Accelerating Your Organization’s Agile Adoption

A Framework for Success

Bryan Campbell & Robbie Mac Iver
Agenda

- Overview of Maturity Model
- Self-Assessment
- Agile Leadership Guidelines
- Problem Scenarios
- Questions & Answers
Accelerating Agile Adoption

- Agile adoption usually begins at team level
- Successes generate more interest
- Supporting scalable, enterprise agile adoption is challenging
- Implementing a successful model requires a framework
Skills Maturity Framework

- Almost everyone can relate to the process of developing skills.
- Developing skills *takes time* and usually requires a *teacher/mentor*.
- Developing skills *takes practice* and often is accompanied by *learning experiences*.
- Businesses usually don’t have years to wait for skills to mature.
Seven Stages of Expertise

- Meilir Page-Jones, authored the *Seven Stages of Expertise* in 1998
- Identified a progression of distinct stages that occurred over time and also identified risks/challenges of moving from one stage to the next
- To demonstrate the effectiveness of this model he famously applied it to bear-hunting

Seven Stages of Expertise - Agility

- **Innocent**: unaware of agile techniques
- **Aware**: aware and seeking to learn more
- **Apprentice**: ready to apply their skills to a real project
- **Practitioner**: leap from classroom projects to those of real world complexity
- **Journeyman**: agile techniques embedded natural way of working
- **Master**: range of real-world project experiences; ability to teach these techniques to Apprentices
- **Researcher**: sharing knowledge with a broader community; champion to further extend the benefits of agile techniques
Productivity increases as skills mature. However, it takes more and more time to increase skills to higher levels.

Not all companies will see value in having employees at these levels.
The J-Curve Effect

The ‘J-curve’ effect occurs when someone learning a new skill has difficulty adapting the skill to the demands of a real world environment and reverts back to their ‘old ways’. The result is a productivity impact and the risk that new techniques won’t be able to cross this gap.

The J curve effect can occur when an Apprentice struggles in applying Agile Best Practices for the first time and reverts back to old techniques. Access to experienced mentors are critical at this juncture.
Strategies to accelerate Skills Adoption

Finding ways to accelerate the time it takes to move staff from one stage to the next while also avoiding the effects of the J-curve effect is a critical component for successful skills adoption. Two models can help address these issues: the **Breadth Approach** and the **Depth Approach**

The **Breadth approach** focuses on developing a solid foundation of Best Practice skills and refining these over time.

Establish internal *mentors* who have experience applying their skills within organization specific projects. The focus is on ‘coaching’ and guiding skills adoption. This is broader focus for these resources.

Increasing skills from Innocent to Aware can occur in a relatively short period of time.

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Strategies to accelerate Skills Adoption

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The Depth or project approach focuses on mentoring individuals at the Apprentice level as they cross the chasm and apply their skills in a real project setting.

The Depth approach is focused on Bridging the Chasm, with more active engagement/participation of mentors on a project. This is more intensive and a deep dive.

**Opportunity Costs**

The amount of mentoring/coaching is higher during this period of the skills adoption lifecycle.

Ancillary benefits include increased staff morale and greater retention of the processes and technology skills applied as associates see them effectively implemented.
Definition of a Mentor

"Good judgment comes from experience, most of which comes from bad judgment."

- Fred Brooks, *The Mythical Man Month*

- A *mentor* is considered to have a skills proficiency of a *Journeyman*: *Has used the skill successfully on multiple projects and can supervise/mentor others on the skill*.

- In addition, a mentor will also possess competency skills such as effective presentation skills and strong written and verbal communication skills.
The Tipping Point

- Eventually, a new skills will achieve a critical mass—the point at which the processes and skills become embedded and specific mentoring is no longer required.

- This usually occurs when a tipping point is achieved:
  - When more than 50% of the organization is operating at a **Practitioner** level or above and more than 75% of the discipline is operating at a **Apprentice** or above.
Self-Assessment

- Where are you on the Seven Stages Scale?
Agile Leadership Guidelines
Agile Manifesto

- **Individuals and Interactions**
- **Working Software**
- **Customer Collaboration**
- **Responding to Change**

- **Processes and Tools**
- **Comprehensive Documentation**
- **Contract Negotiation**
- **Following a Plan**

*While there is value in the things on the right, we value the things on the left more*

Source: AgileAlliance.org
Values versus Practices

Practices
Processes
Tools
Left Brain

Values
Culture
People
Right Brain

Agility Changes the Balance

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Agile Leadership Guidelines

- Address Culture and Values First
  - Practices will generally follow
Projects
Agile Project Management

- Planning Continuously
  - Tradeoffs using feedback to adjust

- Prioritizing by Business Value
  - Associating value with requirements

- Estimating by Relative Value
  - Estimating size not duration

- Risk Management
  - Addressed by entire team all the time
Project - House

What would your approach be to completing this project?

Build A House That Meets the Homeowner’s Needs
Project – First Flight

What would your approach be to completing this project?

Build the World’s First Successful Airplane
What would your approach be to completing this project?

Drill a New Oil Well that Produces xx Barrels of Oil per Day
Which Tools in Our Tool Belt Best Fit This Project?
Agile Leadership Guidelines

- Address Culture and Values First
  - Practices will generally follow
- Work in Ways That Embrace Change
  - Adjust methods to the project
Team One – The Beasts
Team Two – The Players
Team Three – The Rowers
Forming an Agile Team

- As You Grow, Your Personality Changes
- You Will Grow the Most in Your Areas of Greatest Weakness
- A Good Team Member Does Whatever it Takes to Help the Team
Forming an Agile Team

- As You Grow, You Become More of Who You Already Are
- You Will Grow the Most in Your Areas of Greatest Strength
- A Good Team Member Deliberately Volunteers His Strengths to the Team Most of the Time

Source: Marcus Buckingham - Go Put Your Strengths to Work

What Are The Implications?
Characteristics of an Agile Team

- Self-Organizing
  - Versus role or title based
- Empowered to Make Decisions
  - Versus decisions dictated by outside authority
- Decisions are Consensus-Driven
  - Versus leader-driven
- Committed to Success as a Team
  - Versus success at any cost
- Motivated by Trust
  - Versus fear or anger
- Maintain Constructive Disagreement
  - Versus damaging conflict

Source: Jean Tabaka - Collaboration Explained

It is Advanced Citizenship
Agile Leadership Guidelines

- Address Culture and Values First
  - Practices will generally follow
- Work in Ways That Embrace Change
  - Adjust methods to the project
- Create Teams of Advanced Citizens
  - Team dynamics trump everything
Rings of Decision Making

Management

Product Owner

Scrum Master

Circle of Influence

Agile Team

Circle of Control
Agile Leadership Guidelines

- Address Culture and Values First
  - Practices will generally follow

- Work in Ways That Embrace Change
  - Adjust methods to fit the project

- Create Teams of Advanced Citizens
  - Team dynamics trump everything

- Influence Team Decisions
  - Set movable boundaries

Act in the Best Interests of the Team
Practice with Scenarios

- Form Smaller Discussion Groups
- Read Through Scenario
  - What would you do?
- Discuss Alternative Approaches
  - Innocent person would doé
  - Journeyman would doé
- Review for Other Groups
How Would You Deal With…

Fearless George*
Errant Ernie*
Bouncing Barbara
Timid Timmy
Regressing Rita
Bullying Bill
Reluctant Rachel*
Flip-Flop Frankie
Questions

The Journeyman level is a reasonable target for most organizations in increasing skills maturity.

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Discussion Scenarios
Fearless George is one of the developers on your Scrum team. While he is not formally the technical lead (no one is), he is by far the most talented and technically competent developers on the team. George feels a significant ownership of the software product the team is developing and has the most domain knowledge of anyone on the team.

George is frequently doing work that is not on the iteration backlog, and generally reviews every line of code checked-in by any other developer, simply changing things he does not like without telling the other developer. He works mostly behind closed doors, does not interact easily with the team, often misses team meetings, including the daily stand-ups, and often takes days to respond to questions from other members of the team.

You have been coaching George in an attempt to improve his team skills, but have had little effect. What do you do next?
You are the leader of an agile team. Rachel, the product owner has worked with traditional software development teams for several years but has never worked with an agile team. She is uncomfortable with the whole concept of user stories and acceptance criteria. In fact user stories are created by others on the team, and the testers define the acceptance criteria for which they seek Rachel’s approval. Rachel is a domain expert and has written (and continues to write) detailed functional specifications that describe how specific operations and calculations are to be performed. She seems to have little understanding of broader user goals or the user experience that is desired. While she attends the iteration reviews and demos, Rachel will not formally accept the deliverables of iteration preferring to wait until everything is done before spending much time exercising the software deliverables from each iteration.

How can you keep this team on the right track?
Errant Ernie

Ernie is one of the stronger developers on your agile team and has convinced the team to move forward with his proposal for a particularly complex implementation that in your opinion is both unwarranted and faulty. As you have observed the long discussions about this implementation decision, you have noticed that the rest of the team has not so much agreed with Ernie but just given in to him. In an effort to keep the team from going too far astray, you have stepped in and countered the implementation decision by setting your own direction for the team; i.e. you have made a different implementation decision for the team.

Have you acted in the best interests of the team? Why or why not?
You are the ScrumMaster of a team that has been practicing Scrum for a few months. Your team has just taken on a new highly visible project that was initiated to correct issues raised in the last SOX audit. User stories have not yet been sufficiently defined by the product owner to enable the team to complete its relative estimating exercise using story points. A few stories have been hastily written so the development team can start working.

Rita, the executive manager, has requested an estimate to validate that she has sufficient budget to complete the project. She has directed that you assign a single developer to prepare effort based (tasks with estimated durations) without involving the other developers. Nor does she want the business sponsor (product owner) involved because the sponsor does not really understand user stories.

How should you proceed?
You are the agile leader of a software development team that has been using agile techniques for several months and has established a reliable velocity. The team is currently executing iteration 6 and the release burndown shows that the current scope will take 4 more iterations to complete. This is 2 iterations past the completion date that is desired by Bill, the executive sponsor. You have been reviewing the project progress with Bill after each of the last several iterations, suggesting that the team’s historical progress would indicate a need to extend the completion date, or to shift some of the lower priority features to the next release. Bill’s only response has been “I don’t care about that chart, just get it done”!

How would you proceed with the project?
Flip-Flop Frankie

Your team is on day 4 of a 10 day iteration when Frankie, the product manager, announces during the daily stand-up that he has just come from meeting with a customer. As a result he wants to add just a small feature or two to the current iteration so he can show them off to this new customer. This is a customer Frankie has been trying to make headway with for several months and he believes that showing them these features quickly will close a big sale, and after all this agile stuff is suppose to let me make changes whenever I want.

How should you and your team respond to this request?
You are the agile leader of two big projects A and B. They are developed by two teams. Project A includes a feature that can only be implemented by Barbara, a developer from the Project B team. How would you handle this dependency between the projects and the conflicting needs for a specific developer?

Should team B (working on project B) include that feature from Project A in their next Sprint or should team A borrow Barbara from team B to implement that feature during their Sprint?

If team A borrows Barbara from team B should she participate in all meetings including Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum and others even though it will only take her a few days to implement that feature?

Does it make sense for Barbara to spend a lot of time in team A meetings?
Timmy was recently hired as a developer for your agile team and has been working with the team for 3 iterations. This is his first job out of college. Timmy initially offered his ideas in team discussions around design and implementation, but these were generally either rebuffed or not heard by the rest of the team even though in your opinion they were valid suggestions. As a result he now rarely speaks up in team discussions and waits for the team to make a decision and assign him work for the iteration.

Has Timmy failed the team? Has the team failed Timmy? As the agile leader of this team have you served the team well?