PMI®—Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP)®

Knowledge and Skills: Part 1

Objectives

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the key elements of active listening

- Define the Agile manifesto and principles

- List the Agile community and stakeholder values

- Explain brainstorming and the steps to conduct effective brainstorming sessions

- Describe and use coaching and mentoring within Agile teams

Active listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret, and evaluate what they hear. This is accomplished by the listeners giving a feedback to the speaker; paraphrasing what they have heard to confirm the understanding of both parties.

Some of the practices that enhance active listening are as follows:

- Ask open-ended questions.

- Ask for more information.

- Ask for opinions and analysis.

- Do not interrupt; listen till the end.

The following elements help in becoming a better listener:

- Pay attention: Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Show that you are listening: Use your body language and gestures to convey your attention like nodding occasionally, using facial expressions, etc.

- Provide feedback: Understand what is being said and avoid using personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs that can distort what we hear.

- Defer judgment: Defer judgment and don't interrupt with counter arguments.

- Respond appropriately: Be candid, open, and honest in your response. Assert your opinions respectfully.

Assessing and Incorporating Community and Stakeholder Values

Agile is about delivering value to the customer and delighting the customers and stakeholders.

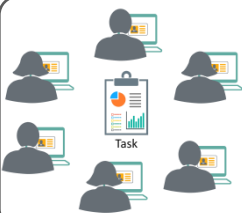Following are the PMI-Agile Community Values:
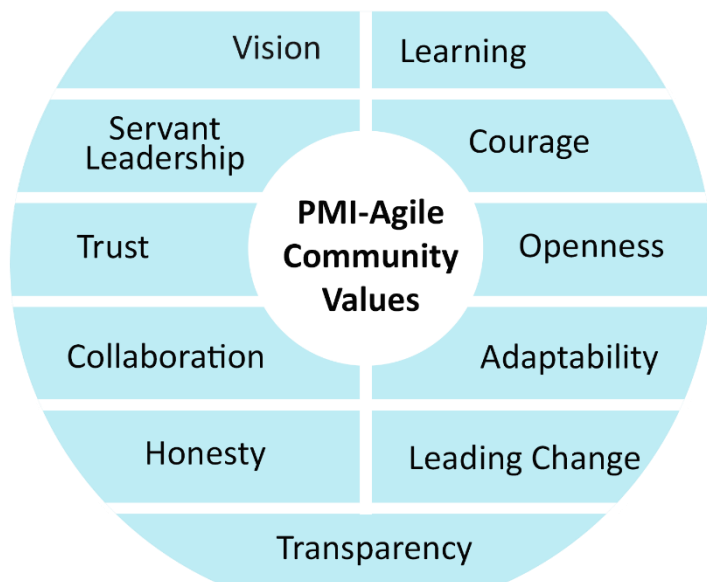
The four working or operating agreements of the PMI-Agile community are as follows:

All work will be performed against a set of program-wide and team-specific acceptance criteria.

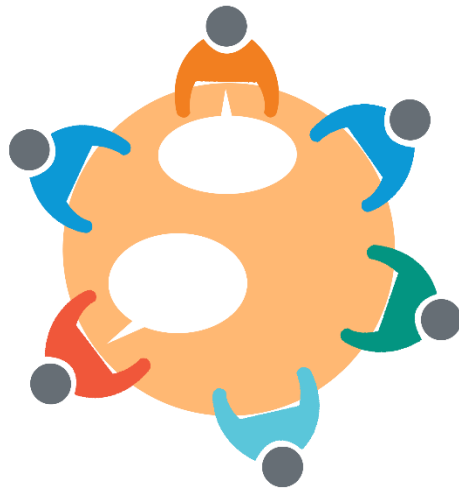All work teams will deliver value using Agile artifacts and ceremonies.

All work teams will self-assign volunteers to fill the community's clearly defined roles.

All decisions will have team consensus, where consensus is defined as "I can live with that decision".

Agile Brainstorming Session

Brainstorming session is a tool to generate ideas from a selected audience to solve a problem or stimulate creativity. Brainstorming technique can be used by the project teams to accomplish the following:

- Solving a process problem
- Inventing new products or product innovation
- Solving inter-group communication problems
- Improving customer service
- Budgeting exercises
- Project scheduling

Steps to set up an effective brainstorming session are as follows:

Optimize the environment for brainstorming	Engage an experienced facilitator	Provide background to the participants ahead of time	Create a team with people from diverse groups

Conduct a creative warm-up activity	Establish the ground rules	Postpone criticism
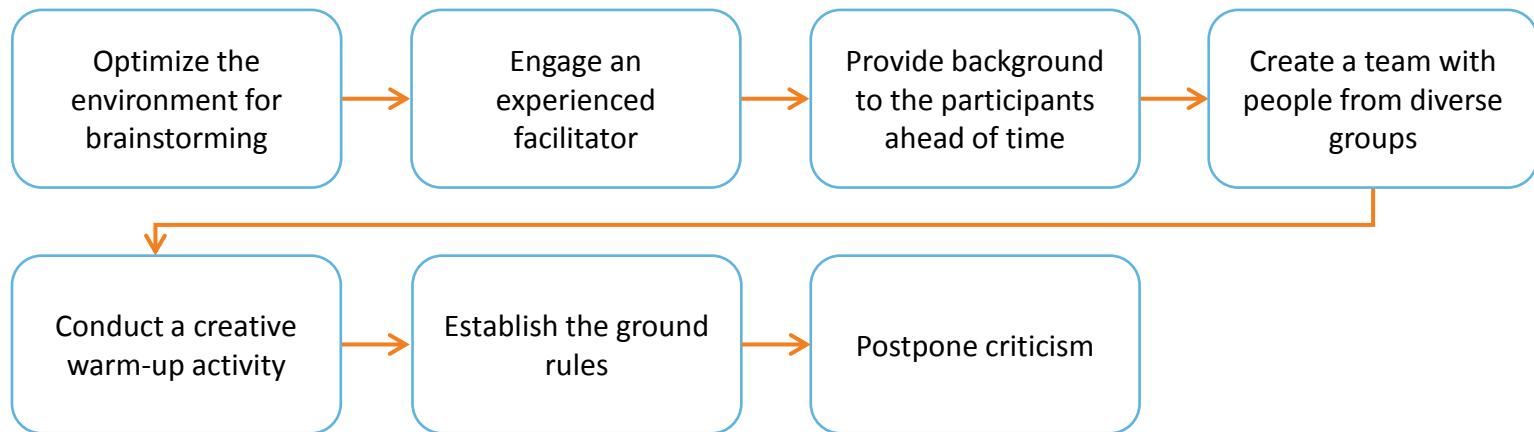
Effective Brainstorming Technique

Following points help in conducting an effective brainstorming session:

Who wants to be the lead?	Ready, set, goal!	Got an idea? Share it.	Put the puzzle together.	Solve it as a team.
• Designate an individual to facilitate the session. • Ensure that the philosophy is carried out appropriately to achieve the desired outcome of the meeting.	• The facilitator to present a set of specific questions or goals to the group to generate ideas or feedback.	• Each member to write one idea per card and read it out loud to the group. • Later, the card is placed in the middle of the table.	• The group to arrange the cards on the table. • Together, determine which ideas are the most critical. • Everyone gets to voice their opinion.	• Discussion around the most important ideas take place. • These are broken down into individual assigned tasks, or general consensus on the desired course of action is taken.

Empowered teams are those which can make the decisions that impact commitment. Agile emphasizes on having a team which is motivated, empowered (self-managed), and which will take the ownership of team's success.

What Empowerment is	What Empowerment is not
Empowerment is:	**Empowerment is not:**
● responsibility and ownership;	● throwing out the rule book;
● working independently towards common objectives;	● bypassing everyone who will say 'No';
● understanding 'Why' to enable decision making;	● doing the fun parts of someone else's job; and
● weighing the impact of decisions on all the stakeholders; and	● freedom to unilaterally make decisions that impact others.
● making more trade-offs.	

Coaching and mentoring is an approach to management and a set of skills to nurture the team and deliver results. In the context of Agile teams, coaching takes on the dual flavor of coaching and mentoring.

A coach helps the team members to accomplish specific tasks and goals.

A mentor shares the Agile experiences and ideas to guide the team members to grow and develop.
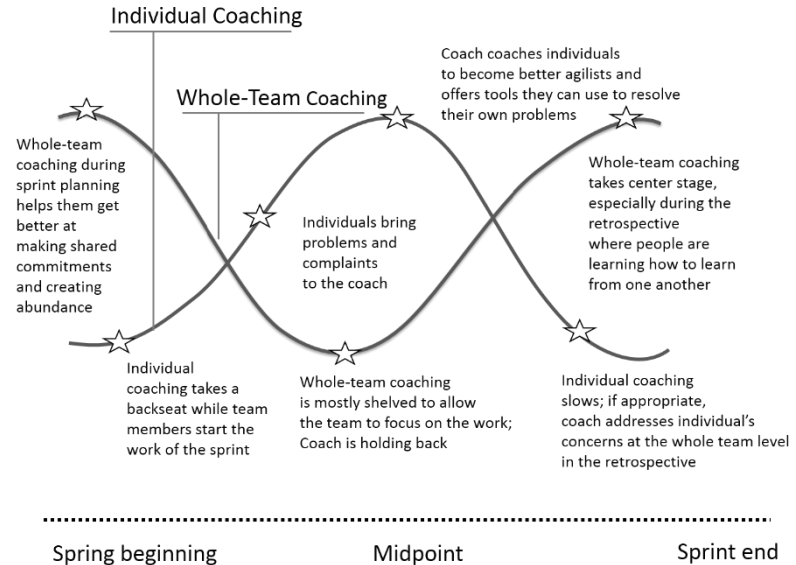
Agile coaching could be done by an internal or an external coach. However, following are some important points to be considered:

- Maintain balanced perspective while working with different teams. Each one will progress at a different pace and will have constraints and impediments that may require help to overcome.

- Stay true to the individual values.

- Understand the social, psychological aspects, and complexity of the team.

- Use an approach which makes sense to the people; understand the process by which people give meaning to experiences, for analyzing teams and situations.

- Develop methods for designing non-intrusive interventions for changing team dynamics.

- Learn what's really needed to get people to work together as teams.

Coaching occurs in different ways through a sprint or iteration:

- Coaching at the beginning focused on the team

- Coaching in the middle focused on the individual

- Coaching at the end focused on the team

- Coaching at the release level focused on the team

Individual Coaching

Whole-Team Coaching

Coach coaches individuals to become better agilists and offers tools they can use to resolve their own problems

Whole-team coaching during sprint planning helps them get better at making shared commitments and creating abundance

Individuals bring problems and complaints to the coach

Whole-team coaching takes center stage, especially during the retrospective where people are learning how to learn from one another

Individual coaching takes a backseat while team members start the work of the sprint

Whole-team coaching is mostly shelved to allow the team to focus on the work; Coach is holding back

Individual coaching slows; if appropriate, coach addresses individual's concerns at the whole team level in the retrospective

Spring beginning   Midpoint   Sprint end

The three primary skills that an Agile coach must possess are as follows:

Work with people	**Facilitate change**	**Systems thinking**
• Listening • Giving feedback • Asking questions • Building trust and rapport	• Enlisting support • Reaching agreement • Spreading success • Learning from failure	• Seeing the big picture • Identifying levers for change • Communicating danger signals

Quiz

QUIZ 1

Which of the following is not a technique of active listening?

a. Use open-ended questions that can't be answered by only a 'yes' or 'no'

b. Ask for more information

c. Ask for opinions and analysis

d. Timebox the conversation to ensure it stays focused

QUIZ 1	Which of the following is not a technique of active listening?

a. Use open-ended questions that can't be answered by only a 'yes' or 'no'

b. Ask for more information

c. Ask for opinions and analysis

d. Timebox the conversation to ensure it stays focused

Answer: d.

Explanation: Active listening should not have a time constraint.

QUIZ 2

Complete the following: Agile manifesto states, "Responding to change _____ ?

a. over contract negotiation

b. over following a plan

c. over dictating a solution

d. over comprehensive documentation

QUIZ 2	Complete the following: Agile manifesto states, "Responding to change _____ ?

a. over contract negotiation

b. over following a plan

c. over dictating a solution

d. over comprehensive documentation

Answer: b.

Explanation: The four principle of Agile Manifesto states "Responding to change over following a plan."

QUIZ 3

When is individual coaching most effective?

a. Throughout the entire sprint

b. During the middle of the sprint

c. At the start and end of the sprint

d. At the start of the sprint

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Answer: b.

Explanation: Individual coaching is most effective during the middle of the sprint. Whole team coaching occurs at the beginning and end of the sprint.

QUIZ 4

What is the purpose of brainstorming?

a. To generate ideas

b. To identify a solution

c. To engage participation

d. To address a problem

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a. To generate ideas

b. To identify a solution

c. To engage participation

d. To address a problem

Answer: a.

Explanation: The primary purpose of brainstorming is to generate ideas.

Summary

Here is a quick recap of what was covered in this lesson:

- Active listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret, and evaluate what they hear.

- Agile ensures customer delight and delivering value to stakeholders.

- Brainstorming session is a tool to generate ideas from a selected audience to solve a problem or stimulate creativity.

- Agile emphasizes on having a team which is motivated, empowered, and which will take ownership of the team's success.

- In Agile, team coaching happens at the beginning and end of the sprint or iteration while individual coaching is done in the middle of the iteration or sprint.

THANK YOU