4.2.2 Exploring the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) Summary Porints

SAFe introduces many new roles to the Agile framework beyond the Scrum's three main roles of Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Development Team member. These roles considered essential to manage the integration and flow of products across many Agile teams running concurrently.

- ***System Teams*** - those that manage delivery and integration of products produced by individual Scrum teams
- ***Architecture Teams*** - manages and promotes the shared architecture framework across teams
- ***Product Manager*** - leads the Product Owners as the primary person in charge of targeting features and EPICs
- ***Release Train Engineer*** - leads the Scrum Masters on each of the Scrum teams, and conducts the large team or team ceremonies

By adding these essential teams, and others when needed, many teams can work together. These teams help make up what is termed the "Agile Release Train" or ART.

ARTs are how many agile teams work together on a single product or part of the business. For instance if there is a Financial company that wants to develop a new mobile banking application for loans, then all Agile teams working on that application might be on the same Agile Release Train. There then might be a separate Agile Release Train or "ART" for developing internal accounting software.

SAFe aligns ARTs to the business Value Stream. By modeling the business as a Lean process (remember Week 2), the organization can then continuous improve how it delivers value to customers using the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. ARTs are the teams that build and deploy changes to each step in the business value stream.

- Agile Release Trains (ARTs) align to one or more similar parts of the Business Value Stream
- ARTs are limited to up to 120 people, keeping on the lowside of Dunbar's number
- ARTs work together through the Sprint process, with shared ceremonies at the Release boundaries

This introduces the need to coordinate very large groups through the typical Sprint processes of Planning, Development, Review and Retrospectives. One of the most prominent aspects of SAFe is what's called the "Big Room Training" and "Big Room Planning" during Release Planning. Each Release is called a "Program Increment" and usually takes four to six sprints.

Program Increments (PI) Planning:

- All Agile Teams get in a room (can be up to 200 people, when accounting for stakeholders and Systems Teams)
- The Release Train Engineer organizes and coordinates the Planning Day
- The Product Manager provides a shared vision, set of features, and priority for the next Release
- Product Owners and Scrum Masters each play their role to execute Planning
- Points are considered absolute (at least at first) to compare across teams with ***one point equal to one person for one day***
- Teams commit to complete PI Objectives, instead of stories (which belong to the team)
- PI Objectives are given business value points by Business Owners

- Teams identify their dependencies across each other during this planning
- The ***Program Board captures all work and dependencies across teams***
- The Teams "ROAM" risks: Resolve, Owned, Accepted, or Mitigated
- Everyone gives a "vote of confidence" on whether they can meet the objectives, and keeps going until the whole team puts up "5 out of 5."

Program Increment Inspect and Adapt (IA):

- System demo is performed across all teams
  - Often includes the Project Sponsors (Business Owners)
  - Humanizes management
- Business Owners give feedback on achievement of business value points
- Retrospectives are run briefly to identify the most important problem to solve
- Problems are then addressed using workshops that include Business Owners, with clear outcomes and support by leadership

A couple of the principles that make SAFe work are:

- ***Take an economic view*** - Instead of just responding to customer wishes, work is evaluated in terms of cost of delay (CoD).
- ***Plan on cadence, release on demand*** - All teams must plan together, but they can release whenever work is ready.
- ***Base milestones on objective evaluation of working systems*** - The work is only considered done when it is fully demoed at the system level
- ***Visualize and limit WIP, reduce batch sizes, and manage queue lengths*** - leverage the Lean principles of limiting WIP and managing queues with small batches helps prevent turning independent teams back into departmental-like groups

Another issue that SAFe addresses at scale is the need to continuously explore, develop, and deploy new solutions. This is embodied in their ideals of "Continuous Everything;" which promotes the movement of potential work, work-in-progress, and done work through Value streams.

SAFe has three four levels of implementation to help answer these ideas:

- ***Essential SAFe*** - basic SAFe with only Business Owners managing as executives often on a single Agile release train (ART)
- ***Portfolio SAFe*** - includes a portfolio management function to align funding across teams or trains
- ***Large-Solution SAFe*** - Introduces the concepts of having Suppliers that integrate delivery along with multiple ARTs on a Solution Train
- ***Full SAFe*** - Includes a Portfolio Management function above the Large-Solution when managing across Solution Trains and other ARTs

To learn a little more about SAFe, check out these great videos as well that can help guide you through the

- Explanation of SAFe in 5 minutes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmJ_mJw8xec
- SAFe Version 4.5: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=qTG4l6jUbj4
- Scaled Agile Framework Online: https://www.scaledagileframework.com

If you plan to learn more on the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) we're sure you'll enjoy the ride!

All materials and information are courtesy of Scaled Agile, Inc.'s general release at www.scaledagileframework.com/videos-and-presentations/

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