledge*. *Spread of Knowledge* is effective for dealing with many of the problems noted in the *Handover anti-patterns* [KHY16]. Yoshiaki, the third party, might use a *Mercenary* or *Successor as capable as the predecessor* to avoid the shortage of the successor.

4.2 Handover in a different room

“No time for baseball players to suffer in human relations. Everything should be resolved by chasing a ball, swinging a bat” — Shigeo Nagashima, (Famous Japanese baseball coach)

Handover in a different room is when the predecessor uses a separate room to limit interruptions during the handover process. The predecessor relies on the third party’s gained knowledge about the system to allow them to concentrate on the handover with fewer interruptions. After preparing for the handover by sharing some of his knowledge of the financial system with Yoshiaki and Joe (Fig 7), Hiro can concentrate on the handover process with his successor, Kei.

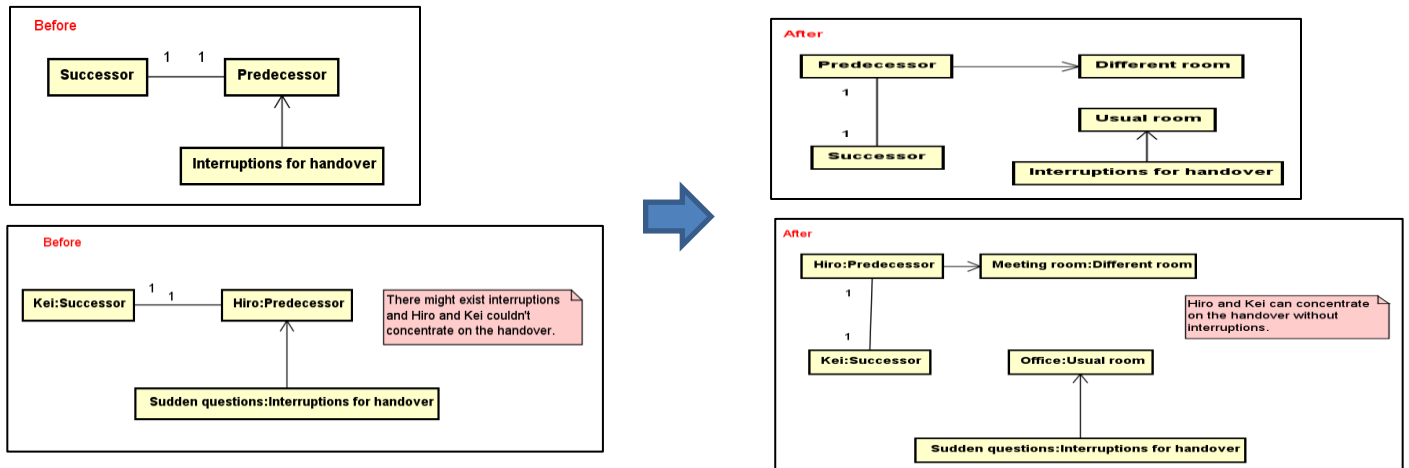


Figure 7. Handover in a different room

As soon as Hiro accepts an overseas transfer, he prepares by initiating *Spread of knowledge* to Yoshiaki and Joe. Hiro then begins the handover with Kei. However, the handover is often interrupted by phone calls and people coming to Hiro's desk to ask simple questions about the financial system.

How can Hiro and Kei minimize distractions so they can focus on the handover process?

Kei is not as knowledgeable and experienced as Hiro about the financial system. Hiro needs to make sure that he communicates sufficient core knowledge about the financial system to Kei without overwhelming her.

On the other hand, many people are used to asking Hiro questions about the financial system. Because Hiro knows the system well, he can answer quickly. The normal path to ask for help is to call Hiro's desk for any issues related to the financial system. However, it can take a lot of time during the day to respond to all of these requests.

Hiro has very limited time to prepare for the handover. He should effectively communicate as much knowledge as he can about the financial system to Kei within the limited time he has.

Because there is no strict rule that bans him from leaving his office, Hiro can use a vacant meeting room in the internal system department office.

Therefore:

To concentrate on communicating the predecessor’s knowledge to the successor without interruptions, Hiro and Kei use an available meeting room during the handover process.

Hiro temporarily moves into the vacant meeting room to concentrate on the handover with Kei. Before the move, Hiro asks Joe and Yoshiaki to act for him while he is away from his desk. Joe and Yoshiaki substitute for him between their jobs answering his phone and any questions that may arise. Because Hiro and Kei can concentrate on the handover without interruptions, the handover can be substantial and more successful.

Since *Moving to a different room* requires a separate space, a room must be prepared beforehand. This pattern requires the *Spread of knowledge* because the third party cannot act for the predecessor without the necessary knowledge. Thus, the predecessor must carry out the *Spread of knowledge* properly before *Moving to a different room*. Even if they moved to the room, other people may come to the room to ask a question. To minimize this, Joe and Yoshiaki become a *Firewall for the handover*. Because third parties have other responsibilities, this pattern has limitations. To avoid these problems, handovers must be completed in a timely fashion. Otherwise, the third party might become overwhelmed and unable to perform all of their normal tasks. *Day Care* [JN05] enhances the performance by concentrating on the system development, while the professional is taking care of a new member. *Handover in a different room* is similar to *Day Care* because it enhances the handover quality by allowing the predecessor and successor to concentrate on the handover, while third parties temporarily act for the predecessor.

Handover in a different room aims to allow for better communications between the predecessor and the successor because it limits interruptions. Not enough communication is one of the main causes for the *Background to be unclear* [KHY16] and *Necessary knowledge to be omitted* [KHY16], Thus, *Handover in a different room* can be an effective countermeasure to help avoid these anti-patterns.

4.3 Firewall for the handover

“It was toilsome game, but everybody helped me. “— Hiroki Kuroda, (Famous Japanese baseball pitcher)

The third party uses *Firewall for handover* to protect the predecessor and the successor during the handover. The predecessor has many job responsibilities which still need to be performed during the handover. This can often interfere with the handover. The third party stands in for the predecessor to support the predecessor during the handover (Fig 8). In this case, Joe and Yoshiaki act as a proxy for Hiro to allow him time to support the handover.

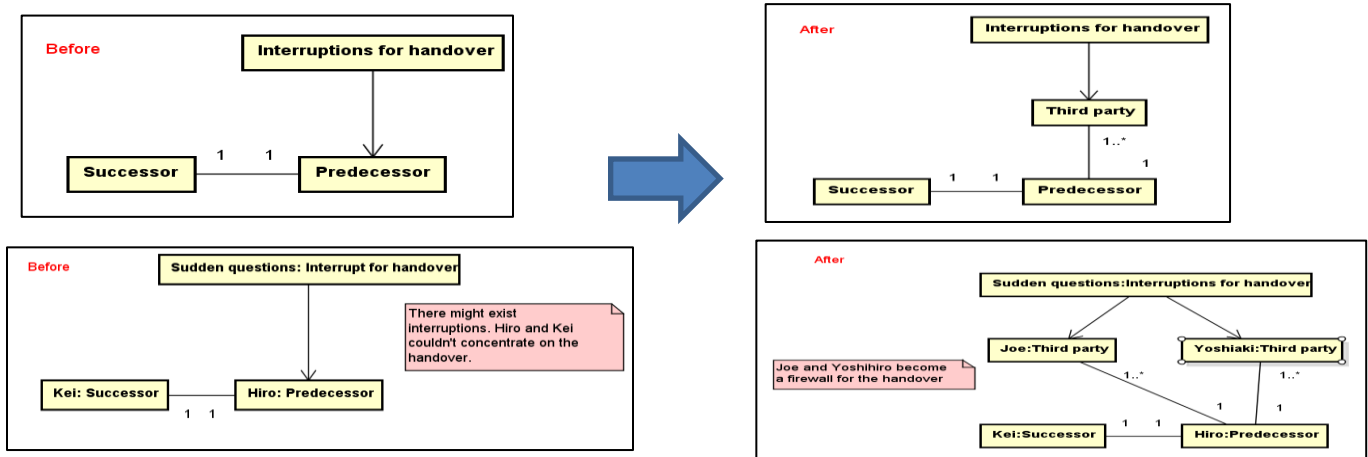


Figure 8. Firewall for the handover

As soon as Hiro accepts the overseas transfer, he prepares for the handover. Then he begins the handover to Kei. Joe and Yoshiaki are worried about the handover because Hiro is very busy and has many interruptions, preventing him from allotting the sufficient time for the handover. Since knowledge about the financial system is very important, Joe and Yoshiaki help Hiro by acting as a firewall by answering questions and communicating knowledge about the financial system that are normally asked of Hiro. This allows time for Kei to receive adequate knowledge from Hiro.

Hiro’s regular tasks involving the financial system often keep him very busy and do not allow much time for the handover. How can Hiro find the necessary time to ensure a good handover to Kei?

Compared with Hiro, Kei has less experienced and knowledgeable, about the financial system. Kei might not have enough knowledge to support the financial system if Hiro cannot find the time to communicate sufficient core knowledge about the financial system to her. This could cause some serious problems to the internal system department and the company as a whole.

There is very little time left before Hiro’s transfer. Joe and Yoshiaki need to help create an environment where Hiro can effectively communicate his knowledge about the financial system to Kei.

Because there is a sense of unity in the internal system section. Joe and Yoshiaki feel that it is natural to help with Hiro’s handover.

Hiro has many responsibilities with the financial system, which often results in answering many calls or questions that arise during normal operations of the system.

It is important that the financial system keeps operating and people have their questions answered.

Therefore:

Have Joe and Yoshiaki help Hiro by acting as a firewall for Hiro during the handover. They can do this by assisting with some of the normal operations, including answering regular inquires.

This allows Hiro and Kei to concentrate on the handover so that Kei acquires sufficient knowledge. Joe and Yoshiaki start by asking Hiro how they can help him. Hiro thanks them and forwards calls and inquiries about the financial system to Joe and Yoshiaki. Joe and Yoshiaki have learned some important information about the financial system when Hiro executed the *Spread of knowledge*. Therefore, they are able to help Hiro by answering his phone and responding to questions, especially the simple ones, allowing Hiro to spend most of his time communicating knowledge to Kei. After Hiro's transfer, Kei is accomplished in the role of Hiro’s successor.

Spread of knowledge must be done before Joe and Yoshiaki can be a *Firewall for the handover*. The *Handover in a different room* and *Firewall for the handover* are often used in combination. However, third parties must be careful not to be overly assertive. It is important for third parties to remember that they cannot deal with every situation as they are not experts. When the third party cannot adequately address a situation, they must judge the urgency of the situation. If a situation is urgent, the third party must interrupt the handover by asking the predecessor for help.

Because the third party has his own work, becoming a *Firewall for the handover* can be problematic because this requires balancing helping with the handover while still performing his normal duties. The firewall person works to be as flexible as possible as he assume the roles of *Firewalls* [JN05] and *Gatekeeper* [JN05]. A cohesive team is crucial for success. The third party should assume that the predecessor’s job is temporarily part of his or her job. *Breaking Down Barriers* [JRH14] contributes to the performance of the *Firewall for handover*. This pattern is an effective countermeasure against the *Background is unclear* [KHY16] and *Necessary knowledge is omitted* [KHY16] anti-patterns.

5. CASE STUDY

To examine the effectiveness of these patterns, we sent a questionnaire to five people within four different companies. The questionnaire targeted businesspersons working for the system department more than three years. This questionnaire is the beginning of a case study to help validate our patterns and elucidate other possible scenarios and patterns. Table 2 shows the result of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Result of questionnaire

	Effectively used	Ineffectively used	Not used
<i>Spread of knowledge</i>	3	0	2
<i>Handover in a different room</i>	4	0	1
<i>Firewall for the handover</i>	3	0	2

According to the table, the patterns proposed in this paper seem to be effective. To better illustrate this, we introduce one of our experiments as a case study of these patterns. At a company we interviewed one of the responders, which we will call A. He shared his experience of using “*Spread of knowledge*” and “*Handover in a different room*” during the handover process. Below is a summary of what we learned from the interview.

5.1 Scene

A works for one of the biggest computing companies in Japan, which develops and sells database management systems. Because A will be retiring in the near future, it is important that he handover his responsibilities. A is in

charge of the development for part of this system, which consists of multiple modules that are developed using the process described in Fig. 9.

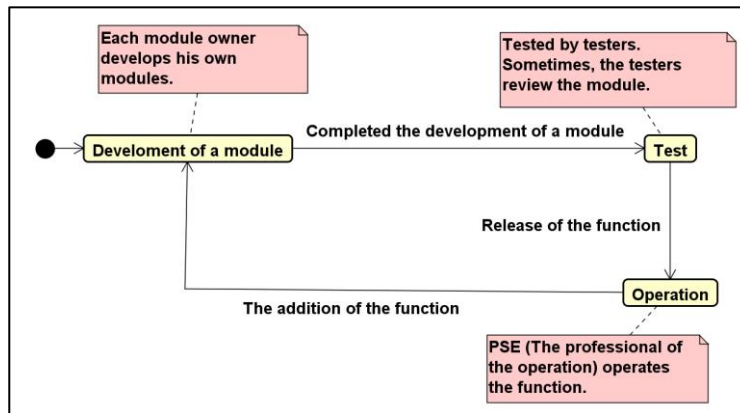


Figure 9. Process of the development

Each module has an owner (developer) who is responsible for its development of modules. A is one of the module owners and has developed various modules. The module owner is the only person who can edit his modules. During the handover, A used the “*Spread of the knowledge*” and “*Handover in a different room*” patterns, which he felt were very effective during the handover process.

5.2 Experience with Spread of knowledge

Many people, like testers and developers, are involved in the development of the system. A thinks it is natural to share knowledge with many of your coworkers. Also, the company where A works encourages people to share knowledge. There are two parties that are very interested in the work A is responsible for and have a vested interest in a successful handover.

The first party is those responsible for maintaining the system and for adding new features. When A needs to add new features, he must understand the knowledge about the previous release. However, sometimes A cannot communicate immediately with the people who were responsible for defining previous features. Therefore, the developers are required to write plain specifications and code comments so that anyone can understand the knowledge at a later date. This is a kind of *Spread of knowledge*.

The second party is other module owners. There are other module owners (developers) that are working on various modules that are somehow related with A’s modules. For example other modules may use features from A’s modules or need to integrate with A’s modules. Therefore, it is important that A shares knowledge about his modules with other related module owners. By applying the *Spread of knowledge*, many colleagues can review A’s work, reducing issues and helping his successor better understand the modules that he will be responsible for after the handover. The company’s *Spread of knowledge* policy has assisted in successful handovers.

5.3 Experience with Handover in a different room

During the handover, A moved to a different room when sharing knowledge with his successors and third parties. The main reason A moved to a different room was to avoid bothering other people since the handover may be noisy. However, an added benefit was that A could concentrate on communicating without interruptions.

6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we propose 25 handover patterns, and explained three concrete handover patterns: *Spread of knowledge*, *Handover in a different room*, and *Firewall for handover*. We express the 25 patterns' relations by a pattern map and define them as a pattern language for handover. To better understand the patterns, we describe them using scenes where each pattern has concrete scenarios. Our questionnaire presented to four companies indicate that the three patterns introduced in Table 2. However, the remaining 22 patterns have yet to be formalized and verified. In addition, other unidentified patterns may exist. In the future, we plan to formalize and verify the effectiveness of the remaining 22 patterns and continue mining the language for additional patterns.

There are three future works for a pattern language for handover. First, our pattern language defines the third party as an indirect person for the handover, but in reality, there are various kinds of indirect persons for handovers. We need to define the roles of these other persons. Second, we outlined the pattern sequences in text only. However, it would be great to see visualization of the pattern sequences. We will consider about the visualization of the pattern sequences. Third, our pattern language does not address the biggest issues in the handover process, “What is the conversation and what should be formally documented?”

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