

What is your role in the organization?

I'm a PG. I'm half time PG, half-time team member. So, I share my time.

What are your key responsibilities?

Mmm. My responsibilities are that I'm a PG for the ANTSYS(???) part of the software. I don't know how familiar you are with products we work with...

Not very much.

It's an application called ANTSYS for the antenna system controller functionality. The responsibility of the PG is to have this sort of the product view of the development while the teams are more feature-oriented normally. They do work from the backlog to produce features onto those products. The PG has a role from the side so to speak, to sort of guard a product and have a more long-term vision for a product and to help other teams that are in ... visiting and doing work in a product. Also to have ... like identify backlog for improvements for a product that could be done by teams. That's some of the parts.

Have you been working here before the transformation towards agile started?

Yes, I started here as a MSc thesis worker at 2005.

And what did you do?

In the MSc thesis?

Haha. You haven't been doing anything in-between?

No I have been here as a software developer in various projects.

Now, in agile context, are the responsibilities for your roles clearly defined?

Yeaahh ... I think it's ... Yes and no, I would say. There are quite clear definitions of the roles that we have, but the common understanding of the roles I don't think is that good because I don't think ... It's not communicated what the roles should be and not, maybe not always clear what one should do and one should not do. Both yes and no I would say. I think there are some good basic thoughts about the roles but maybe it's not ... mm ...

How does it affect your work since these responsibilities are not that clearly articulated?

It can be stuff like the teams might not know when to contact a PG, for instance. That could be something, the teams don't know when to contact a PG or what decision to involve a PG in. We also had ... I mean PGs, we're working in sort of self-organized team or self-created team. For ANTSYS(???), it's the bigger product, and so it's me, Anders and Sushi, I don't know if you have met them.

No.

We are 3 people. We are appointed PGs for different areas but basically it's the same product so it's a lot of the same stuff. Makes sense to work together. The entire ANSYS(???) product, it's a lot of teams that are working, so a lot more of this stuff comes up. For ANTSYS(???) there are not so many teams that are working so it's more easy PG role to sort of keep track of what's going on. But one thing is, for instance, we have a TM (technology management) that sits down the corridor from you. Another sort of instance that are not working with the features, maybe working more long-term with strategies and products etc. So between us and them there are not a clear responsibility division I would say. Sometimes unclear and the teams might

not know is this fine because the TM said it or should we contact a PG or should we ... Stuff like that is not clear I would say. I discussed it just a few days ago.

Lets talk about a bigger picture now. Current organizational structure at Ericsson, do you think there are aspects of it that might stand in the way of agile way of working?

Yes. I think it is. What do you mean when you say «agile way of working»?

Maybe some parts of the organization are not agile perse or not supportive towards agile or maybe there are some parts of it that are not compatible with agile?

I think, one aspect that, I think it is getting better but I [??] to be able for the teams to work efficient on a feature they don't have enough support around them to make everything smooth. That has been one problem; the teams are supposed to solve everything. If the nodes in the labs are not working to be able to run test cases, the teams, they should solve that and the competence is not there. The teams don't have competence. It takes a lot of time that is necessary for them to work. I think that's getting better, I think they are realising that they are to work on those scenarios.

Is it mostly technical support which is lacking or also communication towards and work assignments, and feedback if you need more input on backlog items and such or is it solely as you mentioned nodes or maybe CI?

Let's see. I think there are a lot of technics stuff actually. I can think a bit and figure an example.

Now let's focus on your role. What roles are part of your communication environment and what are your responsibilities towards those roles?

We have, for instance, like I said before, technology management, they are a natural communication party I would say. We, for instance, have this weekly meeting called «RA techno» [??], we discuss technical issues that come up. The purpose of that is for the PGs to bring up stuff that we have seen, to discuss it with other PGs and the TM - those are the ones participating in this meeting. [??] other stuff, TM are driving like product care items that the teams should do and we are involved in that too. Together prioritize what is important to do and how we should do it. Then of course the OPOs I communicate with regarding what work is going to the backlog. We also have this, like I mentioned, backlog for improvements of products. We try to push in for the team work, we and OPO[??]. For instance, the team is doing a feature in some area and there are identified improvements that they could sort of do in that context. And the teams of course, we communicate. Comes a lot of questions about stuff, reviewing solutions or asking questions. Especially when there are teams that are not, I mean a lot of teams are working regularly in the products that we have, but then there are other teams that are doing guest features. And then ... that is ... not working so good, but then there are only the PGs that are not in .. that can take out some of the questions and support. Because the teams are not allocated by time to support other teams that are doing features normally. And the other team coming from outside are supposed to take responsibility for the entire feature which might affect our product a little and their own product so to say more. We try to take that kind of support and guidance.

What can be an exception in your communication behavior? Maybe some other role which you normally don't communicate with but on several occasions you do?

... Exception. These are really hard questions. I don't know what to call it. I mean there are roles of course or people which I communicate with but not so often. It could be for instance be a SA - System organization in Kista.

Do they have impact on the team's progress at times, when the team comes towards you and has a problem and you need to talk to someone who is outside of your normal say network and you need to solve an

issue? Is that something that might affect the team when you need to reach out to people in another location or...?

It could be, yes. When we have dependencies to someone else, it could be like that. For instance now we are doing documentation work, system documentation. We are doing the white box description of the antenna system part of the RBS and we don't know how to handle the black box description, that's something, a different document. That might cause stalling in the process if we don't know how to do that, how to find that out. Because it's not in our mission right now to take care of that as well, but it needs to be done so it's ...

Let's go back to your normal communication environment. Do you see any role as being too central and having too many responsibilities?

... Yes ... Sometimes it's like that. The main reason for that is that we become a bottleneck I think. For my little part ANTSYS (???) it's not a problem because it doesn't happen that much, but for the whole bigger ANTSYS product there are so many teams we are working, 2 different delivery tracks (LTE and multi standard), of course the 3 of us become the bottleneck if we need to support someone. It's naturally like that. That has been a problem since we started as PGs like 1,5 years ago and I think the number of teams at least doubled since then so it's growing. We are not more people.

Let's talk about information and feedback sharing you have with different organizational structures and by this communication I mean both from you to these structures and from the structures towards you. How sufficient do you think it is?

The communication? I think it's not sufficient. I think it's hard to understand what's going on in the organization. I mean both products wise we are a lot of teams doing stuff and things are driven from different perspectives. A lot of stuff is happening. It's hard to get a picture of that. Also, like way of working, that kind of area, there seems like there are island of people, they are doing stuff, they are having forums and etc, but it's not well communicated what's going on. Sometimes it feels like you can get the information by accident, like this is going on right now, this is happening. That part is not working well I would say. The same thing is I think, for instance, TM, what they are doing is not.. I have some insights as we work more with them as PGs, but for the teams, I don't think they even know what TM do. I mean some stuff obviously, but not in a sense that you could wish. That is not working so well.

Can you describe how it affect the teams for example?

For instance ... I mean it obviously affects if you're doing work and there are someone else thinking about like doing restructuring of for instance how we do block tests. If you work with block tests in your team obviously it would be nice to know what's going on around the corner, larger changes to sort of adapt to those, to understand what's happening. That picture I don't think we have good enough. That's the sort of ... that could be partly my responsibility as well to communicate that. We try to do that but sometimes it is hard to reach out. Sometimes it also feels that... At the same time you lack information spreading from people and at the same time there is too much information, It's hard to value what you get, I mean if you get a lot of email each day, a lot of them you can't read by physical limitations you have to throw them away, sometimes you miss stuff. It's a lot of stuff but sometimes you miss the important.

So that means that teams and PGs and other roles could share more information or in a more accessible way that makes it easier to filter it? Do you have any suggestions on how to tackle this problem?

I think that could largely improve. En example of that is ... A year ago we in the PG team started to send out the weekly newsletter to the organization and we still do that. That's one way of because a lot of stuff goes through us but we don't always do a lot of work about it. I mean we get involved in stuff and pick up things that are happening and try to have just a weekly newsletter that collects small notes on what's going on and on our horizon. I don't think I never have received such a good feedback on anything I've done here at Ericsson after we started with a newsletter. It's very interesting. Especialy from management and stuff, that thought it was a really good way of spreading information etc. It somehow felt needed I think. I think it still is a good way of sort of short notes on what is going on for other people. Seems easily to ... and what other areas might as well. We don't take everything in our, but some part.

What communication do you have with management?

Now we haven't had a SM for a while, but we are getting one yesterday. We have a new one now. Earlier ... the line organization earlier had more responsibility for the products and part of that has been transferred to PGs, part of that work. That is a normal communication I had with my earlier SM. He has always driven those questions from his perspective to have a network with people, other managers and stuff, for that domain that we are working. Will see what is happening with a new one. We also had these, now it's not so much, but we sort of regularly have a meeting with the line managers, discussion about the PG role and how we should evolve it and how we should work with it.

... Do you maybe have any communication channels that work good?

... I think normally it works good with the teams. I get contacted by the teams. For instance, an external team that needs some guidance in the product to do work, I think that normally works very well.

Do you see any reason why this one works and the other one doesn't?

That is more direct concrete information. The team is supposed to do the work, they are not familiar with the product, they need someone to help them and I'm interested that they do good job in the code. Also I think it's fun. I don't mind if I have the time to guide them and help them out and describe how the stuff works. Then there are direct questions, there's dialog, we can use the means that we have, email, Lync. Set up a meeting, this Garret (???) tool to review the code I think is working very well. The other parts are more maybe difficult, because I mean if you sit in your little forum for some particular way of working for an issue or something it's not always so easy to know who should receive this information and you can not always broadcast everything that you do. [??] if they do, that gets too much, might be more difficult. I don't know.

When you, in turn, are looking for information, how do you know where to find it, how do you look for information sources?

Then I try to talk to the closest person I can find I think might know something. I mean that's normally how you go about it. I need to find out now, for instance, how to setup the right lab equipment to verify our work and I don't know exactly who to talk to, I try with the names I know and hope to move from there. That's normally how you do it, I think. It's always good to have someone, a little bit here, a little bit there.

Let's talk about your work with XFTs. How can a sprint be interrupted from it's planned direction?

How can a sprint be interrupted? I have never worked in a sprint that has been interrupted. But I guess it happens. I think it's normally due to urgent reprioritisation of the work. Something has happened that is unexpected. For my role, I don't think I have so much to say about that, I can't interrupt the sprint, not that I know of :).

What are the interfaces the team normally has to other organizational structures?

The team communicates a lot with the OPO of course, they communicate with me as well, but more informally. I'm in the team so I'm in the same persons(???). Now we haven't had any team coach, the LM is also a team coach, I don't think that communication has been too much.

How did that affect the team?

I think that could be a lot better. The Scrum Master should have some part in this solving impediments for the team and how to work smoothly and stuff, but scrum Masters normally they can't handle the hard issues. To be able to solve a problem you have to own the problem, but it's a problem for everybody than normally one person can't solve it. For instance, when we started this transformation, the line management set up the impediments board at the fika corner to push post-it notes with impediments and they were supposed to look at them and to do the most important and have some kind of progress in solving those. I think that didn't work out at all unfortunately. A lot of very good things came there but not so many have been solved. Maybe it was hard for them to solve it as well, maybe it was hard for them to really put time in solving these impediments. That again is maybe something that is lacking, the supporting roles should really work more, should be able to lift an issue to someone when they get it and not have to worry about it and hope that someone else is driving the question. That would be

good team coach's role.

How about your communication with PO community?

I think it works fine. I sit right next to Monica, that is OPO for us, that is normal. I know her well and we sit next to each other, that maybe helps it to work better. I would sit right behind the other OPOs for these teams (???). I think that's good communication. I don't know if that's the same for everybody, but for me and the ANTSYS part it works well. I think maybe sometimes the responsibility might not be that clear between what the OPO and the PG do, it might work better for us than the others. I think there are OPOs that take more sort of technical decisions even though it might not be the role to do it.

Do teams have any participation in issues regarding the backlog? Or is it only OPOs and you maybe?

The teams participate a lot I think. Monica has a responsibility for the work package that we should do and in what order we should do them, but the content of them, team are very involved, what does this package mean, what should we do especially in G2 I think.

You work with multiple teams. What are problems and what works good with coordinating teams? Do you think teams communicate well with one another, do they know what other teams are doing, can they help one another when there are problems, overlaps in their work?

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. There have been issues where one team is doing work in the same area of the code and they don't know about someone else is doing a delivery and suddenly everything that you have made is not valid anymore because it doesn't align with what has just been delivered in. There have been issues like that from time to time, I mean it's normal. We are so many teams. We have also meeting to lift all these questions and to maintain a list of teams and what part of the product you work to identify these collisions. I don't know if it works well, but it's at least some way of seeing: now these teams doing work here, maybe you should talk to each other. I think it has improved, teams get used to you are not alone in ??? maybe someone else. Maybe it's good to get used to it and know that there's always may be some one else.

So they are learning and they would approach one another...

I think so. Teams themselves I don't know if they always do. OPOs should be the ones who keeps the coordination and we can help out as well, but we are normally not part of the feature flow so we don't always know what feature was started, the OPOs know.

Would the team give feedback to the OPO whenever such an overlap occurs to kind of find the reason for it and help that it won't again?

I think so, yes.

So that will just improve over time and dissolve?

I don't know. Probably not :D. I think it always might be like that. For instance now there are a lot of teams that work in the same area, a lot of features that are affected. I don't know exactly how they solve that, they identify it from the start, and then they can sort of really work with that, get the team together, now we are doing this and this. That might be easier than suddenly someone corrected the TR and how it affected my stuff. The smaller parts you have to get used to this might change and I have to redo it.

Would you rather see teams resolving these issues among one another or going over the OPOs or upper parts of the structure?

I think it's hard for the teams to know everything. Because there are so many teams so it's hard for each of them to know exactly what's going on. Maybe it comes more normally for OPO role to have this coordination; now I'm starting work in this area and what's else happening to help the teams with that.

So there's the problem of you empower the teams and you give them too many responsibilities and they're being overwhelmed at times. It seems like you're circling back into that: by allowing team to have a lot of responsibilities sometimes they have too much to do and they can't focus anymore because they have to know too much, they have to work too much with technical environment and anything around them, so by pushing it all down they just at some point raise their hands and go «Wow».

Yes, I think that's the case. Sometimes you're supposed to solve something within the team and you can't solve it, that can be really frustrating, that you have some kind of responsibility to solve an issue but you don't have the peer to do it. That's little bit of what I talked about earlier, the teams are supposed to solve problems around them but they are not in control, they don't own that kind of problem.

But then the question, should they own the problem, should they own everything around them?

I think no. I think they should own what they do best and to work efficient with that. They other stuff you just work around.