

Starting and Developing Agile Teams

A Facilitation Guide

V0.86

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Content

Team-Start Example

Purpose

- Supporting a team in their team formation/team development process.
- Lay the foundation needed for a Scrum Master to be able to coach the team as a team.

Time required

Start with at least one day 9-16

There is more material than that, make plans on how to cover the rest either as a day 2 or as several more smaller sessions

Preparations

- Check that the team set up is good enough to make it meaningful to start working with team development. E.g.
 - The team needs to have a compelling goal,
 - suitable skills to be able to reach the goal.
 - It should not be too big etc.
- Create buy in from the team and each team member for the workshop if needed. We want a team that is motivated to participate
- Book some prep-sessions with some line manager and a product manager/PO. They need to present the goals from organization/product point of view. Expect at least 1+2 hours prep with some days in between to create attractive visions
- Book a room, preferably offsite. Best layout is if all tables can be removed and just use a circle of chairs. Some space to hang material is needed on walls.
- Send out invite to team, PO, line manager with purpose & overview agenda at least 1 week before
- Get materials
 - Flip chart paper
 - Whiteboard markers to draw “Journeylines”
 - Postits

- Markers for posits
- Print handouts for “repairing broken agreements” and “Individual goals”
- Prepare a visual agenda with postits on a flipchart paper. Create it like a kanban board, with “ideas”, “doing” and “done” columns that you can use to keep track of the flow of discussions and exercises during the day.

Agenda

Connect

The purpose of the “connect” session is

- Get everyone started talking, interacting rather than passively listening
- Get everyone thinking about what they already know and think about the subject of the session.

We want this to start right away in the morning to avoid people settling into “listening mode”. Thus: Keep your welcomes etc very short (< 1 minute!) and get started with some connect activities almost immediately. Pairwise activities are best since then everyone needs to participate

Example:

Hi, welcome to this day with our team! We have prepared a lot of interesting exercises and I hope you all will find this both useful and fun for our team! Before we get into the agenda etc in a few minute, I would like us all to get started with some warm-up activities.

- Could you all pair up with someone and discuss for a minute: *
- *Is there a difference between a team and any group of people What is it?*

Let them talk for 5 minutes for so until they get going, then interrupt them and collect some ideas from the pairs. Then give them another warm-up question

- *Before we start on trying to build a really great team, we should agree on what that is. How would anyone be able to see that we successfully have created a really great team?*

Let them talk for 5 minutes and then collect some answers. It will be a mix on actions to take how to achieve greatness and how to actually see that greatness have been achieved.

Never mind! Show the the definition from Richard Hackman and ask them to compare with their own discussions:

- Exceed stakeholder expectations
- Grow and be more capable as a team over time

- Each individual should learn, grow and find the work worthwhile and satisfying

Ok, what we will work on today is designed to help us achieve this. Let's look at the agenda:

Agenda

- Cover the purpose of the day and agenda quickly, just main topics
- Cover times, breaks, practicalities. Try to split the session up in 25+5 min sessions of 50+10 depending on team/group size. For a normal size team 25 min work+5 min break is good (This is called the "*pomodoro technique*"). If several teams are starting at the same workshop it may be challenging getting everyone in and out of the room every half hour so in those cases perhaps 50+10 is better.

Ground Rules & Decision making

Time required, 5-15 min See *separate facilitation guide*

Psychological Safety

- In the Aristotele research project at Google they identified basic psychological safety as a key enabler for team performance.
- You can see the same conclusions in the works of others, e.g. Trust is the first step in the "5 dysfunctions of a team" model by Patrick Lencioni.
- In the works of Susan Wheelan the first phases of team development has a lot to do with being accepted by the team.

The *Journey Lines* exercise is a really good way to address this and other goals for new and old teams. Time required is about 2h, depending on team size.

For a team that has been working together, *Appreciation Cards* is another really nice way to start a session focused on team development. Time required is < 30 min.

Use both exercises, but perhaps not in the same session!

Product Goals

Time required, typically: 30 min - 2h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Organizational goals

Time required, typically: 30 min - 1h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Team-vision

Time required, typically 1h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Working agreements

Facilitate making a few team agreements on how to work together. Start with some individual reflections and then use “fist of five” to quickly refine some proposals and make consent decision. Document on a flipchart.

One working agreement that you probably want to explore with your team is how and when to work as individuals and how and when to work as a team. Check out the guide on ‘*Balancing Team- and Individual work*’ for a good way to do that.

Individual goals

Time required, typically 1,5h

See *separate facilitation guide*

A similar but slightly simpler exercise is “Market of Skills” Time required: 30-60 min See *separate facilitation guide*:

Team skills

- Team formation theory

A team move through different phases. See for example the forming, storming, norming, performing theory by Bruce Tuckman or the more recent work by Susan Wheelan. Quickly show the team this and help them realize that this will happen. Especially that the first honeymoon period will be followed by a period of conflict and that this is a good thing that will enable the team to grow if navigated properly.

- Repair broken agreement

Time required, typically 30 min

See *separate facilitation guide*

- Making decisions

In this guide your team can practise consent decision making using “fist of five” in the beginning of the day and during working agreements section.

You may want to mention that for “way of working” decisions, consent decision making is often required - i.e. all team members have to agree to follow the agreement. If not you will get low buy in. In other situations other decision making methods are better suited. E.g. majority vote,

individuals decide, at least two members agree etc. The team should strive to define **how** decisions are made before they try to decide something.

- Problem solving

Teams need to learn systematic problem solving to enable good decision making. This is needed both to solve technical problems in a better way than basing it on opinions. It is also needed to solve many way of working problems in larger organizations. The A3 method and/or cause effect diagrams is one good technique that often is valuable for both these problems. This is best practised on some real problems in a separate session. Set aside 2 hours for that and invite a set of stakeholders that can contribute a diverse set of views on some difficult problem.