



TURNING VISIONS INTO BUSINESS

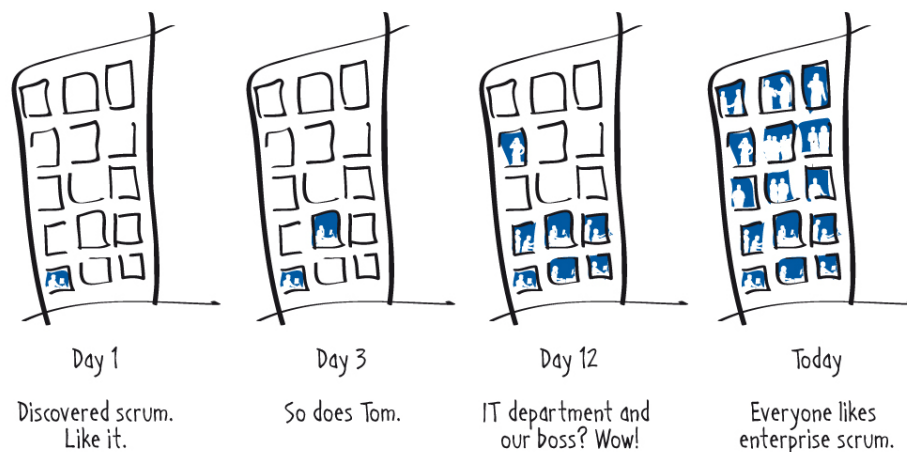
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Lasting commercial success with Agile Evolution

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Scrum techniques are spreading increasingly. In many cases, they lead individual projects to success, but not the company as a whole. That is the case because Scrum is more than the application of techniques.

agile evolution



While Scrum techniques have worked well in one or even a couple of projects, many companies are struggling to reproduce and apply them as organizational knowledge in all project teams. It is just not enough to simply do some projects with. In fact, a comprehensive strategy is necessary in order to transfer the benefits of Scrum to the entire enterprise.

Scrum includes core values which must be distributed and lived within the company for the organization as a whole to succeed. One of these values is "people before processes". Multiplying Scrum across the organization requires special attention to establishing the fundamental values of Scrum.

Where do the values of Scrum come from?

Scrum is an agile approach to software development. It is based on principles drafted in the 2001 "Manifesto for Agile Software Development." These are the priorities in the agile methods:

- Individuals and collaboration over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

The authors of the Agile Manifesto emphasize that while they see the importance of the values on the right hand side, they value the ones on the left more.

With the establishment of agile principles Scrum is able to effect the existing corporate culture and this is where the challenge begins: In order to make Scrum successful, it is necessary to understand how a corporate culture develops and changes.

How does corporate culture evolve?

Individual values of employees influence the corporate culture and vice versa. It is as follows: the personal values of individual employees affect their behavior. Caused by this behavior and the behavior of the company result experiences. Individual experiences which build the collective "memory" of the company or what we call corporate culture. In turn, the existing corporate culture influences the personal values of employees, thus creating a "cycle".

The introduction of Scrum into the corporate culture is a change, which is meant to be spread organization-wide (Agile Evolution). As a consequence establishing Scrum requires a change management approach within the company.

What is Scrum?

Scrum is a framework to develop and sustain complex projects effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the basic concept is to establish a project management, which helps teams to work permanently successful. Thereby the following principles apply:

- **Empowerment and Self-Organization:** Teams are empowered and responsible for all decisions needed to deliver the Increment. They plan their work themselves and choose how to accomplish it best. Teams are cross-functional.
- **Early and Regular Deliveries:** Every member of the team focuses on delivering the product incrementally. Early and regular deliveries ensure a continuous flow of results which enable teams to inspect and adapt.
- **Inspection and Adaption:** Teams regularly reflect on how to be more effective and efficient. This applies to the product as well as to the way of work.
- **Transparency:** Teams share information and knowledge to foster collaboration so that everyone can contribute in the best possible way to reach the goals.
- **Timeboxing:** Everything in Scrum is timeboxed, meaning it has a definite beginning and end which is never extended. This ensures discipline, focus and on-time deliveries.

Scrum teams see the benefits of this technique particularly in the following points:

- Focusing on early results,
- Structured and continuous interaction with customers,
- Establishing an environment for motivated people.

Scrum involves the customer

Agile projects offer the customer benefits, as well. The most important are:

- Regular results (deliveries);
- High transparency (where is the project?);
- If the customer is the product owner, he can define and prioritize the requirements for the project. Requirements may be changed during the whole lifetime.

The customer is more involved than in traditional projects: after each sprint, the results are presented and the customer can decide whether the project is on track or changes need to be made.

What are the critical factors of success with Scrum?

Organizations tend to adhere to existing working practices. Via Scrum, companies can accelerate the normally rather long adaptation process.

Scrum is not only a framework of techniques, but it also contains values which influence the innermost of the corporate culture. This alters previously lived corporate values and requires the application of change management.

The different employee groups feel specific hurdles and obstacles, e.g.:

- The CEO / CIO would like to see Scrum implemented in all projects, because the results are better and the teams are more efficient. However, other managers might worry about their future role, if teams are self organized and hence do not support the change.
- Employees who support and advocate Scrum are confronted with the fact that the initial success in individual projects can not be repeated in others. This may serve as an argument to not apply agile techniques any longer.

Many Scrum implementations focus purely on Scrum techniques in individual projects and neglect the people in the social system and dealing with them. This can have consequences:

- Although they use Scrum techniques, some projects are successful and others are not.
- Projects fail because the change in values is not explicitly managed or because the management does not support the Scrum values.

How to get all employees on board?

It is essential to communicate the values behind Scrum and to address the consequences they will have on the corporate culture. In order for this change to happen, it is not enough to communicate the values or implement them team by team. It is necessary, particularly at management level, to live the change and thus make it visible. An agile evolution is an organizational learning effort that applies to projects, to the change management process itself and even on work done on a management level.

Positive experiences with "spreading" Scrum is essential for this endeavour. Furthermore, this process has to be "orchestrated" and is not to be left to chance. Therefore it is necessary to not only include corporate management and teams, but also not directly involved people (marketing, sales, finance) in the change.

In order to enable people to participate in the Scrum change, the organization needs to strengthen the skills of their employees:

- Meaning for the individual project: Learning the Scrum techniques (which is not difficult). It takes, however, discipline to adhere to the techniques in everyday life. The Scrum Master is the key role in supporting this skill development in the teams they facilitate.
- Meaning for the environment: It is ready and able to handle the Scrum values (e.g. managers foster self-organization).

How to multiply agile techniques throughout the organization?

Scrum can be transferred to the entire organization by scaling the empirical "inspect and adapt" approach. This means: depending on the company size, there is formed a fair number of teams which multiply the knowledge and live an inspect and adapt process on the enterprise level (with as little overhead as possible). They coordinate themselves and they are responsible for a cross-transfer of knowledge and experience. These are possible approaches:

- Enthusiasts from throughout the organization meet regularly to discuss common problems and challenges and find joint solutions for them.
- Coaching teams: Experienced Scrum users accompany less experienced teams and give them advice with critical first-time situations (e.g., the first sprint planning meeting).
- Providing good experiences, for example via an Internet portal, or a wiki database. Contents of a Wiki could be for examples, templates or successfully applied techniques from projects. The wiki should bear the name of the internal contact person, so he can be contacted and asked for further advice. Most importantly, the focus is on the application of Scrum. If the leadership sees the benefit of the reuse in other projects and to commit to them, it will create further motivation for teams to use the knowledge.

For the employees the transparency of the change process is important. This includes how the changes are initiated, supported and multiplied. The values which are applied in each project should also be applied in the entire organization. This requires to "inspect and adapt" the change process itself so that the principles we want to implement apply to the change itself. If the employees accept the process of change, they are more likely to accept the results that come out of the change process. Important points are:

- Identify actions in other areas based on agile principles, such as
 - Long development times or phases of work with little interaction with the client,
 - Results which are not focused on the value stream of the company,
 - Nonspecific responsibilities for the definition and prioritization of requirements.
- It is necessary that the leadership revises actions based on agile principles, and thus creates a framework for agile management (e.g. support self-organization of employees, or encourage early and regular deliveries).

Scrum Master and Scrum Master Chief flank the change

Each team gets a Scrum Master who ensures Scrum is implemented within the project, and the team's productiveness. He will support the team, identify potential improvements, promote the learning process, moderate conflicts and help establish transparency of the development. He is also committed to ensuring Scrum is perceived outside of the projects and receives support from other departments and the management.

The independent teams send their respective Scrum Master as a team ambassador to the Scrum of Scrums meetings to communicate information about broader issues in their teams.

The Chief Scrum Master is responsible for the adoption of Scrum in the organization and for the removal of organizational impediments.

The important role of an external "guide" to facilitate the change

To support the change, it is necessary to know about and apply professional change management. An independent outside perspective, which accompanies the organization like the pilot of boat, often helps. This pilot should naturally know about Scrum, but his professional qualifications in change management, facilitation and his understanding how social systems respond to change are equally important.

External pilots can e.g., coach new Scrum Masters and Scrum Product Owners, help structure the change management process, teach techniques to deal with social systems and facilitate managers in the design of the revised targets. Thus he helps the businesses to be permanently successful with agile evolution.



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