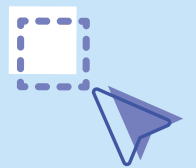# 5 Top Tips for Enabling Large-Scale Agile Methodology with Distributed Teams

by Ian King, Agile Delivery, BCM Consulting EMEA

Contents

Introduction

I think it's safe to say that 2020 has been a tough year all round.

Business-wise, organizations have had to adapt, rapidly, to the new world of wholesale remote working. And with disparate employees negotiating with family members for workspace, connectivity and a little peace and quiet, maintaining business continuity has not been easy. Consequently, the added layers of technical and operational complexity have triggered significant changes in thinking and planning, together with the application of Agile methodology to reach the desired level of performance.

Over the years, working with globally fragmented teams has enabled Luxoft to gain a wealth of experience in this kind of technological change management. Past learnings alerted our experts to the particular challenges of the current situation, enabling us to develop a number of Agile strategies – especially around collaboration, knowledge-sharing and staging important meetings with large contributing audiences.
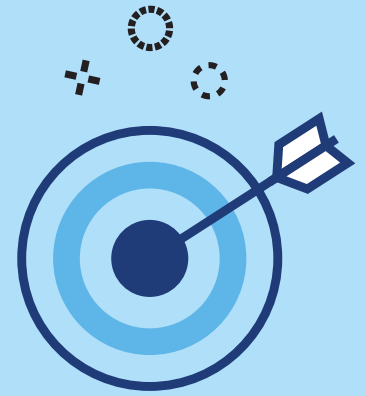
Staging Meetings with
Distributed Teams

So, here are five top tips for arranging a successful meeting – actually, whoever said **"He who fails to plan, plans to fail,"** got it in one.

01

Meticulous Planning and Remediation

- Start early and consider the availability and location of key contributors

- Minimize "out-of-hours" meetings as much as possible

- Factor in additional breaks

- Test all technology, and have alternatives and backups ready to go

- Schedule dry-run exercises

- Overcommunicate schedules and expectations

02

Make Sure You've Got the Right Tools for the Job

Whether the setting is an ad-hoc one-to-one or a meeting for 125 participants, communication and collaboration need to flow as seamlessly as possible. Here are some of the most popular apps:

CHAT: Slack, Zulip, Teams

VIDEO/AUDIO: Zoom, Teams, WebEx, Google Hangouts, Skype

COLLABORATION: Miro, iObeya, Mural, Stormboard, PI Planning app

Generally, having a different tool for each function is easier to manage on the desktop, and also allows for a level of continuity should one tool fail – don't put all your eggs in one basket.

The mix and match approach also works well as different organizations often have differing internal policies and tools.

03

Distribute Key Materials in Advance

Always plan for non-attendance and technology failure. Send out:

- An agenda that covers all time zones

- Keynote speaker materials

- Prioritized features for planning to scrum masters

- Tooling for each session, plus alternatives and download links

04

Maintain Hassle-Free Facilitation and Practical Support

Establish dedicated roles in each time zone to keep your event on track:

- Release Train Engineer, Solution Architect and Product Owner are the key go-to roles

- Facilitators are there to maintain a level of event discipline and free up remote capacity for the key roles to do their jobs

- "Fixers" are the go-to people if anything is needed – from a chatroom set-up, to help with the coordination of technical resolutions

- Technical support should be on standby though, hopefully, unused

- Coaches are needed for newly formed remote teams and can be considered optional
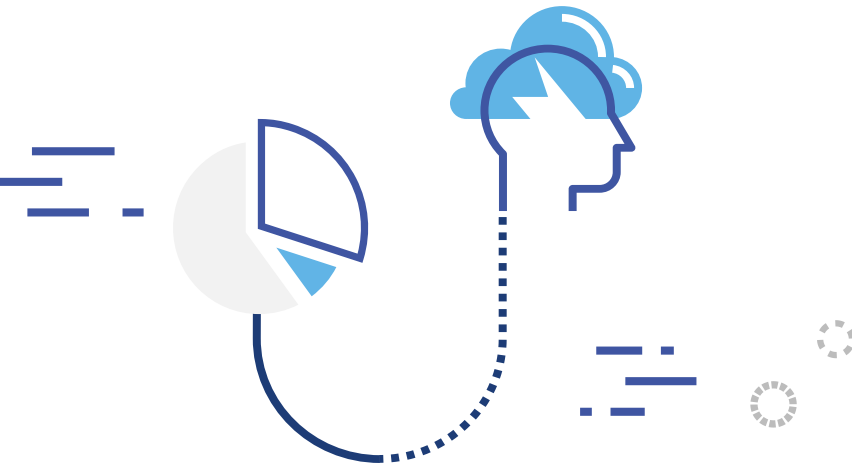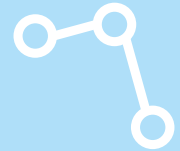
05

Record and Circulate Sessions

Make sure everyone has access to the same information, wherever they are. Also, it's critical that those in remote locations have their voices heard. Recording sessions and enabling feedback loops will reinforce this.

It's a lot more demanding running big events with everyone in different locations and different time zones, coping with new challenges and distractions. However, the five actions detailed above will have a positive impact and contribute to the success of your event.
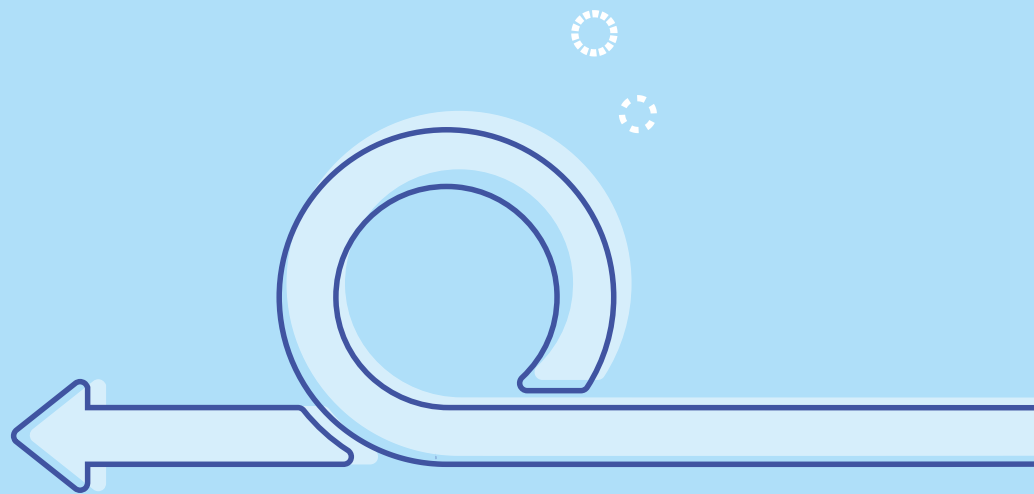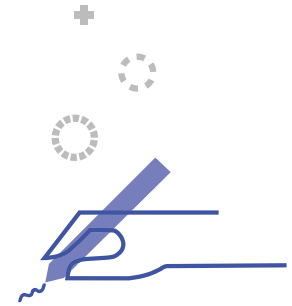
Pulling It All Together
with SAFe®

You might prefer to bring in an experienced technology partner to help evolve your organization's approach to Agile working, transforming waterfall to Agile, improving Agile and DevOps working practices, and moving from simple Agile teams to Agile at scale, particularly with the Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®).

SAFe® workflow and organizational patterns help companies scale lean and Agile best-practices across, potentially, hundreds of disparate cross-functional teams, encouraging Agile alignment, collaboration and delivery, throughout.

The top five tips are never more applicable than during key stages in the SAFe® Innovation and Planning (I&P) events. Here's a typical schedule:

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Buffer for leftover work				Continuing Education	PI Planning			Solution Train Post-Meeting	Optional Time for Planning
Final verification & validation									
Innovation									
PI planning readiness									
			Solution Train Inspect & Adopt	Inspect & Adopt Workshop					Solution Train Post-PI Planning
			Solution Train Pre-PI Planning						

There are a number of retrospectives, plus high-level planning and workshop sessions where senior representatives from different parts of the business, IT and control functions actively participate. These all require careful planning and execution to deliver the best outcomes.

The Importance of Program **Increment (PI) Planning**

The pinnacle of this 2-week planning iteration is the PI planning exercise. It's essential that this event runs smoothly, regardless of the many challenges of bringing a remote, Agile working group of anything up to 125 people together to plan the product features to be implemented during the next 10 weeks. Any logistical hiccups could have an adverse effect on future working plus, potentially, a high financial impact. Putting these tips into practice might not eradicate problems completely, but you'll be in a much stronger position to deal with any troublesome issues and prevent them from derailing the whole event.

Let's Talk

If you'd like to discuss putting these top tips and Agile methodology to work with your own distributed teams, or discuss the benefits and best approaches for implementing a scaled Agile framework, contact me at **iking@luxoft.com**. Find out how Luxoft can help sharpen productivity, encourage knowledge-sharing and enable the workshopping of innovative ideas, as well as boosting the confidence, and the personal and professional well-being of your entire workforce.
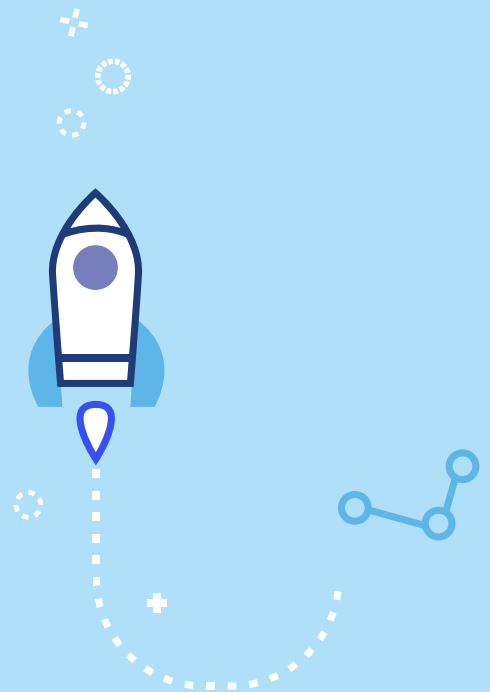
About the Authors

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Ian King is responsible for all deliveries spanning small advisory projects of a few weeks to large multi-year projects delivered from multiple locations. Ian has worked with Luxoft Financial Services for over 8 years now, taking on project management, senior leadership and project director roles for our clients.

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