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AGILE QUEXT

September 2020, Volume 4

**INSIGHTS FOR ELEVATING
YOUR LEARNING &
TRANSFORMATION
JOURNEY**

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AGILE QUEXT

Xebia was founded in 2001. We're a pioneering group of extremely ambitious

craftspeople and a onestop shop for digital & business transformation. We're organized in specialized units of excellence around the world, with offices in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Hilversum, Paris, Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, Atlanta and Boston. Xebia employs over 1500+ people worldwide and have been working Agile in their own software development practices since 2004. In 2001, Xebia were the first company in Netherlands to start guiding other organizations in their Agile transformations following our presence in India from 2006 onwards. Since then we've initiated, guided and supervised more than 90+ Agile transformations.

Welcome to AGILE QUEXT - a compendium of insights and ideas from some of the most conversant minds in the Agile community - meticulously curated for practitioners seeking inspiration and guidance in undertaking this exciting journey. Agile Transformation is the next step in bringing customer focus and business agility in an organization.

The fourth version of AGILE QUEXT covers aspects of an agile organization starting from the practices that make an organization perform efficiently using Scrum & Kanban frameworks. It's the culture that keeps individuals in an organization motivated and the technology driven mindset that brings differentiation to organization offerings & drive the enterprise towards business agility. The key highlights covered in the articles include:

- ◆ Understanding business agility
- ◆ Missing elements in scrum adoption
- ◆ How Kanban helps to achieve transparency
- ◆ Mindset shift from Problems to Progressive solutions
- ◆ Increasing Performance Through Continuous Discovery, Learning, and Sharing

Enjoy reading and explore new and useful ideas, practices and technology solutions in this edition of AGILE QUEXT.

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Experience Xebia's market leading Enterprise agility insights and gain knowledge of the best practices from the trenches. To be truly Agile and to stay relevant! AGILE QUEXT covers aspects of "what's next" in developing agility, from teams to leadership, people to technology, culture to governance, and everything in between. AGILE QUEXT provides the direction you need in your Agile journey. It's your comprehensive guide for responding to what lies ahead for you and your

organization. Enjoy our readings and experience Xebia's annual conferences, meetups and webinars.

THE NEW AGE OF AGILE: EVOLVING FROM TEAMS TO THE ENTIRE BUSINESS

Author: Dean Leffingwell

In his book, *From Project to Product*, author Mik Kersten describes how business leaders are ill-equipped to solve the problems posed by digital transformation. He points to the 2018 report, *Corporate Longevity Forecast*, which issues a “... gale force warning to leaders: at the current churn rate, about half of S&P 500 companies will be replaced over the next 10 years.”

It's a grim cautioning, but not surprising given the new paradigm of competition where customers no longer just compare you to your direct competitors but to the best service they have ever received—from any company. If you launch a banking franchise, you're not just compared to Chase and Wells Fargo, your user experience is measured against Uber and Amazon.

That's a tall order to fill. And it's one of the many reasons why every business that wants to survive the storm must become like FedEx, which venture capitalist Marc Andreessen describes as "... a software network that happens to have trucks, planes and distribution hubs attached." Kersten claims—and there's every reason to agree with him—that "... those who master large-scale software delivery will define the economic landscape of the 21st century." The most forward-looking companies are actively future-proofing for this. BMW Group's CEO expects that in future, more than half of their staff will be software developers.

Okay, we get it—hire thousands of software developers. But is that enough? What does it actually mean to master large-scale software delivery? Based on what's happening in the field, we're understanding that it takes a great deal more.

Business agility—the next big move

From an IT perspective, Agile with a capital "A" has served us well. Development teams get it, they usually like it, and when practiced with integrity and commitment, it consistently delivers results like faster time-to-market, improved quality, predictability, and employee engagement. Agile provides a great foundation, for sure, especially when combined with Lean, DevOps, and Lean Portfolio Management. And now, companies are experimenting with extending Agile beyond its IT roots and applying it to the whole business.

The idea of business agility is clearly catching fire but interpretations of what it is and how to achieve it vary. The underlying meaning, though, is something on which we can probably all agree—business agility is a competitive advantage that helps an enterprise adapt and thrive in the digital age by delivering innovative technical and business solutions in the shortest sustainable lead time.

Key ingredients for achieving business agility

Many organizations struggle to get beyond team-level Agile because they can't agree on the roadmap. However, if you look at companies that are leading the way in this area, you'll see a pattern in approach and capabilities:

◆ Adopt Agile - From C-level to marketing and HR

Let's start with the idea of enterprise-wide practice of Lean, Agile, and DevOps. When every team from every unit—leadership, sales, development, marketing, HR, finance, etc.—works from the same playbook, all have their eyes on the same prize, and work together in cadence and alignment, the entire organization—not just development—is able to continually and proactively deliver high-quality value faster than the competition.

Working this way is an emerging trend and requires specialization of principles and practices for the context of the business unit. For instance, you wouldn't expect marketing and development teams to follow the exact same practices, but there would be strong similarities.

◆ Build core capabilities

Industry pacesetters are building advanced capabilities in the areas of team and technical agility, DevOps and release on-demand, Lean-Agile leadership, Lean systems engineering, and Lean portfolio management. Mastering these capabilities creates muscle memory that can go far in bolstering the development and delivery machine, but even that is not enough to avoid being sidelined by faster and more nimble competitors.

◆ Add organizational agility

Organizational agility provides the business with the capacity to identify and capture opportunities more quickly than its rivals. This is achieved by being able to rapidly evolve strategy, organizational structures, technical and business practices, and people operations. Building organizational agility helps deliver the tangible benefits of better financial results and is an essential chapter in the playbook for achieving business agility.

◆ Commit to a continuous learning culture

Creating a learning-centered work culture is critical for attracting top talent and giving your workers the tools they need to be successful and grow your business. Seems logical, but it's far too easy to sacrifice learning and development in favor of short-term wins, and it's not unusual for an organization to view training as a one-off exercise to fill an immediate need.

This is a common cry among many of the enterprises I've worked with who wonder why they struggle to sustain their early wins from 'going Agile.' Their counterparts, however—the organizations fully committed to building a continuous learning culture—are seeing something altogether different. When an organization commits to encouraging individuals—and the enterprise as a whole—to continually increase knowledge, competence, performance, and innovation, results can be very positive.

Deloitte reports that companies with continuous learning cultures enjoy a number of benefits, including:

- ◆ They are 46 percent more likely to be first to market
- ◆ They experience 37 percent higher productivity
- ◆ They are 92 percent more likely to innovate

The implications are clear: business agility—and all that is required to achieve it—is a game-changing approach to business, with significant bottom-line implications that should go far in helping businesses survive and thrive in the 21st century.



Dean Leffingwell

Cofounder and Chief Methodologist at Scaled Agile, Inc.



broken system isn't going to result in magical improvements. Instead, discipline, courage, and determination are necessary to start changing the system that is getting in the way. And that doesn't happen nearly as often as it should.

This kind of superficial Scrum is what we've come to call Zombie Scrum. And there's a lot of it out there!

How bad is it, really?

We are continuously monitoring the spread and prevalence of Zombie Scrum with our online Symptoms Checker at <https://survey.zombiescrum.org>.

Of the ±2000 Scrum Teams that have participated to date:

- ◆ 77% don't actively collaborate with customers or have a clear vision of what they need
- ◆ 69% don't work in an environment where they can self-organize around shared goals
- ◆ 62% don't work in an environment where they can improve over time
- ◆ 67% don't manage to deliver working & high-quality software every Sprint
- ◆ 42% feel that Scrum isn't very effective for them

The percentages represent teams that scored a six or lower on a 10-point scale. Each topic was measured with 10 to 30 questions.

Is there hope for Zombie Scrum?

Once Zombie Scrum, always Zombie Scrum? Luckily the answer is a resounding 'No'.

First, most teams that start with Scrum will face some or all of the symptoms initially. Provided that they learn from their mistakes and find ways to overcome them, there is nothing wrong with that. Working empirically, using a framework like Scrum, is often at odds with how organizations are used to working. It's impossible to change everything at once, so you'll have to learn how to successfully apply Scrum in the same incremental way that you deliver your product. This may take a long time and a lot of learning.

Second, we know from experience that you can recover from Zombie Scrum even when your team has been stuck in it for a long time. Sure, recovering will be painful, challenging, and time-consuming, but it's definitely possible to fully recover. Why else would we have invested time in writing a book that's packed with experiments to prevent and fix Zombie Scrum?

Nonetheless, we have to face the painful truth: Zombie Scrum has spread on a global scale and threatens the existence of many large and small organizations. The number of new teams that are suffering from Zombie Scrum are rapidly increasing. All departments are becoming zombified on a weekly basis. Many organizations panic once they've recognized the seriousness of this infection. Often, after the first panic settles in, the phase of denial starts.

You'll hear statements like:

- ◆ "That's just the way things work here."
- ◆ "This is a one-of-a-kind organization, we're too unique to do Scrum by the book."
- ◆ "We don't have time for all these Scrum ceremonies."
- ◆ "We can't do Scrum by the book here."
- ◆ "Our developers just want to code, doing 'real' Scrum will only make them less productive."
- ◆ "If we increase the maturity of our employees to level 5, Scrum will work just fine."

Diagnose your team

Is your team suffering from Zombie Scrum? Something that looks like Scrum from a distance, but is missing a beating heart of valuable software. Find out with our symptom tracker.

To date, **1885 teams** have participated

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Christian Verwijs Johannes Schartau Barry Overeem

Need more help?

We are currently writing a book to help Scrum Teams in need. Addison-Wesley has scheduled the release for Q2 2020. Want to receive an autographed copy? [Sign up here.](#)

Infection Tracker

■ Average □ Most teams (1005)



The purpose of our book the “Zombie Scrum Survival Guide” is to offer over 40 tangible experiments that help you fight Zombie Scrum. This does require you to be brave, bold, and ferocious. But we know you can do this. And remember, you’re not in this alone. There’s a global movement, willing to fight Zombie Scrum together!

Zombie Scrum Survival Guide

A Journey to Recovery

Johannes Schartau, Barry Overeem, Christian Verwijs



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MINDSET SHIFT FROM PERENNIAL PROBLEMS TO PROGRESSIVE SOLUTIONS – A KEY TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES IN AGILE TRANSFORMATION

Author: Pranav Barar

In the last few years of my career as an Agile Consultant, I have been part of handful agile transformations for global client where the task was to introduce and adopt agile software development practices across the organization to eventually achieve some business goals. Leaders in these organizations talked about Agile, Scrum, and Kanban based on their own understanding, which was gained through readings, attending conferences and from their past experiences.



In spite of various brainstorming sessions conducted at the beginning, none of the leadership realized that developing a mindset in the organization to move away from perennial problems to finding progressive solutions will be the key factor in dealing with uncertainty and reaping benefits of being agile. To develop and shift the mindset, it becomes important to have the know-how to identify individuals with different mindsets. In this article, I will share my view about how to distinguish between different type of mindsets and the strategy to deal with such individuals during the agile transformation initiative. It is based on my experience of a multi-year agile transformation engagement with an organization having teams spread across 4 locations. During my journey which is still ongoing, I realized the importance of everything that is written further, and I am sharing my views in retrospect.

Each organization will have few individuals who will carry notions that “agile way of working will never work in their organization” but aren’t exactly sure why. These people carry different opinions about “what is agile and what it isn’t”? As a consultant working with these people, one of the crucial tasks for us is to shape their opinions and mindset. And before we learn about some simple steps to do so, it will be beneficial to learn the patterns to identify individuals with different mindsets.

I would categorize mindset of individuals into 2 spheres – One who end their thoughts at identifying problems (Problem oriented mindset) and the other who would always start from thinking of solutions (Solution oriented mindset). Here I share some references to how a person with a Problem oriented mindset thinks in comparison to a person with a Solution oriented mindset.

References to similar statements can help us to figure out the mindset of individuals who need to be

closely watched, constantly mentored so that they do not become obstacles in the journey towards an evolving mindset in the organization. Time spent in the initial few days of a transformation effort helps to create a mind map of promoters and supporters vs obstructers and opposers.

 Problem oriented mindset	 Solution oriented mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Only reasons out possible causes of failures ◆ Visualizes others problems in their environment ◆ Fears uncertainty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Also proposes solutions to mitigate failures ◆ Visualizes being in shoes of others problems ◆ Fearlessly deals with uncertainty

After identification of such individuals, the next step is to have a well thought out plan to deal with them so that they are engaged and allow the collective effort of transformation to gain pace as time progresses. I am sharing my view of few simple steps that have worked for me in dealing with individuals having a problem oriented mindset:

1. **Involve them from beginning** – While their involvement can slow down the pace of decision making but ignoring them can impact the alignment in transformation in long run. Involving them to key meetings and giving them a context upfront for each meeting can make the discussions smoother and conclusive.
2. **Listen to their opinions** – This is the first step to bridge mindset differences with these individuals. The inertia against change is highest at the beginning and the contribution of it would be maximum by such people. Asking relevant questions along with mindfulness makes them feel aligned, empathized as well as significant in the initiative.
3. **Support your arguments with data** – Avoid argument on every matter and select the ones which are required your intervention. Coming prepared with data for key issues can help you develop confidence in eyes of everyone especially the obstructers. It creates a culture where everyone utilizes objective reasoning to resolve issues.
4. **Move from the past and focus on future** – A lot of references will be given to the past, some of which should be ignored after careful consideration. Past was a baggage of different intentions, divergent actions and lack of direction. We should bring the discussions back to the future and all that is required to be done.
5. **Conclude every formal discussion with devolving action items to them** – Collaboration is a key to transforming and including key stakeholders. In distributed and large organizations, taking a direction and achieving a consensus will involve a series of meetings. Learning the art of tracking action items and figuring out the logical next steps is a must but more important is ensuring every individual with problem-oriented mindset is assigned some action items.
6. **Be transparent in accepting mistakes** – Every transformation effort is unique and so is the environment, variables and circumstances. So, it is not necessary that every step taken will result into a positive outcome. Create a culture of openness not only sharing successes but also acknowledging mistakes or failures. Agile Coaches, Scrum Masters should lead by example.
7. **Link failures to positive outcomes** – Failures are bound to happen and the earlier we learn from them, sooner will be see positive outcomes. Highlighting linkages between the learnings from failures and the applications of those learnings leading to positive outcomes will further strengthen the belief that experimentation is the way to move forward in unknown circumstances.

During my agile transformation engagement, I had past experiences that made me realize the importance of following the above mentioned steps from the beginning. For one of such assignments, I started with a 6-week maturity assessment initiative spread across 4 locations. Unaware of which teams I will eventually start the transformation with, I spent a



lot of time understanding individuals in addition to their existing process, practices, and culture. I created a mind map of individuals by understanding their perspectives during the Q&A sessions. Having those noted observations in my sub-conscious allowed me to work out a strategy in dealing with individuals and in hindsight I can confidently say that it's worked for me.

I hope that the views shared in this article summed up in 7 simple advices are useful for the readers and will add 2 cents to your knowledge bank. These are powerful tools which if exercised creatively will help you and your organization in being agile.



Pranav Barar

Principal Consultant
at Xebia



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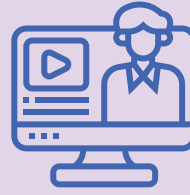
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THE MISSING VALUE IN SCRUM

Author: Arne Åhlander

SCRUM HAVE FIVE VALUES. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH? TO MANY IT MAY BE ENOUGH AND EVEN A LITTLE TOO MUCH. TO ME, THERE IS A VALUE MISSING. AND THAT IS TRUST.

Once, in the middle of a presentation about Agile values and principles, I was told by an executive, "We do not need to hear about values or principles, we need better practices. Tell us which practices to use!" That gave way to an animated discussion resulting in me and my colleagues being kicked out of the assignment. You could argue that the executive was lacking in respect. What was really lacking in my opinion, was trust. Trust that the organization would be able to improve on their own once given direction and support, trust in values and principles, and trust in the presenter (me in this case).

If you are familiar with Scrum, you should



be aware of the five Scrum values- Commitment, Focus, Openness, Respect and Courage. Scrum is a value-based framework. Therefore, in my opinion, every organization implementing Scrum should pay attention to these values. I have noticed that I have a slightly different take on values than what others have.

I often talk about the Scrum values as follows:

Commitment

The value of Commitment is about each person fulfilling a role in Scrum - be it a development team member, the Product Owner, or the Scrum Master - committing to fully understand the role and committing to do their very best in fulfilling the intentions of the role. Commitment is also about asking the Development Team to decide how much work to bring into each Sprint, or (as it is called in the Scrum Guide) to make a forecast. This is done during Sprint Planning with the best knowledge at the time.

Focus

If we ask a Development Team to commit to work, which we do, it is only fair to allow the Development Team to focus on meeting that commitment. Therefore, we ask the Development Team to focus on working on the Sprint Backlog, and nothing else, during the Sprint. Focus is also about meeting goals. We want the Development Team to focus on meeting the Sprint Goal before doing anything else.

Openness

Scrum is based upon Empirical process control which involves inspection and adaptation. It also involves transparency since it is close to impossible to inspect anything without transparency. Openness goes well with transparency. Openness even goes beyond transparency in the sense that being open is also honouring inclusion.

Respect

The fact that we have three different roles in Scrum underscores the need of respect across roles. In Scrum all three roles are important. They all have vital aspects to add. They are all in it together. This is even more emphasized when I take a look at the Development Team. The Development team in Scrum should be cross functional, which means that other team members may very well have different skill sets and background than me. This is beneficial and require us to respect each other and allow each other to contribute to the success of the team.

Courage

The last value, but not least, on my list is Courage. In Scrum we need the courage to work in a different way than we may have been used to. We need the courage to experiment. In Scrum we need the courage to commit to work. Committing to work means that there will most likely be someone holding us responsible for meeting that commitment. Knowing that and still make the commitment takes courage. In Scrum we need the courage to focus. This means we need the courage to say no to other work than what is in the Sprint Backlog. Even if it is our boss or manager asking us to do other things. In Scrum we need the courage to show openness. Not only being open when things are going according to plans and expectations (which is easy), but more importantly, being open when things are not going according to plan. To be open about things going wrong often requires a lot of courage. Finally, showing respect to others require courage. We need courage to allow the unexpected, courage to trust that others may have proposals, suggestions and solutions that are better than the ones I can come up with. Courage to believe that many individuals are smarter together than the smartest individual alone.

Trust - the missing value

So, in what way would the value of trust make Scrum better? As you may have noticed I used the word trust once



when writing about the other values. That was when writing about courage. That makes sense. In order to be courageous I need to put my trust into something.

Furthermore, I argue that we need trust in order to be able, as a development team, to commit to work. We need to trust that we as a team can deliver together. In order to focus we need to trust that others understand the importance of leaving us alone to focus on what is most important and valuable right now. In my mind, openness and respect especially requires trust. Trust may not be enough, we may need more than trust. I am referring to Psychological safety. Psychological Safety means that I as a team member feel I can be my true self for the team. I need to be able to trust the other team members to allow me to speak my heart and allow me to contribute to the success of the team.

By adding trust as a value in Scrum we will not fix all our problems. What we will allow, however, is for a dialogue to emerge. A dialogue about how focusing on psychological safety and dependability can make us a better team. Values in themselves does not help anyone. Discussing what they mean and taking action on the conclusion of the conversations may help us becoming better.



Arne Åhlander

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EVENTSTORMING: INCREASING PERFORMANCE THROUGH CONTINUOUS DISCOVERY, LEARNING, AND SHARING

*Author: Kenny Baas-Schwegler
& Pim Smeets*

THE STRONGEST PREDICTORS OF CONTINUOUS DELIVERY PERFORMANCE AND SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL SCALING ARE LOOSELY COUPLED TEAMS ENABLED BY LOOSELY COUPLED SOFTWARE ARCHITECTURE. TO CREATE BOTH, WE NEED TO RETHINK HOW WE CONTINUOUSLY DISCOVER, LEARN AND SHARE INFORMATION. EVENTSTORMING—A WORKSHOP-BASED METHOD FOR FACILITATING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT IT DISCIPLINES AND SILOS—IS A REMARKABLE METHOD THAT EMPOWERS KNOWLEDGE-SHARING TO THIS END.



Scaling and Handovers

One of the significant performance issues we see when teams and architecture are not loosely coupled is that an increase in the number of teams leads to an exponential increase in handovers. These handovers create queues between the teams, which will decrease your teams' and your company's IT performance. ThoughtWorks — the global technology company and advocate of Agile and Lean principles and practices — found that, on average, when a piece of work leaves a team (i.e., it requires the effort of multiple teams) the time needed to complete that work is an order of magnitude longer than without the handover. Even worse, faults may be added to the information since handovers can become corrupted by indirect communication that creates the illusion of knowledge. Many of us have already experienced this phenomenon while playing the telephone game as a child. The more handovers there are between an idea and the engineering teams, the later the wrong idea will go to production.

“The more handovers there are between an idea and the engineering teams, the later the wrong idea will go to production. “

Shared mindset and model

To decrease the number of handovers and increase performance, we need to rethink the way we conduct requirements engineering. In standard requirements engineering, each discipline has its own tool for collecting and visualizing their model. EventStorming offers a different approach and is easy to learn. In just one hour, you are contributing and creating a shared mindset and mental model of the problem. EventStorming uses just enough structure (in the form of colored sticky notes representing certain concepts) so that it is easier to visualize processes.

The main concept of EventStorming revolves around a domain event — something that happens and that is relevant for your business. One example in the theatre business is when a ticket is ordered and when a ticket is purchased. We structure these domain events on a paper roll that represents a timeline and we start telling the story, identifying opportunities and constraints along the way. EventStorming is always useful when you tell a story, and it is a great visual collaboration tool for meetings.

Visually collaborative meetings

The inspiration for EventStorming came from David Sibbet's 2010 book, *Visual Meetings: How Graphics, Sticky Notes, and Idea Mapping Can Transform Group Productivity*. This book explained that people who work visually have better ideas, make better decisions and are more committed to producing results. Visual meetings — and especially EventStormings — offer a different approach to the classic meetings held in many organizations. EventStorming was first used in the domain-driven design (DDD) community, where designing shared models for complex business problems required a different approach, especially when microservices started to become popular. Quick feedback loops about domain boundaries were a must for avoiding coupled architecture. Because classic modeling tools failed to discover these boundaries fast enough, a smarter way to design shared models with the business and with users was needed and developed.

Bounded context — an essential tool for performance

The most essential pattern in domain-driven design for creating loosely coupled teams and architecture is the bounded context. This central pattern is about consistently and explicitly drawing a demarcation line around a business concept and its language in order to make and keep the boundary explicit and consistent. Inside that bounded context, we collaboratively design a model based on conversations with the business, such conversations becoming the shared language for creating software. A bounded context can be created and delivered by one Agile team that is loosely coupled from other bounded contexts and teams.

¹ *Accelerate: The Science of Lean Software and DevOps* by Nicole Forsgren

However, getting the boundary of the bounded context correct is the most crucial decision when building software. To design boundaries correctly, we use a type of EventStorming called “Big Picture.” Big Picture Event Storming brings all of the people who collectively have all the knowledge of the business together, in one room. Here, they can collectively model the business and design bounded contexts, creating loosely coupled teams and architecture. These teams provide an organization with the flexibility to get (and remain ahead) of the competition.

Improving the business as a whole

Big Picture EventStorming is also a powerful tool for sharing knowledge and creating a shared vision of the entire business line. In this shared vision, we can also collectively decide what are the most significant constraints in our business strategy. Improving each part of the system in isolation will never yield the same results as when looking at the system as a whole. We want to improve our efforts where it matters most, where they have the most impact on improving performance. A Big Picture EventStorming is a perfect time to visualize the entire business line.

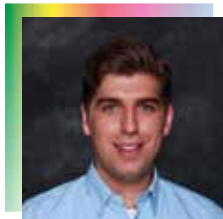
Today, sustainable market advantage is all about agility – being able to respond to opportunities as they arise. To achieve that, we need to stop thinking in terms of IT and business and start acting as an integrated team. EventStorming helps us do this by breaking down the barriers between IT and business. It enables us to share knowledge about what we do, why we do it and how we do it. By designing bounded contexts, we can ensure that a single team has the autonomy it needs to independently develop and release software that is aligned with business goals.

The result? No more unnecessary handovers.



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MEASURING THE VALUE OF BUSINESS AGILITY

Author: Daria Nozhkina

TODAY, MORE THAN A THIRD OF ALL COMPANIES HAVE EMBARKED ON SOME FORM OF AGILE TRANSFORMATION. SOME ARE FURTHER ALONG THAN OTHERS BECAUSE THEIR INDUSTRIES REQUIRE AGILITY TO SURVIVE. LEADERS OF THESE COMPANIES FACE THE ARDUOUS TASK OF TRANSFORMING THEIR LEGACY ORGANIZATIONS WHILE STILL DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO THE STAKEHOLDERS. THESE LEADERS NEED TO CONDUCT THIS TRANSFORMATION CORRECTLY – TO GET IT RIGHT.

Identifying and measuring what matters is at the heart of making such a transformation a success. This identification and measurement is a direct reflection of how effective the leaders are in making decisions and setting strategic goals, and it helps them improve the cost, speed, and direction of the transformational progress. Measurement also encourages people in the organization to make the vital cultural change. Once they see their efforts are translating into real value, they know their work is not in vain. Measurement is the key to unlocking the ROI and achieving the long-term value potential of business agility.

So, what do you measure to capture the transformational gains and make sure they come at a reasonable cost? And how can you be certain they are here to stay? Business agility generally adds value in three ways: it impacts the top line or the costs (or both); drives profitability; and contributes soft value, which ensures that the profitability achieved is sustainable over the long term.

Organic top-line growth

Agile was pioneered by companies whose survival depended on dynamically responding to their customers' needs. Establishing Agile practices allowed these companies to quickly deliver relevant products and services, resulting in increased sales revenues, better time to market than their competition, and ultimately a higher market share. All of these effects can be measured at various levels of granularity – for example, sales revenue vs. customer conversion, customer churn vs. customer retention, units sold vs. product market share. These metrics can signal the effectiveness of change initiatives and help companies adjust in a timely manner.

Improved bottom line

More often than not, improvement in a company's bottom line through cost reduction is a positive side effect of Agile transformation but not its goal, per se. Such transformations would lack a strategic focus on creating lasting change through Agile, making the tracking of value creation rather futile. There are three sources of cost reduction seen in Agile transformations: project delivery, resource optimization, and resource efficiency.

Project delivery improvements include process efficiency (do more with less), faster delivery (do it in less time) and higher quality (less rework required). In Agile, gone are the days when it was feasible to perform processes like

throwing spaghetti on the wall (see what sticks or works), while accountability catches up (if ever). Leaders pay close attention to the project performance levels to see where changes are required both within and around the teams. Resource optimization results from some of the mid-level roles becoming redundant as Agile teams become smaller and nimbler, without the need for much oversight. Though a sensitive topic, it is nevertheless an inevitable part of Agile transformations, which require cultural shifts and changes in the set of soft and hard skills needed. Both project delivery and resource optimization are measured in a reduced number of FTEs needed to complete the initiatives in the scope of an Agile transformation.

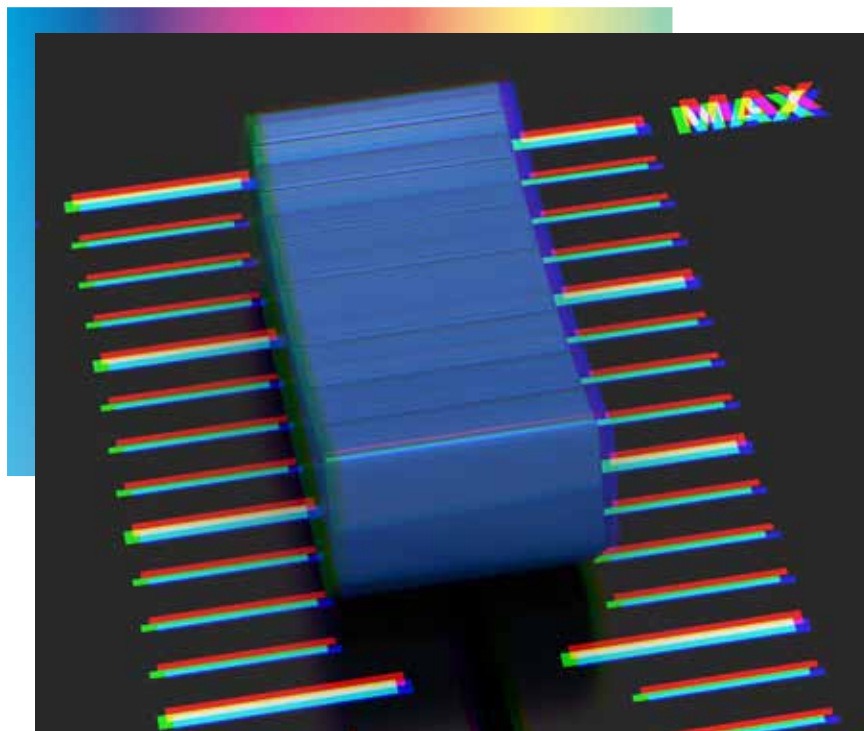
The last source of cost reduction is in resource efficiency. At the basis of Agile is the principle of managing a portfolio of projects simultaneously, closely tracking performance and making go/no-go decisions quickly. A frequent and flexible process for allocating budgets to projects means resources are redeployed to projects with a high propensity to succeed, and no bad money is thrown after good.

Tracking these measures helps track the success of transformation at an initiative level, as well as monitor the overall scope of Agile transformation, as a case in point to the key stakeholders.

Soft value

In Agile transformations, the company's culture is the internal modus operandi that sets the tone towards its customer base. Ultimately, it's the people in the organization that drive the change. Leaders who want to show hard results as a result of an Agile transformation need to be uncompromising when it comes to finding suitable talent for the organization's strategic needs. "Agile" people possess qualities that are different from those who are more attuned to traditional corporate cultures. People obsessed with customer needs and delivering on customer promise are the new norm –the core of Agile. Making this culture visible to the client ensures long-term satisfaction, brand loyalty and, finally, competitiveness. Investing in attracting, growing and keeping the right talent to pivot the organization into Agile is essentially investing in your organization's survival.

Naturally, the ultimate value of an Agile transformation depends on the starting point of the organization, the extent of transformational change and the leaders' ability to identify where the transformation would make the most impact. There is, however, ample evidence that Agile transformations generate value for companies across the board, so it's not a question of "if" but a question of "when" – and to what extent companies are willing to accept the trade-offs they face in order to still be in business ten years from now.



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KANBAN: A WEAPON TO ACHIEVE GREATER TRANSPARENCY

Author: Arnab Rajkhowa

Transparency being one of the pillars of Empiricism, coming up with different ways to visualize the progress of a team have become an inherent need for all Agile teams. This has largely benefitted teams in identifying issues and bottlenecks faster, resulting into early resolution of impediments.

Scrum upholds the pillar of transparency and empowers teams by providing many tools to use within its framework. However, not all teams can fit into the Scrum ways of working.

In this article, I am sharing my recent experience on how moving away from Scrum and embracing Kanban, with the same spirit of empiricism, helped my team in improving delivery, as well as brought a sense of togetherness across dependent teams. Towards the end of the article, you would see how small changes in teams' ways of working resulted into tangible and visible benefits.

In summer of 2019, I joined the DevOps team of one of our Cyber Security clients as a Scrum Master. The team's primary responsibilities were to:

- ◆ Deliver automated solutions and services to the Development and IT teams
- ◆ Adopt newer DevOps practices and toolset to leverage across the organization

Expectations from me as a Scrum Master were - Stakeholder Management and facilitating scope management, planning

and forecasting. Looking back to my initial days in the team, the times were really chaotic, and it was difficult to figure out where we were heading. Some of the observations were:

- ◆ Everybody was too busy, but no work seemed to be completed.
- ◆ Each engineer had a different understanding of the definition of done.
- ◆ Zero documentation – requirements were shared in daily stand-ups.
- ◆ Mismatch of expectation due to unorganized communication within & across teams resulted into never-ending work.
- ◆ Research initiatives either took humungous amount of time or the closure never happened due to cross team dependencies.

However, there were multiple strengths within the group of individuals which could be leveraged to form a team. Some of the indicators were:

- ◆ Multi-Skilled individuals
- ◆ Can-do attitude of engineers even under pressure
- ◆ Tech leads were cooperative and open for feedback
- ◆ Willingness to research and adopt newer DevOps tools and practices
- ◆ Team was welcoming Agile adoption

After assessing the performance of the team for a few weeks, a retrospective session was held to share all observations and possible action items to change existing ways of working. The DevOps Engineers were virtually divided into 3 streams viz. Continuous Integration, Continuous Deployment, and Continuous Monitoring with one lead in each stream.

Scrum mode on!

Teams agreed to welcome Scrum with an optimistic intent which would result into:

- ◆ Stabilization of the inflow of requirements as agreed in Sprint Planning event
- ◆ Predictability for a week and focused work based on team's estimation
- ◆ Sprint Review to compare actuals with planned items

Sprint Cadence was set in a way so that the team gets maximum development time with less distractions. Many key changes were done in the team such as - Leads acted as Product Owners, JIRA Scrum Boards were used to track progress, multiple training sessions were held for the team, estimation started & appropriate closure at the end of every week with review and retrospective sessions. Team started making tasks visible, things were getting done, a sense of accomplishment arrived.

However, some issues continued over 8 sprints such as:

- ◆ Ad-hoc high priority requests within sprints
- ◆ Missing the targeted scope as IT dependencies identified later in the sprint
- ◆ Monolithic pull requests - review and merge used to take more time than usual
- ◆ Requirement detailing was weak due to Tech Lead turning into a PO,

Time for a team offsite – resulting into embracing Kanban

Team offsite is always beneficial to bring in positive changes in the team. This also invited time for a bigger retrospective. Practicing Scrum helped the team in identifying strengths to leverage within team and shortcomings to resolve. Time boxing helped in creating some discipline within the team; however, it was unrealistic to complete all of items planned

within a sprint provided we had unstoppable ad-hoc requests and IT dependencies.

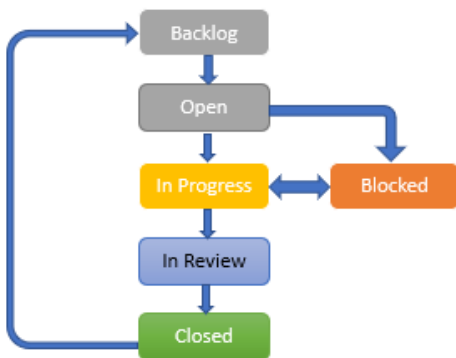
Hence, resulting into the idea of embracing Kanban with the beneficial habits inherited from Scrum.

Kanbanizing Scrum

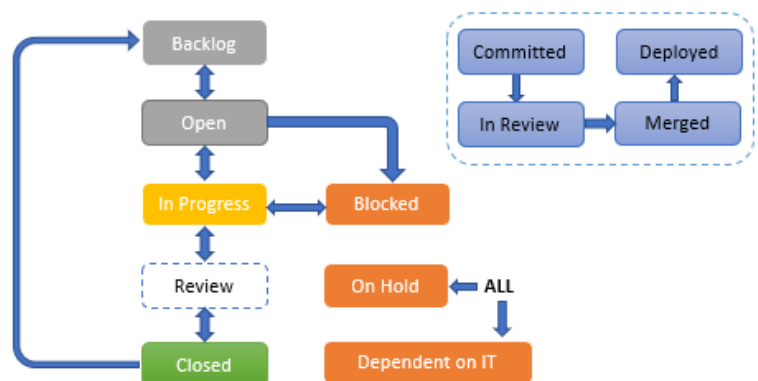
Some of the key highlights of the changes in practices were:

- ◆ **Planning and Review** - Weekly Planning and Review sessions were time-boxed to 1 hour & 30 mins each with the entire team's participation. Review sessions were majorly to assess the progress and understand situations on why items could not be completed.
- ◆ **Backlog Refinement** - Team Leads fortnightly reviewed and refined the backlog to add description to the upcoming requirements. This being a collective activity for the three Leads, helped them to figure out dependencies and accordingly assign correct prioritization for team to voluntarily pull items to working scope.
- ◆ **WIP (Work in Progress) limits** – Defining WIP limits in the “In Progress” and “In Review” columns helped the team to stay focused. The natural tendency of multi-tasking has slowed down significantly.
- ◆ **Defining Done** - Definition of Done (DoD) was formalized for the team where an item was considered Done only after a Pull Request (PR) was merged to the Master branch & a round of review was conducted. Before a PR is merged, requirements were to be reviewed and approved by at least 2 team members which takes care of the quality requirements.
- ◆ **Changes in JIRA workflow:** The initial JIRA workflow was updated with the following changes:
 - » Introduced specific blocker types due to multiple types of dependencies -
 - » **Blocked** – on 3rd party, development team, awaiting response
 - » **On Hold** – progress started, but could not be continued due to other higher priority task
 - » **Dependent on IT** - specific to call out types of blockers
 - » Split the stages of Review to integrate with the code deployment workflow in GitHub
 - » Made it bidirectional so that tickets can easily be moved back to the previous state if acceptance criteria of that current state fail to meet & further changes are anticipated.

Old Workflow



New Workflow



These changes helped in increased usage of the Kanban board as the team found it easier to drag and drop tickets to appropriate status. Also, dependencies were much clearer for teams to highlight and callout for help.

- ◆ **Making use of large screen:** Visual Stand-ups helped team to daily go through the planned backlog and re-prioritize items as necessary. Blockers were identified by looking at the board and intra team dependencies were resolved immediately. Scrum Master used to facilitate the inter-team dependencies and IT blockers.
- ◆ **Introducing Metrics:** Scrum Master continued to share weekly metrics with the team which includes – Throughput, Avg. Cycle time, Cumulative Flow diagram and Flow Efficiency. Flow efficiency resulted into highlighting the process overhead as compared to the effort required.
- ◆ **Including IT Engineers in stand-ups:** Based on the Flow efficiency & Cycle Time metrics shared, a mutual agreement was set with the IT team that a point of contact would join the stand-ups to note and share progress of any IT dependencies. This led to much faster closure of IT tickets.

Key Benefits:

These minor changes were impactful and resulted into major qualitative and quantitative benefits -

- ◆ A much happier, motivated and self-organized team with engineers from DevOps, Development and ITOps
- ◆ Average wait time of IT tickets resolution dropped from 23 days to 8 days and then to 3 days over a period of 7 months.
- ◆ Flow Efficiency increased from 18% to 39% to 62% over 7 months.

Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

In the Agile world of Software development, Transparency is the weapon towards educating teams and the organization. Use of Kanban with custom ways of working enables transparency, which results into identification and implementation of positive changes towards continuous improvement and faster delivery.

If carefully observed, all changes we made while working on Kanban resulted into making things more transparent for the team and other stakeholders. Each small change went through more than a couple of iterations of careful review and intense discussion before being implemented. Impact of changes may not be very apparent right away, but we should remember that every cloud has a silver lining.

As a Scrum Master/Facilitator/Coach, what had helped me in the journey was my continuous interrogation to self - “Am I seeing the real picture of the team or it is just what is being shown?” and the quest to find the response by making things as visible as possible.

Always be transparent! *Transparency builds Trust & Trust accelerates Success!*



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THE SECRET KEY TO PERFORMANCE: INNER AGILITY

Author: Mirjam Diependaal

ORGANIZATIONS STRIVE TO OPTIMIZE THEIR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, TO PERFECTLY CATER TO THEIR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS, AND SURPASS EXPECTATIONS WHEN POSSIBLE. TO THIS END, THEY SET CHANGE OBJECTIVES, TUNE WORK PROCESSES, AND RECONFIGURE THE ARCHITECTURE OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES. AND YET, TOO OFTEN THE EXPECTED IMPACT OR CHANGE DOESN'T MATERIALIZE. SOMETIMES THEIR PERFORMANCE DOESN'T IMPROVE AT ALL. WHY?

When in transition, organizations often forget that the essential factor in change is people. And people are often afraid of change. That's why organizations should explicitly focus on helping people develop inner agility, because, without it, lasting change won't occur. Leadership plays a key role in modeling this inner agility, but for a successful transformation, each individual must take responsibility.

People are stuck on autopilot

A change process requires building a bridge between the known and the unknown, between the familiar and new. To make this possible, people have to leave the beaten track and let go of their certainties. That's challenging because people and groups are inclined to cling to the familiar and to act out of habit. Change requires self-awareness: which beliefs, motives, opinions, fears, and needs, are the basis of my behavioral patterns? Are they useful, or do they impede the transformation that is needed now?

It's all about personal leadership and inner agility

We all bring our life lessons and experiences with us to work. That's the basis for our behaviors and actions, whether conscious or not. When things get challenging or problematic, it triggers our defense mechanisms—strategies that allow us to avoid feeling or facing an uncomfortable or painful reality. These strategies often lead to avoidance behaviors, such as not being fully open, or not voicing our genuine opinions, or evading personal responsibility. This (unintentionally) sabotages the transition progress and performance.

The only way we can create change within our workplace is by first focusing on ourselves. We should look at ourselves to see what we do to keep ineffective interaction patterns in place and how it affects our performance and interpersonal relationships.

Developing personal leadership empowers us to speak out and show ourselves without masks. It employs genuine curiosity without judgment in an attempt to understand another. It draws on our courage and trust, to say what we experience in our inner world, and to listen openly to the response of the other. It's the key to improving cooperation and performance within teams and organizations.

Creating the right culture

Developing personal leadership and increasing inner agility are personal choices that can't be mandated by an organization. In fact, making it seem that it's the people who have to change while the organization stays the same would be counterproductive. Still, organizations clearly have a crucial role in stimulating and facilitating inner agility. They can do this by creating a safe culture in which people are invited to be open about what is going on within themselves and

where relationships and interactions are valued for their quality. Leaders embody the (unconscious) values and norms of an organization in their behavior, so they have to lead-by-example for a culture change to take place.

Powerful approaches for development from the core

How can an organization stimulate people and teams to grow from their core? There are three powerful approaches to bring about sustainable change in people, their interaction patterns, and the quality of the collaborative relationships:

- 1. Slow down to speed up** - Getting out of ingrained behavioral patterns takes awareness. This requires slowing down; to take time to perceive ourselves and reflect. In an organization with pressure to perform, taking time to slow down seems like a counter-intuitive solution. Nevertheless, time for reflection is the catalyst for the eventual change.

Take some time before every conversation or meeting to get clear on what it is that you want to achieve or contribute. Even more importantly, get clear as to how you're going to do that effectively. Encourage participants to openly express their intentions to each other in a brief "check-in." Develop the habit of reflecting afterward, preferably together, but at minimum alone. What went well? Where did we miss an opportunity, or where did emotion get in the way? What can we do to fix this?

- 2. Make the invisible visible** - In conversations and meetings, we often get absorbed in the tasks at hand, discussing practical matters. But for sustainable change to occur, it's important to make behavior and underlying beliefs, motives and needs explicit in the here and now.

Invite people to speak freely about what matters to them and about their tendencies (to fight, flight, or freeze). Explore and define any underlying needs and encourage an open dialogue. Ask for open feedback on how our own and each other's behaviors, and how it affects us.

Get a shared understanding of everyone's role in the interaction patterns. Ask each other questions such as, "What gets you in a flight, fight or freeze mode and what do you need to inspire your best work? What are we creating or maintaining together in our collaboration? Does this get us to our destination?"

- 3. Learn to love the difference** - As human beings, we tend to appreciate what we know, and so clear personal preferences are created in collaboration with colleagues. We tend to avoid others who deviate too much from what we like or know. But this strategy keeps us from gaining valuable knowledge and wisdom. Differences can be the starting point for creativity, new possibilities, and personal growth.

Make an effort to seek out opposing views in your organization and in conversations. Be inquisitive and publicly praise different opinions. Asking in-depth questions and making sure the other is understood are important skills—changing team interactions from "yes, but..." responses, into, "Can you tell us what you mean and why it's important to you?"

Develop the habit of self-reflection when getting irritated by someone who is, act, or thinks "differently." Ask yourself, "What does my irritation with this say about me?" Self-reflection in these situations often leads to a difficult or uncomfortable part of ourselves. And that's where our opportunity for growth lies.

To ensure an Agile transformation is truly successful, focus on developing inner agility in all roles and levels in your organization. Leaders should set an example. Find the courage to be authentic in moments of contact, and open about any triggers or dilemmas. Invite and stimulate all employees to follow. Everyone should share the responsibility to make the transition a success.

Slow down, make the invisible visible, and learn from your differences!



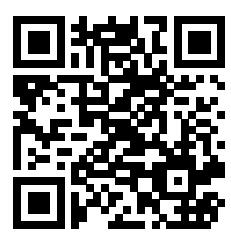
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