

Building a Foundation

- » Obtaining organizational and individual commitment
- » Assembling teams with the necessary skills and abilities
- » Establishing an appropriate environment
- » Investing in training
- » Securing initial and ongoing support

Organizational and Individual Commitment

Commitment to agile project management means making an active, conscious effort to work with new methods and to abandon old habits. Commitment at both an individual level and at an organizational level is critical to agile transition success.

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment plays a large role in agile transition. When a company and the groups in that company embrace agile principles, the transition can be easier for the project team members.

Organizations can commit to an agile transition by doing the following:

- » Engaging an experienced agile expert to create a realistic transition plan and to guide the company through that plan
- » Investing in employee training, starting with the members of the company's first agile project team and the leadership at all levels who support them
- » Allowing scrum teams to abandon waterfall processes, meetings, and documents in favor of streamlined agile approaches
- » Ensuring all scrum team members necessary for each agile project are dedicated: an empowered product owner, a cross-functional development team of multi-skilled people, and an influential servant-leader scrum master
- » Encouraging development teams to continuously increase their skill sets
- » Providing automated testing tools and a continuous integration framework
- » Logistically supporting scrum team collocation
- » Allowing scrum teams to manage themselves
- » Giving the agile project team the time and freedom to go through a healthy trial-and-error process
- » Revising employee performance reviews to emphasize team performance
- » Encouraging agile project teams and celebrating successes

Individual commitment

Individual commitment has an equal role to organizational commitment in agile transitions. When each person on a project team works at adopting agile practices, the changes become easier for everyone on the project team.

People can individually commit to an agile transition by using these methods:

- » Attending training and conferences and being willing to learn about agile methods
- » Being open to change, willing to try new processes, and making an effort to adapt new habits
- » Resisting the temptation to fall back on old processes
- » Acting as a peer coach for project team members who are less experienced in agile techniques
- » Allowing themselves to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes
- » Reflecting on each sprint honestly in the sprint retrospective and committing to improvement efforts
- » Actively becoming multi-skilled development team members
- » Letting go of ego and working as a part of a team
- » Taking responsibility for successes and failures as a team
- » Taking the initiative to be self-managing
- » Being active and present throughout each agile project

Getting commitment

Commitment to agile methods may not be instant

the real and tangible benefits that drive shifts from traditional methods of project management to agile methods include the following:

- » **Happier customers:** Agile projects often have higher customer satisfaction because agile project teams produce working products quickly, can respond to change, and collaborate with customers as partners.
- » **Profit benefits:** Agile approaches allow project teams to deliver functionality to market quicker than with traditional approaches. Agile organizations can realize higher return on investment, often resulting in self-funded projects.
- » **Defect reduction:** Quality is a key part of agile approaches. Proactive quality measures, continuous integration and testing, and continuous improvement all contribute to higher-quality products.
- » **Improved morale:** Agile practices such as sustainable development and self-managing development teams can mean happier employees, improved efficiency, and less company turnover.

Timing the transition

Organizationally, you can start your initiative to move to an agile approach at any time. You might consider a few optimal times:

- » **When you need to prove that agile project management is necessary:** Use the end of a large project, when you can see clearly what did not work (for example, during a sunset review). You'll be able to demonstrate clearly the issues with waterfall, and you'll gain a springboard for piloting your first agile project.
- » **When your challenge is doing accurate budgeting:** Run your first agile project in the quarter before the start of the annual budget year (namely, one quarter before the end of the current budget cycle). You'll get metrics from your first project that will allow you to be more informed when planning next year's budget.
- » **When you're starting a new project:** Moving to agile processes when you have a new project lets you start fresh without the baggage of old approaches.
- » **When you're trying to reach a new market or industry:** Agile techniques allow you to deliver quick innovation to help your organization create products for new types of customers.
- » **When you have new leadership:** Management changes are great opportunities for setting new expectations with agile approaches.

Choosing the Right Pilot Team Members

The agile champion

pilot agile teams' chances for success. A good agile champion should be able to do all these tasks:

- » Be passionate about agility and the organizational and market issues agile approaches will address.
- » Make decisions about company processes. If there is a status quo, the agile champion should be able to influence a change.
- » Get the organization excited about what's possible with agile processes.
- » Regularly and directly collaborate with and support the project team as it goes through the steps to establish agile processes.
- » Acquire the project team members necessary for success, both for the first project and in the long term.
- » Be an escalation point to remove unnecessary distractions and non-agile processes.

The agile transition team

- » Be committed to organizational success through the continuous support of pilot agile teams.
- » Establish a clear vision and roadmap for how the organization will become agile.
- » Be organized like a scrum team, with a product owner (agile champion), development team (leaders who can make organizational changes in support of the pilot scrum teams), and a scrum master (an organizational leader who can focus on helping the agile transition team adopt agile principles and enforce the rules of scrum).
- » Operate as a scrum team, holding all five scrum events and implementing all three scrum artifacts.

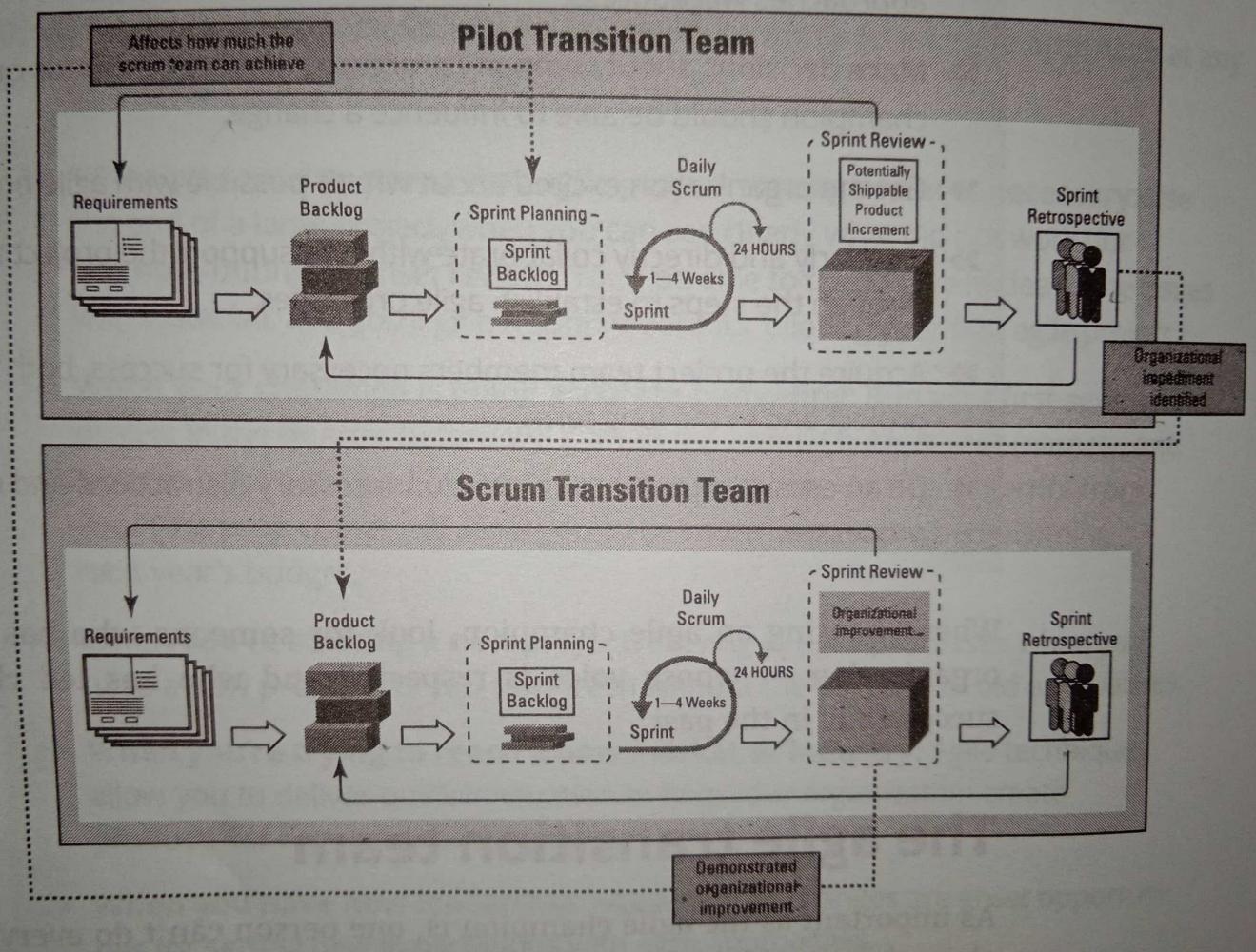


FIGURE 16-1:
Alignment of the
agile transition
team and the
pilot scrum team
cadences.

The product owner

- » Have the business authority and be empowered to prioritize and reprioritize product requirements.
- » Be organized enough to manage ongoing changes to the product backlog.
- » Be committed to working with the rest of the scrum team and to being available to the development team daily throughout a project.
- » Have the ability to obtain project funding and other resources.

The development team

- » Be versatile.
- » Be willing to work cross-functionally.
- » Plan a sprint and self-manage around that plan.
- » Understand the product requirements and provide effort estimates.
- » Provide technical advice to the product owner so that he or she can understand the complexity of the requirements and make appropriate decisions.
- » Respond to circumstances and adjust processes, standards, and tools to optimize performance.

The scrum master

- » Have influence (clout).
- » Have enough organizational influence to remove outside distractions that prevent the project team from successfully using agile methods.
- » Know enough about agile project management to be able to help the project team uphold agile processes throughout a project.
- » Have the communication and facilitation skills to guide the development team in reaching consensus.
- » Trust enough to step back and allow the development team to organize and manage itself.

The agile mentor

An agile mentor, sometimes called an agile coach, is key to keeping teams and organizations on track while learning scrum and beginning to establish a more agile environment. A good agile mentor should

- » Be experienced.
- » Be an expert at agile processes, especially in the agile processes your organization chooses.
- » Be familiar with projects of different sizes, large and small.
- » Help teams self-manage, ask questions to help them learn for themselves, and provide useful advice and support without taking over a project.
- » Guide the project team through its first sprint at the beginning of the project and be available to answer questions as needed throughout the project.
- » Work with and relate to the product owner, the development team members, and the scrum master.
- » Be a person from outside a department or organization. Internal agile mentors often come from a company's project management group or center of excellence. If the agile mentor comes from inside the organization, he or she should be able to put aside political considerations when making suggestions and providing advice.