

Agile Coaching Dojo-Open Topics: Webinar Highlights

This webinar has a Lean Coffee style format in which participants had the opportunity to submit questions to Agile coaches Bob Galen and Shaun Bradshaw. Below is a list of questions from the attendees, along with feedback provided.

1. How do you feel about Carry-over stories?

- This question came up at **StarWest**, which is where Bob Galen was last week. View from others at the conference was that carry-over stories are normal.
- The consensus from Bob and Shaun is that as a norm, they don't like carry-over stories.
 - **90% Complete Syndrome** - Team becomes comfortable with not completing everything that they planned and is complacent with not meeting their commitments
 - **Creates bad habit** - What is enough? During planning if you can't firmly commit as a team to the work, that is a problem.
 - **Don't bite off more than you can chew** - Bite off what you can chew, chew it and deliver it. Do it well. You can always stretch
 - **Don't compromise on quality** - Do more if you can, but don't compromise on quality
 - Velocity will be volatile and unpredictable if teams are constantly carrying over stories
 - **Retrospective** - Recommend that you talk about the issue of carry over stories in the Retrospective
 - **Key Driver** - Figure out why the team keeps carrying over stories. Could it be that as a team, there is not a clear understanding of the stories?
 - **Increase Predictability** - If the team must keep carrying over stories they need figure out how to get better predictability

2. Is it possible to work with a balance between SAFe, Scrum and Kanban?

- 2 of the 3 might be a necessity in some cases
- Depends on the type of work and size of the organization
- Kanban is best choice If there is a lot of interrupt driven type work
- Scrum and Scrum of Scrums is best for feature driven type work
- Difficulty with using both Kanban and Scrum:
 - Integration Points
 - **Scrum:** Regular Tempo
 - **Kanban:** No Regular Tempo.
 - May step on each other's toes if doing both. Versioning could be problematic. Do Scrum of Scrums with both teams.
 - Organization using all 3:



- Scrum and Kanban are both different agile methods.
- SAFe-Scaling framework. Most SAFe implementations are at the Team Level. Can plug in Scrum teams and/or Kanban teams. Can use SAFe as the scaling vehicle with Kanban or Scrum.
- SAFe has notion of Release/PI planning.
 - Kanban can contribute to train, but this leans better toward Scrum. More Scrum at a team level.
- Some teams have both Interrupt Driven work and Plan Driven work. As long as they split capacity between the two boards, it works.

3. What are some things that team can do when they make the transition from Waterfall to Agile practices?

- **Training** - Experience has been to have a mini boot camp that teams will run through. Pick methodology: Scrum or Kanban. Training needs to be experiential
- **Kanban** - Play pizza game
- **Simulations**: Simulate what Kanban looks like or what sprint looks like
- **Behavior** - As much doing as you can in order to get the behavior agile practices
- **Key** - Get going with real work as fast as you can
- **Kanban** - Put together a board and get team to start operating in a Kanban session
- **59-minute Scrum** - Go through all of the ceremonies of Scrum. Use Pet Store app. There will be time for planning, backlog review, actual work, and retrospective. Then, will do it again. Focused discussion at the end of the 59 minutes
- **Team roles** - Call out the team roles and underscore the importance of being flexible

4. In which ways can a scrum master use Six Sigma to add value?

- Six Sigma is more of a toolbox
- When coaching teams with new scrum masters, notice that they aren't leaning on data coming out of the team. Missing opportunities/losing insight at how the team is working at a collective level
- There is a place for some of the Six Sigma tools. Having the tools/data is valuable to objectively present information. Especially useful during retrospective
- Bob's feeling is that using Six Sigma approach can be a potentially slippery slope. Data can be good or data can be bad
- Be careful about how you would present the data. It is team's decision to use and interpret it
- Kanban does Monte Carlo estimates. Data driven-but there is a mechanistic nature to it
- Be careful about being too heavy handed with the Six Sigma toolset



5. What certifications and for what organizations should someone interested in being a coach do?

- **Scrum Alliance** is leading Scrum body - offers Coaching Certification
- **ICAgile** offers tactical coaching skills certification - Complementary skills
- **Find a Mentor:** Co-coach or pair coach with them. Doing this will give you some insight into whether you have the skills for coaching. (*For Scrum Alliance, you have to have a mentor to get the certification*)
- **Certifications don't make great coaches - Experience does.**
- **Who should be a coach?**
 - Look at yourself as an individual
 - Does your personality lend itself to being a coach?
 - Takes a set of skills that go beyond understanding the ceremonies
 - There is a set of soft skills needed to be a coach
 - Beyond whatever certifications you have, you have to be realistic about whether you are capable of it or not
 - How prescriptive should you be? Coaching is not always about answering the question directly. Clients have to come to a conclusion on their own

6. How do OKR's (Objectives and Key Results) work with Agile?

- Perfect complement to directing agile organizations
- Outcome based
- Good at Leadership level
- Having clear results helps leader explain to the teams WHY you want to make that change. There must be some balance, though. There must be mechanism in implementation. Teams might feel like they are being measured only by their results. Need to be careful using OKR's
- **Agile leader mindset** - Create shared ownership of OKR's. Leader must have something in mind

7. What do you think of the Agile Fluency Model by James Shore and Diana Larsen?

- James Shore and Diana Larsen observed that agile teams pass through 4 different zones as they learn. Each zone requires certain agile proficiencies
 - **Focusing** teams produce business value
 - **Delivering** teams deliver on the market cadence
 - **Optimizing** teams lead their market
 - **Strengthening** teams make their organizations stronger
- A team is fluent in a zone when it is fluent in all of the zone's proficiencies, even predecessor zones
- **Model can be applied to:**



- Identify what type of agile investments your organization needs to make
- Revealing what is wrong if you aren't seeing the fluency that you expect
- Align conversations about agile approaches
- 80% focused downward to the team and 20% outward
- Maturity framework
- Helpful for organizations who have lost their way
- Agile is not a methodology. Scrum and SAFe are. Agile is more of a set of values. Going back to basics, values that agile espouses, are you ultimately fostering those values and principles? Shaun is all for it. SAFe is for Managers and leaders. It also makes PMO happy. Agile value comes from the team. SAFe sacrifices that

8. What department at a company should a scrum master start in?

- No department is better than another, however:
 - Best scrum masters didn't know about the company or the team but were firmly planted in the scrum values. Consistently coaching the team on more efficient ways of working, pushing back effectively
 - Not a best place to come from. As an individual where is your passion?
 - Doesn't matter where you have your start
 - Starting out as a people manager in a Waterfall environment and moving to agile can be a challenge
 - Need to be honest with yourself on how you want to make this transition if you came from Waterfall environment
 - CSM from Social Worker background-forget about silos in software or technology company
 - Anyone can be a good scrum master
 - No limiting factor
 - Make sure that you know what good scrum mastery looks like

9. Do you think that an industrial company could gain from agile?

- Agile and scrum is being used in school systems
- Scrum is effective in non-profits and churches
- Kanban can be used in a wide variety of places
- Genesis of scrum is in software but it is getting traction in other places
- In the last 5-8 years, agile moved out to other organizations
- Bob recommended book called "The Wisdom of Crowds" by James Surowiecki
- Agile can be used in any organization. It is not software-centric
- Any organization can gain some value from implementing agile principles and values
- Shaun mentioned that he worked with a client that did agile with software team first and now are doing hardware team



- There are cultural barriers in agile adoption but they are not insurmountable
- Lean manufacturing concepts align well with agile
- Agile principles can apply to more industrial setting
- Mechanics may change how you do it, but the principles will be the same

