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# The Agile Coaching DNA

<https://leanpub.com/TheAgileCoachingDNA>

Last Publication: Jun 2019

This book walks around the landscape of Agile coaching, why it exists, and whom it serves. The core verbs are the DNA (building blocks) of effective coaching:

1. catalyze improvements
2. promote awareness
3. boost ownership
4. facilitate barrier removal
5. develop competencies

The remainder of the book is about exploring each of those practices, how they manifest, anti-patterns to be aware of, practices/tools coaches can use, and anecdotes from others in the field around those five practices. It concludes with a call to action for Agile coaches to help train other coaches to build a sustainable change culture.

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## Part 1 - Introduction and Typical Challenges

“...I recognized it's hard to put this role in a box. To be honest, it's challenging creating a universal definition for this sort of role. However, even with this ambiguity, there are essential elements to define us as Agile Coaches.”

**Agile coaching is an approach towards fostering organizational improvement.**

Typical challenges during a change journey

- **Primary Problems** – e.g., increase customer satisfaction, reduce time to market
- **Unawareness / Inattention** – get a clear understanding of problems, gaps, opportunities
- **Low Sense of Ownership** – you need ownership for self-organizing teams of collaborative decision-makers
- **Gap of Competencies** – people need different skills and behaviors to get to a future state
- **Organizational Barriers** – companies need to optimize processes and designs to favor flexibility, responsiveness, and adaptability

Agile coaching is not about using Scrum, SAFe, etc. We should master how to mix these options to help organizations improve.

## Part 2 - Who Are the Clients of Agile Coaching?

The clients are anyone who needs to learn new skills related to Agile or use it to improve results or achieve a goal.

**“An Agile Coach can act on different organizational levels to facilitate change across a company.”**

Why do we need Agile coaches? **To combine mentoring and coaching to help people embrace change.**

- Help people by asking open questions. Help them explore their mental model and find their own motivation.
- People have their own motivations, needs, desires, fears, values, beliefs, and expectations. Just telling people what to do often doesn't help.

You may not need Agile coaches.

- There's a difference between mentoring and coaching. (See also the [Cynefin framework](#).)
  - **Mentor**: provide correct answers to solve a problem [Do this for “complicated” problems.]

- **Coach:** provide a set of questions to help people find the answers themselves [Do this for “complex” problems.]
- If your company needs prescriptive answers, hire a good mentor, experienced consultant, or a good manager to promote improvements.

Many Agile coaches have “fluffy approaches” (e.g., colorful elements that focus too much on feelings, values, happiness). Instead...

- **Identify the relevant problems to be solved.** Think tangible outcomes.
- **Understand your audience.** Some people want fluff, others want concrete things.
- **Don’t start with magic solutions.** Invest more time listening to people’s problems, then help them explore solutions.
- **Use pull coaching instead of push coaching.** Don’t force your assistance on people. Let them know you can help, and give them space to learn and flourish. Don’t waste your time chasing people who don’t want to listen.

Some people aren’t receptive to coaching. **People must have a desire for a future state.**

### HIGH LEARNING

- +10 ↑ Implement (plan action, request support for follow-up).
- +9 ↑ Show genuine enthusiasm about making a change.
- +8 ↑ Think out loud, making new associations about the issue.
- +7 ↑ Take full responsibility for the results that were created.
- +6 ↑ Request information and examples in an effort to understand (not to defend what you did).
- +5 ↑ Openly wonder about your role in creating the issue.
- +4 ↑ Express genuine curiosity about ways to resolve the issue.
- +3 ↑ Express your appreciation for the message, regardless of the tone of delivery or whether you agree.
- +2 ↑ Summarize key points without interjecting your ideas.
- +1 ↑ Look interested; demonstrate an open posture.

### THE KEY MOVE: CHOOSE CURIOSITY ABOUT THE OTHER PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

- 1 ↓ Show polite interest, while inwardly preparing your rebuttal.
- 2 ↓ Explain how the person misperceived the situation.
- 3 ↓ Justify and excuse the situation by providing a “logical” reason for the problem.
- 4 ↓ Interpret what person says as an undeserved attack.
- 5 ↓ Interrupt to give your perspective.
- 6 ↓ Comply and go along without expressing your reservations.
- 7 ↓ Blame someone or something else.
- 8 ↓ Make snippy replies & non-verbally show your irritation.
- 9 ↓ Complain about decisions and criticize people who aren’t present.
- 10 ↓ Agree with no real commitment to do what you say you’ll do.

### HIGH DEFENSIVENESS

Source: [worthethic.com](http://worthethic.com)

Resistance to coaching...

- Lack of trust in the coach, resistance to change, fear of exposing one’s vulnerabilities
- “The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back.” – Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*
- Ask more questions than giving answers.
- Resist judging if the current practices are bad or not. (I call this **meeting people where they already are.**)

## Part 3 - Introducing the DNA for Agile Coaching

**Agile coaching is about how to be able to respond more quickly and with less risk for business opportunities.**

### Catalyze Improvements

- Agile coaches are **catalysts for the continuous improvement culture.**
- We provide support and facilitation to the change journey.
- We master models regarding change management and facilitation.

## Promote Awareness

- Agile coaches are **aware of the problems, gaps, needs, options, solutions, etc.**
- We support people as they explore their mindsets, behaviors, consequences to promote changes and improvements.
- We help people visualize and measure workflows that identify opportunities for improvements.

## Boost Ownership

- Ownership means that the person has sufficient commitment on the path toward some goal (i.e., knowing why and how). This builds self-esteem and self-motivation.
- We don't want people to be dependent on us; **we want them to learn how to learn.**

## Facilitate Barrier Removal

- **Agile coaches are change facilitators** – people who help the org identify improvement opportunities and foster collaborative strategies to maximize the success of change efforts.
- We teach people to remove obstacles by themselves instead of just removing barriers for them.

## Develop Competencies

- Agile coaches help people learn new skills through coaching and mentoring.
- Remember there is a difference between coaching and mentoring
  - Coaching – complex problem where you don't know the cause-and-effect linkage; ask more open-ended questions
  - Mentoring – complicated problem where there is a cause-and-effect linkage, but needs some analysis or expert knowledge; more telling instead of asking

## Part 4 - How to Evolve with This DNA

The five core elements – barrier removal, awareness, improvement, ownership, competencies – have sub-activities depending on the company, culture, and what level you're coaching at.

### Example: Team Level



# THE AGILE COACHING DNA

Example of evolution for Team Level

@manoelp



Example: Agile Competency Framework (from the Agile Coaching Institute)

# THE AGILE COACHING DNA

Example of evolution based on the Agile Coaching Competency Framework (ACI)

@manoelp



Example: Enterprise Level

THE  
**AGILE COACHING DNA**  
Example of evolution for Enterprise Level

@manoelp



Part 5 - Examples of Agile Coaching Activities

Activity	Objective
Session for envisioning change (involves people from different org levels)	Catalyze Improvements, Promote Awareness, Boost Ownership
Assess what changes/improvements are needed	Promote Awareness, Catalyze Improvements
Map the current value stream, identifying pain points and bottlenecks	Promote Awareness, Catalyze Improvements
Assist in the creation of data visualization and accessibility strategies	Promote Awareness
1:1s with team members, Scrum Masters, Product Owners	Catalyze Improvements, Promote Awareness, Boost Ownership, Develop Competencies, Facilitate Barrier Removal
Provide Agile training	Develop Competencies
Facilitate retros to find org improvements	Promote Awareness, Catalyze Improvements
Help the teams find creative information radiators	Promote Awareness, Boost Ownership, Facilitate Barrier Removal
Help managers and leaders to embed Agile management in their routines	Develop Competencies, Facilitate Barrier Removal
Help teams implement good practices to improve quality and increase productivity	Develop Competencies, Facilitate Barrier Removal
Help the org establish Agile practices for effective portfolio management and governance	Promote Awareness, Facilitate Barrier Removal
Create and assist the strategy to increase multi-actor collaboration, reducing risks and enhancing org performance	Promote Awareness, Boost Ownership, Facilitate Barrier Removal

## Part 6 - Practices to Catalyze Improvements

Organizations are dealing with more complexity and uncertainty. Typical management best practices aren't very reliable.

A **complex system** is a system that exhibits nontrivial emergent and self-organizing behavior. (Melanie Mitchell from *Complexity: A Guided Tour*)

"...it is better to try and learn from the inherent complexity than try to break the system down into less complex components." An organization is more like a living organism rather than a machine composed of interchangeable parts.

Agile coaches help teams be more aware of the problems, gaps, implications of behaviors, etc. via **open questions** to build awareness.

### Agile Coach as Change Facilitator

A **change facilitator** is someone who helps the org identify opportunities to improve and foster collective strategies to maximize the success of the change efforts.

- Develop a shared vision
- Focus on the hard (e.g., capabilities, metrics) and soft (e.g., values, motivations) sides of the org
- Develop a network of committed people
- Find the minimum viable improvement
- Foster the see-feel-change cycle
- Maximize enablers, minimize blockers
- Monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems
- Walk the talk
- Sustain and reinforce
- Be a culture mixer, not a cultural imperialist

### Strategies for Change Facilitation

The more complex something is, the more frustrating and unpredictable large changes will be. Focus on something smaller.

- Look for small changes to make in unexpected places
- Take it one day at a time
- Don't use labels (may bring baggage)
- Roles come last (find the right process, then change roles if needed)
- Survive today to fight tomorrow
- Help the org visualize small benefits
- Validate small hypotheses

### The GROW Model (Goal, Reality, Options, Way forward)

(From John Whitmore's *Coaching for Performance*)

#### Goal – what do you want to achieve?

Tools

- Competency wheel
- SMART objectives
- OKRs
- Team health check

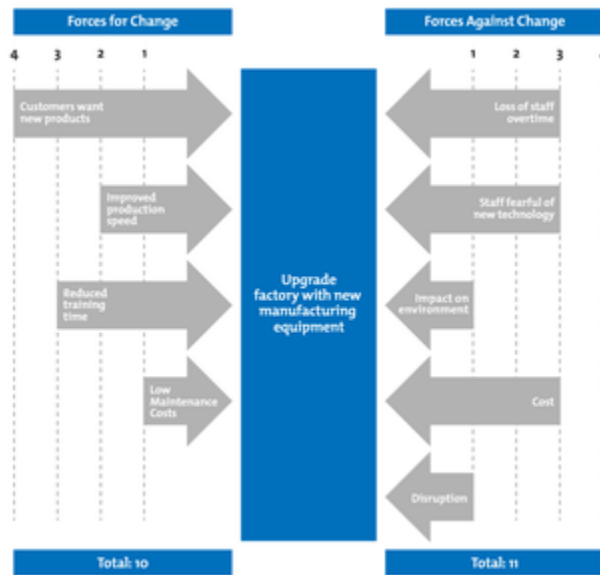
Questions

- What do you want to achieve?
- What's important to you right now?
- What areas do you want to work on?

#### Reality – where are you now in relation to your goal?

Tools

- Force field analysis



- Agile assessments
- SWOT analysis

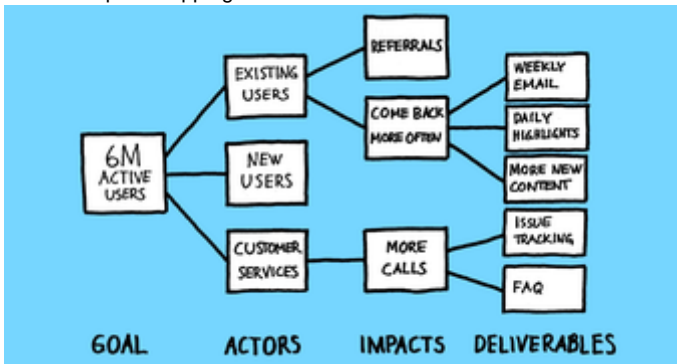
Questions

- On a 1-10 scale, where are you?
- What has contributed to your success so far?
- What the the obstacles, challenges, risks?

Options – what can you do differently?

Tools

- Impact mapping



- Brainstorming as a team
- Wins/losses for each option

Questions

- Do you know someone else who's solved a similar problem?
- If anything was possible, what would you do?
- What are the pros and cons of given options?

Way forward – which options are best for you now, and what actions will you take?

## Tools

- Define the minimum viable improvement
- Roadmaps
- Hypotheses to be tested

## Questions

- What one small step can you take now?
- Who will help you?
- How will you know you've been successful?
- How will you ensure you do it?

## Part 7 - Ingredients to Catalyze Organizational Improvement

**Change management** – a conventional approach of treating change as a project (defined start and end); sometimes this is the right approach

"We cannot predict or control the continuous mutation of a system. Change becomes an ongoing activity in this type of environment. Changes happen all the time, even when we don't want to change (it's beyond our control)."

**Change facilitation** – reducing obstacles and defining components to preserve the system against undesirable outcomes of change

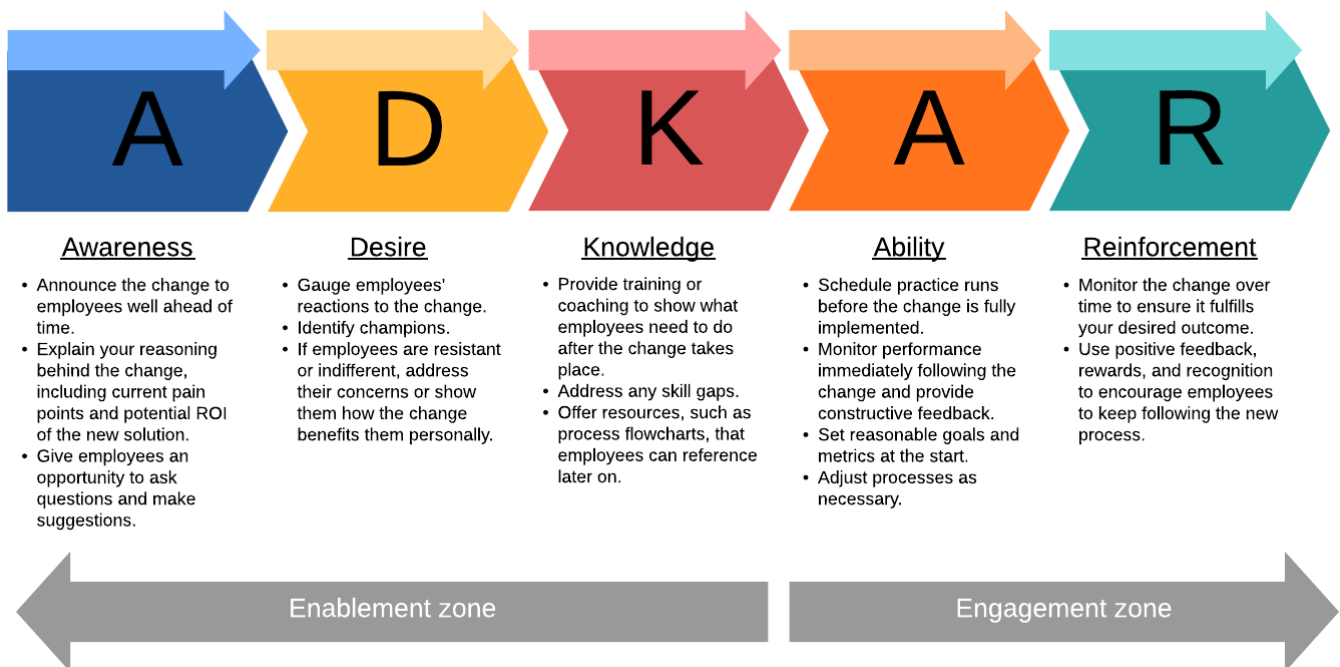
"Not every change is an improvement, but certainly every improvement is a change." – Eliyahu Goldratt

Agile coaching is about helping organizations mix different ingredients to make changes happen. You may need different ingredients at different times, and sometimes your org may not be ready for some of them.

### Ingredients for Change

There's no one right way to catalyze change. You need a diversity of ideas and perspectives. This is about behavior change.

- If people find the new processes hard to learn, there will be resistance.
- Individual motivation matters. (See the ADKAR model.)



- People need to understand the current state first.
- Be clear about what problem your process is going to solve. Avoid copy/paste; your processes must have **fitness for purpose**.
- Metrics help you with transparency and hypothesis testing.
- Willingness to change is essential; you can't coach someone that doesn't want to be coached.
- People need to care about change; there needs to be an emotional response.
- Accept people where they are; use humble inquiry to build trust.

- The people are the organization, and they must feel safe to make changes.
- People at the most senior level must be bought in to the Agile mindset and actually live it.

## Extracting a Meta-model of Ingredients to Change

Based on the above, there are some concepts that make transformations more likely to succeed.

### Clarity and responsibility about why the change is necessary

- **Clarity** = what we're changing and why
- **Responsibility** = good sense of accountability, influence, impact, and motivation
- We as change facilitators use metrics or data visualization to bring clarity. For example, you can look at flow efficiency (how much time work spends waiting for someone to do something about it).
- We help people organize their thoughts and focus on the what and the why.

### Desire to collaborate on the change journey

- Willingness can't be forced. You want people to desire to help be part of the change.
- David Rock (neuroscientist) has a SCARF model – the human domains of the social experience are **status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, fairness**. Work more toward rewards and minimizing threats to those five areas.

### Low organizational friction and high safety to explore new things

- Remember the minimum viable improvement (MVI) concept; start with small experiments and get wins.
- Change often requires unknowns and you can't foresee all the problems and mitigate all risks.
- "If the path towards the improvement is a risk or contains many obstacles, people will identify those difficulties as a danger and it will cause more resistance to change."
- Fear of failure is a big obstacle. We as coaches help frame failures as learning opportunities.

### A continuous review cycle covering all the listed ingredients

- Systems are complex and adaptive, so you need to reflect on whether your coaching is working.
- We need to continuously review and improve our own behaviors and practices.
- (This is basically the do/measure/learn cycle.)

## Part 8 - Practices to Promote Awareness

Awareness is the fuel to catalyze improvements, boost ownership, facilitate barrier removal, and develop competencies.

### Key enablers

Cognitive science

- How do people process information, generate ideas, behave, and make decisions?
- Help individuals explore their mindset and behaviors in search of improvement

Questioning skills

- Know how/when to use closed- vs. open-ended questions
- Coaches act as mirrors to coachees.

Use **information radiators to increase visibility** on what's important to you.

### Driving people's attention to actionable areas

Coaches must help the org be aware of things that can have something done about them.

### Perspectives

As a coach you help people explore different views, as they can become blinded to alternatives or other challenges.







If someone is stuck...

- Anyone else handled this?
- What would someone you admire do in this situation?

Be on the lookout for the **victim mindset**. Look for people complaining and blaming others. This can create a cycle of inaction.

Try using an empathy map:

	Pain Points	Overarching Goals
 <p>Team Members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unplanned work / rework</li> <li>• Low energy</li> <li>• Too much technical debt</li> <li>• Skills/Technology gaps</li> <li>• "Too many meetings to attend! We don't like it"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hit the delivery goals</li> <li>• Balanced workload</li> <li>• Fulfill the need for innovation</li> </ul>
 <p>Iteration Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External pressure over the team</li> <li>• Changes in prioritization (within a Sprint)</li> <li>• Lack of team focus on set priorities</li> <li>• "I need to control the tasks because the team members aren't capable to do so"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve team effectiveness</li> <li>• Maintain a sustainable pace</li> </ul>
 <p>Product Owner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low delivery rate</li> <li>• Resistance to absorb new demands</li> <li>• Too many stakeholders to manage</li> <li>• Unplanned Technical/Architectural work</li> <li>• "Agile doesn't fit my complex product"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver more in a cheap way</li> <li>• Product excellence</li> <li>• Hit the quality expectations</li> <li>• Deliver the entire scope to the client</li> </ul>
 <p>Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of visibility</li> <li>• High variability of the results</li> <li>• No reliable numbers</li> <li>• Skeptical about Agile</li> <li>• "With Agile I'm losing visibility regarding the progress of the individual tasks of my people. It's killing me."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't blow up cost and time</li> <li>• Achieve the KPI to adopt Agile in his area</li> </ul>

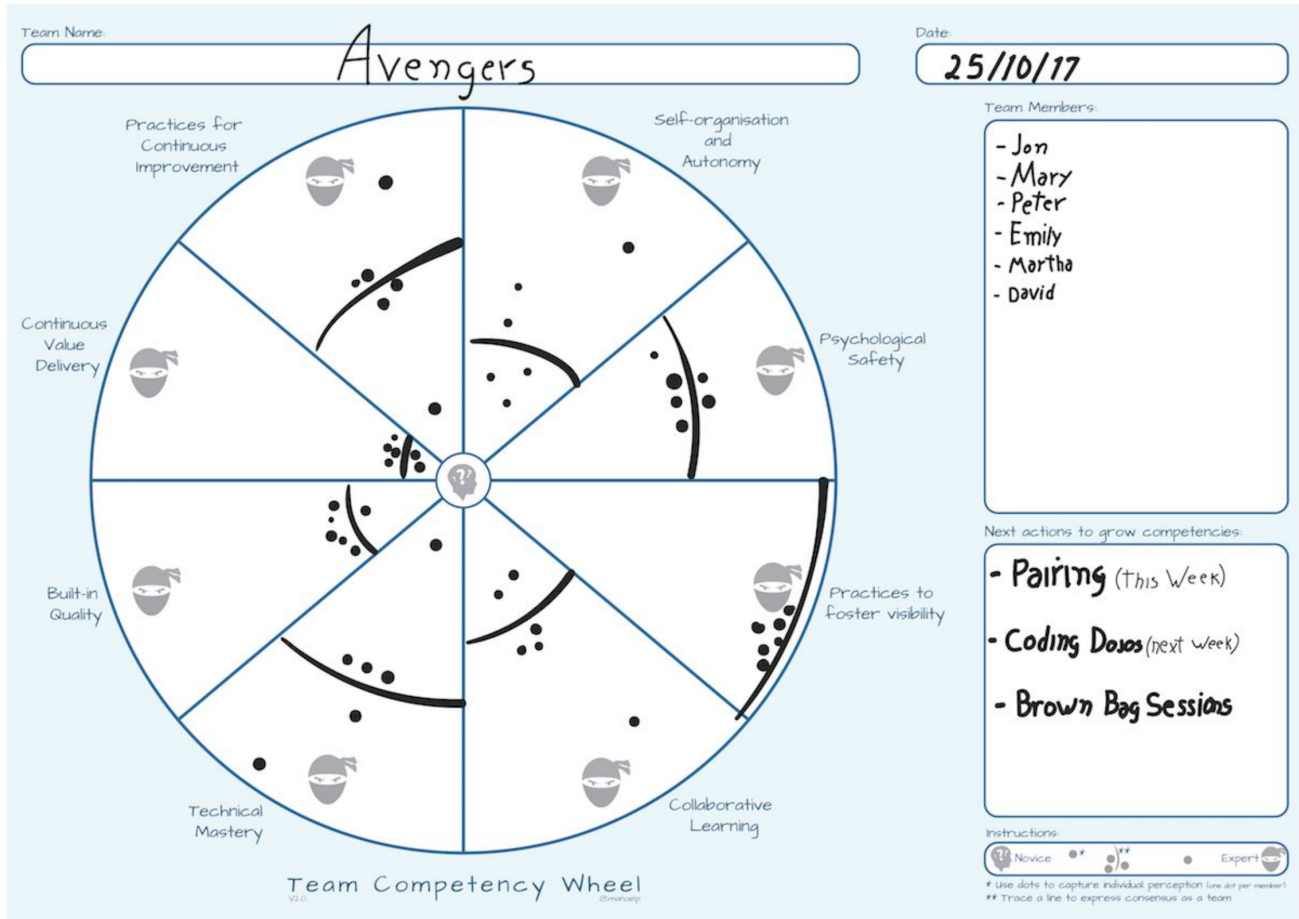
### Situations

- Where are we? Where do we want to go? What are the current problems?
- **Map out the workflow of the actual process of work**
  - This helps identify value streams, bottlenecks, pain points.
  - Once you've diagrammed things out, ask people to identify pain points; discuss and refine.
  - Prioritize problem areas by dot-voting.
- Make this visible so people can understand it; make the problem evident.
- Highlight when/where interruptions occur, because interruptions have severe impacts on knowledge workers.
  - Who's doing it?
  - Who's being interrupted?
  - What kind of interruptions?
  - How often?
- Realize that teams exist *within systems*. Decisions can reverberate far outside of scope and time.

### Gaps

- **Gaps** are about identifying the delta between current state and next state (or desired state).
- Most of the time, new competencies are needed to achieve some new state. Use a competence wheel to measure current state.





## Bridges

- **Helping people build bridges to overcome gaps is a key part of an Agile Coach's role.**
- Recall the GROW model: goal (what do you want to achieve?), reality (where are you now?), options (what can you do differently?), way forward (which option is best?).
- Involve people in building bridges; don't just give them to the team. "They need to be the constructors of their future, not the recipients of it."
- Habits are hard to break. Start with small wins and make the desired behavior easier than the existing behavior.

## Outcomes

- Output : results :: Outcome : benefits that come from results
- An example of misplaced focus is "We delivered 10 features!" when you find out that the features aren't used. You had plenty of output, but zero outcomes.
- People need to be clear about what they're doing the work. What are the benefits?
- If you need help; start by getting the team to work on these:
  - Intention – what you are doing
  - Target – key outcomes from the intention
  - Successful If – how would you know your criteria are met?
  - Failure If – how would you know your criteria are not met?

## Part 9 - Agile Coaching Supported by Data-Informed Culture

### Why are metrics important?

- They are the catalysts for improvement.
- They start conversations.
- Data is more defensible than gut feelings or personal preferences; it's empirical.
- Metrics are at the core of experiments, something fundamental to Agile.

- It makes problems more visible.

## Examples of actionable metrics

### Lead time

- How long does it take to go from “new in the backlog” to “in the customer’s hands”?
- Answers the question, “How long does this work stay in the system?”
- Once you know this, you can identify bottlenecks.

### Flow efficiency

- Once the work is in the system, how much time is actively spent on it (i.e., not idle or blocked)?
- For example, 30% efficiency means that if from start to finish the lead time is 10 days, 7 of those days are spent blocked or idle.
- This also lets you find common problems... No clear policies, poor prioritization, no good definition of done, too much work in progress.

### Team agility health check

On a scale of 1..10, how happy/satisfied are people in regard to... (The book has examples of how to word these for a survey.)

1. Cross-functional collaboration
2. Visibility and transparency
3. Sustainable pace
4. Technical mastery
5. Learning and developing skills
6. Productivity with tools/tech
7. Productivity with work processes
8. Goal clarity
9. Impact of work
10. Embedded quality

You can then use a radar chart to show these. Maybe do this every sprint?

### Organizational agility health check

- Org agility is about **having the behaviors and practices to enable the company to respond to change and generate value with less friction.**
- Karin Martin (*Value Stream Mapping*) – “Wherever there are a request and a deliverable, there is a value stream.”
- Like the team health check, you can survey people at different levels of the org to ask about these qualities: (Again, the book has written out sentences you can put on a survey.)
  - Visibility and transparency
  - Risk management
  - Management of dependencies
  - Cross-collaboration
  - Predictability of deliveries
  - Fast decision-making
  - Continuous improvement based on frequent feedback
  - Smart queue management
  - Embedded quality
  - Value optimization
- This can be done every few months, or at some cadence that makes the most sense for your org.

### Business measurements

- No point in measuring efficiency, velocity, and team health if the org is going in the wrong direction
- Sometimes something as simple as customer satisfaction engagement surveys can help
- Exercise to help build data-driven experiments...
  - **Target** – what’s the problem you want to solve

- **Current symptoms** – describe situations, facts, and perceptions that are currently solving the target problem
- **Assumptions** – possible causes or short narratives that explain the current symptoms
- **Experiments** – tests you can do to verify whether your assumptions are true
- **Measurements** – good experiments are *observable*; define expected values and see if those pan out
- **Share learnings** – knowledge will lead people to review and create new experiments if needed

## Part 10 - Practices to Boost Ownership

Boosting ownership is relevant because a sense of ownership is an essential means for people to engage toward some improvement.

**Collective awareness** (with a sense of genuine curiosity) and a **strong sense of trust** are crucial.

### Psychological ownership

- From *Psychological Ownership – Effects and Applications (Pickford, Joy, Roll)*... Psychological ownership means owning something without formal ownership (i.e., my sports team is X; I'm an X fan).
- Important senses... **identification, control, responsibility, desire to belong**

### The Dude's law

- Developed by David Hussman
- Value = Why / How
  - The theory is if the "Why" is constant and you have too much process, the value decreases.
  - If you have a stronger "Why", the value increases.

### Fix the system, not the individuals

- Fixing people usually doesn't work because there are too many variables: motivations, perceptions, fears, hopes, needs, expectations
- "As an Agile coach, avoid the temptation of using recipes or mythical frameworks about how to make people happier or more motivated."
- Behavior is a function of the person in a particular environment


### Create an org exoskeleton to boost the sense of ownership

- Exoskeleton = artificial external supporting structure
- Align the parameters and foundations of how work can be done, managed, and improved.
- Don't worry about whether teams are doing X or Y practice every day. If they're aligned, they can try different practices that facilitate getting stuff done. It also cuts down on micromanagement.

### Why decentralize the decision-making process?

- Better sense of responsibility, participation and belonging
- Better flexibility to respond to change
- Centralized = waiting for bosses/specialists
- From *Management 3.0 (Appelo)*... central control of a complex system doesn't work because it can't possibly contain all of the information to make good decisions everywhere

### Delegation board: a tool to foster engagement

		1 Tell I will tell them	2 Sell I will try and sell it to them	3 Consult I will consult and then decide	4 Agree We will agree together	5 Advise I will advise but they decide	6 Inquire I will inquire after they decide	7 Delegate I will fully delegate
Facilitate the daily scrum								✓
Detail out the feature backlog					✓			
Team capacity planning for the sprint			✓					
Facilitate Sprint Planning								✓
Add tasks, effort estimations during planning					✓			
Agenda and facilitation for sprint demo							✓	
Scribe during demo and retrospective								✓
Training needs for the team					✓			
Facilitate discussions for training needs with company leadership			✓					
Teach the agile process to the team		✓						
Remove dependencies with other remote teams					✓			

Purpose: communicate the level of authority with which the manager has empowered the team

1. Tell – you make the call; no discussion
2. Sell – you decide, but you need to convince others that you made the right choice
3. Consult – you get input before deciding
4. Agree – the group decides together
5. Advise – you offer opinions, but the group decides
6. Inquire – the group decides and has to convince you they made the right choice
7. Delegate – the group decides; no input needed from you

## Delegation Board

From Program Manager to Scrum Teams



Key Decision Areas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Obs:
Feature Design		X						
Implementation roadmap				X				All POs
Ordering the Team Backlog							X	Scrum Team
User Story content							X	Scrum Team
Accept the increments						X		Product Owner
Drive sprint goals						X		Scrum Team
Documentation approval						X		Product Owner
Team Composition				X				Product Owner
Team's process of work							X	Scrum Team
Technical decisions (implementation)							X	Scrum Team
Feature backlog management			X					

## Part 11 - Practices to Develop Competencies

Competency isn't just about marching people through expensive formal courses and certifications and calling the process done.

### **KAFE model**

#### **Knowledge**

- Having the necessary info and concepts about a subject
- Ex: using videos or a teacher to understand music, scales, notes, chords, instrument techniques

#### **Actual Practice**

- Applying knowledge and handling issues in a subject
- Ex: making the time to practice a musical instrument and apply what you've learned from a teacher

#### **Fluency**

- Performing naturally without expending too much energy
- Ex: getting comfortable with chord patterns so you spend more time on musicality rather than technique

#### **Efficacy**

- Continuously using competence to produce the best results and outcomes
- Ex: comfort playing your instrument with friends or as a hobby to round out your interests

### **Designing new competencies**

Use the KAFE model to elaborate how your coachees will make progress:

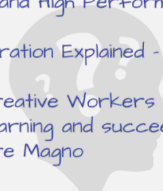
- Knowledge – how will you learn the skills?
- Actual practice – how will you apply it?
- Fluency – how will you make the skills feel more natural?
- Efficacy – what results do you expect?

Competence:

## Meeting Facilitation

[K]nowledge - How to get relevant information, concepts and theories regarding this domain/subject?

- \* Read the book: Visual Teams: Graphic Tools for Commitment, Innovation, and High Performance - David Sibbet
- \* Read the book: Collaboration Explained - Jean Tabaka
- \* Read the book How Creative Workers Learn: Develop your career with emergent learning and succeed in the creativity age - Alexandre Magno
- \* TED videos about this Facilitation



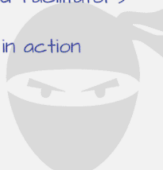
[A]ctual Practice - How to start using the knowledge?

- \* Starting with small meetings
- \* Volunteering to facilitate the sprint retrospectives



[F]luency - How to develop/enhance the naturalness in doing this competence?

- \* Ask for feedback after each experience
- \* Paring with experienced facilitators
- \* See other facilitators in action



[E]fficacy - What are the desired results for this competence?

- \* Helping the team to navigate conflicts
- \* Having more productive meetings



Competence:

## Product Design

[K]nowledge - How to get relevant information, concepts and theories regarding this domain/subject?

- Read the book about Design Sprint
- Lean Inception Book
- Lean Startup Book
- Product Management Course
- CSPO training



[A]ctual Practice - How to start using the knowledge?

- Leading a team in the next hackathon
- Organise inception sessions for the current project.
- Collaborate with others POs in refining the user stories in different products
- Leading the refinement sessions with the team
- Start a side project to develop a new small product



[F]luency - How to develop/enhance the naturalness in doing this competence?

- Participate in all the stages and activities of a product lifecycle
- Act as a PO in 3 different domains (different products)
- Collect feedback from the users and stakeholders
- Participate in all team retrospectives and ask for feedback about my performance as PO



[E]fficacy - What are the desired results for this competence?

- Maximise the satisfaction in each product (Positive NPS)
- Scale and establish our product



## Coaching and mentoring

- “Coaching people is not about following some method to the letter. Coaching is about working with people to translate the knowledge to daily habits and practices.”
- Coaching is about helping people **overcome difficulties in their journey**.
- **Mentors** provide available options; **coaches** support people as they decide what the best choice is.

## Everyday learning

- Many teachers get too focused on their ability to teach subjects instead of thinking about how their learners **will receive their teachings**. Not everyone learns the same way.
- “Learning is a natural capability and it occurs across the human lifespan, from birth to last breath. In contrast, educational and training systems are concerned with the production of useful citizens, who can contribute to the collective economic good.” – *Experiences in Self-Determined Learning*
- People should work in an environment that creates the condition to let people achieve learning goals.

## Agile coach as a learning facilitator

- Facilitators reduce difficulties during the learning journey.
- The competence wheel tool can be good for bringing more awareness to gaps and strengths.
- Understand how people learn best and make that environment a reality.
- Identify barriers to learning and create a more favorable environment.

## Ingredients to develop competencies

- It's difficult to train people if they have no desire.
- It's about the student's needs, not the teacher's needs.
- Agile coaches find ways to turn the relevant changes in the environment into reusable learning for the future.
- Articulate the “why” of learning; connect it to a purpose.
- Continually question the status quo to show that you value continuous improvement.
- **“The learners should be the protagonists in their own process of learning.”**

## Collaborative and emergent learning

- It's not sufficient to only work on the “K” (knowledge) part of the KAFE framework; you need to apply (“A”) it.
- Learning 1.0
  - An expert/teacher/master/institution decides what you must learn and how that learning will take place – prescriptive learning.
  - Two classes: thinkers (educators), doers (learners)
  - Works when knowledge is stable, known, repeatable
  - **Experts define the questions and answers**
- Learning 2.0
  - Still two classes: experts, learners
  - More two-way interaction between the classes, though
  - Trainer decides what that relationship looks like
  - **Learners define the questions, experts define the answers**
- Learning 3.0
  - More inclusive; promotes discussions with multiple perspectives
  - “...we create new knowledge continuously as we encounter new conditions and challenges.” – Marilyn Taylor, *Emergent Learning for Wisdom*
  - **Learners define both questions and answers**

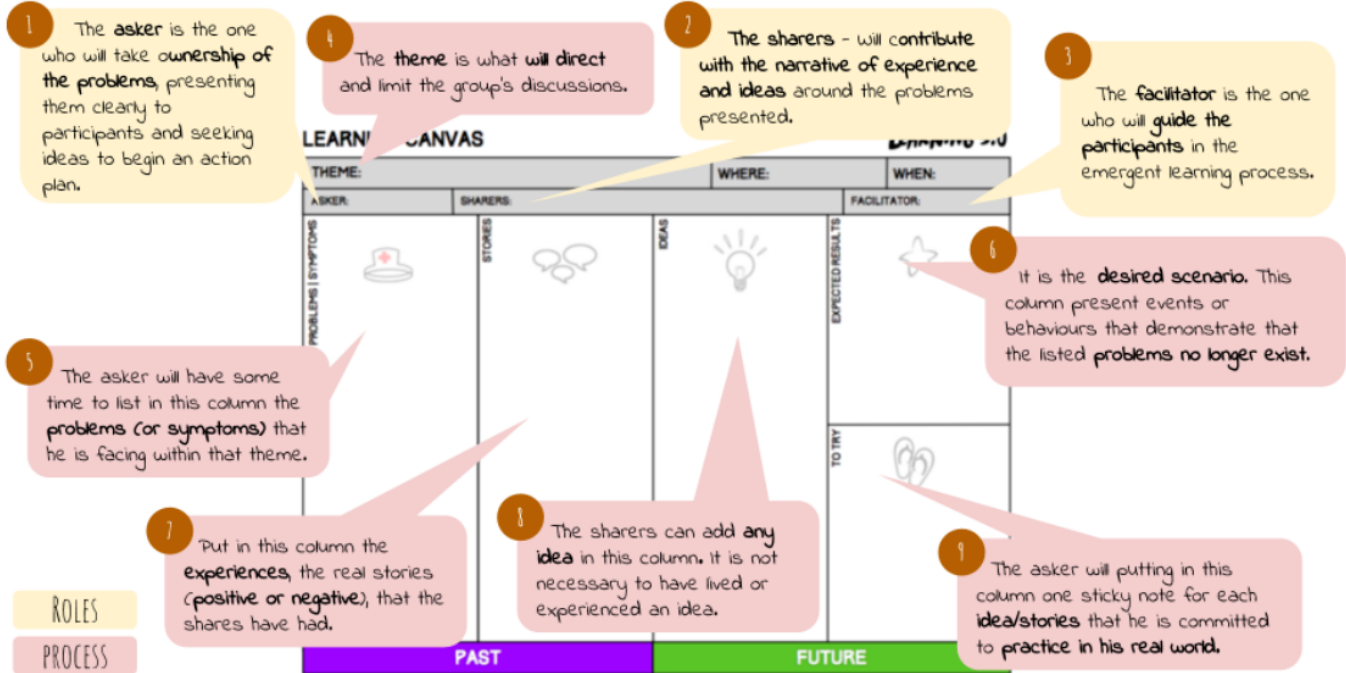
## Learning 3.0 components

- Dialogue – people interact, exchange stories
- Egalitarianism – people treat each other as equals, rather than individuals at different hierarchy levels
- Multiple perspectives – differences foster learning; learning isn't a dictatorship



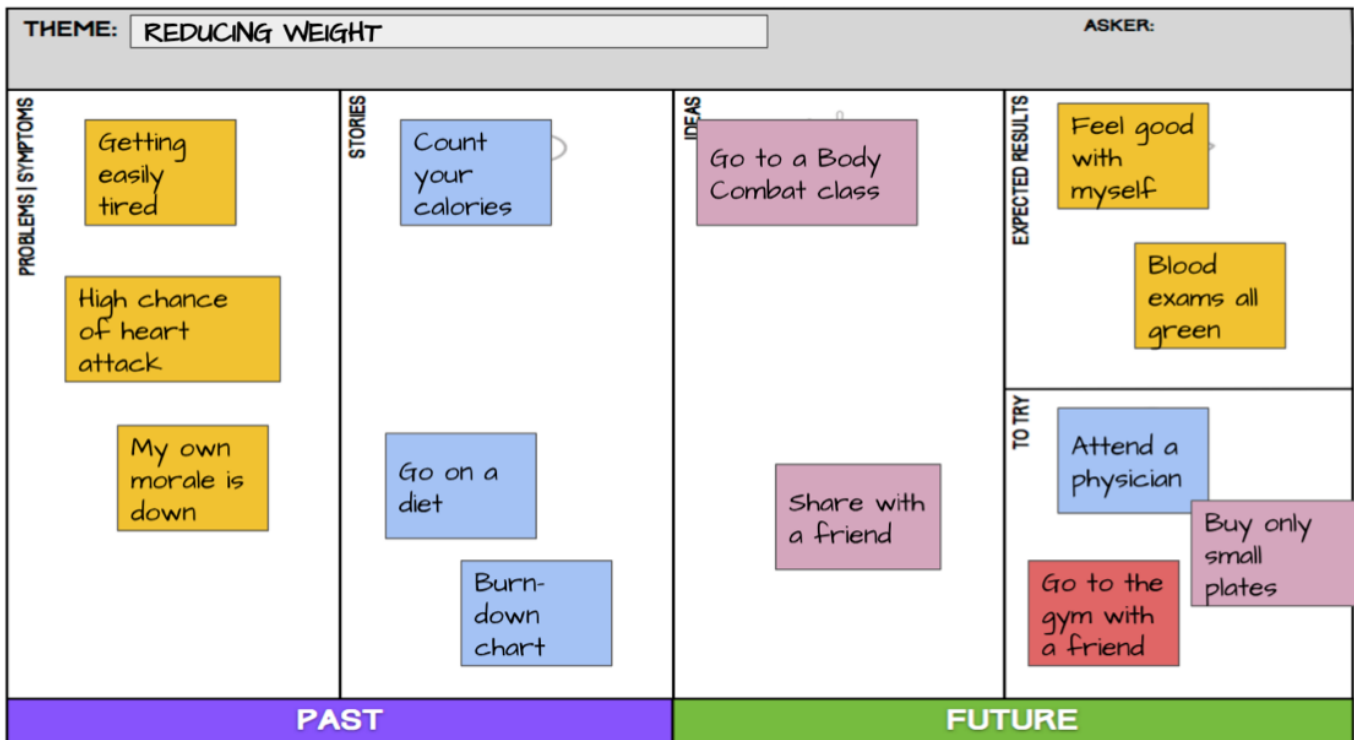
- Non-expert based – (except for technical problems), human systems have no clear-cut solution

### Learning canvas



### LEARNING CANVAS

### LEARNING 3.0



- "In complex systems, every single element is the cause and the effect at the same time."

### Cross-pollination of ideas and experiences

- People can transfer ideas and experiences to others.



- Example: lunch and learns

## Homework

- Agile coaches help people create effective strategies for developing competencies.
- Agile coaches help people create an environment where the learners are active participants in the process.

## Part 12 - Practices to Facilitate Barrier Removal

- Focus on creating systemic solutions, not just firefighting the obvious obstacles. That is, think about how you can adapt the system to minimize obstacles even occurring.

### Anti-pattern 1: Anti-value

What does this look like?

- **Customer detachment** – neglecting the customer, customer isn't really involved in the process, org can't understand what the customers want
- **No shared understanding regarding value** – hard to align on what to build if you're not sure what's most important
- **Waste** – activities that absorb energy and create no value

### Anti-pattern 2: Anti-flow

You'll find things that limit the flow and size of work (e.g., poor collaboration, poor technical skills, obsolete tech, inefficient processes)

Other ways this manifests itself...

- Blindness to queues of work
- Focus on large batch sizes
- Underutilization of shared cadences
- No WIP constraints
- Centralized control

### Anti-pattern 3: Anti-evolution

The silent killer of status quo. This takes the form of environments where there's a lack of learning and poor habits around communication.

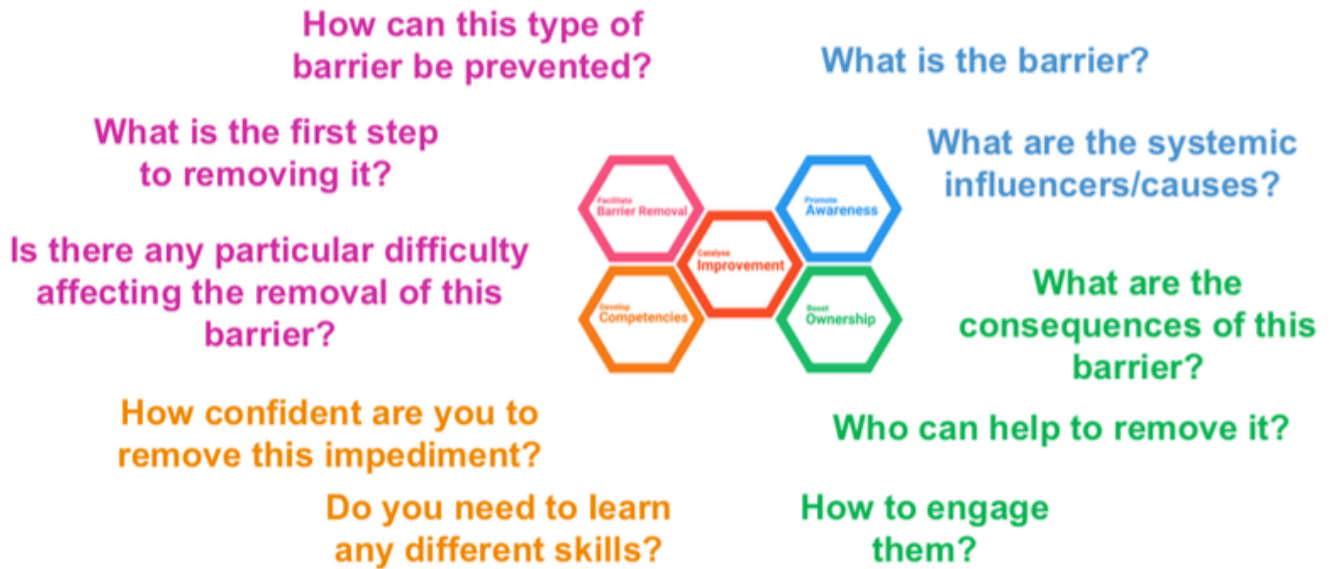
## Narratives to deal with obstacles

- Obstacles
  - Outdated leadership behavior ruled by fear and low trust.
  - What got you here may not get you there.
  - Leaders use brute force, simple solutions, and silver bullets.
  - People working a second job (i.e., hiding weaknesses instead of learning from them).
  - Departments that work like silos and are compensated/incentivized as such.
  - Leaders not understanding touch time and wait time in queues.
  - Lack of alignment about what value is and how it's measured.
- Solutions
  - Lead by example.
  - Look for new behaviors.
  - Human problems often shift us to the "Complex" quadrant of the Cynefin framework (probe-sense-respond).
  - Point out where leaders are now and ask them where they want to be in the future (i.e., a better version of them).
  - Boss and leader are two different terms.
  - Cross-functional teams work on the whole value stream, backed by executive sponsorship and good visual management.
  - The leaders must be bought in from day zero.
  - Value stream mapping can help visualize flow and identify bottlenecks.

## Typical levers

## Recursive use of the Agile DNA

Help people be more aware of the barriers; identify strategies to engage people in helping get those barriers removed; build competencies on the team to remove obstacles.



## System thinking

- Understand how the problem is influenced (e.g., Five Whys).
- Look at the elements (people), interconnections (relationships), and function (results/outcomes) of the system.
- Sometimes the system is more than the sum of its parts – emergent behavior.
- Run experiments to learn and test assumptions.
- What are you trying to improve and why?
- Map out blockers. Map out enablers. What minimizes blockers? What maximizes enablers?

## Improvement Mapping

What to improve?

Enable a cross-functional team composition

Why improve?

- Reduce waiting time in current workflow
- Improve time to deploy
- Increase end-to-end collaboration

Enablers (driving forces)

- Desire for learning new things
- Highly skilled professionals
- Organisational intention toward customer experience
- Support from the C-Level of the company

Blockers (restraining forces)

- Few members offshore (remote)
- Current budget policies based on functional silos
- No previous experience working in cross-functional teams
- Unawareness of the current value stream

Actions to maximise enablers

- Identify the first pilot product
- Organise Lunch and Learn sessions
- Run an inception workshop involving the entire team

Actions to minimise blockers

- Identify a pilot product where the Product Owner can be accountable for the budget
- Run sessions of value stream mapping with managers and teams
- Enable video conferencing using ChromeBox

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## Part 13 - Agile Coaching as an Activity, Not As a Role

- The title "Agile Coach" has become popular, but you don't need that title to be one.
- Some people are calling themselves Agile coaches but are not focused on **uplifting agility to catalyze improvements**. Also, sometimes the org isn't ready for this role.

### Full-time role?

- Most orgs may not need a full-time person, and may need more targeted interventions.
- Anti-pattern: People end up being process police.
- Usually makes sense when that person can serve multiple teams
- A risk of staying some place too long is that you get them from the current status quo to some future status quo, and then you end up defending/policing that status quo.
- "Agile Coaching is not an instrument to force people to adopt new behaviors or practices." If you need an Agile Coach to make sure things are being done the right way, you have a trust problem.
- Your job is not to be a babysitter or commander of the team. Again, this is a trust problem; you can't build trust by overlooking and supervising people's work.
- If the Agile Coach is the *only* person implementing the improvements, the people *having to use the new workflows* have little buy-in. To **boost ownership**, have them be integral to building the new way.

### Is There Any Solution for This Situation?

- If you have to push your services as a coach, the org probably isn't ready. Don't force people to consume your service.
- You need to actively take part in the process (e.g., delivery team) or you risk becoming an uninformed outsider.
- Alexandre Magno (<https://medium.com/songfaces>) says it's a mistake to think that Agile Coaching is a career. I disagree for the most part.
  - Change is never done in a growing organization. Maybe they don't need coaching on how to adopt Agile workflows, but those workflows aren't static.
  - Also, I've found value in moving on to other parts of the org once the one I was helping has stabilized and is self-sufficient.
  - Metaphor I thought of: Just because you've shifted into the highest gear doesn't mean you no longer have use for a transmission.

## Democratizing the Activity of Agile Coaching

- A full-time Agile Coach should aspire to help others to absorb the activity of this style of coaching.
- Realize that you may not be the best person to bring about a change. However, you can help by finding someone who is better positioned and coaching *them* to deliver the change.