

Beyond the ScrumMaster Role: Becoming an Agile Coach

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About Angela

Angela Druckman is an agile coach and Certified Scrum Trainer. She specializes in Agile Transformation, helping teams and organizations all over the world improve their competitive position and effectiveness through agility. Whether working with tiny start-ups or Fortune 100 companies, Angela's experience and guidance have helped her clients achieve extraordinary and measurable success with their agile practices. Angela is the author of *30 Days to Better Agile*.



Overview

- What is an agile coach?
- How clients confuse symptoms with root causes
- The painful truth – having the hard conversation
- Moving forward
 - How to create a possibility where your client sees none
- Putting it all together – the case studies

What, Exactly, is an “Agile Coach”?

You are on an airplane and the person beside you asks: “So, what do you do for a living?”

What do you say?

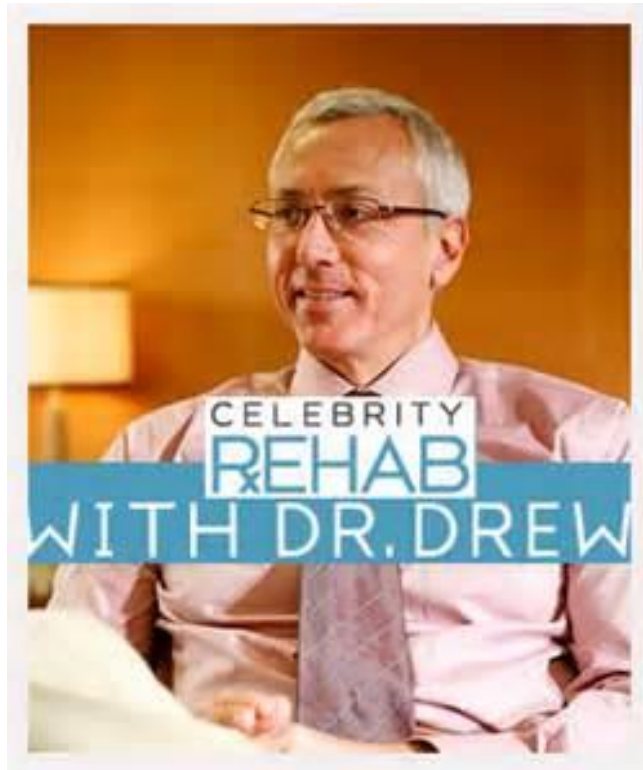


At first glance, my agile coaching looks like this:



But it often feels more...

...like this



...and this



And some of this as well

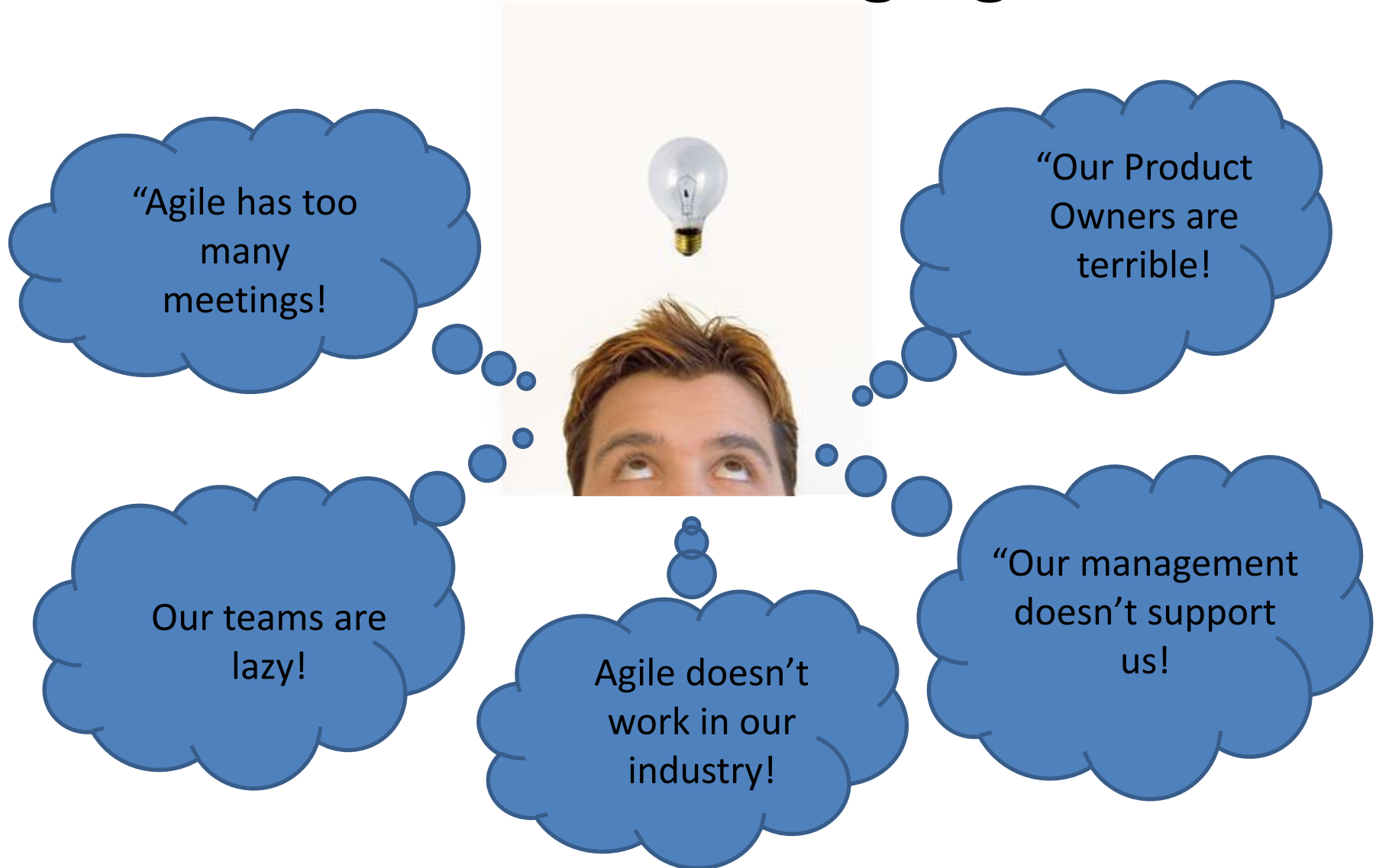


To me, being an agile coach is doing whatever it takes...

- Challenge
- Confront
- Instruct
- Browbeat
- Comfort
- Encourage
- Observe
- Support
- Cheer on
- Admire

...to help my clients get to the next level

“Our Main Problem Using Agile Is...”



“It’s Not Me, Its Them!”

Self-diagnosis is hard! We often:

- Are too close to the problem to see it clearly
- Too focused on symptoms (because that is what we associate with pain) to see the root cause
- Play the victim – this is something being done to us rather than something we are contributing to
- See our own behavior as rational and that of others as completely crazy
- Have an inaccurate assessment of what can and cannot be changed

Agile Coach as Diagnostician

- Maintain emotional distance from the problem
- Look for common patterns first
- Help clients “spin down” problems
- Identify who is and is not benefiting from Scrum at the client’s stage of adoption
- Assume everyone, in their own mind, has a rational reason for the way they are behaving



Getting to the Root of the Problem

Why these behaviors might occur?

- A team continually misses their commitments
- A ScrumMaster micromanages the team's work
- A software development manager does not support Scrum and thinks it is a bad idea
- A Team dislikes going to the daily scrum
- A Product Owner seems disinterested in Scrum

Assessing Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Exercise: On a scale of 1 – 5, how confident would you be engaging in these activities:

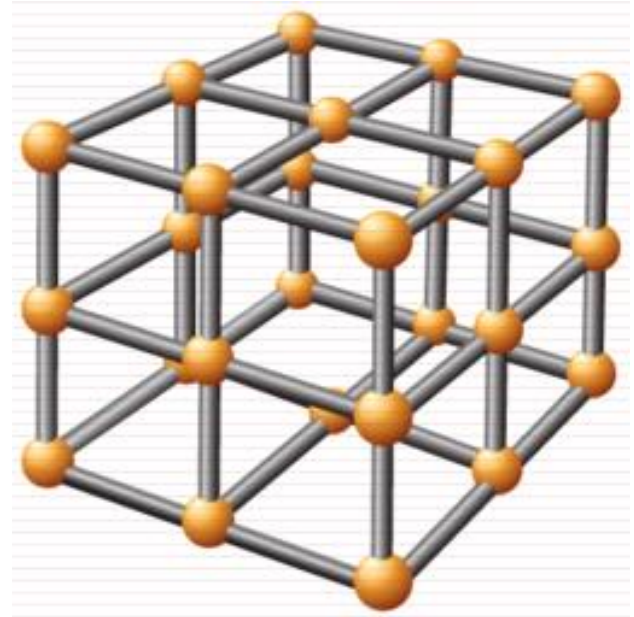
1. Giving a 2-hour “Introduction to Agile” presentation to 20 people
2. Giving a ½-hour presentation to executive management on the benefits of agile practices like Scrum
3. Mentoring and coaching other ScrumMasters
4. Acting as a Product Owner on a project
5. Explaining how the empirical process works and how it is different than predictive processes
6. Taking over the ScrumMaster role on a “troubled” team
7. Facilitating a product backlog grooming session
8. Observing an agile team that is having problems and giving suggestions for improvement
9. Removing an agile team member (or a ScrumMaster or Product Owner) who is “not working out”
10. Starting an agile practice like Scrum in a new workgroup that knows nothing about it

Quick Review: Common Agile Frameworks

- Scrum
- XP
- Lean Software Development
- Kanban

All of these approaches:

- Make use of timeboxes
- Are iterative and incremental
- Have clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Are empirical rather than predictive in nature



So Where Does an Agile Coach Fit In?

An agile coach can come from any of the agile roles (they often have experience in multiple roles). Their job is to:

- Introduce agile to new teams
- “Socialize” agile throughout the organization
- Assess and help with problems at a team, management and executive level

ScrumMaster



Serves the team

Agile Coach



Serves the organization

Introducing Agile to New Teams

Remember that people often have pre-conceptions about what agile practices. Resist the urge to try to “convert” people. Instead, help them:

- Understand the purpose of the empirical process
- See the benefits it can yield
- Learn not just what to do but why to do it
- Be prepared for the role they are considering/ planning on fulfilling (ex – ScrumMaster, Product Owner, etc)
- Know what challenges and problems they may face

Be prepared to accept the fact that not everyone is “ready to hear the message”

Managing Concerns

It is natural for people to have questions about the value of each element of the Scrum process. They may wonder:

- Which parts of the Scrum process are “required” and which are “optional”
 - How Scrum can be combined with other methods
 - How various parts of Scrum actually work in practice
 - How Scrum can work on a date-driven project
 - How Scrum accounts for unplanned work and/ or production support
- To handle these concerns:
 - Focus on real, not hypothetical, situations
 - Stay in “reality-land”
 - Help them learn the art of the trade-off



The Toughest Questions

When agile teams experience problems they are often too close to the issue to see it clearly. A good agile coach:

- Maintains some emotional distance from the team he is helping
- Believes what he sees, not what he is told
- Looks for patterns
- Can be brutally honest when necessary
- Hears the “question behind the question”
- Helps beginners make their problems smaller, not bigger
- Is willing to defer a coaching situation to someone else when it is a poor match for his personality, skill set or energy level



Your Own Growth as an Agile Coach

Being an agile coach is about assessing and helping fix other people's problems. Not easy! Therefore:

- Know it is ok that you don't know everything – no one does
- Don't be afraid to say you are not a good match for a given team or situation
- Know that you cannot “want it for them”
- Agile coaches constantly give—don't let yourself get “used up”
- As you grow in this role, focus your learning on tools, courses and books that help you as a communicator, mentor and coach



Professional Agile Coaching®

Join me for this exciting new course that will further your career as an agile coach. You'll learn:

- An overview of common agile practices and when each is appropriate to use
- Assessing your experience level as a coach
- Choosing the right client
- Making an initial assessment of a client's agile readiness
- Developing an agile toolkit
- Creating working agreements
- Tying agile practices to business value
- Tailoring your message – how to get everyone from team members to executives excited about agile
- Coaching across cultures
- Dealing with conflict
- Growing your skillset as an agile coach
- Building and promoting your coaching practice

Contact us for dates and availability in your area!

Your Agile Coaching Questions

Given everything we have talked about today,
what additional questions about agile coaching
do you have?



After the Webinar

- We will send directions to collect the **PDU** you will earn from attending this webinar (REP – 2849)
- We will also send a links to the **presentation slides** once they are posted online

For more information, visit **www. <http://www.ccpace.com/>**

Thank You!

Let's stay in touch:

- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/angela-druckman/4/337/3b7/
- Twitter: @AngelaDruckman
- Email: angela@angeladruckman.com
- *30 Days to Better Agile* is available through Amazon.com and also directly through me

