Developing Agile Leadership - Toolkit
agileleadershiptoolkit.org
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- **Scrum Coaching Retreat 2015 - Developing Agile Leadership Team**
Introduction

What is Leadership?

*Embedding the capacity for greatness in the people and practices of an organization, and decoupling it from the personality of the leader* -- David Marquet

What is Agile Leadership?

A combination of responsibilities and attributes unique to leaders that are building communities of thought and action. As you are working with leaders on a journey to become more Agile, could they answer 1 or more of the following questions related to responsibilities and attributes?

Responsibilities as an Agile Leader:

➔ Are you setting clear vision and communicating the goals to your teams?
➔ Do you understand and support Agile and Scrum Values?
➔ Are you aligning funding to business value?
➔ Are you prioritizing the strategic portfolio, while respecting WIP limits?
➔ Are you truly supporting your teams?
➔ Are you prioritizing and taking action on impediments that have been escalated to you?

Attributes of an Agile Leader:

➔ Do you trust team members first, in order for teams to trust each other?
➔ Do you embrace thought leadership that stems from collaborative self-organizing teams?
➔ Do you maintain an effective balance between leadership & authority?
How would a leader benefit from developing a more Agile mindset?

To the Leader:
- Engage in strategic work vs. managing the details for staff
- Worry less given the increased visibility/insight to problems earlier
- Same person @ work as I am @ home
- Increased throughput and quality
- New capabilities: adaptability, self awareness, collaboration, resilience, flexibility

To the Customer:
- The right product is the result vs. only getting what we conceived initially
- Ability to provide early feedback

To the Employee:
- Opportunities for increased autonomy, mastery and purpose
- Increased morale and engagement
● Improved work/life balance
● Time to innovate

To the Organization:
● All participants can bring their full mental capacity to the problems at hand.
● We become a destination employer
● Broadened decision making

Managing Up:
● Take “Good” risks
● My boss is aware that people want to work with me
● Customers ask for our team
● I have increased time to support the priorities of my boss
The person you are coaching will likely bring up objections in implementing and supporting the agile methodology. In this section we suggest how to approach addressing these objections. We found a lot of these objections fall into six common categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Proposition</th>
<th>Why do we need agile, why don't we keep doing what works. Why change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Management</td>
<td>Moving from managing hard releases to managing smaller regular releases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return on Investment</td>
<td>Budget and Metrics questions that come from a command and control attitude.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Perceptions that agile will have an impact on short term/long term productivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fragile Agile</td>
<td>We are doing some agile artifacts, we don't need all of them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resistance to Change</td>
<td>Companies/ Employees are resistant to change. Morale will suffer if we make changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a coach we suggest the following approach for dealing with objections:

- **Clearly state the objection.**
- **Provide a clear answer.**
- **Use this opportunity to coach the leader.**
- **Provide examples to back up your answer.**
- **Provide resources to further educate the objector.**

**Examples**

**Value Proposition Objection**

**Objection:** Why not keep doing what has worked before? (Waterfall)

**Suggested Answer:** Requirements gathering tries and fails to identity everything up front. Application is outdated on launch as it is built to specification written months or years before.

**Coaching Tip:** Show an example of a waterfall project that had issues in the past.

**Example:** Dr. Winston W. Royce the ‘creator’ of waterfall wrote in his paper in 1970 that ‘I believe in this concept, but the implementation described above is risky and invites failure.’

**Capacity Management Objection**

**Objection:** Leader is asking for unreasonable project goals, could be asking for people to work on multiple team.
Suggested Answer: What we are building is a sustainable stable environment for the team accomplish their work. Splitting focus will result in lower productivity.

You can also play the https://www.crisp.se/gratis-material-och-guirder/multitasking-name-game on this.

Example:
Read the case studies section in http://www.realization.com/pdf/effects_of_multitasking_on_organizations.pdf for examples of how you can get more done with your teams if you focus them on less things

ROI Objection

Objection: Traditional cost accounting and Agile budgeting don’t match.

Suggested Answer:
With Agile you will gain better control of how budget is spent, with insight into the budget’s impact on value streams. You’ll be able to more frequently optimize budget allocation. The principal financial benefits of agile over waterfall are reduced time to value, and reduced sunk cost before value.

Coaching Tips:
- Move away from project based budgeting to funding agile releases aligned to value streams –

Value stream operating budget visual courtesy of Scaled Agile Framework 3.0
Exercise fiscal governance with dynamic budgeting tied to the Portfolio Vision
- Budget for the portfolio backlog

**Example:** *Excerpt from Open Sourcery:* Apple is Agile and churns out products pretty regularly. Google is also Agile and definitely has the agility to make changes throughout product life cycles. If things don’t work out, they can course correct pretty easily. Microsoft on the other hand is not fully Agile and pushes products pretty slow. This slower time to market can cost more in budget and negative impact on customer satisfaction.

**Productivity Objection**

**Objection:** The team is performing at a lower productivity than before Agile.

**Suggested Answer:** Productivity takes on more of a quantitative meaning in agile which results in better customer satisfaction and lower costs.

**Coaching Tip:** Teach about forming, storming, norming and performing.

**Example:** iPhone vs Windows Phone. The iPhone was created in an agile environment and the windows phone was created in a waterfall environment. The market share differences between the two shows the benefits of an agile approach.

**Fragile Agile Objection**

**Objection:** My teams are doing Agile but not being Agile. I dont trust them that they are Agile.
**Suggested Answer:** Hmm. This seems like a bigger impediment to solve, have you found seeked feedback from the teams on whey they are doing this.

**Coaching Tip:** Talk to the teams, do a retrospective and build a list of impediments they have. Compare the teams on Agile Values and Principles.

**Example:** In most cases when teams are not being Agile, it’s not the team it is the system that they are working on that needs changed. Here is an example that you can use to [http://www.solutionsiq.com/docs/agile2009-mapping-the-change-battlefield1.pdf](http://www.solutionsiq.com/docs/agile2009-mapping-the-change-battlefield1.pdf)

**Resistance to Change Objection**

**Objection:** Agile introduces a significant amount of change throughout multiple levels of the organization.

**Suggested Answer:** Arm leadership with a sensible vision and communication strategy to ensure organizational alignment with the legacy challenges Agile is solving. Create a shared understanding of the journey to minimize feelings of threat and anxiety.

**Coaching Tip:** Actively engage leadership and empower them to be the “early adopters” of the change. Encourage structure, incentives, positive praise, and regular communication that acknowledges the journey across the change continuum.

**Example:**
Build your organization’s field of dreams, “if you build it, they will come.”
How Can A Leader Assess Their Approach to Leadership?

Agile leadership can be assessed based on the following themes:

- Goal Setting and Performance Management
- Management and Leadership Style
- Work Environment and Organizational Culture
- Autonomy and Responsibility
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Communication and Knowledge Sharing
- Competences and Mastery
- Continuous Improvement and Learning Organization
- Processes and Tools
- **Value Generation and Purpose.**

For more see our [Agile Leadership Assessment Spreadsheet](#).

This questionnaire was designed to start a conversation between a Leader and an Agile Coach to increase successful interactions with the organization in the adoption of Agile into the corporation.
What Techniques Will Enable Agile Leadership?

Path from Command & Control to Agile Leaders
There is no obvious trick to this. See change-management literature. e.g. http://change-management.com/

Powerful Questions to Engage Leadership

- What needs to change now?
- What needs to change in the future?
- What is the most urgent concern you have for the company?
- What are your top three priorities?
- What are we consistently doing that makes us better as a team?
- How do we adapt to change, internal and external?
- What do we have control of that if changed, can increase success?
- What should we stop doing now?
- Are we consistently demonstrating our values? And if so, how?
Discussion that Fosters Servant Leadership

- Help them understand the importance of role they play. Agile teams thrive when their leaders are agile with them.
- Open a dialogue on Servant Leadership. It is likely you are coaching someone who already has some of these important characteristics. This opens a safe common ground for your coaching conversation.
  - Values diverse opinions
  - Cultivates a culture of trust
  - Develops other leaders
  - Helps people with life issues
  - Encourages
  - Sells instead of tells
  - Thinks you, not me
  - Thinks long-term
  - Acts with humility

Techniques to Coach Leaders

- Aspire to become a Trusted Advisor with the leader. A Trusted Advisor manifests some of the following behaviors:
  - Is in it for the long term relationship, not short term gain
  - Puts client’s interests in front of their own
  - Genuinely interested in their clients and their business
  - Works really hard to understand the client’s underlying interests not just surface wants. As Steven Covey so succinctly puts it in The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People - “Seek first to understand and then to be understood”.
  - Is reliable - does what they say they will do. “I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe you” (Friedrich Nietzsche)
  - Is credible (but doesn’t feel the need to try too hard!)
  - Gets up close and personal and connects emotionally
  - Is authentic, passionate and enthusiastic “Flaming enthusiasm, backed by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success.” (Dale Carnegie)

Games/Exercises to Demonstrate Agile Leadership

- Multitasking Name Game: writing names one letter at a time for multiple people, vs one person at a time: Multitasking Name Game | Crisp - Get agile with Crisp
- Ball-Point Game, with leader directing activities vs supporting the teams.
- Backlog with vision vs no vision
- Impediment Removal Escalation Board. (First identify impediments. Then find level that would need to solve them.)
- Delegation Board & Delegation Poker
- 60 Steps exercise to demonstrate self organization vs. Command and Control: [AgileConnection | Sixty Steps in the Right Direction](#)

Coaching Leaders to Coach
- “Leader as Coach: Strategies for Coaching and Developing Others” - Mary Dee Hicks

Teams Working with No One Who has Agile Experience
- Provide training, coaches, advisors, references, communities of practice, etc.

Team “Mindset” Tools & Techniques:
[Agile Mindset Assessment & Agile Mindset Matrix](#)
Where Can A Leader Find Inspiration and Deeper Learning?

Books on Leadership
First Things First - Stephen R. Covey
Land on Your Feet, Not on Your Face - Jim Hessler
Principle Centered Leadership - Stephen R. Covey
The 3rd Alternative: Solving Life’s Most Difficult Problems - Stephen R. Covey
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change - Stephen R. Covey
Leadership Agility - Bill Joiner
Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box - The Arbinger Institute Management
Management 3.0 - Jurgen Appelo
Radical Management - Steve Denning
Turn This Ship Around - David Marquet

Books on System Thinking
Quality Software Management, Vol. 1: Systems Thinking - Gerald Weinberg
Quality Software Management, Vol. 3: Congruent Action - Gerald Weinberg

Articles
4 Qualities that make an Agile Leader - Will Yakowicz (Inc Magazine)
Agile Leadership Engagement Grid by Len Legestee
Personal Agility Canvas - David Prior
Leadership in an Agile Environment - Patty Mandarino
Summary of Yahoo! Groups post on Agile Leadership by Ron Jeffries

Videos
TED Talk - How Great Leaders Serve Others - David Marquet
Greatness - David Marquet
TED Talk - The Power of Vulnerability - Brene Brown

Presentations
Slideshare - Lean & Agile Project Management and Its Leadership Implications by David Rico
Webinar - Agile Managers: Redefine your Role by William Rowden
Webinar Resource - Agile Manager's Cheat Sheet by William Rowden
Raleigh Scrum Coaching Retreat, 2014 - Coaching “Up” to the C-Suite

Websites
All About Agile - Agile Leadership
Scrum Coaching Retreat 2015 - Developing Agile Leadership Team

List of team members that worked on Developing Agile Leadership. This toolbox was developed during the Scrum Alliance Coaching Retreat - Seattle June 2015.

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