



Kickstarting and Developing Agile Teams

When a company transitions to agile, the coach guides team formation, focusing on essential agile knowledge, team dynamics, product understanding, and team evolution.

The initial team setup is a critical teaching moment for fundamental agile principles before ongoing reinforcement during collaboration.

AGILE TEAMS



AN AGILE TEAM

Is a cross-functional group of typically **ten or fewer individuals** with all the skills necessary to **define, build, test, and deliver value to their customers**.

By quickly delivering work in small increments, all Agile Teams strive for fast learning, gaining fast customer feedback, assessing the results, and adjusting accordingly.



AN AGILE TEAM

Is Organized Around Value

The goal:

The continuous delivery of value to the customer.

Objective and Responsibilities



CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGILE TEAM STRUCTURE

Cross-functional:

The team structure is cross-functional. Each team member has their own specific skill set, but they all work towards a common goal.

Capable, enabled, and able to:

- Define
- Build
- Test
- Deploy



CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGILE TEAM STRUCTURE

Collaborative: There is plenty of collaboration and open communication within a cross-functional Agile team.

Members are described as “T-shaped” — the horizontal line represents their general understanding of various skills, while the vertical line is their core area of expertise.



CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AGILE TEAM STRUCTURE

Non-hierarchical: Agile teams favor a flat structure where people are given the autonomy to work independently and organize themselves.

KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An Agile team structure will commonly outline specific roles for each team member.

While the focus is on a person's skill set rather than their job title, a defined set of roles can create clarity in Agile workflows.

These roles will vary depending on the project management methodology used by a team.

KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Team lead

A team lead is responsible for coordinating the team and ensuring that processes run smoothly.

Product owner

A product owner represents the needs of the client.



KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Team member

Team member is a broad term that can denote a number of different roles across different industries.

Stakeholder

A stakeholder is not directly involved in the project activities, but they play an important role in determining the final deliverables.



THE IDEAL TEAM PLAYER

possesses three essential virtues

Humility: Humble team players are not egotistical or self-centered.

Hunger: Hungry team players are always looking for more: more things to do, more to learn, and more responsibility to take on.

People Smarts: People smart team players are, "capable of interpersonal common sense."

KICKSTARTING AGILE TEAMS:

SHARED VISIONS AND TEAM VALUES



CREATE A SHARED VISION

- What's in it for me?
- What's in it for us as a team?
- What's in it for my company?
- What's in it for the world?



WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Creating this vision starts with the individual

Ask each team member to write their name and the completion of this sentence: *"When this project is over, I want to say I have...."*





WHAT'S IN IT FOR US AS A TEAM?

Guide them to create a brief and meaningful statement of what they desire to become together.

example:

"We're a creative team that supports one another to create meaningful products."



WHAT'S IN IT FOR MY COMPANY?

Often, the vision statement for the team's project or product or the hoped-for impact on customers or users serves as the basis for this goal.

Start with it, and guide the team to make it meaningful for them.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR MY COMPANY?

For example:

We are redesigning our website in order to attract and retain more customers by making it simple for them to obtain the services we provide.



WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE WORLD?

If the team's activities do not benefit the world in a remarkable way, invite them to look on a smaller world scale.

If you work with a team whose product will have a big world impact, guide them to be big, too



WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE WORLD?

"Our project saves the livelihoods of 100,000 at-risk children."



WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE WORLD?

All these goals taken together comprise this new team's shared vision. This vision gives them a destination to start moving toward.

HOW TO GET AN AGREED SET OF TEAM VALUES



HOW TO GET AN AGREED SET OF TEAM VALUES

Show an example of what a value can look like

Positivity — If something doesn't look right, we propose a better way to do it



WHAT ARE VALUES

Values could be any behavior the team wants to encourage and should be a mix of aspirational goals and some things the team already do, that they want to continue doing and improving.



EXPLORING VALUES METHOD

Ask the team to name some successful teams that have a good ethos, or teams within the organization that have admirable qualities.

Get the team to look at the example teams from the list and call out a few values that they have



Write out all these admirable values
Split the team into small groups and ask them to come up with three to five values that the team should aspire to, and a short accompanying description.



Once the small groups have some agreed values, these can be replayed back to the whole team and noted down

After all the sub-teams have had a turn, voting can take place



EXAMPLES VALUES

Teamwork, We will help each other complete work that may be outside our specialty

Being bold isn't bad.

Share the work = share the credit.

Notice when someone needs help and offer it.

Preserve open communication, even when not comfortable.



EXAMPLES VALUES

The success of the team is more important than the success of the individual.

Keep it simple.

Don't struggle for more than 30 minutes before asking for help

Be truly open so we can get the most creative solutions.



EXAMPLES OF OTHER NORMS

Rules for living together: The "no stinky food" rule goes here.

Logistics: Core hours (if not all day), sprint length, and stand-up time are typical logistical norms.



EXAMPLES OF OTHER NORMS

Being together in conflict:

- In what ways will we call out conflict at the moment?
- How will we get back to “the dream” of our shared vision when we are deep in conflict?
- Under what circumstances would we be willing to call it quits as a team?



A LIVING DOCUMENT

Should be changed and amended as the team changes

There will be issues that fall outside of what is covered, don't add more values each time

Our aim is to have a memorable number of key values which will help the team improve and work as a real team

THE JOURNEY OF TEAM DEVELOPMENT: FROM FORMING TO PERFORMING



Tuckman's Team and Group Development Model

Phases that groups of individuals go through when they first begin working together as a team



WHAT IS TEAM DEVELOPMENT?

Team development is a process of learning to work together.

Each time a new group of people is gathered to perform as a team, they have to find a way of communicating, define goals, and learn to work together effectively.

This process can be rather easy or quite difficult.



By recognizing the team development stages, we can help teams **solve issues and progress**.

By going through the development cycle, teams stop being a group of individuals and **become a unit**, all working together towards the same goal.



In an ideal case, the team linearly goes through each of them.

However, if circumstances change, teams can **go back and forth** between stages instead of moving forward.



1. TEAM IS FORMING

The new team getting acquainted

The team members must get to know each other and determine what they are trying to achieve and how they will start doing that.

The team is making little progress, and their progress is often riddled with errors.

They must learn to work together before creating any true value.



1. TEAM IS FORMING

This stage is filled with uncertainty, and most team members seek guidance.

TIPS

- Introduction and Icebreaking
- Goal Clarification
- Creation of team vision and values
- Role Assignment
- Establishing Communication Channels
- Building Trust
- Forming Norms



2. TEAM IS STORMING

The team has to learn how to work together despite their individual personalities

They must start searching for a way to collaborate and progress. It is common for teams to have several divided groups

The team productivity either stays the same or decreases. It is important the team solves all the underlying issues so that it can improve productivity and avoid long-term problems in the future.

TIPS

- Help by letting everyone have a say
- Listen to all sides of each conflict and facilitate a middle ground
- Define the communication rules to help your team
- Encourage them to talk and make working agreements on how they are going to act together.
- In this stage, facilitation is most important



3. TEAM IS NORMING

a sense of unity and a common goals are forming

The team starts to standardize their work practices and solidify roles.

There are no more groups within the team and instead, they all work in a unit with a clear leader.

Work efficiency increases and becomes the highest since the beginning of the team development cycle.

TIPS

- Set individual roles for the team members
- Recognize the value of everyone on the team.
- Show the team ways to get even better
- Encourage them to take ownership and responsibility and continue improving.
- The most important tool to be used is coaching.





4. TEAM IS PERFORMING

Everyone is working together towards a common goal and producing predictable results regularly

New issues are no longer a threat

There's a clear structure, unified goals, and, most importantly, steady results

TIPS

- Assist your team in continuing the great work by mixing the team roles.
- Your role is to prevent things from going wrong and prevent the team from returning to any previous stage.
- It is mostly observing, while focusing on other levels of the job, always being ready to step in as coach, facilitator, or impediments remover or to share experiences and teach the team new things.



5. TEAM IS ADJOURNING

At one point or another, every team reaches the endpoint and enters the Adjourning stage

The team as we know it ceases to exist

TIPS

- Help your team navigate this transition
- It's an opportunity to reflect on successes and growth.
- Consider holding an event or at least a short meeting to gather everyone from the team one last time and thank them for the job that has been done.



THERE IS ALWAYS SOME CHANGE

Even a small change can break a team apart and make them return to the first forming stage

You must observe any change and identify it early and adjust your behavior regarding the actual team stage, even if it's just for a couple of days.

Exercise



Using Tuckman's Group Development
At which level is your team right now?

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing
5. Adjourning

Write down some action steps to take next.

UNDERSTANDING AND SOLVING TEAM PROBLEMS



PROBLEMS AT THE PROCESS LEVEL

Use health checks to detect problems at the process level.

A health check helps us remember the basic ingredients of agility.

A health check provides basic insights to reflect on the team's process, asking, "How are we doing with agile?"

Richer insights emerge when the health check is conducted in two stages with the entire team:

- questionnaire
- conversation.



SOME USEFUL QUESTIONS:

- 1) "Are our sprint reviews consistently resulting in actionable feedback?"
- 2) "How often do we revisit and adjust our definition of 'Done'?"
- 3) "Are team roles and responsibilities clear and adhered to in our processes?"
- 4) "Do we feel our retrospectives lead to tangible improvements?"
- 5) "How frequently do outside interruptions affect our sprint goals?"



PROBLEMS FROM THE QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE ANGLE

Examine the products that the team created to uncover any hidden issues.

Ask,

"Did the team produce real value?"

"Is the quality something they should be proud of?"

"If this product were a hamburger, would I serve it to my kid?"

"If I were the customer, would I be happy to pay for this?"

"How can the team produce better?"



PROBLEMS IN THE TEAM DYNAMICS

Identify issues with team dynamics, with analysis of the following question:

"How can the team become a better team?"

The tipping point is when "an individual's self-interest shifts to alignment with behaviors that support team achievement."



BART ANALYSIS

BART analysis asks us to consider the impact of four dimensions on team dynamics:

- Boundary,
- Authority,
- Role,
- Task.

When teams go wrong, the source of trouble can often be linked directly to one or more of these dimensions of team Dynamics



1) Roles:

- Are roles clearly defined and understood by everyone?
- Does everyone operate within their designated role without overstepping?
- Is there role redundancy, with individuals occupying multiple roles?
- If new roles are introduced, are they well-defined and integrated?



2) Tasks:

- Do team members share a unified understanding of the team's mission?
- Is it clear who's responsible for which tasks?
- Do past experiences or ingrained habits impact the perception and execution of current tasks?



3) Authority:

- Is the delegation of authority clear and respected?
- Are team members exercising their given authority appropriately?



4) Boundaries:

- Are members operating within the confines of their roles and responsibilities?
- How do roles and responsibilities shift or evolve over project stages?
- Are there distinct "territories" within the team? How do these impact collaboration and cohesion?

EXERCISE:

BART ANALYSIS



INSTRUCTIONS:

1) Recall:

- Remember a past team scenario where dynamics were challenging.
- Note the project, team composition, and main challenges.



2) BART Analysis:

- Use the BART questions to evaluate the past team issues:
 - **Roles:** Were they clear? Did members overstep?
 - **Tasks:** Was the mission clear? Were task responsibilities defined?
 - **Authority:** Was it clear and respected?
 - **Boundaries:** Were they clear? Any 'territories' within the team?
- Document insights, especially where Roles, Tasks, Authority, or Boundaries may have been sources of conflict.



3) Insight & Action:

- Identify major issues from the BART reflections.
- Note potential solutions or measures to mitigate such issues in the future.

4) Plan Forward:

- Create a list of actionable steps for better team dynamics based on insights.
- Set a reminder to periodically review this list for future applications.

MANAGING CONFLICT IN AN AGILE TEAM



RECOGNIZE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONFLICTS AND DISPUTES

Disputes

Are short-term disagreements that you can generally resolve.

They are usually caused by issues that are negotiable and can sometimes play themselves out without intervention.

Conflicts

Are more severe and require a more thought-out approach.

Conflicts tend to stem from differences in personal values or worldviews and often involve non-negotiable issues.



QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO HELP IDENTIFY IF YOU'RE DEALING WITH A CONFLICT OR A DISPUTE:

"Is the disagreement over a particular outcome or approach?

Is there personal investment involved from either side regarding the outcome?

Is the language used objective, or are personal beliefs influencing the conversation?

Does the conflict involve personal issues?

Is a power struggle or goal misalignment the root of the conflict?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMPLAINT HANDLING IN AGILE TEAMS



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO ABOUT IT?

"Do I have to respond?"

Agile teams can often navigate conflict by themselves.

The team's efforts, even if imperfect, are preferable to imposing a top-down solution.



HANDLING TEAM CONFLICT EFFECTIVELY

If you feel you have observed long enough and decided to intervene, there are a few things to keep in mind.

- ✓ Observe
- ✓ Be Fair and Impartial
- ✓ Step in When Needed
- ✓ Avoid Assumptions



MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE IN FIVE STEPS



1) Speak to Team Members Individually

It's always a good idea to consider inviting those involved to an informal one-on-one meeting.

During the session try to identify the root cause of the problem.

- Avoid making assumptions and let people open up in their own time.
- Reassure them that the discussion is confidential.
- Ask each party the same questions, to remain impartial.



2. BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER



Before beginning the conversation, set up some ground rules.

Encourage team members to listen to one another, respect one another's opinions, and avoid interrupting or making personal remarks.

During the discussion:

- Keep the tone of the conversation calm and non-threatening.
- Encourage active listening, so people understand where the other person is coming from.



- Encourage individuals to share ideas. What do they want or need? What would they be prepared to commit to? Have them to brainstorm some solutions.

- Ask the conflicting parties about situations where they've worked well together in the past. See if they can build on those positive experiences.

If the discussion becomes heated, take a break.



Reframing the Conflict

Instead of viewing the conflict as an issue for individual team members, try to frame it as a common issue shared between the team.

Re-framing the conflict is simply a tool to help everyone on the team take an objective stance and understand the root cause of the problem.



3. ASK THE WIDER TEAM FOR IDEAS

You can ask for everyone's opinion as long as it is not sensitive or confidential.

Openly discussing the conflict allows you and your team to consider alternative assumptions, beliefs, and decision-making strategies.

asking questions such as:

- Is this solution cost-effective?
- Will this solution fit with current time constraints?
- How easy will it be to implement the solution?
- Will it add value to the overall product?

Then you can run a brainstorming session or use another ideation tool you like.



4. DRAW UP A PLAN

Ask the parties to detail agreed-on actions for reconciliation. And get each to commit to this strategy.



5. FOLLOW UP

Ensure that issues have been resolved properly by following up on the situation.

You can use one-on-ones to prevent old disagreements from resurfacing.



IN CONCLUSION

Conflict is an unavoidable part of human interactions, including those within agile teams.

When approached with care, understanding, and strategic techniques, however, it can pave the way for growth, deeper understanding, and improved team dynamics.