



Companion Workbook

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LiveLesson 1: How Do You Become a Good Agile Coach?	2
<i>What are the competencies of an agile coach?</i>	2
<i>How many of the native wiring qualities do you possess?</i>	2
<i>How can you tune up your native wiring?</i>	2
LiveLesson 2: What Mindsets Need to Change?	2
<i>Where do we stand with reprogramming plan-driven beliefs?</i>	2
LiveLesson 3: What Behaviors Need to Change?	2
<i>What is your native conflict response mode?</i>	2
<i>How violent is your communication?</i>	2
<i>Can you be their servant?</i>	2
<i>Will you respond intelligently?</i>	2
<i>What practical step will you take?</i>	2
LiveLesson 4: How Do You Prove Your Value?	2
<i>Where are you in the process of becoming a valuable agile coach?</i>	2
<i>How can you change the way your value is measured?</i>	2
LiveLesson 5: How Do You Help the Agile Roles Become Fully Occupied?	2
<i>Which of these ScrumMaster/agile coach behaviors are hard for you?</i>	2
<i>How are the product owners doing with their role?</i>	2
<i>Which managers need your attention?</i>	2
LiveLesson 6: How Do You Make Agile Meetings Purposeful and Productive?	2
<i>Should you step into the circle at the stand-up or step back?</i>	2
<i>How can you make sprint planning go better?</i>	2



<i>How can you make the sprint review more meaningful?</i>	3
<i>How can you breathe life into the retrospective?</i>	3
LiveLesson 7: How Do You Change Negative or Repressed Conflict Into Something Productive?	3
<i>What conflict exists on the team?</i>	3
<i>What do you do when people complain to you?</i>	3
LiveLesson 8: How Do You Help the Team Come Up with Great Ideas?	3
<i>Does the team need cooperation or collaboration?</i>	3
<i>How do you build individual cooperators?</i>	3
<i>How do you build their collaboration muscle?</i>	3

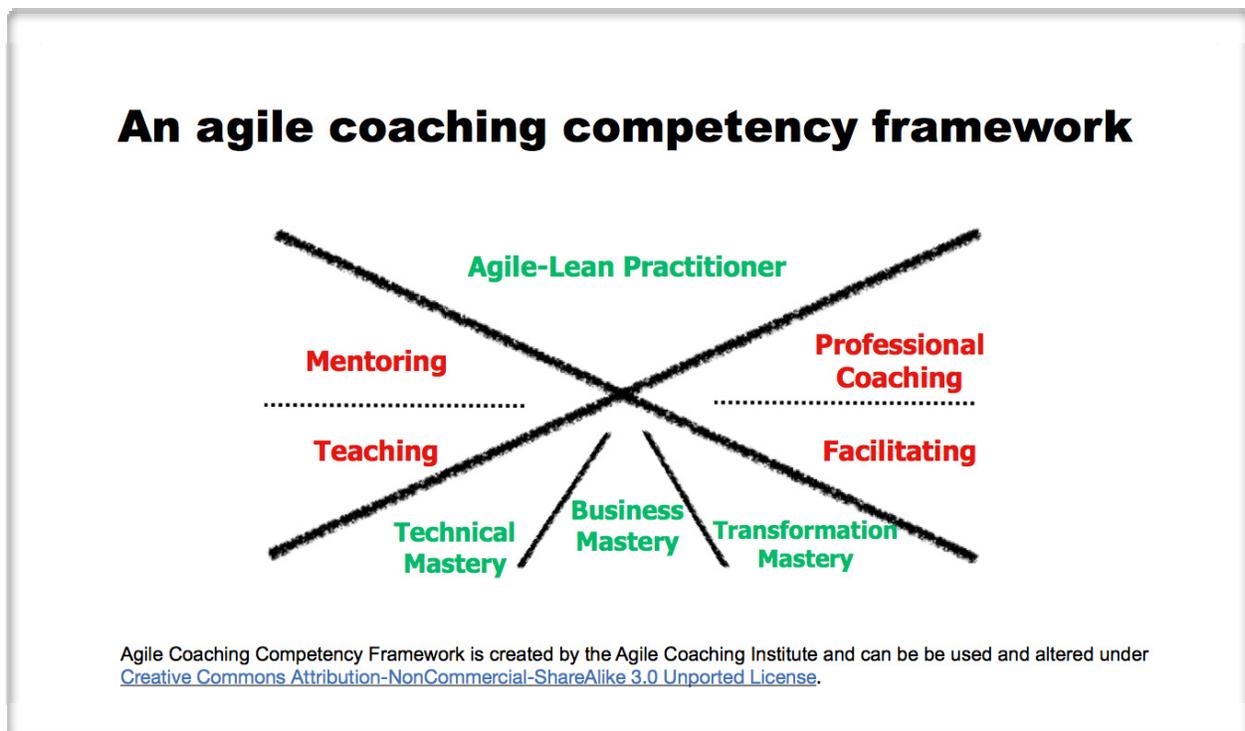


LiveLesson 1: How Do You Become a Good Agile Coach?

What are the competencies of an agile coach?

Use this competency framework to help you see the full palette of skills and knowledge areas of successful agile coaches.

You need to be quite strong in Agile-Lean Practitioner and strong in either Mentoring or Teaching as well as strong in either Professional Coaching or Facilitating. It's great if you're strong in all four but not strictly necessary. And,



we suggest you pick one in-depth area to really get to know: Technical Mastery, Business Mastery or Transformation Mastery.

Here are some short definitions:

- **Agile-Lean Practitioner:** Applies agile practices, lives agile values.
- **Mentoring:** Sharing knowledge, skills and perspectives that foster the personal and professional growth of someone else.
- **Teaching:** Instructing others in specific knowledge, skills and perspectives.



- **Professional Coaching:** Partnering with clients in a creative process that inspires their personal and professional potential (from the International Coach Federation).
- **Facilitating:** A neutral process holder who guides groups through processes that help them come to solutions and make decisions.
- **Technical Mastery:** Technical expertise as a software craftsperson.
- **Business Mastery:** Expert at business-value-driven innovation and product development.
- **Transformation Mastery:** Expertise as an organizational development and change catalyst.

For an in-depth guide to this framework, see the [white paper](#) at AgileCoachingInstitute.com.

<http://www.agilecoachinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Agile-Coaching-Competencies-whitepaper-part-one.pdf>



How many of the native wiring qualities do you possess?

As you think about whether you will be a good agile coach, consider the ten abilities and mind-sets prevalent in people who have the native wiring for coaching:

1. They have an uncanny ability to “read a room.” As soon as they step into a room, they can tell what basically happened while they were out. They instantaneously read the emotion in the air and know whether all is well.
2. They care about people more than products. Sure, the focus on products is still there, but it’s accomplished through caring about people, who, in turn, knowing they are cared for and supported in their growth, create great products.
3. They cultivate curiosity. They know when they don’t know. They don’t know what people are thinking or feeling, and they don’t know why things are as they are. So they ask.
4. They believe that people are basically good. Yes, they know the hard cases exist. But even the most difficult people are good inside, perhaps just a little further back on the road to being a full human being. So, they meet these people where they are and help them take the steps they can.
5. They know that plans fall apart, so they act in the moment with the team, rather than holding on to any one idea or hope about how things should turn out.
6. They have a thirst for learning. They know that they are not done growing yet (ever).
7. They believe that any group of people can do good things in the world, given a growth environment and an audacious goal. They believe excellence exists and is worth pursuing.
8. They have a low tolerance for institutional reasons that hold people back from excellence, the ones that “just are because they have always been.” It drives them crazy when someone says, “Yeah, I know it’s a waste of time, but that’s the way we do it here.”
9. They believe that disequilibrium is essential. Chaos and destruction are simply building blocks for something better. Messiness is expected.



10. They risk being wrong. When they are wrong, they own up to it and move on.

I created this list by reflecting on my successful agile coach apprentices and what made the transition to agile coaching look smooth. Some of them had a trouble-free time becoming an agile coach, easy by comparison to my very arduous (and worthwhile) journey. Looking at the list now, I can see that I have adopted native wiring mind-sets over time. Ten years ago, probably only half of the native wiring aspects were true for me. Now, all of them live in me and form the steadfast core from which I coach agile teams.

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p17

How can you tune up your native wiring?

If you would like more of these native wiring qualities to be part of you, it's simple to do. Just train your mind. Tune it up a bit.

Sit down for five minutes (or even 60 seconds) each morning before you start your day of agile coaching. Find a place where you can be alone -- an unused conference room, a parking lot bench, a broom closet. Breathe easy.

Let your mind start to clear and repeat the phrase below. Repeat it again and again, gently for the entire time. When your mind moves to another topic, just bring it back to the phrase.

Monday: I relinquish my plan. I act in the moment to offer what they most need.

Tuesday: I am only partially right. I stay curious and see how others are right.

Wednesday: People act from good intention. I remain open to discovering it.

Thursday: Mistakes and messiness are necessary. We are all learning.

Friday: Excellence exists and is worth pursuing.



LiveLesson 2: What Mindsets Need to Change?

Where do we stand with reprogramming plan-driven beliefs?

The arrows represent a continuum from one belief to another. Put an “M” on the line to represent your belief. Is it closer to the left or the right? In the middle? Then, put an “O” on the line to represent your organization’s predominant belief.

<p>We can plan the work and work the plan.</p>		<p>Planning is essential. Plans are useless. [Eisenhower]</p>
<p>The plan gets more accurate over time as we flesh out the project through phases of activity: requirements, design, etc.</p>		<p>A plan gets more accurate because it is constantly trued-up to the team’s actual performance.</p>
<p>Completing tasks and delivering deliverables indicate progress and value delivered.</p>		<p>Only delivered end products indicate progress and value delivered.</p>
<p>Delivering on time, on budget and on scope equals success.</p>		<p>Clients getting the business value they need equals success.</p>
<p>Scope can be locked down with later discoveries being handled as change requests.</p>		<p>Time and budget (people) are held constant. Only scope flexes.</p>



Controlling through the project plan is my job.		Controlling through a plan is not possible; releasing the team into the safety of agile is my only measure of control.
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What new insight did you gain from doing this exercise?

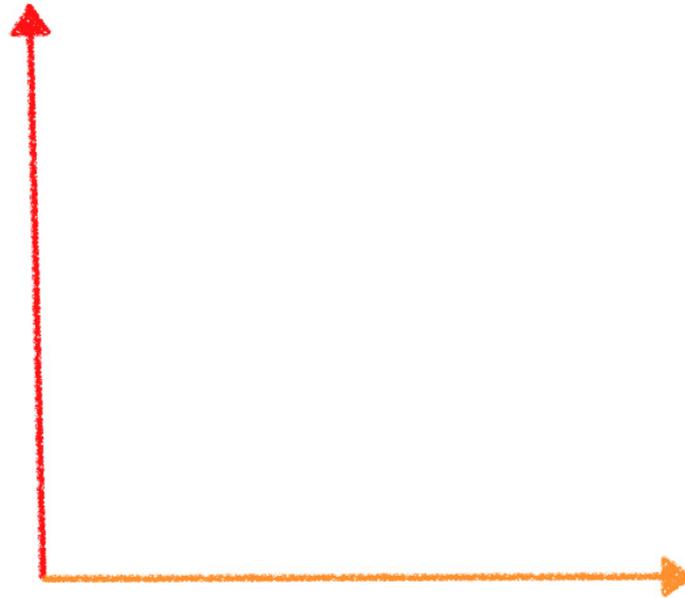
If you had to pick one mindset to change in yourself or in the organization, which one would it be?

What can you do to remain open to agile so that it can be your reprogramming teacher? Where will you look?



LiveLesson 3: What Behaviors Need to Change?

What is your native conflict response mode?



Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (TKI)
Source: CPP, Inc. (2009)

How much is your native conflict response mode in-line with agile or working against agile? What is the effect?



How violent is your communication?

Consider these questions honestly, and jot down “yes” or “no” next to each. Don’t think about it too much. Your initial response is accurate enough.

- Do you spend some time each day quietly reflecting on how you would like to relate to yourself and others?
- Do you remember that all human beings have the same needs?
- Before every conversation, do you check your intention to see whether you are as interested in others getting their needs met as your own?
- When asking someone to do something, do you check first to see whether you are making a request or a demand?
- Instead of saying what you **don’t** want someone to do, do you say what you **do** want the person to do?
- Instead of saying what you want someone to **be**, do you say what action you’d like the person to take that you hope will help the person be that way?
- Before agreeing or disagreeing with anyone’s opinions, do you try to tune in to what the person is feeling and needing?
- Instead of saying “no,” do you say what need of yours prevents you from saying “yes”?

Source: Quiz adapted from Baran and Center for NonViolent Communication 2004 Coaching Agile Teams, pp. 36-37



Can you be their servant?

On the subject of listening and giving space for others to respond:

“...Only a true natural servant automatically responds to any problem by listening *first*.”

“It is often a devastating question to ask oneself, but it is sometimes important to ask it—‘In saying what I have in mind will I really improve on the silence?’” (Greenleaf 1991)

Ponder these questions: What percentage of the time do you listen first? Do people have room to speak when they are around you?

On the subject of accepting one another:

“[People] grow taller when those who lead them empathize and when they are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing.” (Greenleaf 1991)

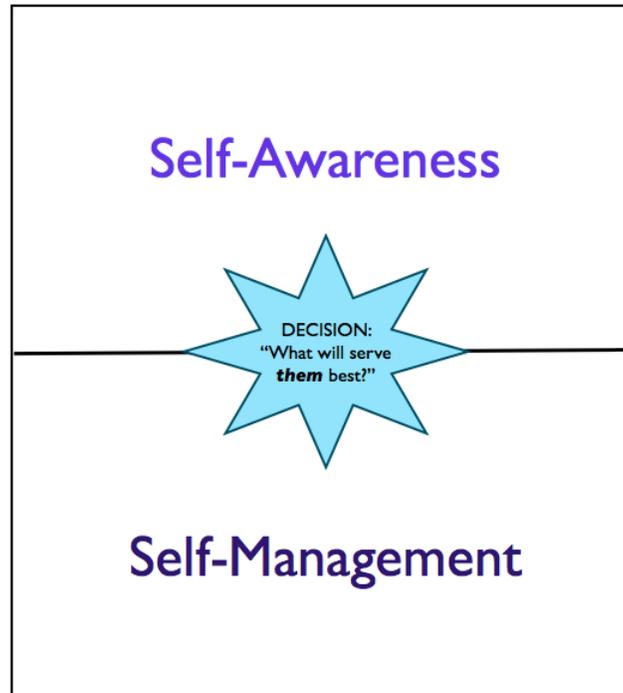
Ponder these questions: How likely are you to accept people as they are and honor where they are on their journey? When you coach, do your judgments create a barrier between you and them?

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, pp. 35 - 40

What’s the bottom line? Are you a strong servant leader or do you have many more miles to travel? _____



Will you respond intelligently?



Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
Source: Daniel Goleman (1998)

In a given day, how often do you find yourself pausing and consciously asking, "What will serve *them* best?" Many times? Some?

Where are you successful?

In what situations do you find it challenging to take the pause?



What practical step will you take?

There are many things you can do to become more aware of your instinctive, or knee-jerk, reactions to things and to recover from command-and-control-ism.

The great thing we can borrow from agile is the experimentation mindset. So, design your experiment here.

Which one of these will you try as an experiment?

For how long? _____
(remember, never longer than a month)

Practical steps

Daily practice Jogging
Meditation
Breathing
Music
Many more

Stay connected to what you care about

Truly listen

Talk less with more purpose: **WAIT** Why am I Talking?

Stay in the present moment

What will indicate to you that it was successful? _____

I suggest you put a reminder on your calendar to inspect-and-adapt when the experiment is done. Really—do exactly what we coach teams to do. Check it out and see if you want to continue or not. And then, make your next plan. What will be your next experiment?



LiveLesson 4: How Do You Prove Your Value?

Where are you in the process of becoming a valuable agile coach?

Use this diagnostic to get a sense of how far you've come, and how far you have yet to go to become a well-rounded agile coach. Mark "yes" or "no" next to each item.

	Yes	No
Have you instilled the agile practices?		
Have you started up agile teams?		
Have you coached...		
...team members 1:1		
...the whole team		
...product owners		
...outsiders		
...the team through change		
Have you instigated paths toward high performance?		
Have you accepted their ideas above your own?		
Have you mastered yourself? (Do you act consciously?)		
Have you modeled agile values and principles?		
Have you navigated conflict?		
Have you set yourself on a growth path?		
Have you started giving back?		

Wherever you "are" is just fine. Taking this baseline measure is the hardest part and the most critical. Now, knowing where you have room to grow, you can find resources to help you do so. Much of what you need is contained in the rest of these LiveLessons.



How can you change the way your value is measured?

To change the way people measure your value, first change the way **you** measure your value. Instead of measuring yourself as a manager (the behaviors on the left), measure yourself as an agile coach (the behaviors on the right). Once you see the power of the agile coach behaviors reflected in the team’s ability to deliver more and more value, perhaps you will then see your own value more clearly.

Driving results. Directing the work of others.	➡	Creating an environment where results are delivered naturally and no one needs to be “driven.”
Following company processes.	➡	Challenging processes that restrict value delivery.
Delivering according to plan.	➡	Delivering the most business value possible in a set amount of time.
Immediately escalating problems to management.	➡	Working through problems within the people involved to fully resolve them and move on.
Delivering the product according to plan.	➡	Enabling the team to deliver the product according to their changing and increasingly accurate plan. Letting business value delivered be the only metric that matters.
Implementing agile by the book.	➡	Knowing when going “by the book” is best and when to sacrifice the most powerful expression of agile to get at least some improvement in an imperfect environment.

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p. 281



LiveLesson 5: How Do You Help the Agile Roles Become Fully Occupied?

Which of these ScrumMaster/agile coach behaviors are hard for you?

Does	Does Not
Guide and facilitate	Direct or drive
Keep everyone focused on delivering business value	Stick to deadlines and approaches that no longer work
Have a keen interest in the team's overall performance	Become attached to specific outcomes from the team
Coach the team for high-performance	Get involved in task-level direction
Promote the skills and growth of every team member	Become the only voice of the team

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p177

Take one that's difficult for you and ask, "What drives this behavior in me? What makes me drift toward the "does not" side?" Jot down your answer:

You may need to ask the "what drives it?" question several times to get to the root of what really drives your less-than-useful behavior.

You may want to do this exercise for each behavior you find challenging. When it comes to helping people do agile well, you are their best asset, so it's worth you knowing what makes these behaviors arise in you.



How are the product owners doing with their role?

A refresher on the vision of the product owner role done well:

- **Business value driver:** All decisions and trade-offs, including when to stop the project, are made through considering which alternative gives the most business value now.
- **Vision keeper:** Keep the big picture of the product in the team's sight, and direct them toward it each sprint.
- **Daily decision maker:** Be fully present with the team to engage in conversation and make decisions as they arise so that the team can move forward unimpeded.
- **Heat shield:** Protect the team from all outside noise and pressure, allowing them to focus.
- **The one ultimately responsible:** Be completely invested in the product. The team's work is not just another job assignment—it matters to your career—so you graciously accept the burden of being the final person answerable for the business results of the product.

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p.171

Part 1. Think of the best product owner you have worked with. What do they do that lets you know these parts of the role are done well?

Business-Value-Driver _____

Vision Keeper _____

Daily Decision Maker _____

Heat Shield _____

Ultimately Responsible _____



Part 2. Now, think of a product owner who does not do such a great job. What do they **do** that lets you know these parts of the role are **not** done well?

Business-Value-Driver _____

Vision Keeper _____

Daily Decision Maker _____

Heat Shield _____

Ultimately Responsible _____

Part 3. What insights did you get from thinking this through? What action do you need to take?

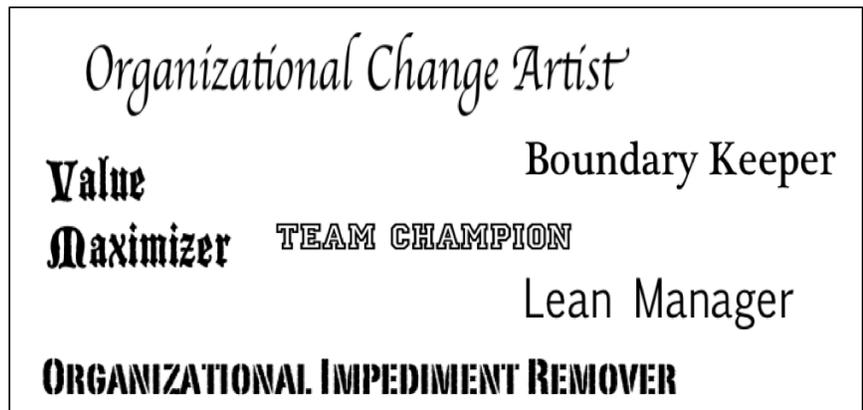


Which managers need your attention?

The role of agile manager is new and very much needed. Take a look at these things we need agile managers to be:

- **Organizational change artist:** Guides the organization through agile adoption (and re-adoption).
- **Boundary keeper:** Reinforces healthy role boundaries both within the team and between the team and the greater organization.

- **Value maximizer:** Manages the portfolio of projects like a product owner manages a portfolio of user stories, always asking what the highest business value project is *now*.



- **Lean manager:** Uses lean thinking to improve organizational flow so that the value teams deliver can be realized without delay.
- **Organizational impediment remover:** Finds the gritty courage it takes to remove entrenched impediments.
- **Team champion:** Offers observations from the team boundary and releases the team to reach their fullest potential by truly believing they can.

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p. 174

Which managers need you to guide them to become these things? Write down their names.

Now, circle one name that you will act on this week. I'm not kidding. This is too important to let slide.



LiveLesson 6: How Do You Make Agile Meetings Purposeful and Productive?

Should you step into the circle at the stand-up or step back?

Step in when they are new to stand-up or when they have regressed and need a little extra help. Also, step in when a really harmful behavior needs immediate correction. Otherwise, step back. Remember, they don't have to do the stand-up perfectly. They just have to do it well enough to get these purposes met:



Based on their maturity, is it time for you to step in or step back? _____

Which purpose is not being met? _____

Does it require a step-in intervention or can it wait until the retrospective? _____

Regardless of their maturity, facilitate this with a sense of lightness and neutrality. They're not "bad people" when they do the stand-up poorly, they're just learning and changing. Help them do so.

And above all, remember that your job is to help them sprint and deliver customer value. Choose your interventions wisely.



How can you make sprint planning go better?

Which two of these will you improve? Go ahead...just circle them.

Introspection time

Which two to improve?

- prepare the container (agenda)
- coach/mentor the product owner to prepare the backlog
- encourage all voices
- movement and multiple activities at once
- look for teachable moments, like
 - affirm the roles
 - user stories, business value
- help them get unstuck (silent tasking, pairs work)
- “Which purposes have we fulfilled?”
- “Are we committed?” and see everyone’s real opinion
- hold the timebox



How can you make the sprint review more meaningful?

To make the sprint review more meaningful, consider these questions:

What has your role been in the sprint review? What things have you typically done?

What were you doing those things for?

_____ Who was that for? You? Or them? _____

Your job is to allow them to “true up” and “get direct feedback.” How are you doing? Give yourself a score of 1 to 10. _____



How can you breathe life into the retrospective?

Observe, observe, observe -- all sprint long. Consider these questions as you observe the team in action:

Is the team using the structures of agile to stay coordinated?

What is the team tolerating that it shouldn't?

How well does the work flow?

Where are the breakdowns in communication, coordination, attendance, attention to one another, and collaboration?

Where are the brilliant moments?

Where does it feel slow, like molasses on a cold day?

How does the team's level of anxiety change throughout the sprint?

Are people present physically, mentally, and emotionally?

When and how does the level of excitement change?

And...add your own questions as they occur to you.

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p. 133

Know that the retrospective can become a tiresome, pointless meeting unless facilitated well. Your goal is to design a meeting in which they can interact to see the last sprint with new eyes. And, to make a handful of agreements for action that will help them be even better next sprint. Consider these questions:

What has your role been in the retrospective? What things have you typically done?

Would you say that the retrospective is purposeful? Or has it become an empty ritual? _____

Considering everything we just explored, what will you improve about your retrospective facilitation next time?



LiveLesson 7: How Do You Change Negative or Repressed Conflict into Something Productive?

What conflict exists on the team?

Think over the last few sprints. What conflict has occurred on the team? Put a dot at the appropriate level for each conflict you remember. Small conflicts such as snide remarks count, too.

Now look at the “map” you made. What does it tell you about the team’s ability to navigate conflict successfully?

Is there too much toxic conflict? Or, perhaps conflict is rumbling underground? Or, is the team harmonious but making their way through one mediocre day after another? What’s true for your team?



What do you do when people complain to you?

People often complain. When they complain to the agile coach, we can take on the complaint as our own, especially if we view it as a way to remove an impediment. If we do so, though, we deprive the team of their chance to learn how to work with complaints.

Instead of taking it on yourself, use this 3-step process to work with complaints. Practice this. It is not a typical conversation. If you do not practice, you are not likely to do it in real time. If you are there with colleagues, take 5 minutes now to practice this a few times. If not, promise yourself you will practice with someone in the next two days.

Here are some juicy, real-life scenarios to practice with:

Scenario 1: A team member casually mentions that he came in over the weekend to correct another team member's work. In his opinion, it was a job poorly done. He tells you that he was willing to do it this one time, but in the future he expects you to set the other team member straight.

Scenario 2: A team member tells you that she will be taking an unexpected day off because another team member did that to her last week, which caused extra work and a lot of frustration. This week, she's going to "get back" at the other team member by taking a day off. She feels she deserves it and wants the other person to know how it feels to be let down.

Scenario 3: A team member comes to you and asks that you talk with two others on the team who speak too softly to be heard during the stand-up. He says he is embarrassed to bring it up himself because he has a slight hearing problem, and he's not sure if his inability to hear them is his issue or theirs.

Then, have your friend play out a scenario that you think might be brewing in your own work situation. See how well you do with "live ammo."

Source: *Coaching Agile Teams*, p. 219

3 steps when people complain to you

1. "Have you shared your concerns and feelings about this with _____?"
2. "_____ should know of your concerns. Would it help if I go with you?"
3. "May I tell _____ that you have these concerns?"

If none are accepted, cease to consider it a problem



LiveLesson 8: How Do You Help the Team Come Up with Great Ideas?

Does the team need cooperation or collaboration?

Which one does your team need? (just circle it)
OR

Imaginative or breakthrough thinking needed?

New technology or uncertain approach?

Competitive advantage the main goal?

Collaboration

Innovation need fairly low?

Approach and technology well understood?

Coordination of work-in-progress the main goal?

COOPERATION



How do you build individual cooperators?

Score these from 1 to 5 where 1 means they do not exhibit the behavior or attitude and 5 means they do it all the time. Jot your numbers down beside each bullet point.

How cooperative are the people on the team?

- Agreeing to **“response-ability,”** which means choosing to respond intentionally to whatever happens in life rather than denying or blaming.
- Noticing when your silence has conveyed implicit consent because real “team players” **never “go along”**.
- Using your veto power while also accepting responsibility for **moving the group** toward an acceptable solution.
- **Reflecting** on your actions to recognize the interplay of your conscious and unconscious intentions.
- **Telling your truth** with compassion instead of delivering “constructive” criticism.

Source: Christopher Avery, *Teamwork is an Individual Skill*

What do your scores explain to you?



How do you build their collaboration muscle?

Take the quiz below to see where you stand. Notice how often each of the ground conditions and collaboration muscle builders occurs on the team. Often? Not often enough? Never? Just jot the answer down beside each one.

Putting it all together

<h4 style="color: orange;">Ground Conditions</h4> <p>How often do you...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Expect them to come prepared.Encourage their healthy ego.Establish the collaboration zone.Encourage curiosity.Allow a break.	<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"><p style="margin: 0;">often? not often enough? never?</p></div>	<h4 style="color: orange;">Collaboration Muscle Builders</h4> <p>How often do they...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Speak the unspeakable.Build up instead of breaking down.Hear all voices. Play (seriously) together.
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Given what you just learned, consider these questions.

What behavior or lack of skill (or fantastic skill) does this assessment explain?

Where should you focus your attention? (which ground condition or muscle builder) What's one step you can take?

