

Maturing Your Organization's Agile Adoption – Problem Scenarios



1. Fearless George*

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.

As the ScrumMaster, you have been coaching George in an attempt to improve his team skills, but have had little effect. What do you do next?

- **Read the scenario aloud to your team**
- **Identify a person to act as the spokesperson for the team**
- **Discuss approaches to the scenario leveraging some of the practices from the presentation.**

Notes

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Fearless George

The following are some suggestions on how to address the issues found in the Fearless George example. Each of the answers reference a slide in the Presentation material to provide more context.

- **Agile Teams:** *Committed to Success as a Team:* Engage the team on how to solve/address the problem (Slide 33)
- **Agile Leadership:** *Fix Culture and Values First.* Recognition that George may be in a different role off of the team (Slide 35)
- **Agile Leadership:** *Understand the Rings of Decision Making.* Releasing George might not be in the capacity of the team or the ScrumMaster (Slide 35)

To access all the material from the presentation you can visit:

- <http://robbiemaciver.com/downloads/presentations/33-apln-leadership-summit> or
- <http://www.bryancampbell.com/Downloads/AgileMaturity/>

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2. Reluctant Rachel*

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?

- **Read the scenario aloud to your team**
- **Identify a person to act as the spokesperson for the team**
- **Discuss approaches to the scenario leveraging some of the practices from the presentation.**

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Reluctant Rachel

The following are some suggestions on how to address the issues found in the Fearless George example. Each of the answers reference a slide in the Presentation material to provide more context.

- **Agile Project Management:** *Defining value.* Understanding what business value is associated with the requirements would help Rachel appreciate how to better enable her business users. (Slide 25)
- **Agile Project Management:** *Identifying value in releases.* Helping Rachel see that pieces of functionality that can be released into production in incremental segments would help her appreciate that not everything needs to be done to be accepted. (Slide 25)

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3. 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 our own direction for the team; i.e. you have made the a different implementation decision for the team.

Have you acted in the best interests of the team? Why or why not?

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Errant Ernie*

The following are some suggestions on how to address the issues found in the Fearless George example. Each of the answers reference a slide in the Presentation material to provide more context.

- **Agile Project Management:** *Managing Risk.* Helping the team understand the risks associated with the implementation might help ensure that they can assess whether they should follow Ernie's advice. (Slide 25)
- **Agile Teams:** *Committed to Success as a Team:* The team needs to commit to success as a team. That is not likely to happen if Ernie becomes the defacto leader and decision maker.
- **Agile Teams:** *Empowered Decision Making:* Overriding the decisions of the team if they agree with Ernie will not empower the team. Also in some cases (based on the risk) allowing the team to fail with their own collective decision is an important learning experience. (Slide 33)

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4. Regressing Rita

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?

5. Bullying Bill

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?

6. 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 "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?

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7. Bouncing Barbara

You are the agile leader of two big projects – Project A and Project 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?

8. Timid Timmy

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?