Xebia

AGILE NXT

Insights and Foresights for Your Next Step in Agile

agilenxt.com

Xebia was founded in 2001. We're a pioneering group of extremely ambitious craftspeople and a one-stop shop for digital transformation. We're organized in specialized units of excellence around the world, with offices in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Hilversum, Paris, Delhi, Bangalore, and Boston. We employ over 850 people worldwide and have been working Agile in our own software development practices since 2004. In 2007, we were the first company in the Netherlands to start guiding other organizations in their Agile transformations. Since then, we've initiated, guided and supervised more than 60 Agile transformations for companies among the top 250 in the Netherlands.

Welcome to AGILE NXT—a new magazine full of information and inspiration for professionals on the emerging Agile journey. AGILE NXT covers all aspects of "what's next" in developing agility, from teams to leadership, people to technology, culture to governance, and everything in between. Its scope and perspective range from the visionary to the practical and we hope you'll find more than one new idea, useful process or tool that resonates with your current and future Agile state.

True agility requires continuously anticipating and responding to whatever lies ahead; It's about adapting, evolving, emerging and changing, step by step, along the way. AGILE NXT provides the direction you need in your Agile journey. It's your comprehensive guide for responding to what lies ahead for your organization. It challenges you to think differently and improve yourself, your team, and company a little more each day. We hope it gives you the insight and foresight you need to take your next step towards success.

The content of AGILE NXT comes from exclusive collaborations with industry thought leaders as well as our passionate Agile experts at Xebia. No one has all the answers. However, as a community, we can increase our capacity for finding solutions and broaden our knowledge by sharing it. We hope you'll think of us here at Xebia as your team of Agile gurus, who can help you continuously increase your agility.

Enjoy reading AGILE NXT!

Kind regards,

Alexander Koffeman, Andrew de la Haije, Arlen Bankston, Bart Bouwers, Chris Lukassen, Cynthia Maasbommel, Daan Teunissen, Daniël Burm, Daphne Henning, Dennis Kaltofen, Edwin Oldenbeuving, Ellen Barree, Els Aarts, Erik van der Velde, Evelien Roos, Frank Eyssen, Gino N. Shahidi, Guido van den Boom, Gunther Verheyen, Hans Willems, Irene de Kok, Jarl Meijer, Jeff Sutherland, Jens Broetzmann, Johan Timmerman, Jordann Gross, Jurriaan Bernson, Just Meddens, Laurens Bonnema, Liselotte Pröpper, Maarten Uppelschoten, Marcel van Benthem, Martijn de Haan, Marianne Pot, Mark van den Brom, Marnix van Wendel de Joode, Menno van Eekelen, Michael Meier, Mirjam Diependaal, Mohsen Rezai, Paul Immerzeel, Petra Kiers, Pieter Rijken, Riët Broekhuizen, Rik de Groot, Robbyn McGill, Roel Trienekens, Ron Eringa, Ron Meijer, Serge Beaumont, Theo Gerrits, Thomas Kruitbosch, Willem Vermaak.
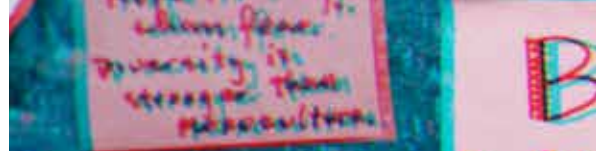
When I First Met Agile...

Going Beyond the Agile Butterflies

When I first met Agile a few years ago, it was love at first sight. It felt like we were totally made for each other. But now that we've been together for a while, our relationship has become a lot more complicated. Our different environments interfere, and there are some pretty big expectations. The challenges we face together seem to keep growing and we've formed some habits and routines that I doubt add any value. Our love was so much easier in the beginning, back when we only felt butterflies...

Author **Daphne Henning**

Maybe, like me, Agile stole your heart too, and so you also relate to this journey. How do we go from love at first sight to creating a long-lasting relationship with Agile? Sometimes I almost forget why we fell in love in the first place. But remembering why our love first emerged and holding onto it tight gives me the strength to keep fighting for it. Does it feel like that for you, too? If so, then I say trust your gut feelings and stick with it. Agile's undoubtedly worth it; you just need to determine what's NXT between you.

Like all love, Agile love changes over time. That's okay. Don't look back with longing for the past, instead look ahead and long for what it can become. What can you do to make your love blossom (again) or even just get a little bit better? What are the qualities you want to hold on to, and what do you want to let go, or improve? If you know in your heart that it's true love, fight for it every step of the way. Start by deciding now what your first, Agile NXT step will be.

Here at Xebia, that's what we do for our clients every day - fight to make sure the heart of their company beats in tune with the Agile way. We're here to ensure that your relationship with Agile keeps working, and we'll stay by your side all the way. Heck, we'll even walk you down the aisle at your Agile wedding. That's how much we believe in Agile and trust that it's a good match for you.

We have a pretty long history as Agile "matchmakers" too - as we were the first in the Netherlands to do it. Like a one-eyed king of the land of the blind, we inspired other companies to start their journey to agility and supported their relationships every step of the way. We've paved the way as mentors and partners because we know Agile by heart. Eventually, more and more companies fell in love with Agile, and that number continues to grow.

As the Agile journey emerges, we too have matured and learned together. Some of our early-day

Agilists have even turned grey, but they still bubble with Agile puppy love. And why not? Agility, is, at its core, playful. It calls for adaption in both life and work, one of our key strengths as humans. When we don't know what will happen, we must rely on our curiosity, creativity, and passion instead.

In fact, "transformation" is a result of adaptation. But "big" transformations to become adaptive are often too disruptive, and organizations have no time to recover. Like it or not, disruption requires recovery. But the only reason big transformations are required today in the first place is that small steps weren't taken yester-day, and the days before that. Now there's a gap that's too big to bridge.

The gap probably started with one little crack, perhaps a miscommuni-cation on our part. Maybe the words we've been using to discuss our Agile love don't belong together at all. So, let's banish the word "trans-formation," which sounds dazzling and bold, and focus on the small steps that lead to "agility" instead.

True agility requires continuously thinking about the small, by-heart steps, of what's NXT. But since there's no end goal (setting one limits your growth potential), it's difficult to see what you've achieved. And, thanks to the rapid pace of an ever-shifting, increasingly digitized market, whatever is NXT changes overnight.

Here at Xebia, what's NXT with Agile occupies us daily. Like you, we have good days and bad. But we never doubt our true love of Agile. In fact, our passion for it splashes from each heart-written article in this magazine. Agile ís the love of our life. It's a love that's infinite. But infinite love comes with a downside.

So, what can you do if your Agile love starts to feel distant, or shows a few cracks? Don't panic! It's easy to nurture the love that's still there into a flourishing, happy relationship again. How? Here's some advice, from one Agile lover to another:

Cherish yesterday's memories, deal with today's challenges, dream about tomorrow's opportunities, then decide "how" overnight. It sounds simple. But let me ask you right now, "how" has your team or company improved since yesterday? Don't feel bad if you don't have an answer. Most of us don't consciously improve ourselves overnight. On the contrary, we seem to develop habits and routines for just about everything then find it extremely difficult to break them. Sometimes we even seem to worsen overnight, if we don't consciously make an effort to improve.

So, what's the next step you can take to improve yourself tomorrow? Reading this magazine can be your first. Then, the easiest way is to follow (and work with) expert Agile leaders who can help you increase your agility. Leaders who are one or two steps ahead, but not too far, to prevent a gap. They'll remind you to ask yourself at the end of each day, what will I improve tomorrow?

Let your subconscious mind work on the answer while you sleep. I promise, your sweet dreams of an Agile love that goes beyond the butterflies will come true.

Daphne Henning,
Chief Technology Officer

Doing DevOps the DASA Way

After embracing Agile processes and continuous delivery for application development, many IT departments are now adopting DevOps as a service delivery approach. DevOps is imperative for creating and operating a productive information platform that's essential for digital business. As the name suggests, IT operations are part of these initiatives.

Author **Thomas Kruitbosch**

DevOps started as an open grassroots movement, embracing the principles of the Agile manifesto, continuous delivery, and other practices. There's a strong focus on sharing lessons learned among practitioners, and it has attracted increasing commercial attention, which has resulted in DevOps-branded software and services. This attention may shift the focus towards implementing IT software tools and processes while ignoring fundamental concepts and principles of DevOps. The result? Limited productivity outcomes.

As Xebia consultants, we regularly assess Agile, continuous delivery and DevOps initiatives within organizations. Frequently, we notice that the initiatives are mainly limited to adopting Agile process tools to organize work. Likewise, we have seen IT automation initiatives driven by continuous delivery that didn't work. These focused on local optimizations bound to the existing organization structure, architecture, and software release processes. Even when these initiatives were started with the right principles and key business outcomes in mind, somewhere down the line, they were dropped.

Among other root causes, we've found that a lack of knowledge and skills frequently contributed to the derailment of these initiatives. This included poor understanding of DevOps concepts and implications, no common vocabulary and a lack of competencies to break through existing way-of-working patterns. The DevOps Agile Skills Association (DASA) was founded to address these knowledge and skill gaps. Xebia is one of the founding members of DASA.

DASA is an independent, and open, members-driven association supporting the development of DevOps training and certification in the global market. This includes the development and evangelization of a vendor-neutral DevOps qualification program for professionals. According to DASA, DevOps is about cultivating experiences, ideas, and culture to create high-performing IT organizations. DASA has defined six DevOps principles.

The Six DASA DevOps Principles
- Customer-centric action: courage to act, innovate.
- Create with the end in mind: product and service thinking, engineering mindset, collaborate.
- End-to-end responsibility: live your accountability, concept to grave, performance support.
- Cross-functional autonomous teams: T-shaped profiles, complementary skills.
- Continuous improvement: if it hurts, do it more often, fail fast.
- Automate everything you can: enhance quality, maximize flow.

Effectively applying these six DASA DevOps principles implies adopting the principles of the Agile Manifesto as well. It means that "being DevOps" (according to DASA) includes "being Agile" (according to the Agile Manifesto).

Adopting the six DASA DevOps principles requires a holistic approach, which cannot be limited to the implementation of processes, controls and software tools. For many organizations, adopting the six DASA DevOps principles can only be done when they are willing to tear down the existing silos of the organization.

Throughout the DASA qualification program, concepts, techniques, and examples are covered to demonstrate the far-reaching implications envisioned by the (founding) members. As such, they highlight concrete challenges and guidance to tackle these challenges. For example, challenges with the architecture of IT systems and the structure of the organization are covered. The qualification program acknowledges that implementing DevOps the DASA way is hard for many organizations, something not done overnight or with a plan-driven transformation program.

"Why do skills and knowledge matter for DevOps?"

The training paths of the DASA qualification scheme cover knowledge, skill and behavior competencies for engineers, product owners and leadership relevant in DevOps. For example, the Create and Deliver training path of the DASA qualification scheme will not train participants to be a skilled Scrum master, neither will it train participants to become skilled in a particular programming language. Rather, it will provide these participants with a common vocabulary and the knowledge, skills, and behaviors required to operate successfully within an organizational environment inspired by DevOps principles. Likewise, the Enable and Scale training path focuses on the knowledge and skills required to create and manage such a DevOps inspired environment. When combined with Agile training paths, the DASA qualification scheme can build a solid foundation for Agile and DevOps initiatives.

Thomas Kruitbosch,
Principal DevOps
Consultant

"Great responsibility
follows inseparably
from great power."

**The Product
Samurai**

A Product Manager's Guide
to Continuous Innovation

theproductsamurai.com

Product Leadership for the Third Wave

Welcome to the third wave of Agile adoption - an age where organizations reinvent themselves around Scrum, and, if done well, the power trickles down to the people. These are the people who have the knowledge to make the best decisions, but this has exposed a new kind of problem.

Author **The Product Samurai**

The Problem With the Product Owner Role

When Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland created Scrum, they envisioned a different kind of leader. One who "owns" the product, knows its value, and, brings it to the market together with the Scrum master and development team. They disliked the word "manager," which derives from Latin-French and loosely translated means "he who makes the horses go faster." Instead, they coined a new term for the role, "product owner."

The revised concept and role promised to improve everything - instead of directing managers we would get inspirational leaders who were passionate about the problems their products solve for their customers. We would get great visionaries that discovered how to create products that matter. "Rally the team! It will be fun!" cried the promise. There was only one problem - nobody knew how.

Bottom line, that's the beauty of Scrum. It's a simple framework for effective team collaboration on complex products, nothing more nothing less. It doesn't tell you how to inspire teams or how to lead them. Instead, it leaves you to figure out how for yourself.

Trust and Safety

Over the past few years, we've observed that most product owners have grasped empiricism and mastered techniques like business model canvassing, contextual inquiry, data analytics, maintaining an ordered backlog, and explaining value. However, no matter how highly motivated, smart, and skilled, some product owners make an impact while others don't. Why?

The answer may lie in how the brain works.

On a biochemical level, the human brain continually scans the environment with a single question, "Am I safe?" It won't allow us to take another breath or step forward if the answer to that question feels like "no." Since the product owner is a leader who must get people moving, this is a critical insight. People won't start moving towards a product owner's vision or goal until they are sure they are safe.

The discriminating factor between successful and unsuccessful product owners lies in their ability to build trust and a safe environment. Trust depends on the credibility and reliability of the product owner, how much she or he shares with the team. Does their vision reflect a genuine desire to help the customer or to propel their career? Product owners that get the mix right are substantially more effective.

Handling Resistance

Another critical difference is the way successful product owners transform resistance into commitment. These are the leaders who proactively confront team members and stakeholders who don't see a problem and create awareness.

The mind is like a parachute - it works better if it's open. People can't be motivated to solve a problem or seize an opportunity until they can accept and understand new information. So, the best product owners recognize this and foster an environment that nurtures learning. Instead of tossing inspiration around like seeds, they make sure that it takes root.

Stakeholder Management

"With great power comes great responsibility," so says Churchill, Roosevelt, and Spiderman. The statement actually derives from a set of decrees set forth at the French National Convention in 1793, "Great responsibility follows inseparably from great power." So, if product owners become

product leaders they are more like the mini-CEO of a product. This means the profit and loss of their product should also fall on their shoulders. Ironically, the more "power" they gain, the less they can use.

"The Six Leadership Styles for Effective Team Performance" by Daniel Goleman is a great resource for product owners that operate at this CEO-level and need to switch effortlessly between leadership styles according to the stakeholder field, urgency or importance. These product owners build relationships and focus on making collaborative decisions.

They also coach the development team to expand their span by giving them more autonomy. In a crisis, they know when to apply a more powerful approach or roll up their sleeves and set the pace. Third-wave product leaders must know when to apply what style on an individual and group level.

About Product Leadership
In many ways, leading the product is a lot like practicing martial arts. It's not about mastering a collection of techniques; it's about the interplay between them - knowing when to apply what, inspecting what works, and then adapting to improve.

The Scrum framework is often criticized for not giving product owners enough tools in the realm of product management. However, much like a dojo (the room where martial arts are practiced), Scrum does provide the perfect conditions for people to grow on their path.

Product leadership in the third wave is not about pushing people faster; it's about learning how to own the product and nurturing it to fruition.

"In many ways, leading the product is a lot like practicing martial arts."

Chris Lukassen,
Agile Coach and
Product Management
Samuari

Mixed Human-Robo Agile Teams: The Future is Now

Robotization has gained the attention of companies and markets across all sectors. According to research on digital customer support, Dutch consumers have high confidence in robo-advice and consider digital advisers as reliable as their human counterparts. As collaborations between artificial intelligence (AI) and Agile teams become the new normal, organizations must embrace a new way of working. Rather than a far-off, sci-fi fantasy, the future is now. Is your organization ready?
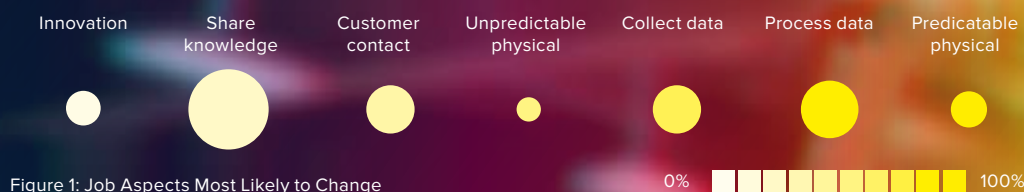
Author **Rik de Groot**

A Shift in the Market
Robotization will continue to accelerate innovation, disrupting and changing the paradigm of business operations in many industries. It will free companies to change how day-to-day tasks are performed and the fundamental way employees work. As with many technological changes, this brings fear. People worry that robotization will decimate the job market, leaving the vast majority unemployed. But the good news is, this is far from reality. Robotization will create greater opportunities for employees to retrain and uplevel their skills to perform more strategic duties within organizations.

Change in the Nature of Jobs
Robotization won't take over people's entire jobs, but it will take over some of their tasks, particularly those that involve collecting and processing data (Figure 1). The focus will shift to providing integral advice in complex customer situations. According to the World Economic Forum's "Future of Jobs - 2016," the required professional skills of 2020 will be problem-solving ability, critical thinking, and creativity.

Customer situations and the advice needed to resolve them will become so complicated that individual advisors won't be sufficient. Collaborations with AI will allow employees to focus more on the strategic and creative tasks involved in providing the quality customers demand. Agile teamwork will become even more critical than it is today.

Innovation	Share knowledge	Customer contact	Unpredictable physical	Collect data	Process data	Predicatable physical

Figure 1: Job Aspects Most Likely to Change   0% ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ 100%

Benefits of a Robo-Advisor

Robo-advisors provide digital advice with little to no human supervision. They are powered by artificial intelligence, mathematical rules, or algorithms, depending on the complexity and capabilities required. Robo-advisors first appeared in the financial world but soon spread into other industries as legal and product advisors.

Thanks to their accuracy, reliability, 24/7 availability, and cost-saving rationality, robo-advisors are a huge leap forward for organizations and customers alike. However, according to an article posted April 25, 2018, on CNBC.com, "The 4 Advantages of Human vs. Robo-Advisors," customers still want integral advice that involves human emotion, accountability, flexibility and tailored services, especially in complex situations. The limitations of the technology and a human need to establish trust mean people and robo-advisors must collaborate as a team.

The Mixed Human-Robo Team

A mixed human-robo team contains all the multidisciplinary skills required to achieve a particular purpose. As with a typical Agile team, five to seven members are ideal, but the size of the team depends on its area of focus, the disciplines needed, and the amount of human attention required for each robo-advisor. For example, in addition to their personal tasks, human advisors must also:

1. Feed the robo-advisors with any new strategy and product information by modifying rules, patterns, or the AI neural network.

Figure 2: Team Composition

2. Validate that the robo-advice is correct and stays within the law, as it is still the responsibility of the humans on the team.

Agile's Added Value

An Agile human-robo team collaborates with the customer. It uses a change-responsive, flexible strategy for increasingly complex questions. Advice must be relevant and timely, even if the questions have never been asked. Cooperation will become more critical than ever before. Agile adds value by creating focus, priority, and by stimulating team autonomy in three important areas:

1. **Critical thinking** - Mixed Agile teams form "think tanks" to solve complex problems and learn new strategies.

2. **Integral advice** - Mixed Agile teams provide human emotion, accountability, flexibility and tailored services, especially in complex situations.
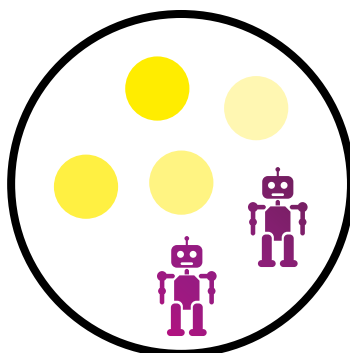
Rik de Groot,
Lead Consultant,
Agile Transformations

3. **Responsibility** - Mixed Agile teams regulate the advice given by robo-advisors, as the humans are still ultimately responsible.

Agile methods help teams visualize the work that needs to be done and create a flexible strategy. Letting go of the less complex activities and giving them to the robo-advisors adds value and quality, creating vital improvements overall.
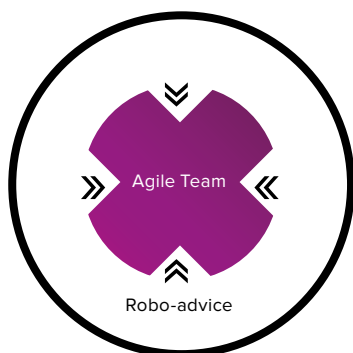
Initial Experiments
Robotization has become standard in manufacturing. Other industries, such as sales and legal, are still in an experimental phase with advising technologies. Many platforms provide financial advice and cloud-based solutions, and chatbots are becoming more common. With chatbots, customers experience a "conversation," but the advice doesn't come directly from humans. Agile teams feed the robo-advisors with rules, patterns, and logic. In this way, organizations provide enhanced advice that's more analytical and data based.

Support Mixed Teams
When guiding mixed Agile teams, consider the following focus points:
1. **Future** - Cleary state the future. Focus on the new, added value and describe what is expected from the team.
2. **Letting go** - Letting go is one of the most challenging aspects of working with mixed teams. Sometimes giving direct advice seems more straightforward. However, humans make mistakes. It's essential to stimulate a "think tank" focus.
3. **Skills** - The new skills required for even newer roles, such as data scientist and ethical hacker, are becoming more critical. Focus on developing craftsmanship.
4. **Team autonomy** - Solving complex problems requires multiple disciplines, especially under a time crunch. An Agile mindset and collaboration can create a high performing team. Reward team results.

Agile Next Future
Collaboration between team members will become more critical. Robo-advisers will replace some professions and make others obsolete, while newer occupations like ethical hackers and data scientist will become more in demand. Agile can help teams do what robotizing alone cannot (yet); focus on creativity and solving complex problems.

Kick-Start Your Agile Team With Design Sprint

Picture this: You've defined the product vision with the product owner and determined scope for the upcoming sprints. Your team is all ready to leap onto their backlog and start delivering value. Now imagine all assumptions and ideas have already been verified with real customers. All this, in the first week of your sprint.

Author **Mohsen Rezai**

You've just kick-started your Agile team with design sprint.

By providing your team with customer feedback when it's most valuable for them - at the earliest stage possible - they know whether they're (still) solving the right problems and can redefine or adjust their next steps accordingly. Your team learns quickly and avoids committing to delivering the wrong product; one that doesn't quite meet your customers' needs or answer critical business questions.

Design sprint is different from software design sprints. In those, development teams design code, create a new architecture for new or existing code, and in general, redesign how a software end-product should look. However, with the power of design sprints, you can kickstart teams while staying focused on business value.

In his book, "Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days," Jake Knapp describes the design sprint in detail. Developed by Google Ventures to answer critical business questions, the design sprint is a five-day process that includes:

○ Defining the main problem.
○ Forming ideas.
○ Designing solutions.
○ Prototyping and validating with real customers.

A design sprint shortens endless discussions and compresses months of development time into a single week. During that week, you test your designed prototype with real customers and gain realistic data instead of waiting for months before launching a minimum viable product.

Design sprint magnifies your team's potential, allowing it to leverage early customer feedback and swiftly recognize if your product does what it should. The powerful design sprint process is applicable to any domain, even outside of IT. According to an article by Tim Brown and Jocelyn Wyatt published in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, the design sprint concept derives from the
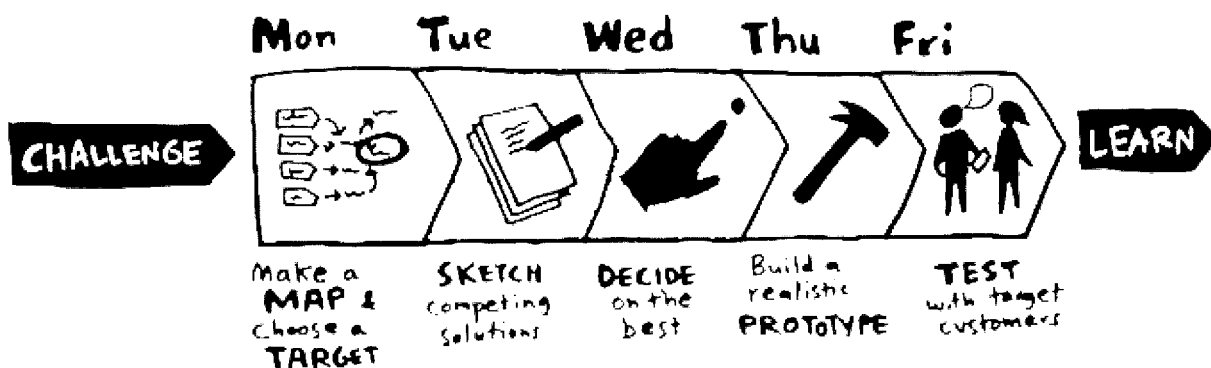

Figure 1: Design Sprint Structure

design thinking framework and was popularized by the innovation company IDEO in the '90s. Time-boxed to five days, the design-thinking framework forms the design sprint.

Design sprint helps to speed up team effectiveness at the beginning of a project, when they must answer questions the right way, such as:
○ Are we solving the right problem?
○ Have we verified the solutions?
○ Are we focusing on what the customer wants?
○ What will we be doing in the coming months?

It works with both existing and new teams that require a fresh view on current problems and their solutions. Kick-starting your team with design sprint enables the members to be on the same page from the start, work towards solving the issues at hand, and explore and learn together.

A few months ago, we used a design sprint to kick-start a new, multi-disciplinary Agile team. (See Figure 1 for the structure of activities we followed for each of the five days.)

The entire week was filled with techniques, methods, workshops, and hands-on experiences. The Google Venture website page on design sprints provides a step-by-step guide for facilitating your own.

On Monday, the team started by creating a customer journey map and defining the most critical problem. Subsequently, the team designed several solutions to this problem on Tuesday and narrowed down to the best one on Wednesday. After building a low-fidelity prototype on Thursday, we collected valuable feedback on Friday while testing the prototype with real customers. By using the different techniques described in Knapp's book, the team visualized all the input and started looking for patterns and valuable insights to capture them. The outcome of these productive five days was a realistic prototype derived from a set of promising solutions. At the end of the day, the entire team knew what they had achieved and what they should do next.

For newly-formed teams, the output of such a design sprint is precious. For example, in our case, following the design sprint, the team created a backlog with all learning points and built their roadmap for the next phase. Then, we initiated the first Agile sprint to convert the created prototype into a real product. Our backlog included customer-verified product features that the team could immediately build in the upcoming sprints. The ideas generated during the design sprint that didn't make it to a prototype were placed separately on the backlog for future inspection.

How do we feel about the design sprint experience in retrospect? Here's what we gained:
○ An entirely new perspective on existing customer problems.
○ Customer-centric and verified solutions.
○ Accelerated processes and critical decision making.
○ Shared vision and mission, knowledge, and commitment of every team member.
○ Early understanding of customer needs and a solid backlog that reflects them.
○ A fun week!

A bonus benefit from this process was the improved collaboration that flourished during the design sprint and stayed with the team ever since. In a week full of creative thinking and inspiration, challenges and relief, and numerous discussions, the team dynamic changed; the team learned to grow and stay united while working toward the sprint goal. With design sprint, you speed up team building and orchestrate collaboration effectively, especially when working with newly-formed teams that are working together for the first time.

Mohsen Rezai,
Agile Consultant,
"Driven by a love of design thinking, experimentation, and continuous learning."
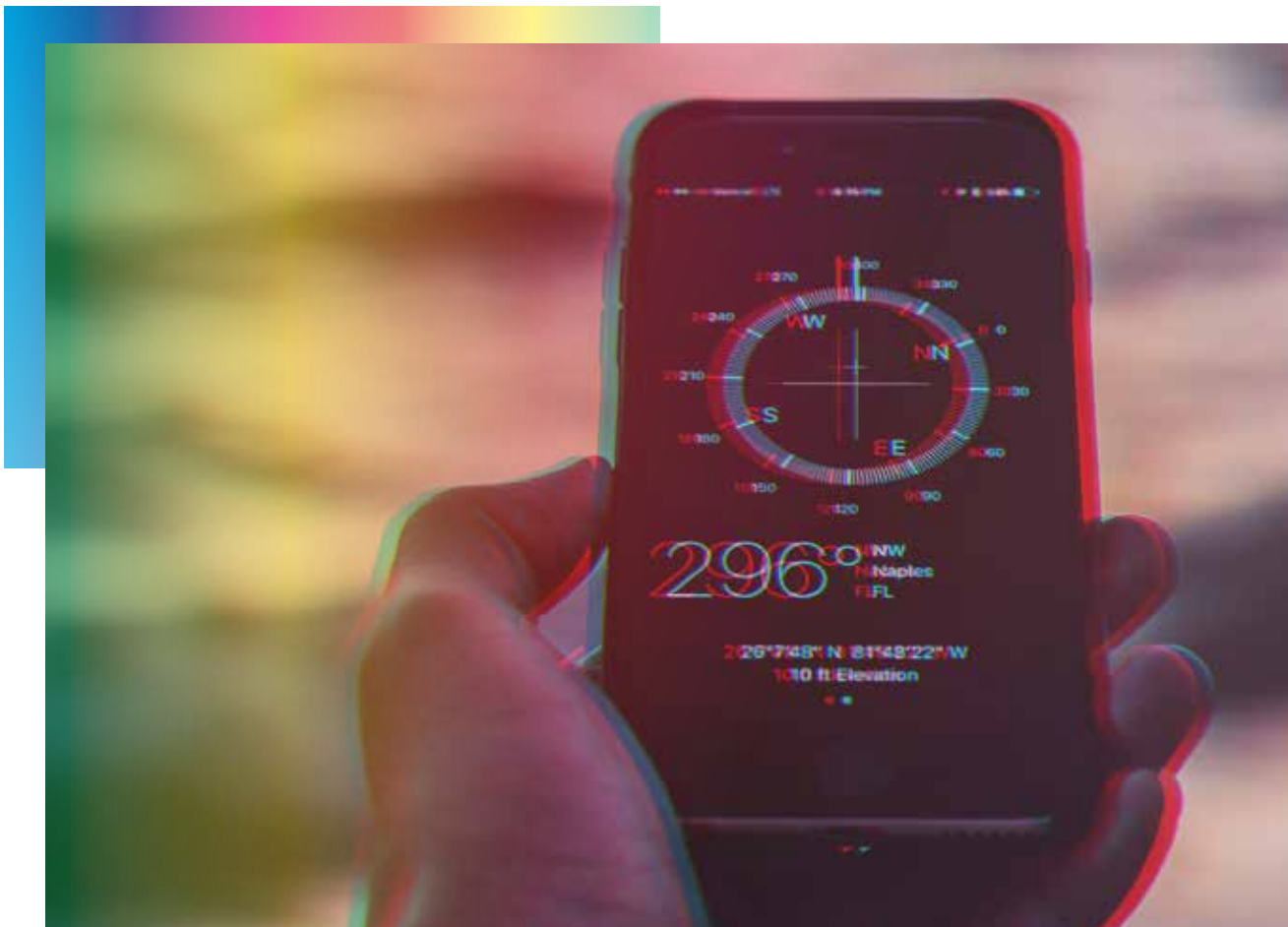
Leadership's Role in Business Agility

While the term "business agility" has come into vogue, many leaders still don't comprehend what it exactly entails. This article explores a definition of business agility from the leader's perspective, and shares some patterns based on real-world stories of dozens of companies who have attempted to become Agile from end to end.

Author **Arlen Bankston**

Defining Business Agility
Business agility is the ability to measure how your products and services are performing and use this information to improve them frequently and painlessly. This sounds simple, but most organizations are constructed in a way that makes it much harder than necessary. There are four factors which drive business agility:

1. **Flexibility** - Being able to rapidly start, stop and redirect initiatives.
2. **Focus** - Prioritizing so that teams can attend to one thing at a time rather than ten.
3. **Flow** - Eliminating gaps between functional silos and delivery activities.
4. **Feedback** - Basing decisions on real-world usage patterns rather than internal opinions.

Bringing Flexibility to the Portfolio

The way in which projects are funded and allocated to teams is perhaps the area where the greatest business impact can be realized, but it is one of the last things that most companies address. For instance, an annual budgeting process obviously constrains the ability to start, stop and redirect projects on the more frequent bases that both Agile methods and today's chaotic world demand. Some approaches that have proven effective in making the portfolio more flexible include establishing portfolio Kanban boards to focus work in process and adopting Agile budgeting methods which align investment against desired business outcomes rather than preordained feature sets. For instance, a company might allocate $10 million to improve automated assistance services, but the specific projects and features intended to deliver that outcome would be determined more on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Building Teams with Focus

Most leaders start by equipping teams with the basic concepts and tools of Agile delivery, a sensible proposition given that effective teams are the heart of any Agile organization. They train process leaders like Scrum masters, business representatives like product owners, and, of course, the delivery teams. Methods like Scrum and Kanban can improve engagement, collaboration, and happiness, yielding better products and teams that truly take ownership of their work. With proper mentorship, groups can start to self-manage and even coach one another, spreading competence rapidly. In addition to the portfolio-level adjustments noted above that keep teams from being inundated with too many workstreams, driving and supporting this evolution may infer changes to functions like human resources, ensuring that performance management and career progression schemes drive the right behaviors and attract the best talent.

Generating Flow Across Functions

What has to happen between a customer's request and its final fulfillment? Development is just one part of the equation, and not necessarily the most time-consuming or problematic. A focus on team velocity alone is insufficient if you truly want speed. It isn't uncommon for upfront business planning and funding cycles to near or even exceed the time spent in actual development, while activities like marketing and sales can also add time following delivery. Leaders must make the work flow across these activities more smoothly, which may involve reorganizing functional groups against customer experiences and journeys. This means that a customer experience like painless billing might be served by dedicated finance, marketing, and sales functions in addition to development and operations, yielding teams

that own the process holistically rather than relying upon a centralized group. These independent end-to-end value stream teams can move quickly, change direction with ease and align the strategy of each experience group to real-time, real-world results.

Enabling Meaningful Feedback

The term "MVP" has gotten a bit of a sketchy reputation due to a common situation; products go out quickly, but they don't improve much beyond that point, making customers feel like test subjects. The main reason this occurs is that most development teams have little connection to production; when they finish one project they just move to the next. Separate operations teams pick up the product and maintain it, but they often focus on stability over innovation. All this means that the product evolves very slowly once it's in the wild, where the best information about how people use it is actually available. Lean UX and discovery methods help teams to learn rapidly upfront, testing hypotheses about the market, customer needs, and prospective solutions through clever prototyping, simulation, and experimental methods. Meanwhile, DevOps addresses the structural problem of improving organizational feedback loops so that iteration is based upon real-world usage patterns rather than internal opinions.

Business Agility Requires Leadership

Agile methods have always been intended to bring business and delivery functions closer together, but only recently have companies begun to address the non-development aspects of this problem at scale. While enabling teams to function effectively on their own is critical, they will only realize their maximum potential under certain conditions. They need alignment with all the groups they rely on, a flexible portfolio of work flowing to them, and data-based feedback to drive the continued evolution of their products. Get started by speaking to some of your peer leaders and seeing where you have the best opportunities to start on this journey; it's a long one, but very rewarding once you arrive.

Arlen Bankston,
Certified Scrum Master and
Product Owner Trainer,
Lean Six Sigma MBB and
Founder of LitheSpeed

Using Brain Science to Boost Your Scrum Events

As an Agile coach with a passion for Scrum (and mother of three!), I'm always on the lookout for innovative ways to boost and develop personal and professional mastery. I recently attended a powerful training, "Training From the Back of the Room Back of the Room," devised by Sharon L. Bowman. It teaches you how the human brain works in a learning setting like a training or workshop. I discovered some interesting differences between traditional and brain-based learning that also apply in the workplace. This article describes some of the concepts I learned and how you can apply "brain science" to make your Scrum events more effective.

Author **Evelien Roos**

The Brain
The human brain has three parts which all have their own functions. The "reptile brain" is the primary brain which holds all primary life functions (breathing, heart rate, balance).

The "mammal brain" is the part of the brain where senses, hearing and motor areas for the body reside. The human brain or "neocortex" is the part where the cognitive functions work. Cognitive functions are perception, language, action, attention, memory, consciousness, imagination, emotion and orientation.

Cognitive Functions
The cognitive functions of the neo-cortex are the focus of this article. These are the functions of the brain that allow us to absorb information and knowledge. To process informa-tion, you need memory, as well as language, orientation, attention, and problem-solving abilities. Reasoning, calculating, writing and reading are all cognitive functions.

Brain Science
Brain science or neuroscience is the methodical study of how brain cells work and how the brain executes all its functions. Although the brain has been subject to extensive research, we still don't exactly know what some parts of it do.

In the training and her books, Sharon Bowman describes the "six trumps" of learning based on cognitive neuroscience that create a better learning experience for learners. What makes or breaks attention? What do you need to do to stimulate information processing? How can you optimize learning? These six trumps enhance learning based on the science of the brain.

Six Trumps
Through extensive research on brain science, Sharon developed the "six trumps" of learning. Each trump indicates the superior state that surpasses the other for optimizing learning:
1. Movement trumps sitting.
2. Talking trumps listening.
3. Images trump words.
4. Writing trumps reading.
5. Shorter trumps longer.
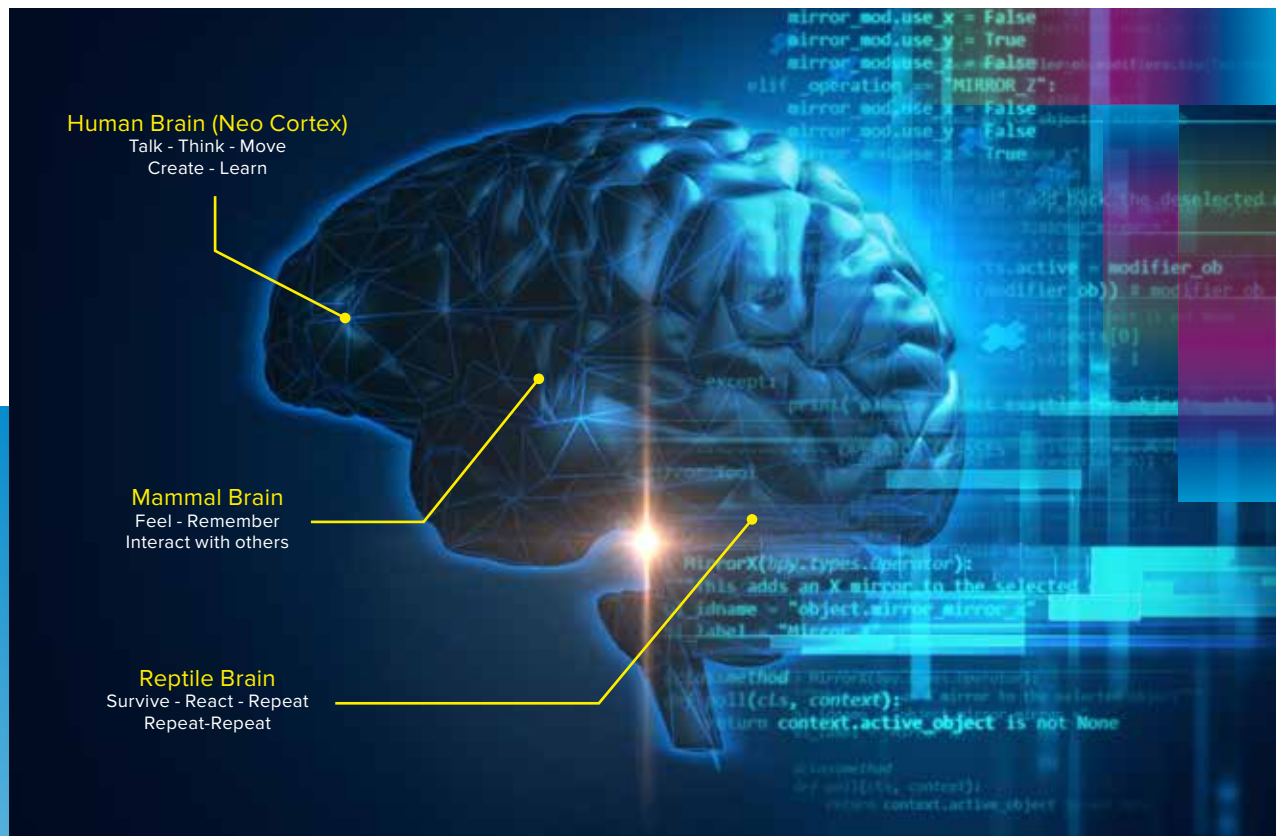6. Different trumps same.

Movement Trumps Sitting
Physical movement increases cognitive function by increasing blood circulation. The brain receives more oxygen, which enhances our ability to think and learn. Moving every 10 to 20 minutes increases a participants ability to process information. Sitting for long periods makes thinking and learning more difficult because your body's oxygen level decreases.

Moving around keeps people awake, it enhances cognition and boosts memory.

Movement ideas:
Get people moving with simple stretching exercises, or by asking them to walk in place or around the room. Stand up to discuss in pairs, or ask people to write thoughts on sticky notes and post them on the wall to motivate moving. Even turning to discuss topics with other people is better than sitting still. Bottom line, take short body breaks to get the oxygen flowing.

Human Brain (Neo Cortex)
Talk - Think - Move
Create - Learn

Mammal Brain
Feel - Remember
Interact with others

Reptile Brain
Survive - React - Repeat
Repeat-Repeat

Talking Trumps Listening

Verbally processing information leads to a better understanding of it than only hearing it.

Talking builds relationships, elicits feedback and enhances involvement. When you are in a conversation, you are processing information three ways:

1. You listen to what is being said.
2. You think about it.
3. You reply with an answer or thought in your own words.

Talking helps you retain the information in your brain. By discussing it rather than just listening, the new information connects to what you already know. However, a person has to feel safe and comfortable to speak.

Talking ideas:
Create a container where people feel safe to share. Get people talking by asking them to turn and talk to their peers, or use a talking stick.

Stand up and discuss, in pairs or small groups. Hold discussions, small group presentations, role-playing or collaborative games.

Images Trump Words

Vision trumps all other senses. Our brain stores images and sounds longer than it does words alone. We call an image anything that creates a mental picture. An image can be a photo, video, or a mental one formed in the imagination through story, metaphor, or analogy. Cases studies and visuals created by participants also form images in the mind.

An image helps to activate the brain, it evokes emotions, it triggers long-term memory and creates shortcuts in the brain.

Image ideas:
Help people create mental metaphors and memory maps through doodling, stories, and graphical facilitation.

Writing Trumps Reading

If you add writing to the physical senses of seeing and hearing the brain stores that information longer. When writing, you use multiple senses, it requires physical movement and adds the sense of touch. Your body and mind are engaged. Writing enhances the involvement because it helps you to review content, which reinforces it. Writing stimulates memory, is kinesthetic and it grabs and holds the attention. Writing helps to focus; you have to think about what you write when you are writing. You process information three times when you are taking notes in a learning environment: you hear it, you think about it, and you translate it to paper. When you write, you are already thinking about what you should write, thus evaluating and ordering the information that you receive. The process of thinking before you write helps to fix ideas more firmly in your mind. Writing leads to higher and easier recall and better retention of the information presented to you.

"The process of thinking before you write helps to fix ideas more firmly in your mind."

Writing ideas:
Ask people to practice outlining, mind mapping, doodling, drawing icons and filling in blanks.

Shorter Trumps Longer
Our cultural conditioning and the natural way our brain works makes it "check out" after ten minutes or so unless something happens that grabs our attention again. The attention grabber could be a change in our environment, the way content is presented, people moving or the way a meeting or training is facilitated. Disrupting attention helps the brain "chunk" content or information into smaller parts. People remain alert and stay engaged when you work with smaller pieces. When people pay more attention to what they are hearing, they understand it better and remember it longer.

Shortening ideas:
Break up content by giving small tasks and short assignments. Keep meetings brief. Change up the learning environment and your facilitation style.

Different Trumps Same
You (and your brain) don't pay attention to boring things. Your brain will eventually ignore everything that is continuously the same. Use a variety of teaching and learning techniques to activate and engage people. Anything new, unexpected, unusual or extra-ordinary will capture the brain's attention. So change things up regularly, mix and vary!

Differentiating ideas:
Develop surprising ways to engage your audience. Introduce dot voting (voting with dots on subjects), or a data hunt (go around a room to gather information).

Applying Brain Science to Scrum Events
Employing any of these six trumps during your Scrum events can help the attendees focus and pay more attention. Brain science can improve their problem solving and innovation abilities as well. Engaged, involved and activated attendees will learn more from the experience. By stimulating openness and commitment, you also avoid negative

thoughts and create happier people. Even introverted attendees will benefit from brain science when you create the space for them to speak up (for example, in smaller groups) and foster respect and trust.

In the Scrum framework, there are five Scrum events, and every event has its own purpose. These events are timeboxed to keep the meetings focused. Here are some ideas of how you can apply brain science in each:

1. **Daily Scrum** - synchronize on the progress made toward reaching the Sprint goal
   ○ Maintain attention by rotating the order of the team members' contributions.
   ○ Short check-in round at the start.
   ○ Stand up.

2. **Sprint Planning** - create a forecast for the next Sprint
   ○ Move around (get up to the board).
   ○ Write down the items on sticky notes.
   ○ Visualize the business value.

3. **Sprint Review** - exchange feed-back on delivered increment and look forward to the product backlog
   - Let stakeholders handle the mouse.
   - Let every attendee write down one improvement for the shown functionality.
   - Let stakeholders write or draw their feedback.
   - Use different ways to involve stakeholders (e.g., Sailboat game).

4. **Sprint Retrospective** - inspect how the last Sprint went regarding process and people
   - Dot voting.
   - Engage everybody and stimulate discussion.

   - Try different formats to spark creativity.

5. **Sprint** - container event for all other events
   - Move frequently.
   - Talk to each other.
   - Make important stuff visual (Definition of Done on the wall, the Sprint Backlog visible for everybody).

I learned a lot from Sharon Bowman's "Training From the Back of the Room," and her six trumps of learning based on cognitive neuroscience. Knowing how the human brain works and how its cognitive functions allow us to absorb information and knowledge

isn't just interesting, it's useful for business. When we keep movement, vision, writing, images, brevity, and variety in mind, especially in our Scrum events, we process information better and faster, which can help us work more effectively.

Evelien Roos,
Scrum Professional,
"Committed to innovating the mastery of Scrum."

Yesterday's Competitive Advantage is Today's Industry Standard

To meet the digital demand of the 21st century, an increasing number of companies have chosen the Agile business model. Cloud-native systems, embracing social media, mobile platforms, continuous feedback, the predictive capabilities of (big) data, and other technologies all are extensions of this organizational transformation.

Author **Edwin Oldenbeuving**

Agile is a mindset that guides every aspect of collaboration and is not limited to any one part of an organization. In its broadest sense, Agile is a business model, an operational structure that offers organizations the tools and capabilities they need to react swiftly and efficiently to the fluctuations, and disruptive or relevant trends of the market.

The speed of digitalization today requires a higher degree of agility, adaptability, and flexibility at every level - from the organizational structure and culture, down to its IT architecture. For this reason, an organization's Agile business model must be comprehensive, with learning and adapting built in as essential to its survival.

Teams must be able to function "ad hoc" wherever and whenever necessary, without dated hierarchical or monolithic structures getting in their way. Operational response time can't be hindered by legacy-systems or inferior digital tools. These are no longer optional improvements.

Yesterday's competitive advantage is today's industry standard.

It's not enough to merely shape, organize, guide, or lead your organization in a particular direction. Agile has become the new standard.

Rapid Development

Since the turn of the century, the world has changed tremendously, requiring significant adaptations in how we manage and transform our organizations for future success. Sometimes, its good to pause and appreciate these changes, particularly how quickly the movement towards more flexibility and maneuverability has progressed.

Now, in 2018, as organizations embrace the next phase of their Agile maturity, new questions are arising, such as:

○ What's the difference in effectiveness and ROI within the organization when a certain framework is chosen?
○ Is it advisable to choose a variety of Agile business models for the diversity of value streams and types of activities within the organization?
○ Which metrics need to be set up to enable continuous recalibration and adjustment?
○ What's being overlooked if the promised added value hasn't manifested from the organization and teams after a number of years of working Agile?
○ What should the target operating model look like in order to be fit for purpose in 2020, or 2025?

We're now at the point where there has been sufficient experimentation in all business functions to fully complete a high performance version of the Agile organization puzzle. In 2019, we anticipate seeing the first consistently Agile company throughout the entire organization, including all the necessary metrics and feedback loops.

The following timeline illustrates the speed of Agile's development in less than two decades:

2001 - A group of thought leaders from the software development world who felt things needed to be done differently penned "The Agile Manifesto." They didn't agree on much else, except for the intrinsic value of being "agile."

2007 - In response to the growing alignment they saw between business and IT, a group of business and IT professionals from Xebia launched the earliest versions of Agile consulting and training.

2011 - The first organizational Agile transformations began to occur in the Netherlands, establishing end-to-end teams that were responsible from ideation through a product or service's life cycle. Applying customer/user feedback became central to this process.

2014 - People outside IT product development began experimenting with Agile, applying its principles and methodologies in their own domains. Wait times were significantly improved, and handovers were reduced through this new method of collaboration. Campaigns that had previously taken four to six months to develop were suddenly completed and delivered within a few weeks.

2015 - From this year and on, staff departments such as HR, finance, risk and compliance, and procurement began working in an Agile way. After that, organizations gradually started embracing Agile in their entire omnichannel strategy - from call centers that provide customer service to physical locations offering information, advice, and sales.

2018 - Agile's next wave begins.

Optimize

The next step in optimizing the Agile business model is an old challenge. Organizations must find ways to achieve genuine collaboration with business partners. The "war for talent" and value creation must move beyond the egocentric, win or lose battle.

As the world is increasingly confronted with diminishing resources and raw materials, it's time to look for ecosystems in which humanity's survival comes before maximizing profit. This necessitates a network of high-performance cells fitting seamlessly with other high-performance cells, which together, constitute the whole.

Over the past few years, a few important prerequisites to realizing the Agile promise have become apparent:
1. A clear vision and objective must be implemented and supported throughout the entire organization.
2. Continuous learning and improvement based on feedback and interaction with customers, users, own employees and systems.
3. An organization (and its architecture) must be easy to navigate and (dis) connect; a network of end-to-end responsible, autonomous teams and self-contained services.
4. Processes and structure must be able to continuously adapt to changing circumstances.
5. Aspire to an engineering culture for all; with a "can-do" mindset characterized by enthusiasm and inspiration.
6. Challenge professionals to continually develop; provide the space for them to experiment and innovate to stay fit for purpose.
7. Automate repetitive operations to prevent errors wherever possible.
8. Measures all activities for effectiveness and make continuous adjustments possible.
9. Reduce complexity across the organization and in its products and services; create strength through simplicity.

Realizing perfect, holistic collaboration is paramount. Principles, people, technology, leadership, strategy, structure, and cooperation work in synchronized harmony. Keep the old adage in mind, "*Agile is about working smarter, rather than harder. It's not about doing more work in less time: it's about generating more value with less work.*"

Edwin Oldenbeuving,
Principal Consultant,
High-Performance Agile
Organizations

Design Thinking: Get to the Heart of What Your Customer Wants

According to a study on custom-developed applications conducted by The Standish Group in 2014, only 20 percent of features are used "often," 50 percent are "hardly ever" used, and 30 percent are only used "infrequently." In other words, if you have a budget of one million to build a custom application, you could immediately save half of it if you knew which features weren't relevant for your end-users.

Author **Jens Broetzmann**

As an Agile consultant and trainer, I wondered if these numbers were accurate - and what that might mean for companies in the midst of an Agile transition. I conducted a survey of 25 members of the NLScrum MeetUp group in July 2018 and asked, "How confident are you (on a scale from 1 low -10 high) that the Scrum team in your organization is creating high-impact solutions and features for the users?" The average answer was a 5.2. I also asked, "On a scale of 1-10, how strong is your urge to improve this?" Their responses averaged 8.3. Based on this survey, I think it's fair to conclude that there's room for improvement. Agile, or waterfall, if you are not making the right priority decisions, you will not create high impact solutions.

Why Design Thinking?
The American management consultant, educator, and author Peter Drucker said, "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all." Building and maintaining product features that are "hardly ever" used not only increases implementation and maintenance costs, it also increases the overall time-to-market. Besides, who gets inspired and motivated to build something that will hardly ever get used?

Understanding and Defining What Customers Want
What makes it so difficult to understand and define what customers want? Creating features customer don't want generates "invisible waste." But it's difficult to detect when companies are doing this for two main reasons:
1. **The wrong assumption - customers know what they want**
    During the design process, we talk to end users and often assume that they know what they want. However, the truth is, customers only know what they want in broad strokes. Steve Jobs said, "It's not the customer's job to know what

they want. It's our job to find out." Too often, we jump too fast into the solution without having a deep understanding of the problem. If you don't know who and why you can't answer how and what. Understanding the customer's situation completely is critical for designing a successful product and its features.
2. **Priorities are based on opinions rather than real customer data and insights**
    Scrum provides the ceremonies, roles, artifacts, and values for quick feedback loops but offers less guidance for defining the right solutions and features for customers.

We often assume our priorities are correct without validating them first, and that's a problem. Furthermore, the way in which we determine priorities is also partly to blame. Too often, time /deadlines or internal political stakeholder pressures influence a decision (or feature choice) without verifying if that choice actually resonates with the customer. In the end, there's only one way to find out if a feature is meaningful for your customer - constantly testing to learn from your end users. You can only make the right decisions based on the data and insights collected from those tests. That's where design thinking comes into play.

What is Design Thinking?
Design thinking is a process and a mindset for creative problem-solving. Partially rooted in design practices and creative techniques taught at MIT and Stanford in the '50s, the innovation company Ideo popularized it in the '90s. Design thinking enables cross-functional teams to work in a customer-centric way so that the products they make resonate in the market, are loved by the customers, and generate business value. Implemented daily, the problem-solving potential of

design thinking creates a living innovation culture and inspires new and surprising forms of creative teamwork.

Design thinking uses low-fidelity prototypes during the process, creating a faster feedback loop with the customer. This feedback, in turn, provides early guidance, better insight, and data that informs decisions about what to implement, or not. If wise decisions are made throughout development, maintenance costs will be decreased, and the customer satisfaction will rise.

How Does Design Thinking Work?
Collaboration is at the heart of design thinking. During a workshop, a cross-functional team with a culture of empathy works on a problem worth solving from the customers' perspective. The team moves through the five stages of the design thinking process:
1. **Empathize** - Inspire new thinking by discovering what people really need.
2. **Define** - Define the problem you would like to solve.
3. **Ideate** - Generate ideas and push past obvious solutions to get to breakthrough ideas.
4. **Prototype** - Make ideas tangible - build rough prototypes.
5. **Test** - Measure and learn from testing your prototypes to receive fast feedback to learn how to improve for the next iteration.

First, the team broadens its perspective and understanding of the problem by gathering information and interviewing customers (1- empathize). With the insights this generates, they then determine which particular problem to focus on solving (2- define). During the next stage (3- ideation), they create as many solutions as possible and determine which would be best for solving the customer problem. They visualize this solution by building a prototype (4), and then test
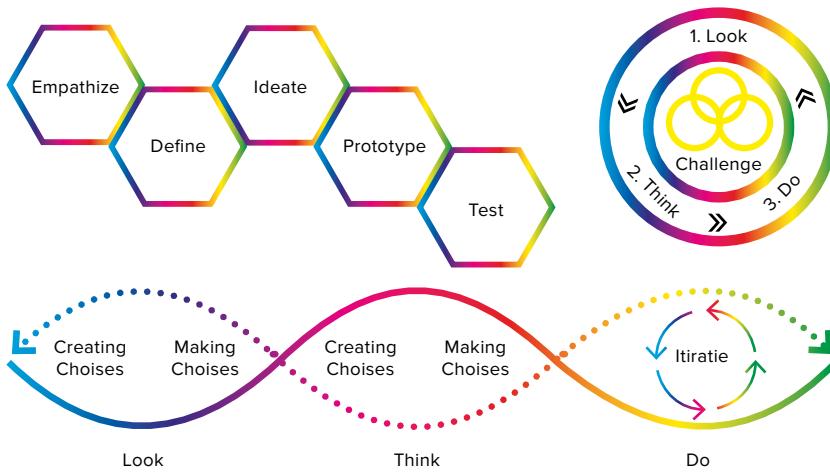
Figure 1: Design Thinking, A Human-Centered Design Approach

(5) it, face-to-face with the customer. From the feedback this generates, the team learns what resonates and what doesn't, and can adapt the solution to meet the customer's needs in the next iteration.

Depending on the complexity of the challenge, a design thinking workshop can take between two and four days and is familiar in the context of a design sprint. As Jake Knapp of Google Ventures describes in his book, "Sprint," a design sprint uses the design thinking framework with a timebox of four days.

Many organizations and teams have successfully used design thinking and companies such as SAP, IBM and, ING have created their own innovation centers where design thinking is part of their daily way of working.

Maintaining a Continuous Feedback Loop

Conducting an initial design thinking workshop with your team is a great way to start this continuous feedback loop, and its the only way to reduce uncertainty. Some Scrum

> "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

teams kick-off with a design sprint to gain a deeper understanding of the customer and quick improvement ideas, as described by Rezai Mohsen's article, "Kick-Start Your Agile Team With Design Sprint" in this magazine. However, at the end of the day, you need to reduce or completely remove any uncertainty as to whether your customers will use your solution before you start building it.

After a first design thinking workshop, the team defines the riskiest assumptions as a next step, then tests those in small sprints, and validates at the end with the customer. For example, suppose a Scrum team is tasked with improving the overall digital online banking experience. They begin with a three-day design thinking workshop that generates three potential improvement ideas and paper prototypes. The initial customer feedback is promising, but the team still isn't sure which of the three features is most desirable for the end user (riskiest assumption). So, as an experiment, they create a simple landing page that outlines the three potential new features. Clicking on any one of these three takes the customer to a page that details that particular feature. The customer can leave an e-mail address to receive further news and information.

Creating the landing page is defined as a product backlog item and the team refines and defines the necessary user stories and tasks to pull this into the sprint. One week after the implementation, the team and relevant stakeholders come together to analyze the customers' clicking data. Based on the data, the team concludes that the third idea resonates most with the customer and focuses on building and improving it. They keep an up-to-date dashboard that's visible to all stakeholders and explain their decisions and priorities based on the data. The leadership team congratulates them on saving the company unnecessary costs by scrapping the first two ideas. The team has used design thinking to increase customer satisfaction and build brand loyalty.

In today's fast-changing digital world, you can't afford to waste time, money and resources building features no one will use. Instead, focus on creating more features your customers will love and gain the competitive advantage. Customer retention and brand loyalty will grow.

Implementing a continuous design thinking loop and mindset will take an initial investment of time and energy, but it's nothing compared to the risk and cost of building something nobody wants. According to my survey, 88 percent of of NLScrum members agree, design thinking helps product owners and Scrum teams create better products.

Jens Broetzmann,
Business Agility and
Innovation Coach

Cultivating a Culture for Engineers with Agile

Today's digital age is buzzing with "transformations" and "accelerations" that are driving organizations to new levels of competition and increasing their reliance on IT. Information technology is no longer a secondary, supporting resource; IT has become a primary business USP. In turn, the increasing demand for capable, seasoned engineers has sparked a virtual "war for talent." The only way to attract and retain the best of the best is to cultivate a culture specifically designed for engineers. Agile can help you do that.

Author **Serge Beaumont**

Digital Drivers

There are four critical ramifications of today's digital age fueling the war for talent and the increasing demand for engineers:

1. **Product digitization** - In today's digital age, all products are either digital or have a digital component. Non-physical products, such as insurance or bank accounts, are expected to have a complete information and transactional experience through a phone app or other digital channel. Even very physical businesses like do-it-yourself (DIY) chains need to create an online presence. Customers today research online before they purchase offline (ROPO), and the DIY store that offers the best online experience wins the customer.

2. **Mass customization** - The ability to tailor all client interactions uniquely to that client in a one-on-one conversation has become the expected norm. It's not a unique selling point anymore; it has become a basic requirement. Features like recommendations, direct chat windows and personalization are commonplace.

3. **Immediate customer feedback** - A logical extension of mass customization and the culture of social media is that organizations need to make their customers feel truly heard and understood. Responding to feedback must be done quickly and effectively. There are many examples where a phone app gets very high ratings only because the people behind it rapidly implement changes based on user feedback. This is not a new phenomenon. Listening to customers and doing something about their complaints has always been a good thing, but the rate of change and the amount of feedback has increased across all digital channels.

4. **Reduced cost of entry (the fast fish eats the big fish)** - The cost of entry and scaling up has become so much lower, large and established organizations can no longer rely on their current market and scale dominance. There is too much focus on the archetypal disruptors like Uber and Airbnb. They make for nice stories of heroic success, but there will always be new competitors in a market. The real problem is the large and established organizations that can't keep up with the rate of change.

The War for IT Talent

The digital age has shifted information technology from a secondary supporting resource to a primary business USP. While at one time some organizations could get away with a less than optimal or even bad engineering culture and ecosystem, they can't afford this oversight anymore.

Organizations that already leaned heavily on IT are making it even more central to their business. This is perhaps best illustrated by a quote from Ralph Hamers, CEO of ING Bank, who, during a video interview with Brian Caplen of "The Banker" in August 2017 said, "We want to be a tech company with a banking license."

Then there are the organizations that never had their own IT engineering capability in-house because it wasn't part of their primary business processes or they had no digital products or presence. These organizations now need to build the fundamental infrastructure for an engineering ecosystem from the ground up.

As IT consultants, we've experienced this trend more and more and are often the first in-house IT project for an organization. We help them acquire and retain talent. Many of the requests we receive are for maintenance contracts, not because the organization wants to outsource, but simply because they are not successful in getting the necessary people on board. Although this can be a good solution in some cases, it does not get at the root cause we need to address. The "war for talent" can be won with a good engineering culture and eco-system.

An Engineering Culture and Ecosystem for the Digital Age
To attract and retain top IT engineering talent we need to understand the engineering mindset. To an engineer, money is not the primary motivator. For them, it's about challenge, safety, clarity, staying relevant, making a difference and being in an environment that doesn't impede. However, we see many organizations that have trouble hiring engineers, and even then there is a high chance that these new hires will leave within a year or even a month. Often, that's because those organizations don't provide the right environment - they don't understand the engineer's mindset.

Engineers are professionals like any other, but they have some specific qualities and characteristics that are best served by a particular kind of culture. For example:

1. **Engineers create products** - Their career is defined by creating or changing a product. A product can be interpreted broadly. It can be software, a physical object, but also an improved team or company culture. This is literally a creative job: engineers create things.
2. **Engineers are the ones who must care about how well a product is built** - They share responsibility with other roles for aspects like ensuring economic feasibility and fit for use, but they are the primary role that deals with product quality, performance, and other technical requirements.
3. **Engineers live in a meritocracy** - As knowledge workers, engineers' bragging rights are based on what they know and how well engineered their products have proven to be. In a field where state of the art is moving forward quickly, an engineer must also stay ahead in the knowledge rat race or see their career fall behind.

"To attract and retain top IT engineering talent we need to understand the engineering mindset."

Agile Attracts Engineers

Agile addresses the needs of an engineering mindset. Engineers today choose to work for Agile organizations because they have better engineering cultures. In fact, many organizations started doing Agile for the sole purpose of attracting and retaining engineering talent.

In non-Agile organizations, it was quite common that an engineer would only be responsible for a task or a step in a larger project, but not involved in the end-to-end lifecycle of a product. This meant that the engineer would have to identify themselves with that step, but not feel pride in the creation of a product. Agile addresses this directly because the identity, autonomy, and planning of a team are all around a product. Engineers in an Agile team create products.

The empirical feedback cycle built into Agile results in direct, critical feedback on a product's technical quality. Faced with the facts, everyone can see what is helping or hindering the team in its ability to deliver a well-functioning increment. This transparency can motivate management to confront any "organizational insanities" holding the team back, which takes (emotional) pressure off the team. Engineers in an empirical cycle can get the people in their environment onboard to help them create a well-built product.

Agile leads to a better chance of delivering a working product as well as a direct connection between the engineer and the product. So, engineers can clearly point to a product and claim its success as their own. Engineers in an Agile team can undoubtedly claim their place in a meritocracy.

Conclusion

In today's digital age, organizations need to create an appropriate engineering culture to win the war for talent. Agile plays a critical role in creating that culture by addressing qualities and characteristics that are particular to engineers. Creativity, craftsmanship, and merit must be prioritized, nurtured and rewarded to attract, engage, and retain top engineering talent.

Serge Beaumont,
Principal Agile Consultant
and Business Unit Manager
Software Development

Recommended Reading for Every Agile Leader

Some people may think we no longer need managers in this Age of Agility, but I strongly disagree. Without capable Agile leaders, we'll never manage to break free from the chains that bind us to the old world. But how do leaders learn how to lead in this new world?

Author **Ron Eringa**

Leading in the New World

So far, we still only have a limited knowledge of what a genuinely Agile organization looks like. Only a handful have managed to succeed, but that number is growing. VersionOne's 12th Annual State of Agile Report shows Agile adoption across enterprises is reaching a significant 25 percent in 2018, compared to last year's 8 percent.

The report attributes in-house Agile coaches, consistent processes, and standardized tools across teams to the rising success, and flags cultural alignment, change-resistance, and managerial support as ongoing challenges. The most critical finding, however, is an incapability among Agile leaders to develop a culture of flexibility, support, and ownership.

Genuine Agile organizations require leaders that create environments where teams can grow. These leaders prepare their team, business, or organization for disruption and unpredictability. How? They replace plans and execution with shared values and principles, compliance with motivation, and practices and tools with support, knowledge, and opportunities.

Knowledge Areas for Agile Leaders

I collaborate with over 250 Agile professionals worldwide to ensure that the professional Agile leadership curriculum of Scrum.org encapsulates the scope and depth of the community's knowledge and practical experience. In 2019, the curriculum will shift from two-day basic training courses to complete learning journeys for Agile professionals. It will most likely contain six knowledge areas that are critical to successful Agile leadership.

To help you get a head start on your leadership journey, I've included a list of recommended reading linked to these six knowledge areas and a brief summary of each.

1. Transformation Reorganization

Read:
○ "Reinventing Organization" by Frederic Laloux.
○ "Holacracy" by Brian J. Robertson.
○ "Sociocratie 3.0" (Dutch) by Jef Cumps.
○ "Good to Great" by Jim Collins.

Nowadays, companies are forced to operate under uncertainty and in constant reorganization. Linear, transactional approaches to reorganization cannot fix complex, real-world problems. Frederic Laloux's book, "Reinventing Organization," describes some of the best-known examples of organizations that have successfully paved the way to agility, so start here, for inspiration.

The transformational approaches described in Sociocracy 3.0 or Holacracy are evolutionary and people-centric. In "Good to Great," Jim Collins proves that large-scale reorganizations don't really work.

Instead, great companies don't focus on managing change. They create the conditions that allow transformational change to happen automatically by focusing on the people first.

2. Systems Thinking and Mental Models

Read:
- ○ "The Fifth Discipline" by Peter Senge.
- ○ "Spiral Dynamics" by Don Beck and Chris Cowan.
- ○ "Theory U" by Otto Scharmer.

Before preparing an organization for optimal learning, you first need to understand how people learn and think. What effect does a change in the environment have on a person's thinking process and vice versa? You can answer this question once you know how a thinking pattern evolves and impacts human behavior.

In "The Fifth Discipline," Peter Senge describes how to build a learning organization based on human mental models. Don Beck and C.C. Cowan build on developmental psychologist Clare W. Graves' work to introduce eight complex value systems that shape the preferences of human mental models in their book, "Spiral Dynamics." In "Theory U," Otto Scharmer provides a method to turn unproductive patterns of behavior into ineffective patterns of decision making.

3. Ownership and Responsibility
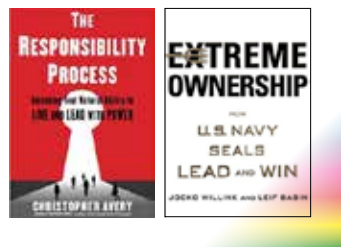
Read:
- ○ "The Responsibility Process" by Christopher Avery.
- ○ "Extreme Ownership" by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin.

Responsibility and ownership are mental processes, rather than mere traits, that work similarly among people. When coaching towards more responsibility, you need to understand the mechanism behind it. An Agile leader should be able to unlock these processes not only within themselves but also within others. Christopher Avery's

"The Responsibility Process" and "Extreme Ownership" by Jocko WIllink will help you develop greater insight in this area.

4. Scaling Through Minimalization

Read:
- ○ "The Nexus Framework" by Kurt Bittner, Patricia Kong, and Dave West.
- ○ "Large-Scale Scrum" by Craig Larman and Bas Vodde.

What is the minimum required amount of structure to build a product with multiple teams? And why do you even need to scale in the first place? The key to scaling Agile effectively across multiple teams is to eliminate complexity and dependencies. Scaling frameworks such as Nexus and LeSS are good examples of how simplified, scaled agility looks. "The Nexus Framework" and "Large-Scale Scrum" both describe simple, easy to understand structures on how to apply Scrum at scale.

5. Group Dynamics

Read:
- ○ "The Captain Class" by Sam Walker.
- ○ "De Hei Op!" (Dutch) by René Meijer and Lex Mulder.

Organizations usually underestimate their Agile teams' need for a servant leader, such as the Scrum master. "The Captain Class," by Sam Walker, provides world-renowned examples of how the servant leader role contributes to team success. In "De Hei Op!," René Meijer and Lex Mulder describe how to look at a team from a group dynamics perspective and create long-lasting and effective interventions.

6. A Culture of Creativity

Read:
- ○ "Creativity, Inc." by Ed Catmull.
- ○ "I Wish I Worked There!" by Kursty Groves.
- ○ "Managing for Happiness" by Jurgen Appelo.

The best way to manage complexity is to create a culture that stimulates creativity. The books listed in knowledge area six emphasize how employee happiness leads to amazing results.

While Kursty Groves captures the interior of many creative and successful companies in "I Wish I Worked There!," Ed Catmull explains how he created an environment at Pixar to make this happen in "Creativity, Inc." In "Managing for Happiness," Jurgen Appelo provides a rich toolbox to draw from in forming creative work environments.

Agile Maturity in the New World

Organizational leaders can measure their organization's current maturity on a 5-level scale:
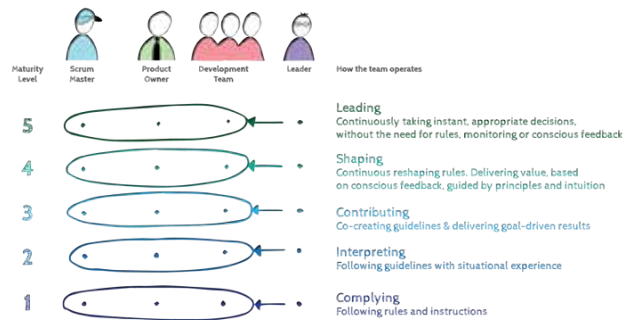
Although the respondents probably didn't use this model when describing their maturity level, The VersionOne survey data suggests that organizations are caught at level one or two. Usually, a three-level maturity (minimum) is necessary for daily complex problem-solving. However, armed with the knowledge gleaned from reading up on the six critical areas, new world Agile leaders can transform cultures of level one followers into level five leaders.

Ron Eringa,
Agile Leadership
Developer, Coach
and Trainer

The Art of Personal Mastery

In a digital world where technology rules almost every aspect of our daily routine, learning is critical to success, personally and professionally. What I've learned as an Agile coach is that leadership, mentorship, and coaching are strongly linked to employee happiness, performance, and growth. In even the most complex environments, incredible achievements are possible when people practice the art of personal mastery.

Author **Paul Immerzeel**

In Peter M. Senge's book, "The Fifth Discipline," personal mastery is defined as "a set of specific principles and practices that enable a person to learn, create a personal vision, and view the world objectively." In the context of this article, I look at personal mastery through the eyes of a change agent who guides, coaches, mentors, or influences people to achieve their goals.

Because we now live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, it's become increasingly difficult to prioritize problems and identify their solutions. Personal mastery is vital under these unpredictable conditions because it unleashes the limitless potential of knowledge workers and creatives to solve problems.

Personal mastery consists of mindful listening, para-phrasing, asking questions, and providing feedback on feelings and, eventually, thoughts. It requires you to postpone your judgment. It activates learning by challenging current visions, pushing group members out of their comfort zone, enhancing thinking, and influencing perspectives. It removes the symptoms of ego from our communication that often render it inefficient and contaminate our interactions - judging, opinionating, and listening with the utter intention to speak. Instead, personal mastery shifts the focus to learning and improving, ourselves and others. By first sharing, then exploring, and finally combining information, personal mastery creates knowledge and accelerates understanding.

Organizations need all of their employees to practice personal mastery. How? Start by empowering and enabling your employees to:
○ Share what they sense, feel, and think.
○ Communicate their vision.
○ Intervene when they believe it is necessary.

By removing obstacles that could discourage employees from feeling comfortable and sharing valuable information, your organization can develop a culture of learning and innovation, with personal mastery in its DNA.

An Example of Lacking Personal Mastery

Martin is a leader in an organization that's going through an Agile transformation. He'd like to choose the right behavior for the situation, but the habitual behavior chooses Martin instead. He's a passionate guy, committed to making things work. But passion also has its downside. In conversations and discussions, Martin unknowingly and unintentionally replies with the same catchphrase, over and over again: "But the question is…"

He then follows the catchphrase with his own opinion, which contradicts whatever the other speaker just said.

After hearing from others that they find Martin's pattern quite disappointing, an Agile coach decides to immediately call attention to it when it happens during a group retrospective. Martin feels awkward and disappointed. He wonders why none of his colleagues spoke up before. He thought they'd all agreed to be "radically transparent." Addressing this blind spot would have helped him.

However, Martin's feelings surprise the others in the group. They emphasize that, in these recurring situations, they are the victims, not him.

I call this a "hostage situation of perceptions." The group feels victimized by a communication pattern, that they perceive is intentional, that disqualifies their input. Martin unintentionally reinforces the group's belief when his old habits unconsciously and repetitively kick in.

Personal mastery, on the other hand, would have made all the difference in this situation. It would help Martin and the group become more conscious, honest and outspoken. A person with personal mastery would provide Martin with feedback on his catchphrase immediately. Personal mastery would also help Martin become more conscious of the ineffective patterns in his communication style. He would intentionally and regularly ask for honest feedback and deliberately change his speech patterns.

Paul Immerzeel,
Business Agility
Consultant and
Leadership Coach

What Makes a Team a Winning Team?

For the last twenty-five years, I've enjoyed working with teams to improve them. I've worked with all kinds of teams, from those that barely make progress to those that turn everything they touch into a success. What sets these teams at opposite ends of the spectrum? What makes a team a winning one?

Author **Bart Bouwers**

My first job as a developer was at a small but promising tech business (these days it would be called a startup). There were ten of us, and we developed CD recording software. Soon, anyone would be able to burn CDs, but this was a first back then. We were doing something pretty cool, and everything just flowed. We were all equals and occupied only two rooms, so the communication lines were short and face-to-face. We did everything together and knew each other well. At times there was friction, but we always came through stronger than before, because we wanted to move forward together. Eventually, we released the first multi-platform CD burning software package. We were one team, with one goal, and we'd won!

Later in my career, I worked as a test manager for a small bank. The test process ran perfectly. We truly took that software to the task. Nothing escaped our attention. Quality was paramount. We were a high-functioning test team- tight communication and strong connections. The developers and analysts (in their separate teams) had nothing on us. But the problem was that this separate team structure didn't create value for the customers. The whole development path took months, and timely deliveries to the client were always at risk. Until the bank decided to move to "Scrum."

The test engineers that I managed were put into Scrum teams. My responsibilities as a test manager shifted to the management of the testers' professional development and the testing strategy. Goodbye operational responsibility. I was worried. But what I saw unfold forever changed my perception of collaboration. In these combined teams, analysts, developers, and testers worked well together! Testers could immediately share their findings with developers and mistakes were corrected right away. The analysts discussed new tasks

with the team as they came in, and everyone gained a shared understanding.

On top of that, these teams delivered focused value for the client at every sprint. They were rocking it! They loved getting client feedback because they could use it to improve the product. It felt good. These teams were successful, and the members just seemed to get along. They operated skillfully and kept improving. A critical success factor in all this was the informal company culture grounded on equality, trust, and a strong shared belief in the bank's mission.
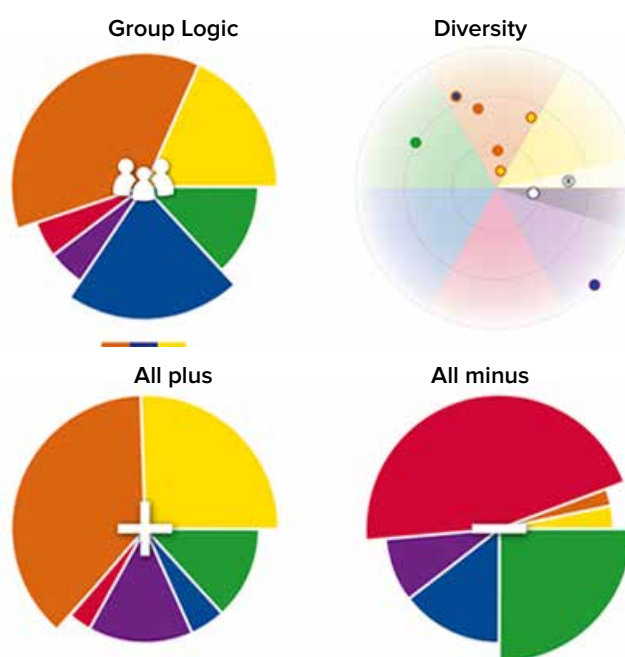

Figure 1: Example Management-Driven Team Profile

From then on, that's how I wanted to work. As an Agile coach, I made "focusing together to deliver value" the team motto. I was all about pleasing the client with

well-functioning teams and organizations. I was playing in the Champions League. After all, I'd seen it done before, so it could be done again, reproduced any-where...or so I thought.

Then I entered the big "scrumming" corporates...
Complications.
Control.
No collaboration.
Keeping knowledge to yourself.
Slacking off.
Pulling the brakes.
Complaining behavior.
Low energy.

I called it "Zombie Scrum."

Clients? Who were they? Questions like, "How am I ever going to get this to work?" kept me awake a night. As a computer scientist and expert on process initiation, this was of a different order. It was about the behavior and interactions of people- an invisible but all too present undercurrent. Turned out, that "team magic" I had previously experienced wasn't as reproducible as I thought. We were worlds away from what I knew and had seen work.

That's when I started researching team dynamics. Many interventions, observations, books, and training courses later, I now understand that teams can get stuck ("The Five Dysfunctions of a Team," Lencioni). I know that we each have our own motivations (Management Drives, MBTI, Spiral Dynamics), and why specialists can be reluctant to pick up a different task or expand their know-ledge field (T-shaped Profiles). I understand why sharing knowledge might not come easy (because knowledge equals power), and that not everyone starts out involved and eager to take the initiative. I know and understand that everyone has their own personal reasons for these choices and that I have to respect them. But I don't have to accept them as the status quo.

Now, I know how to create the conditions for a healthy, winning team. We need leaders who facilitate alignment and stimulate autonomy. We need to find new ways of rewarding the whole team's success, not just its individual members. We need to move away from restrictive control mechanisms and give the power to the people! If it's not us fulfilling these conditions, my dear organization-designers, who will?

I also focus on the functioning of the teams, both management and Agile. I use two interventions to improve team strength, a drives workshop, and a feedback workshop.

In the drives workshop, we explore management drives. Every team member learns what theirs are. We discuss the drives of the entire team. What are this team's preferences? What are this team's allergies? (see exam-ple team profile).

Knowing each other's likes and dislikes supports mutual understanding and respect. From here on, the team members can relate each other's behavior to their management drives profiles, which helps them develop stronger connections to each other.

At the feedback workshop, I teach team members to improve their interactions by practicing feedback using the WeQ team-boosting system. Research shows that teams must learn to freely give each other guidance in order for the team to perform at their peak. And structured sessions like WeQ help provide the safe space for teams to do this. Over several rounds of play, team members share feedback, starting with compliments in the first round. As the game progresses, they begin giving and receiving more critical feedback. It's all about the collective intelligence of the team (the culture).

It takes a safe psychological environment for team members to show their true selves and be open to giving and receiving honest feedback. As personal walls come down, more critical (and more constructive) feedback can occur, with less resistance and less adverse consequences. Once the option to approach each other honestly and critically becomes more common, I know we're one big step closer to a winning team.

I always get a kick out of well-functioning teams. Even in passing, you feel the energy - teams that laugh and support each other, teams that focus entirely on the customer, teams that always deliver. But I also enjoy teams that don't run quite so smoothly yet, because I know that I can help them improve. I can teach them to win.

Do you want a winning team? Eliminate mediocrity by giving your team the tools they need to excel and achieve their potential. Teams are an organization's most valuable asset, so it makes sense to invest in their performance.

Bart Bouwers,
Senior Agile Consultant
and Trainer,
"Loves creating
high-performing
organizations."

Scrum@Scale: A Meta-Framework for Strategic Agility

In my book, "Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time," I explain how Scrum reduces team sizes and breaks down projects into short-term goals, improving speed and quality of work in an immediately visible way. In real-life situations, where complexity exists beyond theory, a scaling framework must be able to demonstrate results.

Author **Jeff Sutherland**

An excellent example of such scalability is Saab Technologies, which produces the best multi-role fighter aircraft at 20 percent of its competition's costs. After working with hundreds of world-leading companies to improve Scrum in many domains, we expanded it to an organization-wide framework.

Our goal is to change what some leading executives describe as "soul-sucking" traditional environments (places where overwork and late delivery is the norm) - into "soul-enhancing" environments - where sustainable pace, personal growth, and work enjoyment translate into remarkable financial success.

Such a change requires a scaling framework that works organization-wide, which Scrum@Scale does. It's different from many other currently proposed scaling frameworks in the following ways:

1. It generates cultural change by addressing the organizational structure directly.

2. It enables organizations to do twice the work in half the time with hundreds of teams by leveraging its power on any team.
3. It goes beyond IT operational efficiency and addresses the strategic agility of any organizational domain.
4. It drives up the organization's value. For example, MedCo and Pegasystem both saw their price stock double and quadruple respectively while using Scrum@Scale. Similarly, in 2017, 3M experienced the largest stock price jump in its history, partially driven by implementing Scrum@Scale across several divisions.
5. It's completely consistent with the Scrum Guide and avoids extra roles, non-Scrum teams, and hardening sprints.
6. To scale the performance of one team into hundreds, it imitates the internet's scale-free architectures that are also commonly found in biological systems.
7. It's suitable for all parts and types of organizations, including sales, marketing, HR, finance, strategy, research, academia, and both for- and non-profits.

Leveraging the work of Harvard Professor of Leadership J.P. Kotter, we also identified three critical steps for the successful implementation of Scrum@Scale:

Step 1: Set up a leadership action team, a Scrum team that creates and sustains an Agile environment within the organization.
Step 2: Establish the executive metaScrum, a strategic leadership team that prioritizes all Agile initiatives.
Step 3: Deliver shippable product increments at the end of every sprint, or sooner, by employing the Scrum of Scrums as a network of teams.

The last step defines whether a company is genuinely doing Agile at scale. The best example is Amazon, whose 3300 Scrum teams deliver a new feature to production more than once per second.

To implement Scrum@Scale, we start by building a high-performing reference model using a small number of teams that can deliver according to the Scrum Guide.
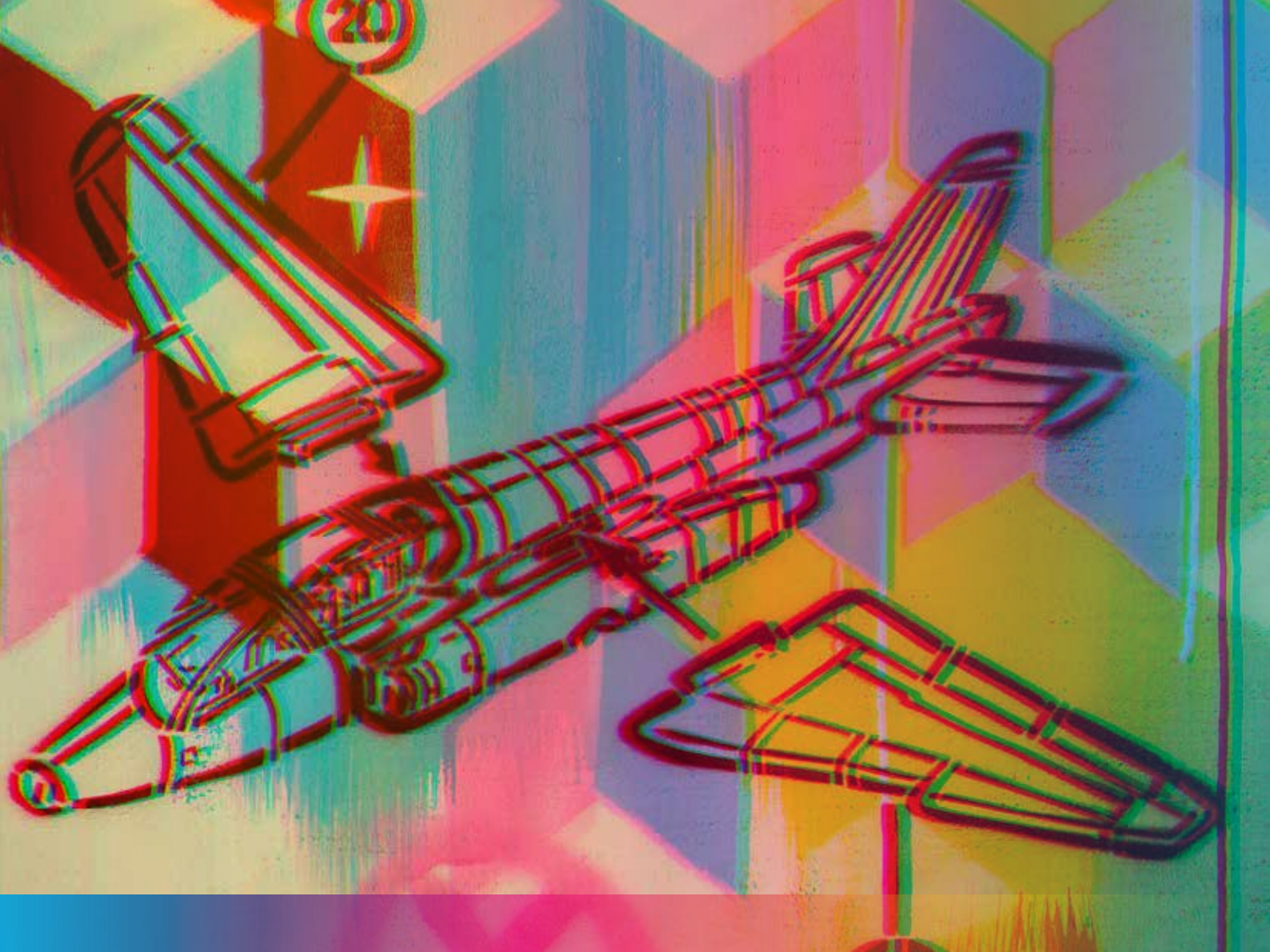
Then we scale this model systematically across the organization, without sacrificing high performance. We simultaneously prioritize areas of work in small incremental steps so we can measure and achieve systematic improvement and
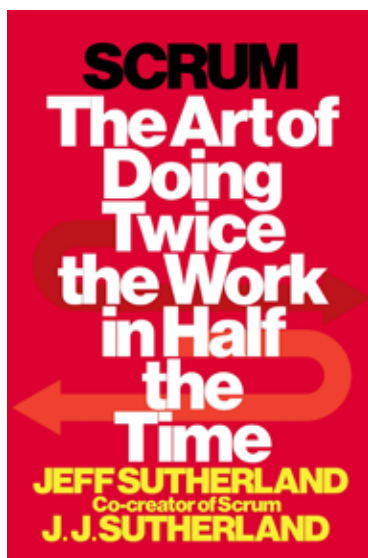
understand what creates better results. This approach is essential to lean organizations, where process efficiency is more than 25 percent.

Takeuchi and Nonaka's article, "The New New Product Development Game," observes the way lean teams operate. The taxonomy of teams using Scrum@Scale is based on the same model; they are networked as a Scrum of Scrums when they need to deliver an integrated, shippable product at the end of a sprint. While the network size varies across companies, its components are the same.

Scrum is designed for product development across all industries for all types of products. It's currently used in oil drilling and oil rig management, within large IT groups in the oil industry, as well as

among business partners across the oil industry for B2B transactions. The same is true in other sectors, such as the software industry.

Scrum@Scale is the only framework with published data (www.scruminc.com/scrum-papers/) that shows the performance of a single hyper-productive team can be deployed to globally distributed networks of teams.

Jeff Sutherland,
Inventor and Co-Creator
of Scrum

Agile Coaches, Prepare for the New Wave

While introducing Scrum to a group of younger professionals, I was surprised to hear the question, "What's waterfall?" Then it hit me - there's a new wave of people (younger millennials born after 1989) entering the workforce that isn't hindered by "old thinking." Most likely, these "new wavers" (as I like to call them) have only experienced the Scrum way of working, which presents both challenges and opportunities in how they learn Agile. What does this mean for the Agile coach?

Author **Cynthia Maasbommel**

The 6 Traits of New Wavers
New wavers exhibit six traits that are very different from the current, older workforce:

1. Scrum Experience
Because they are just entering the workforce, the Agile way of working is probably the only way of working that the new wavers have ever experienced. It means we can reasonably assume that they've already mastered the basics of Agile. They know and follow its processes and can execute the mechanics. Short-cyclic deliveries, transparency, and doing the most valuable thing first only seem logical to them.

On the other hand, they may have experienced a suboptimal implementation of Agile in their early employment. This could make them cynical of the framework, or unclear about how it works.

2. Self Oriented
New wavers are more focused on their own develop-ment. Where in the past job hopping may have been frowned upon, now it's become a trend. New wavers are not afraid to self-organize their professional and personal development. They are probably good at adapting to new environments and new colleagues, which has helped them build their social skills.
A self-oriented focus can also translate into a broad range of interests, which means they may have experience in a variety of disciplines and domains.

3. Value Work-Life Balance
New wavers know the value of their personal lives and so are more likely to want, expect (or even demand) flexible hours or part-time employment.

4. Value Purpose and the Need for Speed
The need for a sense of purpose seems to grow with every generation, and that's particularly true for new wavers. They want to accomplish clear results and see the added benefit of their actions, fast. You can see this need reflected in the rapid editing and swiping actions of movies and apps targeted towards them.

5. Internet Savvy
Unlike the older workforce, new wavers were raised on the internet. They know it like the back of their hand and can find what they're looking for seemingly instantly. Their formal schooling most likely focused on developing learning agility and taught them to look for and use information rather than learn it by heart. Retrieving information and using it quickly comes naturally to new wavers. They grew up searching, learning, and trying new things.

6. Value and Master Feedback
New wavers were educated differently. They were encouraged to evaluate each other at school critically, so grew up feeling more comfortable with giving and receiving feedback. Older generations are only just learning to value and master feedback at work. New wavers have this ingrained.

The 8 Do's & Don'ts of Coaching a New Waver
When it comes to coaching a new waver, you'll make a much more meaningful impact if you keep these six traits in mind. Additionally, here's a list of eight do's and don'ts that can make all the difference in your new waver communications:

#1 DON'T Explain Waterfall
Don't explain why we went from waterfall to Agile to new wavers. Alternatively, do, if you want them to laugh their asses off. It's hard enough for them to believe we even bothered with long-term planning and the inefficient handovers of the past. Also, don't worry that they might slip back into "old thinking" patterns of hierarchical structures and controlling mindsets - they won't. New wavers never learned them in the first place!

DO Break Bad Habits
With new wavers, the Agile basics are already there. So your job as an Agile coach is to help them truly understand and practice the fundamental ideas. Choose interventions that support them in becoming and being Agile so they can continuously improve and function at their full potential.

If the new wavers have been working under a poorly implemented Agile model, they may have fallen into some bad habits. If that's the case, then it's your job to help them break those habits.

For example, they may follow the mechanics without understanding why, and hold Scrum events without meeting their goals. If they have accepted a way of working that restrains them from thinking in possibilities, or about ways to organize what they need, it leaves unresolved impediments that lower the team's success.

What I often see in a poor Agile implementation is a failure to deliver product increments. In these cases, value isn't maximized, and no learning is gained from that increment.

When coaching new wavers on Agile, explain the importance of self-organization and slicing to enable inspection and adaptation. Show them examples and allow them to experiment in small steps. A job coach once told me that a person generally becomes accustomed to something after six months of practice. So, the sooner you catch your new wavers' bad habits, the easier it will be to break them.

#2 DON'T Enforce Personal Benefit
New wavers strongly value their own individual needs, and they naturally nurture the same in others.

This means they'll initiate conversations about priorities, possible solutions, and ways to improve within and across teams on their own. Members who: value each other's opinions, feel free to speak up, and continuously work together to improve collaboration, make successful teams. New wavers are fire starters for these kinds of interactions.

DO Emphasize the Team
The team goal is more important than all individual goals, and Agile coaches should emphasize this point. All members share the responsibility for achieving the team's goals, and everyone's actions and interactions should contribute to its success. A new waver's self-orientation and directness could lead to interactions and actions that aren't aligned with the team. Without a shared goal in mind, interactions could be non-constructive, lead to conflict, or even counter the team goal. New wavers may need guidance on interacting with respect, especially with an older workforce that's not as comfortable with giving or receiving blunt, direct feedback.

#3 DON'T Increase Broad Development
A team is much more flexible with specialists who also have general knowledge in other domains (T profile) or, even better, specialists with two specializations and general knowledge in other domains (π/pi profile). That way, if a member gets sick or leaves, it doesn't cause that much of a problem for the team. Unlike the older workforce, new wavers already have a broad range of interests and development, so you don't need to emphasize gaining general skills in more than one area.

DO Promote Specialization
A new waver's lack of specialization could cause delays in implementation, as more research and learning may be needed. To improve and speed up performance, promote specialization in (a few) new wave team members so they develop T or pi profiles.

#4 DON'T Restrict New Wavers to One Discipline in One Team
The older generation is more content working in the same position with the same team for many years. It's the opposite for new wavers. New wavers like to try on different jobs and disciplines to enhance their own development. They like to explore a variety of environments to see what suits them best. Although job hopping is the antithesis of a stable team, don't attempt to hold them back, you'll only lose that fight.

DO Enable Individual Development and Team Maturity

Instead, discourage job hopping by offering new wavers exciting development paths within the team. Also, invest in the team's maturity to make it less vulnerable to the negative consequences of members leaving. Teams that reach the performing phase of Tuckman's "Team Phases" already have deeply embedded values, so they can handle people entering and leaving more easily. A high-performing team also recognizes the advantages of securing knowledge. The Agile coach should focus on interventions designed to propel teams to this phase.

#5 DON'T Focus on Time

There's no value in demanding a 9-5 workday from your employees, as you probably already know. However, this holds especially true for new wavers who value their private life and work-life balance even more. They want to decide for themselves how they spend their time.

DO Focus on Results

Instead, use the new waver's desire for flexible or part-time working hours to get the most out of the time the team is together. State desired results clearly and provide any means necessary to enable and ensure effective communication. Team rooms with whiteboards and digital collaboration tools are a good start.

#6 DON'T Skip Explaining Why

New wavers place a high value on purpose and won't invest their time in something if it's not clear first why they're doing it. So, for example, don't initiate a game without explaining its purpose, even if you wanted to make them deduce that themselves. They won't bother.

DO Emphasize the Value of Non-Immediate Results

The new waver's need for a purpose make things like introducing a sprint goal and team purpose easier. However, it also makes it harder for new wavers to recognize the value of activities that don't quickly lead to visible results, like refactoring code or automating tests. Challenge the new wavers to see the value in activities like these and motivate them to put effort there.

#7 DON'T Speed Up First Estimate

When aligning and forecasting for the next few sprints, a team needs to refine the work items and estimate the effort needed to get them done. This process can take some time with older generations, but new wavers do this quickly by nature, so there's no need to coach them to speed this up.

DO Challenge on Finishing

New wavers are constantly exposed to tons of stimuli, so they might have trouble focusing. They're easily triggered and distracted, scanning heaps of information. The Agile coach can help them concentrate on one thing at a time. Help the new waver finish by illustrating the consequences of context switching and not being able to collect feedback when the work needed for a product increment is not done.

#8 DON'T Explain the Importance of Experimenting

New wavers naturally grasp the concept of experimenting and adjusting accordingly. They're accustomed to speed and the internet, so can quickly scan and assess information and decide to skip it or switch it. A positive Agile side effect is that they accept shorter feedback loops and change direction when needed.

DO Coach on Thinking Over Doing

The new wavers' need for speed and proficiency with modern technologies can lead them to act before they think. They risk wasting time by not doing enough planning or design in advance (thinking). Stimulate their thinking by asking new wavers to discuss the problem they're solving or the need being met. Show them the value in following a plan, (even if following it loosely).

A new wave of younger workers has entered the workforce, challenging Agile coaches to find new ways to motivate and teach them. Be aware of the differences and what this means for you as an Agile coach. Help the new wavers preserve their valuable traits under the stress of the system. Don't let them grow accustomed to the established way of working, thinking and interacting. Although coaching new wavers can be challenging in some aspects, their innately "agile" characteristics allow them to perform in ways that maximize the value of the work done. Besides being internet savvy, new wavers are characterized by having Scrum experience, self-orientation, a sense of purpose, and the need for speed. They also value and master feedback, and value a work-life balance. Agile coaches can make a more meaningful impact by keeping these traits and the eight do's and don'ts in mind when working with new wavers. Help new wavers preserve their natural Agile mindset. Otherwise, you risk losing some of their valuable traits.

Cynthia Maasbommel,
Agile Coach

The Art of Leadership Agility

As we move from the old world of hierarchy and planning to the modern world of self-steering and agility, it is clear to all people witnessing this paradigm shift that our day-to-day behaviors must radically change. We need to increase our sense of ownership, be more proactive, communicate more, be less afraid to fail, but maybe most importantly, we need to stop managing other people and increasingly lead them.

Author **Ron Meijer**

Instead of telling people what to do because "I'm the boss," we need to guide, coach, inspire, challenge, nudge and sway...in short, lead. We want to use our personality, not our position, to engage people to move in a particular direction. Note that we still want to influence – self-steering and agility don't mean throwing people into the deep end and hoping they can swim (and all swim in the same direction). That's chaos! As Scrum masters and coaches we still give direction, but not by imposing it and backing it up with carrots and sticks. Instead, we engage people by winning hearts and minds.

Still, many people want to know what the "right" leadership style is for moving from management in support of self-steering and agility. "Can you teach us agility leadership?" they wonder, still seeking leadership that will exactly fit an Agile organization. Do you see the irony? "Give me a fixed, one-size-fits-all approach so I will know exactly what to do in an Agile organization," they say, but that's the opposite of agility! "We want a fixed plan for how to lead in an Agile organization," says the person who hasn't fully understood the essence of what agility means.

If you want to lead in an Agile organization, you personally need to be agile. In other words, we shouldn't be looking for agility leadership, but for leadership agility. So, the question to ask should be, "How can I be agile myself as a leader, in order to support organizational agility?"

So, what do we mean by leadership agility? In my view, agility rests on three underlying qualities:

Flexibility. To be agile, one needs to be able to switch between different behaviors and not be rigidly stuck in one track. So, for an organization to

be agile, it needs to be capable of shifting direction where necessary, tapping into a broad repertoire of potential behaviors. In the same way, leaders are agile if they have an arsenal of different leadership styles between which they can easily switch. In other words, not one trick ponies with one standard style, but chameleons with a range of potential styles that they can access when needed.

Adaptability. To be agile, one also needs to be able to learn new behaviors along the way. So, for an organization to be agile, it needs to be capable of adapting itself to unfolding circumstances, adding new actions to its existing repertoire. In the same way, leaders are agile if they can adopt new leadership styles which they come to master on the fly. In other words, they are able to retain a "fit" with their environment through continuous learning.

Responsiveness. To be agile, one needs to be able to be rapidly flexible and adaptable in response to the demands of the situation. So, for an organization to be agile, it needs to sense the conditions in which it is operating and quickly react to them, switching to already existing behaviors or developing new ones. In the same way, leaders are agile if they can "read" the people and the situation around them and swiftly adjust their leadership style appropriately.

Leaders who want their teams or organizations to flexibly switch behaviors and adaptively learn new ones in quick response to the unfolding situation should practice what they preach and do the same. Some people have instinctively developed their leadership agility, but few leadership development programs actually promote increasing agility. On the contrary, during most training programs leaders are told

to "play to their strengths" and to "remain authentic." This means people learn to stay the same instead of challenging themselves to grow and stretch to master new leadership styles.

So, in future, as we shift from management to leadership, we will also shift from a focus on the leader to an emphasis on the followers – leadership agility is about flexibility and adaptability in responding to the needs of followers, not sticking to the leadership styles within your comfort zone.

Leaders might enjoy the comfort of knowing their key strengths, and recognizing they are an ESTJ (Myers-Briggs personality type) or "Blue" (in a variety of other typologies), but their real learning focus will be on becoming more Agile themselves, so they can quickly adjust to the demands around them.

"Leadership is an action, not a position."

Ron Meijer,
Professor of Strategic
Leadership at Tias School
for Business Society,
Tilburg University

Mindshift to Purpose: Our Need to be Part of Something Bigger

In 1962, John F. Kennedy visited the NASA space center to prepare for a speech and ran into a janitor carrying a broom. Kennedy asked him what he was doing, and the janitor replied, "Mr. President, I'm helping put a man on the moon." That story is a far cry from the sentiments expressed by today's workforce. According to Gallup's "State of the Global Workplace" report in 2017, only 15 percent of employees worldwide are engaged in their jobs, and 18 percent are actively disengaged. Why?

Authors **Jordann Gross and Roel Trienekens**

Purpose

It's an almost incomprehensible question, "What is my purpose?" Existential by nature, a purpose is our *raison d'etre* or reason for existence. It's a question more and more people are daring to ask themselves these days, especially with the new wave of millennials entering the workforce. According to the 2017 "Millennial Impact Report" by Achieve Consulting Inc., "94 percent of millennials want to use their skills to benefit a cause." People of this generation have a strong desire to make a positive impact in the world, and it's rubbing off on the rest of their colleagues. More and more employees are asking themselves bigger, deeper questions.

What gives me energy? Why do I get out of bed in the morning? What do I truly care about?

Work is no longer just about getting a paycheck. It's about having a sense of purpose.

Belonging

From an early age, all of us yearn to be part of a group, to have a sense of belonging. Often, we find this through achieving something together, either by directly contributing our talents or by association (like cheering on our favorite football team). We all need a shared goal because it gives us a stronger sense of shared purpose. That's how we feel we belong.

Purpose as a Guidepost

A group of people only becomes a team once they have a common goal. A goal is something we set out to achieve by working towards something bigger than ourselves, something we believe in. A team with a clearly defined and inspiring purpose is often a highly motivated one. Purpose brings focus and helps the team make decisions. Asking the question, "Will this move us closer to achieving our purpose?" provides a quick and definitive answer as to whether or not to you're doing the right thing. In fact, "intuition" can be just as valuable as cognitive validation. Often a team can "feel" when it's not "doing the right thing" to achieve its purpose, and can then pivot to change its course.

Ownership and Intrapreneurship

Purpose also generates a feeling of ownership, in both individuals and teams. If you get out of bed expecting to achieve something great, but then encounter someone or something that blocks you, your feeling of "ownership" will incite you to act, because it's your goal that you want to achieve.

A monthly salary doesn't even compare to this kind of intrinsic motivation. When it's only about the money, and not a shared sense of purpose, people are more likely to opt for the path of least resistance. Instead of pushing hard to remove the obstacles they encounter, they fall

back on excuses instead. But if explaining that they're not responsible for something, or why it can't be done, still provides a paycheck, why else would they bother?

A sense of purpose provides the motivation we need to work harder to solve problems and remove obstacles. So, rather than strictly defining roles and responsibilities and focusing on who's responsible for what (so people are frequently checking what they don't have to do), identifying and communicating a clear purpose fosters ownership and intrapreneurship.

The same forces of intrinsic motivation apply to learning and personal development as well. If a person or team doesn't have a particular skill or capability, the intrinsic drive towards achieving this greater purpose requires us to step up and obtain that skill or capability. Learning happens naturally in a team that has a strong purpose.

Discover Your Purpose
"What is the impact you want to make on the world, your company and yourself?" Ask yourself and your team this question, and give yourself time to "feel" the answer. Discuss it until you find something that resonates and excites you; something that gives you a sense of fulfillment.

We coached a team that, at first, thought its only reason for existence was to execute a credit restructuring process - not very inspiring work. However, after only thirty minutes of exploring their purpose, they realized what they were doing was, in fact, enabling financially troubled companies to stay in business. In turn, this meant that the company's employees could keep their jobs and that mortgages could be paid and mouths fed. All of a sudden, the importance of the team's tasks had grown immensely - and so did it's members' energy and dedication towards doing their job well.

A well-defined purpose is:
- **Inspiring:** It should light a fire and passion in you and your organization.
- **Concise:** It should be easily repeatable until it becomes a mantra.
- **Observable:** It should have an observable effect or at least measurable progress.

Making Purpose Stick
Defining a purpose is not enough. You need to make sure everyone rallies behind it. A team that believes in it can achieve even the loftiest goal, like putting a man on the moon. A shared purpose expands our sense of what is possible.

So how do you create a shared sense of purpose that persists?
- **Believe it yourself**
  Get completely behind your purpose. If you don't believe it yourself, no one else will either. You have to embrace it 100% to inspire others.
- **Reinforce it often**
  Your purpose must be at the heart of everything you do. Repeat and reinforce it as often as possible, even if you think everyone already knows it. Emphasize it as if this is the only thing that matters - because, it is.
- **Reward the right behavior and share successes**
  Show people how their actions are making the world a better place. Bring them into contact with people they have impacted. It's the ultimate reward for a generation that lives to achieve something great.
- **Build a movement, on purpose**
  What is your goal? Do your employees know and share your passion for this purpose? Do they know what difference they are making in the world?

Fire up your teams, department, and organization by helping people identify what drives them. Inspiring a sense of purpose can transform an ordinary department into a movement. Motivated teams and individuals are more than happy to join you and change the world for the better. So, if you want a high performing, Agile organization, help your employees and teams define their purpose, then shoot for the moon.

Jordann Gross,
Agile Transformation
Consultant, "Loves making
people future fit."

Roel Trienekens,
Agile Enterprise Coach

A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words:

Accelerate Your Transformation With Visualization

In both our personal and professional lives, complexity is increasing exponentially. On average, we process about a hundred thousand words a day, which is about the equivalent of reading four Harry Potter books a week. The amount of information we're already processing impacts our ability to take in more. So, an organizational transformation, disruptive by nature, adds an onslaught of new information.

Author **Menno van Eekelen**

In addition to processing routine daily tasks, professionals must also learn, comprehend, and apply new skills and structures while synthesizing and adopting different mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors. Under these conditions, it's critical for managers, teams, coaches, consultants and other stakeholders to present valuable information in an immediately accessible way. Visualization is one tool you can use to accelerate impact and amplify effectiveness during your Agile transformation.
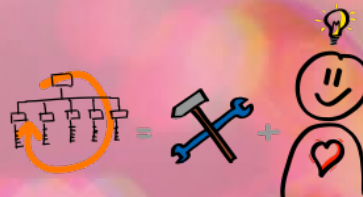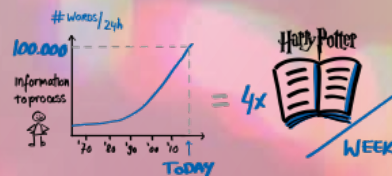
The Power of Visualization
Images have always been at the center of our stories, from prehistoric cave paintings to New York City's subway maps. The most influential stories in history are those we can imagine and visualize.

So, it stands to reason that if you want to shift a paradigm, you have to change the way people see it. Old images make new stories harder to imagine because they're ingrained into our memory. Replacing old images with new visualizations helps people grasp information and imagine things differently. So, for instance, a sketched networked diagram can create fresh associations and replace an outdated organigram in our minds. Suddenly, we can "see" how this new way of working might work!
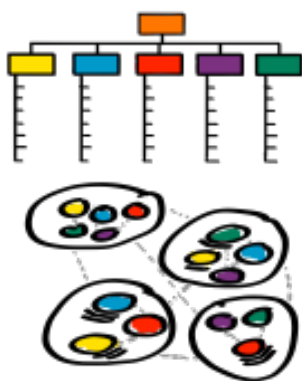
**The Brain is a Terrible Word Processor**

Our brain is wired for visuals; seeing comes before words. At birth, we're able to see and visually recognize long before we develop verbal skills. Moreover, when it comes to acquiring knowledge and learning new skills, even as adults, neuro-scientists have confirmed that visualization plays a dominant role.
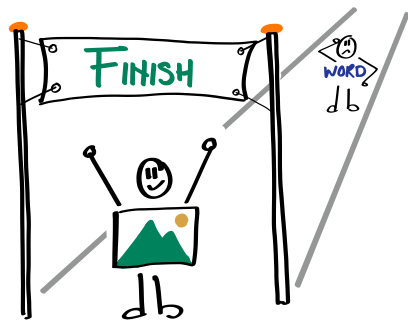
We use different parts of our brain to interpret words than we do to process an image. An image can trigger us to stop, think, laugh, talk, and connect emotionally.

The reason pictures are so much more powerful than words has to do with the way our brain sends and receives information. Half of the neurons in our brains are connected to sight.

With eyes open, two-thirds of the electrical activity that's going on in the whole brain is associated with what we're seeing. It takes the brain less than 150 milliseconds to recognize an image and less than 100 milliseconds to assign meaning to it. We are naturally-born pattern recognizers. Words are processed individually as images almost as quickly in our short-term memory. However, images interface directly with our long-term memory, creating lasting imprints. Images have priority.
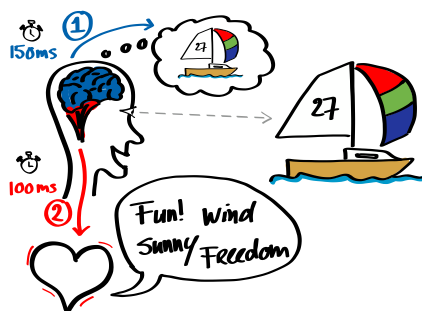
When an image and text are in direct conflict, the image usually wins. Since we aren't born with the cognitive ability to process words, it makes sense that words can't beat images. So a picture truly can tell a thousand words. There are five ways we can use this understanding of visualization to speed up our Agile transformations and make them more effective.

1. Sketching Skills: Find Hidden and Essential Drawing Talent

There's probably at least one member with some affinity for drawing in every group or team. You can discover who they are by introducing visual activities. For example, start your organizational Agile awareness workshop with a drawing exercise. Ask group members to sketch out the

character, skill set, or hobbies of other members. Provide an introduction to graphic facilitation or sketchnoting. Simple visualization tools like these can energize, connect, and empower people to create a new (transformation) story.

2. Pictures: Travel Journal

Just as you would for a personal holiday or trip, you can document the journey of the transformation with pictures. Capture the essence of conversations and decisions by including visualization in every interaction. Make sure plenty of whiteboards or flip-overs are available, with lots of colored markers. Incorporate images into chats; they're more effective when the dialogue works towards a shared and immediate visualization. Also, at moments of agreements or disagreement, remember to take a snapshot of the situation; it will help you remember and recall the conversation. Use these pictures to create a daily or weekly journal and add relevant keywords as well.
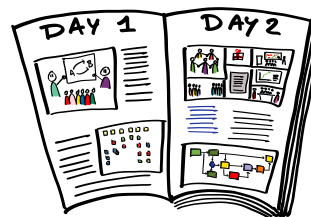
3. Talking Pictures: Shared Complexity

During a transformation, it's often assumed that everyone shares the same concept of the situation.

However, each person may have a different understanding of the current organizational structure, internal processes, customer journey, or system landscape.
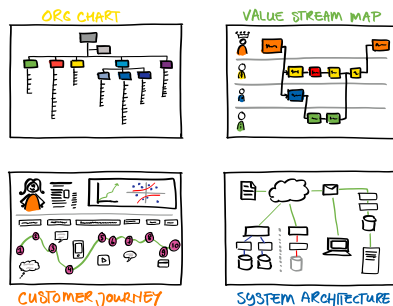
Until we visualize and share our different interpretations through images, we may think we're all in agreement. So, start every transformation by collectively visualizing these four aspects to help the "transformers" see and acknowledge the complexity of the situation. Not only will these insights add value during the transformation, but they can also help you identify short-term improvements that yield direct results sooner.

4. Style: Congruent Visualizations
When creating a visualization, try to make the styles congruent with the content. You can distinguish between the present situation and the ideal future one by creating a congruent visualization for each. Give each paradigm its own unique look. Choices in color, shape, and line influence our emotions and experience. So, for example, use PowerPoint building blocks to visualize the current paradigm and sketchnote the new situation with a tablet or by digitizing physical drawings.
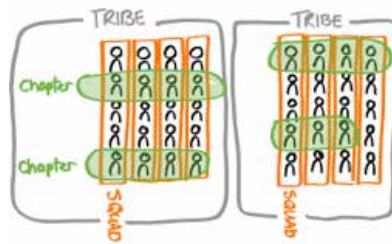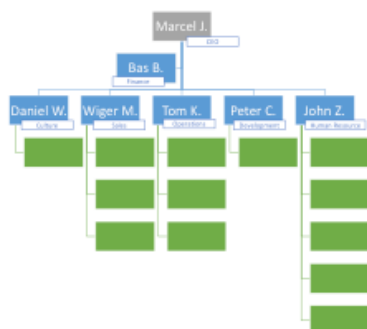
This will make it clear that we're dealing with a "new story." The visualizations become even more powerful when their style is also congruent with the culture and mindset behind the story that's being told.

5. Communication Media: Initiation of Co-Creation
People interpret and process information and experiences differently when it comes to learning and changing. Some people are visually oriented, some people "think with their ears," while others are more kinetically inclined.

You can combine different media to involve everyone in the transformation story. For example, a physical booklet, PDF, video, poster, or game can help make the same story more tangible in different ways, creating an emotional connection with everyone. It's all about involving the largest possible part of the organization in the co-creation process of the transformation.

Images Not Words!
There's untapped visual talent hidden within every organization. You can put its power to work to increase the speed and effectiveness of your Agile transformation. By implementing the five suggestions in this article, you can help people break old patterns and shift paradigms.

Visualization in Practice
"The Spotify Engineering Culture" is a two-part video series created by Henrik Kniber in 2012 that tells the story of the popular streaming service. It has inspired Spotify's employees, as well as thousands of professionals outside the company, with its simple use of voiceover and animated sketches. The video perfectly demonstrates how adding visualizations helps the mind learn, remember and recall new things. Watch the video on Vimeo.com, then imagine how long it would take to absorb and internalize all the information it presents from a written document instead!

Stop Talking and Start Drawing
Images have more power than words! In recent years we've seen a surge of uses for drawing in business: graphic facilitators help develop new strategies; video animations explain new ways of working; sketchnoters and trainers document conferences and events; people use Nueland® pens and flip-over sheets to create visually rich Powerpoint® slides.
Xebia Academy offers visualization training designed explicitly for change experts to accelerate more impactful transformations.

Menno van Eekelen,
Organizational
Transformation and
Change Consultant

Unboxing the CoCreate Agile Scaling Model

There are several models on the market that describe how to apply Scrum and Agile in organizations with dozens, even hundreds, of teams. These including the well-known SAFe and LeSS frameworks. This article introduces CoCreate, a model based on Spotify's "organizational blueprint" that has been applied to two Dutch companies, ING and KPN, that now serve as inspiring examples.

Author **Jarl Meijer**

The following convictions distinguish the CoCreate model from other scaling models:
- Success is dependent on developing people and culture.
- Autonomy must be combined with purpose-driven.
- Integrating business and IT is more profitable than integrating IT departments alone.
- Product development is equally important to (IT) product realization (if not more so).
- Being Agile is more critical to success than applying Scrum.

The Modern Organization: Scale to Be Small
CoCreate is a philosophy and guide for organizations with ambitious goals and a foundation in Agile. These organizations want to create cultural change, attain a more competitive position, and increase adaptability and growth while cultivating an Agile culture.

To achieve these goals and succeed in today's digitized world, modern organizations require the triple-As of the CoCreate model:
- Agility.
- Autonomy.
- Alignment.

Rapid technological developments dictate and affect every aspect of the business world today, from customer behavior to internal operations, innovation and competition, even employee expectations.

Organizations must respond just as rapidly to keep up with the competition. To do so, they must possess and express the following qualities:
- **Inherently customer-oriented:** Continually defines value and maintains contact with the customer.
- **A standstill = decline philosophy:** Constantly develops and adjusts regularly.
- **Innovation competencies:** Embeds innovation in both craftsmanship and culture.
- **Intimately connected:** Stays small enough to be Agile and shares successes internally and with partners.
- **Empowered people:** Nurtures employees, their development, and motivation; cultivates leadership; develops all employees to achieve their potential.

Interestingly, many startup organizations often possess these characteristics by nature. However, as these young and small organizations grow, their structures, processes, functions, procedures, and bureaucracies grow with them.

CoCreate advocates creating small organizations within large ones. It offers a growth model for successful organizations to "scale to be small."

The Core Components of CoCreate
In the CoCreate model, value delivery and people development are central. Without value, there are no customers or income; and without people, realization and quality are not possible. The design and distinguishing convictions of the CoCreate model reflect this.

Additionally, there are five, critical core components that must receive dedicated attention during a transformation:

1. **Performance:** Organizational structure and performance.
2. **Growth:** Development of individuals and expertise.
3. **Products:** Strategy, product development, and innovation.
4. **Culture:** Culture and leadership.
5. **Adaption:** Transformation and change.

Each of these components affects the others and partly overlaps, but the distinction between them helps clarify the model overall.

1. Performance

Performance describes how value delivery is designed in the organization. Autonomous units (tribes and squads) are the engines of the organization, but it doesn't mean that there's no collaboration. Dependencies are often a major source of delay, misconceptions, frustrations, and attunement. Autonomy addresses this by removing dependencies at the root of the organization's structure.

Alignment between the autonomous units is secured by several means, such as a cascading set of purposes, a quarterly business review (QBR), or synchronization.

A tribe is a business unit of 100-150 people. The people in a tribe are organized into squads of 5-10 people. In tribes and squads, delivering value is central. All the expertise needed to deliver this value must also be present in a tribe or squad, whether the expertise falls traditionally under business or IT. In fact, the distinction between business and IT inhibits the agility of many organizations. Removing this separation creates a more Agile organization.

2. Growth

In order to be successful and survive as an organization, personal development and value delivery must be given equal attention. For that reason, the CoCreate model also organizes people into chapters that are structured towards developing people and expertise. A chapter consists of up to ten members. Squad members and chapter members are the same people, as everyone who is in a squad is also in a chapter.

Traditionally a manager has two responsibilities: delivery and HR/people management. These are separated in the CoCreate model. Here, delivery is with product owners and the squads, and people management is with the chapter leads. A chapter lead is responsible for one chapter, which is designed specifically to develop a particular expertise: What is needed to use current technologies in the best way? Furthermore, looking ahead, what is the technology for tomorrow?

This restructuring of people changes the role of the HR department, as now, some of their responsibilities are delegated to the tribes.The role of HR shifts from its traditional purpose of simply providing human resources and expands into providing HR-related expertise and cultivating cultural change.

3. Products

Every organization moves through a continuous cycle of product development to fulfill customer wishes. In the CoCreate model, this is called the value circle. The cycle begins with initiatives for innovation and improvement, moves through prioritization to working in squads, and completes upon delivery to the customer. Delivery ultimately leads to new customer wishes, at which stage the cycle repeats.

The guiding principles of the CoCreate value circle are:
- **A Lean startup philosophy:** The learn-build-measure cycle is focused on obtaining quick feedback through contact with real customers/users.
- **Alignments:** Create a common goal and joint product for a joint customer experience.
- **Prioritization:** Prioritize according to value; always know what that value is.

The product component of the CoCreate model utilizes recognizable product delivery planning tools, like PortfolioWall, marketplace, story maps, and roadmaps, throughout the value circle.

4. Culture

The culture of an organization underlies everything and ultimately determines its success. Whether or not employees carry out the processes and roles as intended; whether they stay with the company or move on; whether or not they choose to develop personally and professionally in a way that aligns with the organization's values - these factors are ultimately influenced by the organizational culture.

In a CoCreate organization, the culture stems from five core values:
1. Autonomy versus central control.
2. Shared goals versus incoherent unit-level goals.
3. Team performance versus individual performance.
4. Growth versus maintenance.
5. Want to work versus have to work.

Formal and informal leaders play an important role in creating the culture of an organization, or the so-called "smell of the place." Leaders who are close to the work floor and accessible, provide clear direction and can quickly remove impediments, contribute to the company in unquantifiable ways by improving the overall quality of its culture.

5. Adaption

Adaption covers the change capability of the organization. It is used in the initial transformation and also continuously. Transformation into a CoCreate model is a radical change. For most organizations, it involves developing and embracing a completely different culture, with structural adjustments and perhaps also personnel changes. The pace of this change is determined primarily by the organization.

A typical transformation roadmap consists of several stages spread over several years. At each stage, change takes place in multiple aspects simultaneously.

There are six distinct change streams:
1. Organizational design and human resources management.
2. Culture and leadership development.
3. Anchoring, which includes training Agile coaches and Agile champions.
4. Craftsmanship and continuous value delivery.
5. Strategy, product development, and innovation.
6. Performance of Agile tribes; implement the model in a tribe and customize until it leads to the desired performance.

By default, the organization performs the change. External experts are merely the catalyst who provide knowledge and guidance. Internal staff must be trained to make the change permanent.

A CoCreate transformation involves and depends on the employees. Decisions are delegated to them to create a culture of self-organization.

CoCreate - Your Next Step

The CoCreate model is based on the triple-As: autonomy, alignment, and agility. Even the name reflects a philosophy of collaboration in its implementation. The model focuses equally on developing value and people, while performance, growth, products, culture, and adaption are its critical core components.

CoCreate organizes people into chapters, squads, and tribes that are structured around the necessary expertise to deliver value and there is no distinction between business and IT. The role of HR shifts to developing expertise and cultivating cultural change, as culture underlies everything and determines success. In the CoCreate model, culture stems from autonomy, shared goals, team performance, growth, and intrinsic motivation.

A typical CoCreate transformation roadmap consists of several stages spread over several years, with the change taking place in six distinct streams at each stage. External partners, like Xebia, can catalyze change by providing expertise and guidance. However, ultimately the organization achieves change by developing sound internal change capabilities and a culture of self-organization.

Jarl Meijer,
Agile Consultant,
Coach and Trainer

Agility Without Agile

Agile is a buzzword these days. Many organizations work to become "Agile" so they can implement "Scrum," another buzzword. But what is real agility? Here's the story of a company that exemplifies it, and it doesn't mention either buzzword once.

Author **Just Meddens and Theo Gerrits**

Who or What is Hans Boodt?
Hans Boodt Mannequins (founded by its namesake) manufactures high-quality, custom-made, bespoke mannequins for the show floors and windows of the top clothing and sports brands worldwide. The mannequins' materials, shapes, and postures are unique to each customer - a tall order in the increasingly fast-paced fashion world. A company like Hans Boodt can only operate in this world by being extremely flexible and listening very carefully to what the customer wants.

What are Hans Boodt's challenges?
○ The cost (in time and money) of building prototypes for the final product.
○ The time interval before real customer feedback can be collected.
○ The costs (in time and money) of fabricating the molds for the final product.

These challenges are all about speed and flexibility: how can we get to a first prototype faster, so that we can improve speed and quality of customer feedback, and how can

we rapidly convert this feedback into high-quality, completely custom-made end-products?

How Does Hans Boodt Meet These Challenges?
To keep up with the rapid pace of the fashion industry the company had to transform. It could no longer wait six weeks for the hand-made clay proto-types from professional modelers as it had in the past. They needed customer feedback much sooner. If the customer only wanted a simple revision, it often meant creating a whole new prototype, because

the ad hoc alteration of an arm or a leg would look too unnatural. Hans Boodt had to find a way to speed up this process; it was too costly and time-intensive.

The company looked for other prototyping methods and discovered that it was possible to print life-size mannequins with commercially available 3D printers. However, there were some downsides. The 3D printers were prone to errors, still took several days, and were very expensive. But Hans Boodt Mannequins decided to take a chance on the promising technology. They're now working on improving its speed and accuracy so they can eventually produce 3D-printed life-size models daily. This will significantly speed up the rate of their customer feedback and they will also be able to incorporate any revisions into a new prototype within 24 hours. Hans Boodt is now also using "virtual" prototypes to gain even faster customer feedback.
An augmented reality app built for the iPad allows its customers to download an electronic model and place it virtually in their own shop windows.

Once the prototype is perfect, the final mannequin must be produced through another, intensive process that takes weeks, particularly fabricating the molds. Here, too, progress has been made in streamlining this process through 3D printing. And, since a model can be sent digitally, there's an opportunity to install a 3D printer in a production plant closer to the customer, making transport and delivery faster and easier.

Focus on New Methods and Innovation
The company wanted to ensure the new 3D printing process became standard, so they decided to abolish the old clay modeling techniques completely. Now, using and developing the new technologies is unavoidable.

By daring to choose non-traditional, cutting-edge technology, the company gained a robust competitive edge. It dramatically reduced the cost and lead time of its processes and became much more flexible in its customer responsiveness.

Hans Boodt Mannequins shows agility in practice, without using the traditional (Agile) frameworks and technologies, like Scrum, Spotify or Lean Product Development. The company has entrepreneurship running through its veins and agility in its DNA. Perhaps rather than "Agile," Hans Boodt is "anti-fragile" - under intense market pressure, it grew sturdier and more durable instead of breaking.

Just Meddens,
Change Agent,
"Always searching for new ways to help organizations improve customer satisfaction."

Theo Gerrits,
Agile Consultant,
"With a passion for innovative technology."

50 Shades of "No"

The pressure is on—tons to do and no time to do it. Every week, my calendar is jam-packed with requests, meetings, sessions, courses, and questions. There's more on my to-do list than I could ever complete!

Author **Willem Vermaak**

If you're a product owner, like me, I'm sure you can relate. At times, the workload can get pretty overwhelming. You'd think with the growing sense of urgency we'd start weeding the less important stuff out. But instead, we seem to cram more of it into the limited time that we have.

Of course, the consequences of this in practice are just what you'd expect - unfinished work (or work that's never started), or even worse, work that's subpar in quality.

As a product owner, obviously, that's unacceptable. But what else can you do? The more you seem to learn the ropes, the more demanding the role becomes. Questions, requests, remarks, and feedback keep flooding in daily - they pile up on your desk, fill your phone, clog your email, and even occasionally sneak in as faxes!

Filtering through all the madness can be quite a challenge (in fact, that might be the world's biggest understatement). How do you decide what you will (and won't) do? Is there some superpower that can give you laser-sharp focus?

Why, actually, yes! The answer is "no." I mean, yes, there is a way to sort through all the madness. You can start weeding with a laser-sharp focus simply by saying "no."

But, is it really that easy? Can you just say "no?" I find most product owners struggle with saying "no" because they never really learned how to in the first place. I see this in the various courses I teach, as well as when I'm working with a company in the field. Product owners seem to understand the role, but they don't know how to respond to all the requests and questions that come with it, or how to handle the stakeholders.

They want to avoid conflict, or they have a fear (conscious or not) of hurting or disappointing the other person. On top of that, in dealing with the various types of stakeholders, there's no single version of "no" that works. Different stakeholders require different approaches. And unfortunately, a one-size-fits-all, magic pill "no" doesn't exist.

In fact, "no" comes in all kinds of flavors. To help product owners weed out all their to-do-lists, I've categorized fifty shades of "no" according to the situation.

First, there are the clear, no hassle, definitive noes. Then, there are the noes related to the value of the product. You also have noes that relate to budget, timing, and customers, and noes that relate to the vision. You can read more about these and all fifty shades of "no" in "50 Tinten Nee" (in Dutch only), due out in early 2019. I co-wrote the book with Robbin Schuurman to help product owners understand both the role and the stakeholder field better, and how to say "no" the best way. If you're a product owner overwhelmed with tasks and demands and you struggle with saying "no," this book can help you regain focus and pro-actively deal with your stakeholders.

Stay on the lookout and start practicing your "no!"

Willem Vermaak,
Leadership and Product
Development Consultant

Engineered Culture: The Unintentional Side Effect of Agile Transformation (and How to Prevent It)

Organizations that transform into Agile ones need their cultures to reflect their new values. Agile cultures promote flexibility and autonomy. They're purpose-driven, idealistic, tolerant, open, inventive, explorative, warm, engaged and sincere. But how does an organization transition towards such a culture? Is it possible to create or engineer one? And, if so, what potential side effects should you consider?

Authors **Mirjam Diependaal and Ellen Barree**

Culture Runs Deep

More and more we see organizations actively influencing their cultures to create the desired effect. However, this is not an easy task. On average, a culture change takes five years to implement. That's an eternity if you want to make progress in a rapidly changing environment. So, to keep up with this pace, programs related to culture are usually kept relatively short.

They also initially focus on the two upper layers of culture, as explained by former MIT professor Edgar Schein in his book, "Organizational Culture and Leadership." These two upper layers consist of:

1. **Artifacts**—any tangible, overt or verbally identifiable element of the organization, like furniture, architecture, jokes, and Scrum boards.
2. **Espoused values and behaviors**—the organization's ideals, goals, and aspirations.

In practice, the organization's functions become roles, visible values are discussed regularly among newly formed teams, instead of managers they have leaders, and offices get decorated with signage to make any progress visible to everyone. All these interventions contribute to the intended cultural change, but are they sufficient?

Schein also names a third layer of culture, basic under-lying assumptions. This deeper layer isn't visible, but it's subconsciously present. It contains elements, like ideology, mindset, worldview, emotions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. This layer also determines culture but it's much more difficult to influence.

Unintended Consequences of an Engineered Culture

In "Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation," Gideon Kunda describes how one company's attempt to promote non-authority, creativity, and personal growth in its culture backfired. When it replaced bureaucratic supervision with peer-monitoring, employees took a more cynical stance and eventually disengaged. An undermining culture developed, as opposed to the intended one. Kunda uses this to illustrate the danger of unintended side effects if the deeper layer of "basic underlying assumptions" has not been positively influenced.

We've also encountered this in the field. Organizations initiate an Agile transformation, but behavior doesn't change, only the processes. Structure and values are known but not internalized. The new, self-organizing teams envisioned never emerge from the first phase. Instead of the bustling, energetic, creative units intended by the interventions, they get a group of people with change fatigue who are merely mechanically applying the learned method. Fundamental rituals such as retrospectives are infrequent because their value has not been personally experienced. The underlying layer of mindset, belief, thought, and emotion has not been activated. Employees who previously believed in the change lose faith and become demotivated or disengage. The carefully constructed and propagated ideology slowly crumbles, and the opposite effect of the intended change occurs instead.

Grass Does Not Grow Faster if You Pull It
Organizations that go or have gone through a transformation have to consider the many changes that simultaneously take place: a new strategic course, altered organizational structure, different working methods, and a changed leadership style. All of this calls for a culture that supports the new path, which begins with what already exists. Culture develops from long-established patterns and assumptions, so changing one won't happen overnight.

Kunda's research, the culture layers described by Schein, and our practical experience all indicate that culture isn't as easy to build. Instead, an Agile transformation must be grown to ensure that it takes root in the core of the organization.

5 Seeds for Cultivating a Sustainable Agile Culture

A sustainable Agile transformation doesn't just happen on paper; it's propagated through everyone's actions and exchanges throughout the entire organization. It's essential to influence culture at the deeper level of "basic underlying assumptions" by planting the proper seeds.

1. Start each Agile transformation with intention. What is the passionate story about what you want the future to bring? Articulate the aspiration; tell appealing stories in plain language. Help people to understand and connect to the need for change. Make sure that the need refers to real problems because culture is somewhat hidden and ambiguous.
   Give people the opportunity to think, feel, visualize and reflect on how the intention of the transformation relates to their personal objectives. A spirited organization grows from "fertilized soil," which get replenished by each person's work and behavior.

2. Creating a new culture should begin with an analysis of the current one. You need to first understand the outcomes of what the current culture produces and how it does or doesn't align with current and future market and business conditions. Spend time, attention, space and reflection to map out the current culture and to understand the real dynamics of the organization. Conduct in-depth and lively dialogues across all layers of the organization. Listen sincerely, even to what is not said out loud. Realize that the undercurrent is an invisible influence on culture and that it determines the effectiveness of the work and the organization's ability to change.

3. Make a GAP analysis of the current and ideal situation. Build on what's already there. Be careful not to send the message that the current ways are "wrong." Instead, emphasize perpetuating and strengthening the positive qualities of the organizational culture and "curing" the dysfunctional aspects by changing demands, ambitions, or circumstances. Identify common objectives based on the GAP analysis.
   Concerning both behavior and output, targeted environments abound with small, vibrant signals that link the present to a future idea. Focus everyone's attention by consistently nurturing and supporting engagement. Effective groups and their leaders place value on setting priorities, identifying decisive behavior, and flooding the environment with signals that connect the two.

4. Select and develop leaders who align with the target culture. Influential change agents in the organization can advocate for a culture shift through their language and actions. Ensure cultural continuity through living by example; in words, heart, and hands. Only then will the desired change be experienced. Recognize that every choice, every call, and every action signals priority, values, and beliefs. Have a commitment and willingness to take responsibility for this and to discuss it with others in the change process. Only when spoken ideals become a reality in daily practice will there be a shift in shared norms, beliefs, and implicit understanding. Then it creates a collective consciousness in which everyone works together, and optimal performance is achieved.

5. Don't treat culture change as an isolated change, but integrate it with other changes in your transformation. Don't just talk to each other about the desired culture or behavior. Apply, practice, and experience it in reality. Organize lots of small, brief development meetings. They create more impact than a few large ones because it's easier to stay focused, absorb information, and integrate what's been learned into daily work. Organize many small cultural interventions across the organization, but don't make "culture" the topic, as if it's something separate from the transformation. Instead, pick a practical problem and solve it in the right way, using the cultural values and behavior you hope to instill. Culture is an integral part of the process, so make its development and effects visible, as well as your appreciation for any progress. Support the creation of a culture and language in which people address each other about behavior that counters positive change. Be alert to the possible unintended side effects of cultural change through observation, and then "pull the weeds." Take the basic underlying assumptions into account.

You can't create a thriving culture by carving a mission statement into granite. Making sure that everyone can recite some one-liners won't do it either. There's no "golden ticket" approach for creating an ideal culture. It's an ongoing process of trying, failing, contemplating, and learning over and over again. It doesn't come from "a solution" and can't be imposed. However, you can ensure you've planted all the right seeds so that an Agile culture emerges from the inside out. Culture grows from solving problems together, continuously nurturing development, and tending to the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Mirjam Diependaal,
Personal and Organizational
Behavior Coach

Ellen Barree,
Organization
Anthropologist and
Agile Consultant

re.vers.ify: The Need for Agility in the Face of Perplexity

Your iceberg is melting. Your cheese is being moved—at light speed. The balance of society has rapidly shifted from industrial (often physical) labor to digital (often virtual) work. It profoundly changes the fabric of society and our social systems. The industrial paradigm is rendered useless. The need for agility is bigger than ever. Hence, the value of the Agile paradigm, today and in the foreseeable future.

Author **Gunther Verheyen**

System Update Required

Many beliefs and constructs of our current society have their roots in the industrial age. In the industrial age, progress mostly came from the development of mechanical devices, machines, and equipment. In the underlying (industrial) worldview, players were typically expected to robotically follow prescribed algorithms of repetitive activities to produce pre-defined results, in assumed or enforced stable working conditions.

The industrial beliefs and practices reigned over society for the past couple of centuries. Today, prosperity and progress can no longer be assured through this paradigm. Now, and in the foreseeable future, survival and success depend on our ability to unleash and frame the cognitive and creative abilities of all players involved in regularly creating novel products and services, while operating in turbulent circumstances.

A vast majority of work in modern life has quickly shifted from the ordered stability space to the *complex novelty* space. People and organizations in many domains of society cling to the old paradigm. Its promise of reasonable predictability is tempting, even when negated by the daily reality of work and life. Organizational gravity and cultural inertia prevent the much-needed updates and upgrades to our structures and constructs, keeping them unfit for the 24/7 information age.

Ironically, acting upon the premises of the past paradigm results in an actual inability to act. Expectations and predictions are outdated before they can be fulfilled. No meaningful work is completed before new, seemingly reasonable, predictions are raised. Complexity turns into perplexity, an inability to act, an individual or collective state of being overwhelmed by complexity, permanently.

The Subject of Change

Working and living in the 24/7 information age forces us to think, understand, and act quickly, yet with grace. We need to swiftly address unexpected challenges, explore and change direction, take advantage of the unforeseen. We need to act with agility.

The Agile Manifesto established a clear alternative for the industrial views in software development (2001). People worldwide made Scrum (1995) the most preferred definition of Agile.

As society moves deeper into the complex novelty space, ever more new organizations worldwide discover the value of Scrum to address their complex challenges. Delivering software products is only one field of application.

In the current, third Scrum wave, ideas and movements converge toward the simplicity of Scrum again. Simplicity is the path to navigate the complexity of our world. Scrum is indeed minimal, yet sufficient to effectively address complex challenges in complex circumstances.

Observation shows how difficult it is to cohesively employ Scrum without sacrificing its intrinsic simplicity. Organizations twist Scrum to fit their

"To re-vers-ify is the act of re-imagining your Scrum to foster the re-emergence of your organization."

current structures, often remainders of the industrial age. Others aggravate Scrum with additional roles and phases. Many break Scrum's cohesion by ignoring the essential rules, principles, and values that underly it.

Still. Scrum, implemented by the book or otherwise, is no more than a start.

The internal foundation required to increase an organization's agility is the new Agile way of working. Agile allows more room for learning, improving and continuous adaptation. It restores respect for people and re-humanizes the workplace. But the ultimate value is in the agility demonstrated outwardly. Both are not just functions of a process like Scrum, but also of the internal structures.

Rigid structures are the antithesis of agility.

The Scrum framework creates the boundaries within and upon which organizational structures can re-emerge, despite the absence of explicit instructions in Scrum on how to do so. Scrum is an invitation to think across existing structures and re-emerge an organization's way of

working. The adoption of Scrum is an opportunity to upgrade your organization. It requires courage, belief and persistence.

Agility is why organizations adopt Scrum. The benefits of Scrum will not fully unlock the desired and needed agility of an organization without touching the broader organization.

Reversification—A Different Act

Agility is critical in the complex novelty space. Scrum is defined and proven. Yet, a clear and burning urgency is rarely enough.

Adopting Scrum to upgrade an organization for complex novelty work is not just a technical or process matter for people hardened in the industrial paradigm. When those people attempt to transform their organization from the industrial to the Agile paradigm, serious mismatches occur. That's because they are primarily working with what they already know - the tools, language, and practices of the industrial paradigm!

You can see the two paradigms in direct conflict in situations where increasing numbers of teams are mass-commanded into some derivative of Scrum against imposed deadlines and other top-down expectations. When teams are established within existing depart-ments, and some big-name model at scale is selected as the one and only future operating model, agility is believed to increase. After a while, easily a few years, a giant deflation happens.

What was perceived as an increase in agility turns out to be an illusion, supported only by impressive progress on paper, e.g., lay-off figures and internal improvements. The agility demonstrated outwardly has hardly improved; morale, belief, and conviction plummet.

Unfortunately, this is a reasonably predictable result.

Teams that must work within the confines of their traditional line organization rarely focus on end-to-end benefits for end-users. Significant dependencies, delays, and overhead are hidden in hierarchy and power games. The organization rarely invokes engagement, focus, and intrinsic motivation.

The path of increasing agility via Scrum will inevitably be a cobble-stone path. It is a highly complex endeavor that requires well-considered steps of experimentation and learning. Change comes in increments too.

It is no model and has no pre-empted linearity or organizational blueprints. It thrives on deliberate emergence, actions to provoke changes and events to happen, not being able to predict the outcomes, but using time-boxing and regular inspections and adaptations to pave the path. All models are wrong, even the ones that are right.

Re-imagining Scrum starts by considering how it enables the creation of an ecosystem to deliver end-to-end value. Start your custom act of reversification with the creation of one ecosystem having all abilities and authorizations to serve one product or service, completely, end-to-end.

Support the involved players in merging and reforming teams with the goal of optimally serving consumers, users, and stakeholders. Facilitate the ecosystem with tools, infrastructure, shared (visual) work-spaces.

Act, learn, change, replicate, expand. Grow your own model. Develop your agility as a unique signature of your organization. Support the emergence of more and more ecosystems.

More and more functions are performed within the ecosystems, allowing the nervous system to focus on its core functions; transmitting, connecting, feeding, nurturing.

All constructs dating from the industrial age are gradually replaced with structures that have flexibility and adaptability in them, the flexibility and adaptability required for the complex novelty space. Your organization will be reversified. Rhythm, cadence, and poetry are restored. The workplace is humanized. Agility becomes the DNA of your organization.

Regardless of formal names, structures, processes or models applied, your organization is genuinely Agile in that it thrives on the prime Agile tenets: people-driven; iterative, incremental progress; and value as the measure of success.

Gunther Verheyen,
Independent Scrum
Caretaker

Digital Transformation Gets Real

The global business community seems to agree, we're now entering the third wave of digital technology in which artificial intelligence will be the main driving force. In tremendous ways, and at an unprecedented speed, this third wave will revolutionize the way we interact with each other and corporations interact with us. Whether we are eating, sleeping, working, sporting or relaxing, a world without digital tech has become unimaginable. We're seeing the first signs of this all around us already. Take, for example, how the insurance provider Lemonade (Lemonade.com) uses AI to determines a customer's risk profile, or how speech analytics is gaining ground in call centers.

Author **Guido van den Boom**

For businesses, the "adapt or die" adage is ever present and survival of the fittest means developing nimble, adaptable processes driven by digital technology. Failure to follow the course of this evolution spells disaster for any company. For most incumbents, it's hard to keep up with the changing pace of customer demand and behavior, not to mention the threat of new entrants who have already embraced new digital technologies, such as AI, robotics, and AR. In fact, a study from the John M. Olin School of Business at Washington University estimated that, in the next decade, 40 percent of today's companies on the S&P 500 will be gone. This is "disruption" in action.

Digital Tech Adoption Issues

Having been on the inside of many companies since the late '90s, and having witnessed their first steps into the world of the internet, I would dare say that technology has always been first and the people operating it have come second. And unfortunately, this is still the case. Considering people's real needs, fixing their day-to-day issues, or providing possibilities to make their jobs easier, more meaningful, or more fun, has not been the top priority. From the massive ERP transformations in the '90s, via e-commerce in the '00s, to mobility and digital marketing in the '10s, again and again, tech has been imposed by senior management rather than co-created with staff.

User-adoption and change-management best practices fell by the wayside with lacking budgets. Meanwhile, the conviction that new tech could be used after a single product training resulted in underutilization or no utilization at all. Sometimes a decision to invest in a completely different technology was made because there was, seemingly, "no fit with the company's requirements." Despite numerous lessons in humanizing its purpose, such as "only deploy tech that solves real business issues," and "'identify all stakeholders carefully," and "make training and coaching fun," the technical aspects of projects often prevailed. Moreover, the business cases highly-paid staff members and consultants had been working on for months were never realized. Although lately, an improved focus on UX/UI and user-friendliness has slightly increased adoption levels, it is still merely a drop in the ocean.

But in this third wave, CxOs, tribe leads and managers no longer have the luxury to allow for failed IT projects due to low adoption rates. They need to adapt to the new digital normal as quickly as possible. According to the TomTom Telematics' Senior Managers Study, conducted in June 2017, "Almost a third of business leaders in the UK admit their organizations are laggards when it comes to adopting new technologies."

Digital Tech Adoption Through Agile

There is light on the horizon. I'm convinced Agile ways of working will realize a significant breakthrough in the area of new digital tech adoption by the workforce. It seems, for the first time in the history of introducing new digital technology, the human factor is gaining ground.

Many companies have seen a decrease in time-to-market to bring new products, features, and services to their consumers. So, more and more, consumers are reaping the benefits of Agile. But what about the employees? How can they benefit from Agile to get the tools they need to fire up their continuous improvement cycle?

One of the key aspects of Agile is the phenomenon of autonomous, independent teams/value streams. They can design, build and run products that ultimately contribute to and are fully aligned with the purpose and key objectives of the company. Consequently, the teams should be empowered and mandated to choose and implement the tech stack that fully supports them to optimally do their job.

For example, imagine I'm a product owner responsible for the Move customer journey and I need to drastically improve NPS and retention. And let's suppose that the best way I can realize that is through the creation of an omnichannel Move service - a killer personal app, a Move webpage, and an app for store personnel. If this is the case, I'd better make sure the people who are designing, building and running this have the tools at their disposal to enable them to do the job fast, well, and while having some fun.
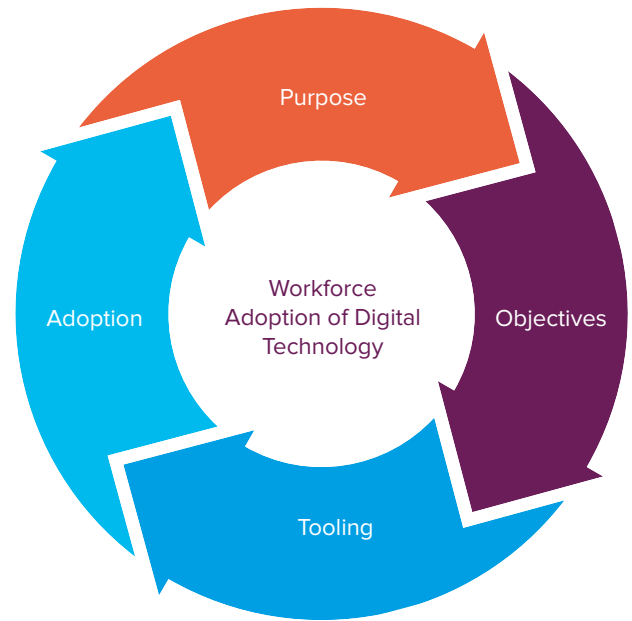
Thanks to Agile, we'll be seeing much better user-adoption rates of new digital tech in the workforce of the future, because the ability to achieve objectives will depend primarily on access to fit-for-purpose tools. Moreover, demand will come directly from the workforce, rather than forced top-down by management.

Guido van den Boom,
Partner, Digital
Transformation

Shared Leadership: The Product Owner as Mini-CEO

As organizational structures flatten, the product owner role becomes increasingly important. But what exactly does this role entail? Is just anyone capable (and willing) to become a mini-CEO?

Author **Jurriaan Bernson**

The top thinks it's all going too slow, and the teams don't know how to succeed. Sound familiar? Every day I see precisely the same thing going on with organizations that have chosen to go Agile. With a flatter structure, these companies hope to achieve more business agility, and thus, become more successful in the market. There's nothing wrong with that choice or those expectations; it's in the implementation where it sometimes goes wrong.

Do those responsible truly understand the nature of an Agile transformation? It's a complex process that begins with the formation of autonomous teams, followed by the introduction of Agile coaches who accelerate those team by teaching them self-learning skills. Finally, a handful of product owners are added who need the vision to maximize value. Dozens of product owners can all be responsible for different parts of a product. However, what being a product owner means, exactly, is something few people actually know. What are the exact limits of responsibility, when the products owners are held responsible for the success of the products, and increasingly, the organization?

Here are three steps aspiring Agile organizations can take to get the most (and best) out of the product owner role:

1. **Communicate top-down distribution of power and mandates explicitly.**
In Agile organizations using the Scrum framework, product owners are the spiders on the web. Usually, each team has a product owner who - after consulting with the team - is mandated with determining the focus of the next two weeks. Once a management layer (including top management) relinquishes ownership and adopts a supportive position, they shouldn't be allowed to overrule decisions made by the product owner. Often, it's here where things start to go wrong.

It's a big transition from "take direction" to working Agile. Taking full responsibility is not easy if a manager or the boss previously made the decisions. Moreover, a two-day product owner training won't turn anyone into the ultimate entrepreneur. That's why communicating what is changing to everyone, explicitly, is necessary. Follow that up with guidance to support initiatives within the frameworks that the organization sets. Describing roles and responsibilities is a good start. However, also try to define what "success" would actually be. What does success look like after three months, one year, or three years, for the product owner?
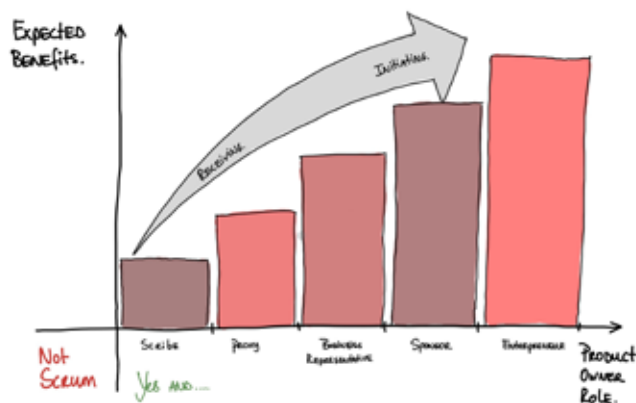
Key Individual Accountabilities

- Translate the company mission, BHAG, and strategy into a product vision.
- Develop product principles that are in line with the mission and brand and make sure they are applied across the customer journey.
- Develop and execute the product roadmap based on the product vision and deep customer insights.

Key Shared Accountabilities

- Work together with tech to turn the roadmap into epics and sprints, balancing time to market and quality.
- Work together with brand to develop positioning/promise of propositions, new add-on products and for content (art and copy).
- Work together wit supply chain teams to automate the supply chain with technology.

Key Leadership Behaviors

- Create impactful, loveable products.
- Dare to think inside-out to innovate and delight the customer, without ignoring their feedback.
- Leverage our data and insights without losing our principles and brand consistency.

Parameters for Success	
Key Performance Indicators	Organizational
• Net Promoter Score (per product domain). • Conversion rates. • Revenues and margins of new products. • Project specific KPIs. • Velocity.	• Product owners per domain. • User experience designers across domains. • Product and supply chain engineer across domains. • Web analyst across domains.

Decision Rights	
Owns	Influences
• Product principles. • Product roadmap. • Products before they are embedded within the BaU.	• End-to-end customer journey.
	Vetoes
	• Customer-facing propositions that do not follow product principles.

Shared Leadership

If an organization wants decisions to be made at every level, they have to do more than say, "take ownership." Shared leadership is a beautiful idea that can certainly help your organization progress, but every detail of that execution needs to be done the right way.

Jurriaan Bernson,
Business Unit Manager,
Product Management
"Loves to build great products that make an impact on customers."

2. As the product owner, accept handovers of power and mandates explicitly.

The next critical step is the explicit acceptance of the role by the product owner. Does the product owner know what it takes to be successful, and does he or she accept that challenge? Complete transparency from the onset about the role and responsibilities will ensure optimal clarity and that the product owner can deliver results.

3. Ensure product owners are qualified to execute power and mandates and that they receive the appropriate training.

Not every developer, project manager, business consultant or manager is a product owner. The product owner knows the customer/user, the technology as well as the commercial aspect. They translate the wishes of the customer or opportunities in the market into insights and challenges that, together with the team, are translated into concrete solutions. The product owner must also possess leadership qualities: they can inspire and enthuse a team to work towards the solution together. Also, they must be a connector and able to communicate with all stakeholders (internal and external). Because it's such a versatile role and the person is responsible for the success of the product or service, the product owner is sometimes referred to as a mini-CEO.

In larger organizations, this role is more complex than in a startup or scaleup where there is often a clear goal. Therefore, the right training and coaching of product owners are essential. Too often, project managers, managers, analysts, and developers receive two days of training and a certificate and are then given the responsibilities of a product owner. However, it takes much more investment than that to develop people into mini-CEOs who can indeed handle the job.

Evolutionary or Revolutionary Change

Change is inevitable and happening faster than ever. Everywhere you look, companies are swept up in a never-ending storm of transformation. But large change initiatives in organizations are incredibly disruptive and can take several years to prepare and implement. Who knows what the future will bring? By the time an organization gets to "wherever" it's going, things will be different. So, instead of moving towards a defined, future end-state, companies should determine what doesn't work now and evolve, step-by-step.

Authors **Pieter Rijken and Maarten Uppelschoten**

There's More Than One Way to Change

Most often in business, we see "revolutionary" change. It's a top-down-driven, planned-approach, usually co-created with employees. Typically, this "revolutionary" approach to change depends on defining a future end-state. It moves from point A to B on a journey that focuses on an end-state (though that end-state may change over time). Top-down-driven, planned change aims to minimize resistance by involving the people it's most likely to affect. So, even though the future is unpredictable, end-state goals create clarity and trust in the leadership.

This type of change is largely based on the influential theories of the German-American organizational psychologist Kurt Lewin and his well-known three-stage model - unfreezing, changing, and refreezing.

There's a wealth of literature, case studies and knowledge available for navigating this particular kind of change. The Xebia-led Agile transformation of ING Bank to the Spotify model is one good example. Although this approach to change has some merit, it also has disadvantages, especially in volatile environments.

One problem is that it assumes a certain degree of organizational inertia, which isn't necessarily the case in today's fast-paced digitized business landscape. More often than not, people and teams DO initiate local changes, continuously.

Another disadvantage of this model is that it creates a roadmap towards a predefined end-state. That means leaders must define a vision of desired outcomes before the change initiative even begins.
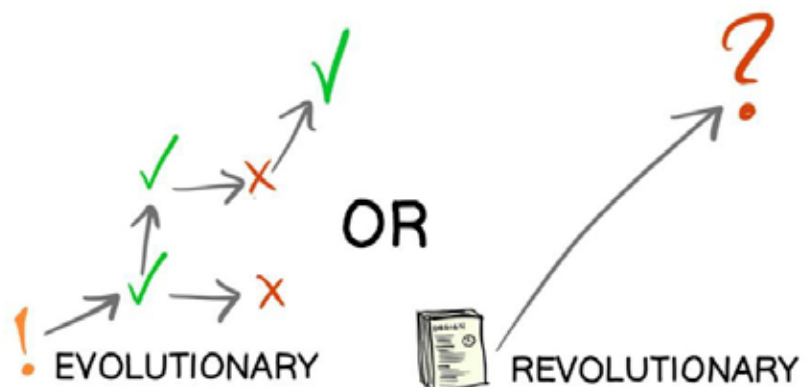

Figure 1: Evolutionary Change - Moving Away From What Doesn't Work. Revolutionary Change - Pre-Defined Future End-State

Knowing the Organizational End-State: Fact or Illusion?

It's difficult to predict how the future end-state will actually unfold in a disruptive and turbulent environment. As Yoda said in the Empire Strikes Back, "Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future."

Defining the future end-state is based on assumptions about what we know today. Our assumptions heavily depend on our understanding of how the organization works. Most organizations are complex, social systems consisting of many interdependent connections between people and teams. It's not easy to make assumptions under these conditions.

Things that prove to work now may not still work tomorrow, especially in a fast moving market. Nassim Taleb, the author of "Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable"

calls this "positive knowledge" in his follow up book, "Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder." Taleb argues that what's been "proven" to work is based on assumptions that may not be valid in the future. In other words, any actions or decisions based on positive knowledge are sensitive to the unknown future.

However, the opposite holds true for "negative knowledge," which Taleb defines as the things that have been proven NOT to work. Negative knowledge is less sensitive to the future. If it does not work now, it will most probably not work in the future either.

So, how does this help us?

Since we don't know the future, we can only act on what we do know today. Awareness of your current state should guide you going

forward. Is something working for you, or not? If not, that's what you "move away" from. Do this step by step, following the theory of constraints paradigm introduced by the late business management guru, Eliyahu Goldratt in his 1984 book "The Goal." The theory of constraints assumes there is always at least one constraint. It uses a five-step focusing process to identify that constraint, exploit, and elevate it.

This step-by-step evolution allows you to "arrive" at your desired state, without knowing it in advance. Your desired state is not a predefined "end-state," it emerges from what you genuinely want to achieve, all along the way.

What Do You Genuinely Want to Achieve?—Properties

We often hear statements from organizations that tell us they have an end-state goal in mind:
"We want to become agile."
"We need to be lean."
"We must restructure our organizational hierarchy, so it's flatter and simpler."
But that's like saying, "We want to be a diamond."

You don't want to become a diamond; you want to become LIKE a diamond—harder, sharper, more transparent, and more valuable than you are today.

It's the properties of the diamond you want, not the diamond per se. So, if your stated goal is "to become agile," you should ask yourself why? What are the properties of agility that you want your company to possess and manifest? What are the properties of your "desired" state? Once you've identified these properties, communicate them to everyone involved, including stakeholders and customers. Then determine the first small step you can take towards improving upon (or developing) those qualities and characteristics.

Learn from each newly achieved state and decide the next most logical and valuable step at that point. It's more about making a selection of two rather than replenishing a backlog of twenty items. Ultimately, you may not become a diamond, but you will definitely become harder, sharper, more transparent, and valuable.

What Do You Want to Change: Discovering What Doesn't Work

What we want to change is based on what we want to achieve, which is why defining these properties first is so critical and essential. A change in properties will tell us if a step works, or if it doesn't. That's how we evolve without a pre-defined, end-state goal.

We conduct experiments to obtain knowledge about our "current" state —did the action improve or move us towards manifesting a proper-ty of value? If the experimental step works, we gain a yes- positive knowledge, if it doesn't, we gain a no—negative knowledge. Again, it's the negative knowledge we need to direct our change path since the "noes" are less sensitive to the un-knowns of the future. We determine each next step, step-by-step, by figuring out what doesn't work. This series of experiments and actions allow us to evolve.

Evolutionary Change: Move Away From Where You Are Now

In this "evolutionary" approach to change, the future end-state is emergent and not designed. Instead of moving toward a specific pre-defined outcome, we improve upon what doesn't work - which will still be true in the future. Changes are guided by knowing what doesn't work and moving away from it.
We use the outcome of experiments to decide where to go next and let the organizational structure emerge. This approach is robust to unknown, future events and ensures an organization fit for its purpose at every step of the way. In this approach, you discover the future one step at a time.

Pieter Rijken,
Kanban Expert,
"Passionate about improving organizations through data."


Maarten Uppelschoten,
Chapter Lead ING

> "We are trying to prove ourselves wrong as quickly as possible, because only in that way can we find progress."

Richard P. Feynman

Find and Bind Talent With a Flexible Shell

The increasingly intense competition for highly-skilled knowledge workers pulls organizations in two, seemingly opposing ways. On one hand, companies want to maintain stability to profit from team learning. On the other hand, they want to offer a dynamic environment to find and bind talented new people. But how do you create a balanced learning environment which appropriately nurtures both the stability to learn and the desire to grow simultaneously?

Author **Daniel Burm**
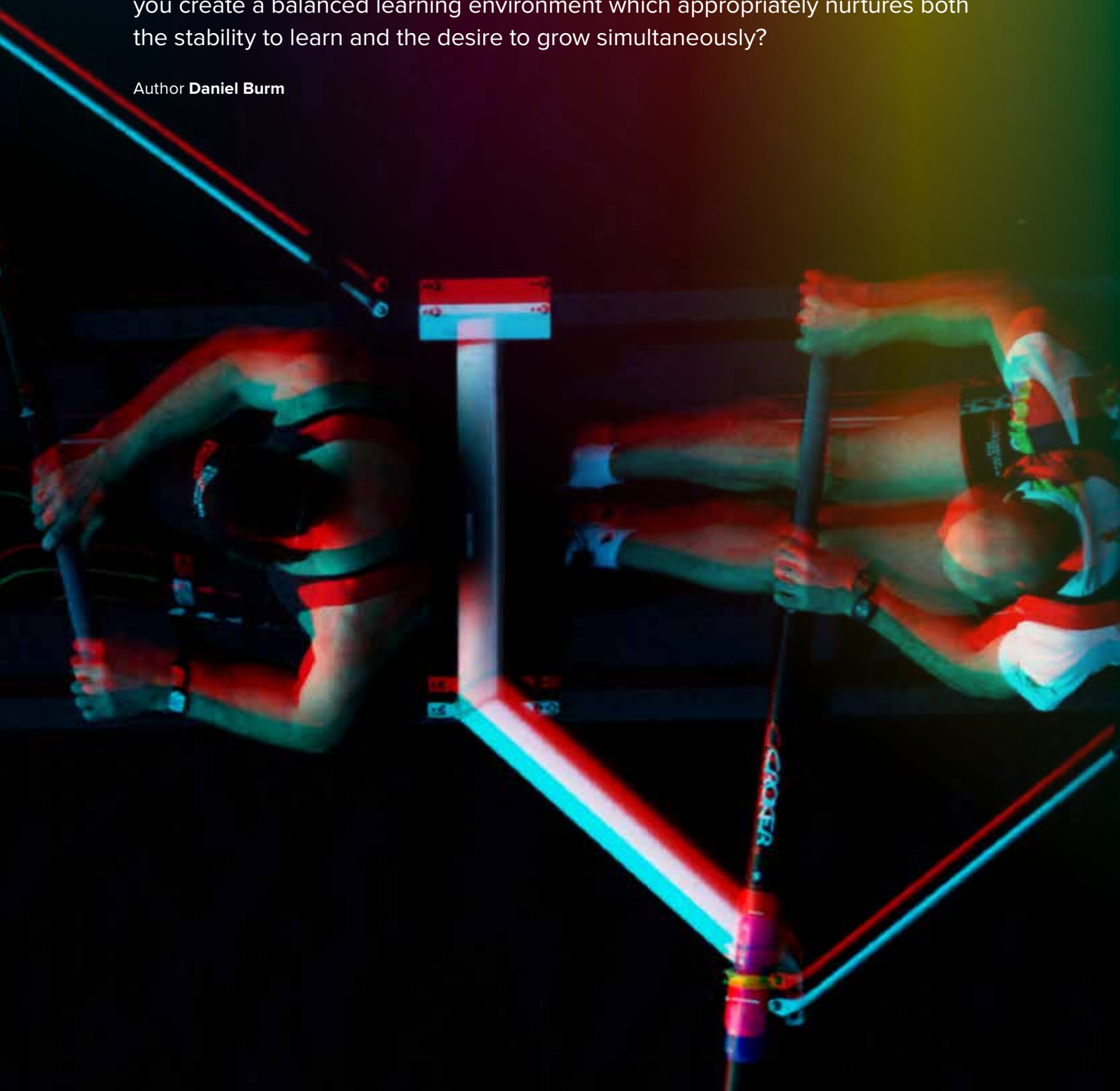
The Challenge to Find and Bind Talent

When searching for their dream job, Millennials value personal development and flexibility more than most generations. These values would seemingly make the Agile organization a "must have" for young employees, as it offers both the freedom of autonomous self-organization and development possibilities—in theory. But talent like this often experiences a dissonance between their expectations of an Agile organization and the actual development opportunities they encounter there.

Personal development is often at odds with the flat, team-based structure of an Agile organization. There's so much to learn, and only limited opportunities for individual growth outside the team context. On top of that, organizations initially benefit more from stability in the teams, so there's not much incentive to invest in the personal career trajectory of an individual member if it disrupts that.

Businesses need stability in teams because it preserves the acquired knowledge and hard-earned lessons learned. Stable teams fulfill their purpose and contribute to the whole by delivering a certain degree of specialization focused on a customer segment, product, or service.

Unfortunately, stable teams are the opposite of what knowledge workers prefer. Can you imagine being stuck on a team after losing interest in its purpose, or with a colleague with whom you don't see eye-to-eye?

Knowledge workers want to develop themselves both within the team and outside of it. So, organizations must trade some stability for personal development, but how can they do both at the same time?

The Flexible Shell

One potential solution is to form a "flexible shell" around stable teams.

When forming teams, it's important for people to have as much autonomy as possible when it comes to their roles. The flexible shell could be introduced in addition to the creation of stable teams for the coming period. Team members can stipulate if they want to be part of the flexible shell or prefer the stability within the teams. These people make up the core of the stable teams so it will always be important to weigh personalities and value systems to find the right balance of team members. As such, joining the flexible shell is optional.

Those people in the flexible shell make up a kind of "talent marketplace" that supplements the different, stable teams. The marketplace allows people to organize their own team transfers. It's easy to set up and has a few basic rules:

○ A team member from the flexible shell can only transfer if another member of the shell is willing to switch places.
○ The skillset of the team member and the feedback they got from their previous team are always accessible to the stable team members of their destination team.
○ A receiving team is allowed to refuse a new team member from the flexible shell, on the condition that they can point to a deficit in skill or ability until these are demonstrably improved or present.
○ A receiving team is not allowed to refuse a new team member based on personality or value system but has to demonstrate how to deal with these differences before the transfer can take place.
○ Only one person per team can be transferred at a time.

Thus the flexible shell can maintain the stability within the team while at the same time create an opportunity for those that want to grow more than a single team would allow. The flexible shell is very suitable for those with the ambition to get to know all aspects of the Agile business operation and stimulates the natural selection of high potentials and talent within the organization.
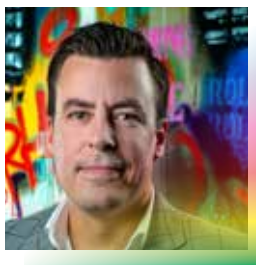
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