

Lesson 6

Coaching the Agile Team

- 1. Introducing Scrum in SAFe
- 2. Characterizing the role of the Scrum Master
- 3. Experiencing PI Planning
- 4. Facilitating Iteration Execution
- 5. Finishing the PI
- 6. Coaching the Agile Team

SAFe® Authorized Course: Attending this course gives learners access to the SAFe® Scrum Master exam and related preparation materials.

Learning objectives

- 6.1 Act as a servant leader
- 6.2 Facilitate effective SAFe Team events
- 6.3 Coach the Agile Team using powerful questions
- 6.4 Guide team collaboration and resolve conflicts

6.1 Act as a servant leader

Servant leadership

A servant leader knows that his own growth comes from facilitating the growth of others who deliver the results.

Good leaders must first become good servants.

—Robert Greenleaf, father of Servant Leadership

Behavior patterns of a servant leader

- ▶ Listens to and supports team members in problem identification and decision-making
- ▶ Understands and empathizes with others
- ▶ Encourages and supports the personal development of each individual
- ▶ Persuades rather than uses authority
- ▶ Thinks beyond day-to-day activities
- ▶ Seeks to help without diminishing the commitment of others
- ▶ Is open and appreciates openness in others



Scrum Master as servant leader

Trait in the context of SAFe
Listens to and supports team members in decision identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- As a good facilitator, encourages everyone to express their opinions- Is attentive to hesitant behavior and body language during Daily Stand-Up meetings, retrospectives, planning- Helps the team identify positive and negative changes during retrospectives
Understands and empathizes with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shares in celebrating every successful demo, feels bad about Iteration failures
Encourages and supports the personal development of each individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourages team learning- Fosters collaborative practices: side-by-side programming, Continuous Integration, collective code ownership, short design sessions, specification workshops- Encourages rotation in technical areas of concern: functionality, components/layers, role aspects- Facilitates team decision-making rather than making decisions for the team
Persuades rather than uses authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asks questions that encourage the team to look at decisions from new perspectives- Articulates facts, helps the team see things they may have overlooked, helps them rethink

Scrum Master as servant leader - continued

Trait in the context of SAFe
Thinks beyond day-to-day activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sets long-term operating goals for the team: Agile practices to master, new skills to acquire- Examines what is missing in order to make the environment better for everyone, prioritizes improvement activities and makes them happen
Seeks to help without diminishing the commitment of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Facilitates ad hoc meetings (design discussions, story reviews with the PO, coding and unit testing approaches, critical bug-fix strategies)- Helps the team find access to external sources of information: subject matter experts, shared resources (architects, UX designers, tech writers)- Helps clarify and articulate rationale behind scope commitments- Helps team members prepare for Iteration Review and System Demo- Helps the team find techniques to be more collaborative
Is open and appreciates openness in others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shows appreciation for team members who raise serious issues, even when delivery is jeopardized- Encourages and facilitates open communication among team members and with external colleagues- Encourages healthy conflict during team meetings- Gives open, honest opinions

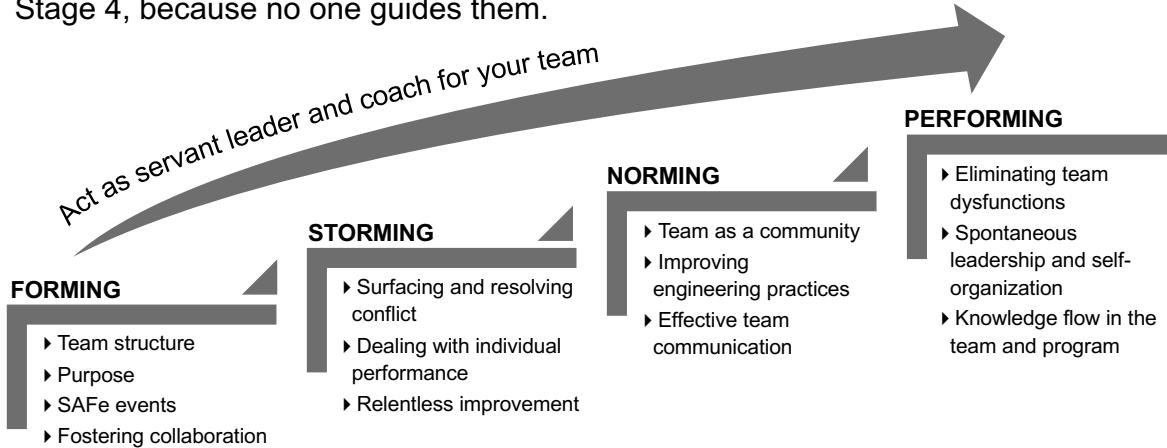
Stages of high-performing teams

In order to address challenges and deliver results, each team grows in four stages.



Scrum Masters accelerate transformation

The Scrum Master helps the team progress quickly. Some teams never reach Stage 4, because no one guides them.



SCALED AGILE® © Scaled Agile, Inc.

6.9

Exercise: A day in the life of a Servant Leader

In your teams, use your flip chart to brainstorm the typical daily activities that a Scrum Master (Servant Leader) would be involved in:

- ▶ Add time estimates to each item
- ▶ You have listed a minimum of 10 things a Scrum Master should do on a daily (or near-daily) basis
 - ▶ What conclusions can you make about the SM role?
 - ▶ Is this a full-time or part-time role?



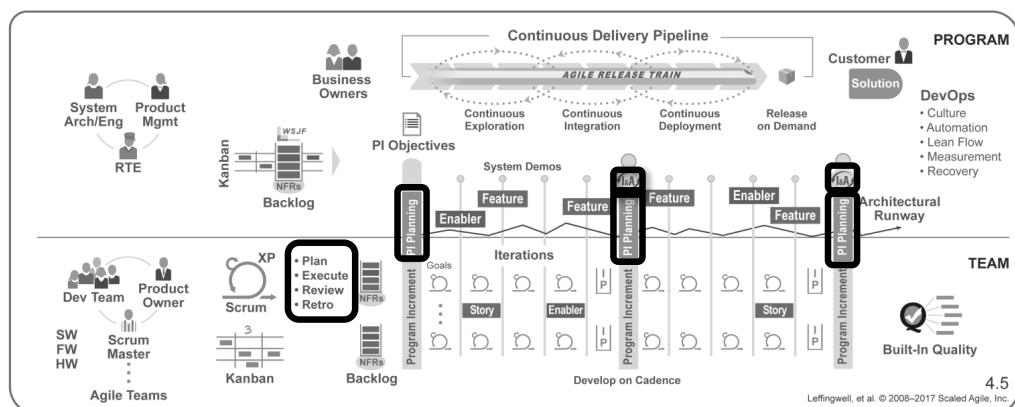
SCALED AGILE® © Scaled Agile, Inc.

6.10

6.2 Facilitate effective SAFe Team events

Scrum Team events in SAFe

As process shepherd, the Scrum Master is responsible for facilitating effective SAFe events.



The challenge with meetings

Facilitating meetings and events is challenging!

- ▶ Meetings can be challenging because ...
 - The purpose is not clear
 - There are no actionable outcomes
 - They may result in unproductive conflict
 - They may be boring
 - Conversation may divert from the agenda into deep discussion
- ▶ Such meetings add almost no value
- ▶ Ineffective meetings can (and should) be fixed ...



Running successful meetings

Scrum Masters can benefit from the best practices for amazing meetings from companies like Apple and Google.

- ▶ Prepare for every meeting, no matter how short
- ▶ Advertise a clear purpose and agenda
- ▶ Identify a Directly Responsible Individual (DRI) for agenda/action items
- ▶ Expect participants to know why they are attending, what contributions they will make, and expected outcomes
- ▶ Leave with clear action items
- ▶ Advertise and keep to timeboxes
- ▶ Be prepared to challenge and be challenged
- ▶ Get participants moving, use manipulatives, engage kinetically

Running successful meetings (cont.)

Scrum Masters can benefit from the best practices for amazing meetings from companies like Apple and Google.

- ▶ Establish default decisions; decisions should never wait for a meeting
- ▶ Don't bring a problem without bringing at least one possible solution
- ▶ Review actions taken to meet commitments—enforce accountability
- ▶ Use “yes, and ...” instead of “no, but ...” to keep inputs positive and flowing
- ▶ Take frequent breaks
- ▶ Go the extra mile to bring remote participants into the discussion
- ▶ Use parking lots to avoid too much detail and/or going off on tangents
- ▶ Communicate beyond the meeting

Exercise: Practice effective planning for SAFe events

Your program is in the third Iteration of the current PI, and things are not going well. Your team had important dependencies on work to be completed by another team, and they haven't delivered, putting multiple PI Objectives at risk.

To get things back on track so both teams can meet their PI commitments, the RTE has recommended a joint meeting of the teams to work through the challenges and build an action plan to get the teams aligned.

Using the guidelines from the previous slide, discuss the things that you, as the organizing Scrum Master, would do before, during, and after this meeting to ensure a positive outcome. Be prepared to share your plan with the class.



6.3 Coach the Agile Team using powerful questions

Scrum Master as coach

Becoming a coach requires a shift from old behaviors to new ones.

Move away from ...

- ▶ Coordinating individual contributions
- ▶ Acting as a subject matter expert
- ▶ Driving toward specific outcomes
- ▶ Knowing the answer
- ▶ Directing
- ▶ Talking about deadlines and technical options
- ▶ Driving the ‘right’ (your) decisions
- ▶ Fixing problems rather than helping others fix them

Move toward ...

- ▶ Coaching the whole team to collaborate
- ▶ Being a facilitator
- ▶ Being invested in the team’s overall performance
- ▶ Asking the team for the answer
- ▶ Letting the team find their own way
- ▶ Guiding
- ▶ Focusing on business value delivery
- ▶ Doing the right thing for the business right now
- ▶ Facilitating team problem-solving

Lyssa Adkins, *Coaching Agile Teams*

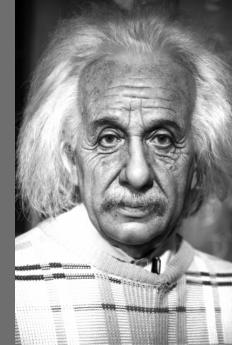
Coaching with powerful questions

Coaches don't give people the answer. Instead, they guide people to the solution.

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask.

For once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes."

—Albert Einstein



Why are questions powerful?

- ▶ They are thought-provoking
- ▶ They generate curiosity in the listener
- ▶ They channel focus
- ▶ They generate energy and forward movement
- ▶ They stimulate reflective conversation
- ▶ They surface underlying assumptions
- ▶ They invite creativity and new possibilities
- ▶ They inspire more questions
- ▶ They help reach for deep meaning



Powerful questions you can ask



Powerful questions like these can help connect ideas and generate deeper insights.

- ▶ What new connections are you making?
- ▶ What had real meaning for you from what you've heard?
- ▶ What surprised you?
- ▶ What challenged you?
- ▶ What's missing from this picture so far? What is it we're not seeing?
- ▶ What do we need more clarity about?

Powerful questions you can ask (continued)



Powerful questions like these can help connect ideas and generate deeper insights.

- ▶ What has been your major learning, insight, or discovery so far?
- ▶ What is the next level of thinking we need to do?
- ▶ What hasn't yet been said that would help us reach a deeper level of understanding and clarity?
- ▶ What would you do if success were guaranteed?

Exercise: Powerful questioning

- ▶ Find a partner—one person is the team member, the other is the coach
- ▶ The team member chooses a project issue they are facing
- ▶ The coach can only respond in one of two ways:
 1. Reflective listening: *"I hear you saying ..."*
 2. Asking a powerful question (See examples on next slide)
- ▶ Switch roles after 5 minutes



Exercise: Powerful question examples

- ▶ What new connections are you making?
- ▶ What had real meaning for you from what you've heard?
- ▶ What surprised you?
- ▶ What challenged you?
- ▶ What's missing from this picture so far?
- ▶ What is it we're not seeing?
- ▶ What do we need more clarity about?
- ▶ What has been your major learning, insight, or discovery so far?
- ▶ What is the next level of thinking we need to do?
- ▶ What hasn't yet been said that would help us reach a deeper level of understanding and clarity?
- ▶ What would you do if success were guaranteed?

6.4 Guide team collaboration and resolve conflicts

Some truths about teams

- ▶ Teams are far more productive than the same number of individuals
- ▶ Face-to-face communication is extremely efficient
- ▶ Teams work best when not interrupted
- ▶ Products are more robust when a team has all the cross-functional skills necessary
- ▶ When teams themselves make a commitment, they will probably figure out how to meet it
- ▶ Changes in team composition can impact productivity
- ▶ Peer pressure is the best individual motivator



The five dysfunctions of a team

Teamwork is the ultimate competitive advantage, but many teams are dysfunctional.



Source: Patrick Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 2002

SAFe helps the five dysfunctions

Inattention to results	Results are empirically reviewed at the end of every Iteration and Release. Team retrospectives drive continuous improvement.
Avoidance of accountability	Stakeholders, peer pressure, and review of results drive accountability.
Lack of commitment	Teams make shared commitments to each other and to the external stakeholders.
Fear of conflict	Scrum creates safe environment for conflict; the Scrum Master encourages discussion of disagreements. Shared commitment avoids individual conflict that occurs when objectives are not aligned.
Absence of trust	The environment is safe. The team shares commitment and goals, displays hyper-transparency, and engages in retrospectives.

Exercise: Dysfunction in action

Scenario: You are facilitating yet another team retrospective where the elephant in the room is the team's inability to complete the Stories in the Iteration backlog.

A lot of time was spent on unplanned work dealing with defects from previous Iterations. John, the diva developer, insists he could fix it all in a day or two if he could work alone. You bring this up in the retrospective, but all you get back is silence and most of the team members looking at the ground.

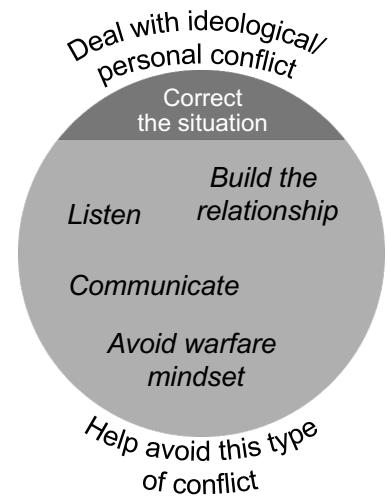
- ▶ What dysfunctions do you see playing out in this team, and, more importantly, what do you do about it?



Avoiding ideological/personal conflicts

A leader should spend far more time helping things go right than dealing with things that are going wrong.

- ▶ Help others see their teammates as human beings with their own needs, cares, worries, and objectives (instead of as obstacles)
- ▶ Help the team set a common vision, goals, and values
- ▶ Start gradually, dealing with long-term tension within the team
- ▶ Educate the team on achieving consensus
- ▶ Build 'relentless collaboration'
- ▶ Master proven conflict-resolution techniques



Resolving conflicts

"In any system that is brought together for a purpose, there is no such thing as real conflict, only unexamined assumptions." —E. Goldratt's Theory of Constraints

Steps in resolving a conflict:

- ▶ Meet with the conflicting parties
- ▶ Identify exactly what each party wants
- ▶ Identify why each party needs what they want
- ▶ Find out what the common goal is that ties these reasons together
- ▶ Obtain agreement that the common goal is correct
- ▶ Dig deeper and review the assumptions
- ▶ Challenge each of the assumptions



Working agreements

Working agreements facilitate conflict management. Have them and keep them visible.

As a participant on this team, I agree and acknowledge that:

- ▶ I am committed to the team's objectives and goals
- ▶ I respect other people's opinions, even when they contradict or conflict with mine
- ▶ If we cannot reach agreement, I will seek and support a consensus decision
- ▶ I will at all times avoid blocking my team from moving forward
- ▶ Whether or not the team decision coincides with mine, I will do my best to support it



Achieving consensus

- ▶ Define why reaching consensus is important in this situation.
- ▶ Let people exchange thoughts. Begin with someone who disagrees and then ask someone who agrees to give his or her perspective.
- ▶ Decompose the disagreement. Identify precisely what parts of the idea they disagree with. Can a portion be removed or modified?
- ▶ If that doesn't work, ask those who disagree to propose a modification to the idea or exchange alternative ideas.
- ▶ Continue exchanging thoughts and finding alternatives until you reach consensus or decide consensus is not possible. If consensus isn't possible, make a majority decision and clarify that everyone will support this decision.

Exercise: What to do about John?

Scenario: You are the Scrum Master. Everyone on the team except John meets with you. They tell you that John is not doing his work, is offensive, and is difficult to work with. They want you to fix the problem.

- ▶ Define a process (flowchart) for how your team will handle such problems.
- ▶ Prepare to share your results.
- ▶ Leave with your flowchart and do this exercise with your team.
Make it visible so that the team knows the process.



Lesson summary

In this lesson, you:

- ▶ Explored how to appreciate the unique abilities and perspectives on the team (including your own)
- ▶ Gained practical tips for meeting facilitation, team development, and team coaching as a servant leader
- ▶ Considered techniques for dealing with team dysfunction and conflict

Suggested Scaled Agile Framework reading:

- “Lean-Agile Leaders” article
- “Scrum Master” article
- “SAFe Core Values” article

Course wrap-up

Exercise: Class retrospective

- ▶ Pick someone in the group to facilitate this exercise
- ▶ Use the three-column format below
- ▶ The facilitator ensures that everyone contributes and mines for opinions and valuable ideas

What went well?

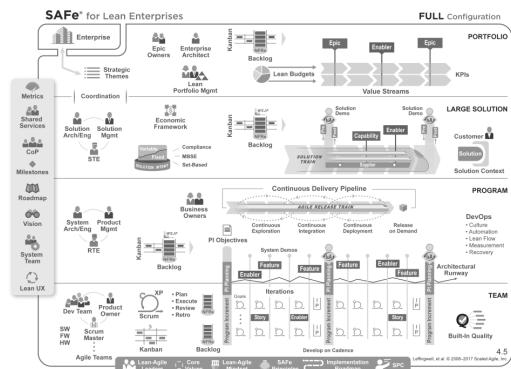
What didn't ?

What to do differently next time?



Scrum Master reading list

- ▶ *Coaching Agile Teams*, Lyssa Adkins
- ▶ *Agile Retrospectives*, Esther Derby and Diana Larsen
- ▶ *SAFe Distilled*, Richard Knaster and Dean Leffingwell
- ▶ *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni
- ▶ *Death by Meeting*, Patrick Lencioni
- ▶ *The Goal*, Eliyahu Goldratt
- ▶ *Tribal Unity*, Em Campbell-Pretty
- ▶ *The Rollout*, Alex Yakyma



Explore the SAFe® knowledge base and
find free resources at:
ScaledAgileFramework.com

Next steps on your SAFe journey...

- ▶ You will receive an e-mail directing you to your SAFe Community Platform account and training plan
- ▶ Login to the SAFe Community website. Based on your certification level, you will have access to some or all of the following:
 - Individualized training plans (including certification exams)
 - Professional development videos
 - Communities of Practice
 - Links to valuable SAFe presentations and videos
 - Performance Tools
 - Downloads, including PDFs of workbooks
 - Certification Kit
- ▶ Prepare for and take your certification exam
- ▶ Participate in the Scrum Master Community of Practice

The screenshot shows the homepage of the SAFe Community Platform. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'SAFe', 'COMMUNITIES', 'LEARN', 'DISCUSS', 'VIDEOS', 'COURSE ADOPTERS', and 'BUSINESS RESULTS'. Below the navigation is a banner with the text 'WELCOME TO THE SAFE COMMUNITY PLATFORM!' and a subtext 'A place where you can easily find solutions and ask questions'. There are three main sections: 'WORKBOOKS' (with an icon of a document), 'CERTIFICATION KIT' (with an icon of a certificate), and 'PERFORMANCE TOOLS' (with an icon of a wrench). Below these sections is a 'TRENDING ARTICLES' section containing several questions like 'How do I access my course exam?' and 'Why can't I get the answers to the practice test?'. At the bottom of the page, there's a footer with the text 'Located at: community.scaledagile.com' and three small icons for 'SAFe', 'SAFe 4', and 'SAFe 4.5'.

SAFED AGILE® © Scaled Agile, Inc.

6.39

Next steps on your Scrum Master journey...

- ▶ Build a high-performing team and foster relentless improvement at the Team and Program Levels
- ▶ Address Agile and Scrum anti-patterns
- ▶ Support the adoption of engineering practices, DevOps, and Agile architecture
- ▶ Apply Kanban and flow to optimize the team's work
- ▶ Working towards SAFe Advanced Scrum Master (SASM)



SAFED AGILE® © Scaled Agile, Inc.

6.40