

# XFT-SM: Interview guide

## Introduction and Background

We are students from Chalmers and Göteborg University working on our Master's thesis with Ericsson. The goal of our research is to look into the communication patterns inside the large-scale organization using SCRUM and identify problematic areas that might be hindering the possibility of reaping the benefits of agile adoption. As a part of this work we are conducting interviews with several employees to get the perspective of those actually involved in the various aspects of the development process and create a broad picture of existing context. We will interview representatives of various roles within the organization and thus aim to cover as more aspects of the existing environment as possible.

The purpose of this interview is to gain more insight on the current situation from you as a [ROLE] and possibly discover any discrepancies or obstacles of the communication flow. Your response will be treated anonymously in any publications (internal or external) of this study. We will start the interview with a set of questions regarding your background in the organization and continue on with more open-ended questions related to the transformation of the development process in Ericsson and sequentially arising issues related to the organizational structure and information flow inside it.

The interview will take around [NNN] minutes.

Do you have any questions at this stage?

To be able to come back to the contents of this interview and extract as much information as possible we would like to record this session. Is this alright by you?

## Background information

1. What is your role in the team? (Closed question)
2. What are your key responsibilities? (Open question)
3. How do your responsibilities differ from the ones of an XFT developer and where do they overlap?
4. Have you been working here before the transition towards agile?
  - a. What was your role during that time?
5. Could you describe the interpretation of Scrum you follow inside the team?

## Agile Transformation & Ways of Working

### 6. What is your view on company's transition towards agile?

#### Probing Questions

- a. What is the vision for the transformation?
- b. Are the expectations fulfilled?
- c. Is the organization more responsive to change and more reactive?
- d. Do you feel that all levels of the organization are supportive towards agile?

**7. Are there any aspects regarding the organisational structure which tend to stand in the way of working in an agile manner?**

- a. How different are various parts of the organization in their agility?
- b. How compatible are the elements of the old structure with the new way of working?

**Context Information**

**8. How do you relate to other roles (inside and outside your XFT)?**

Probing Questions

- A. How often do you communicate with other roles?
- B. What are the issues you communicate about with each role?

**9. How can the normal workflow of an XFT during the sprint be interrupted from it's planned direction?**

Probing Questions

- A. (If not interrupted) How is this achieved?
- B. (If interrupted) How often does it deviate from the plan?
  - a. What do you feel is the biggest cause interrupting your work or flow?
    - i. What are different types of recurring interruptions?
  - b. How are these interruptions addressed during sprint planning?
    - i. (If no) Why is anticipation not possible?
    - ii. (If yes) Which parts of unexpected change can be anticipated?
      - 1. What is the influence of parties outside the XFT on such changes and interruptions?
  - c. Which parties are normally involved in addressing and mitigating unexpected change and interruptions?
  - d. Which roles have more responsibilities than other in such a case?
- C. Are there problematic areas of communication about these interruptions significantly blocking the sprint's progress?
  - a. (If yes) Which are these? Can you elaborate?
- D. What else can block the sprint's backlog?

**10. As a Scrum master where do you position yourself in regards of decision making within the agile context?**

Probing Questions

- a. Can decision making around the XFT be blocked?
  - i. (If yes) How da fak?
  - ii. What is your role as a Scrum Master in resolving it?
- b. To what extent are you involved in decision coordination regarding the backlog related issues?

- i. (If negative) How could you be involved earlier?
- ii. (If negative) Which problematic areas could be mitigated easily?

### 11. How volatile is your team's sprint backlog during the sprint?

#### Probing Questions

- A. (If changes) Where do the changes come from?
  - a. How recurring are they?
  - b. When you discuss the change and possible resolutions, who do you discuss it with?
  - c. In such discussions, are there any blockages in the communication line that slow down or hinder its resolution?
  - d. How do you integrate such changes with the ongoing tasks?
  - e. How does it affect the existing items in the backlog?
- B. (If unsteady) What are reasons for fluctuations?
  - a. Are reasons causing fluctuations reoccurring within sprints?
  - b. What countermeasures are taken to stabilize a sprint?
  - c. Are causes communicated outwards and discussed?
    - i. (If positive) With whom?
    - ii. (If negative) Why not and should discussions be held?

### 12. What are major external, coming from outside of your team, influences the XFT is faced with during the sprint?

#### Probing Questions

- c. What are major roles the team communicates with during a sprint?
- d. How do the influences affect your work?
- e. How do they bear the potential to extend or delay a sprint significantly?
- f. At what stage are they considered and how is their impact anticipated?
- g. How are they communicated, which communication paths do they usually take (remain within the XFT or move out)?
- h. How optimal is communication around them?
- i. How can it be improved?
- j. Can you give an example for an exceptionally unproductive sprint?
  - i. What were the characteristics, communication patterns and causes?

## Agile & The Organisational Structure

### 13. How dependant is the work of your XFT on other organizational structures?

- k. What interfaces does your team have to these structures (both inwards and outwards)?
- l. What are the team's responsibilities towards other roles?
  - i. How frequently are these responsibilities followed?
  - ii. How time consuming are they?

- m. How dependent are other roles on the progress of the XFT?
  - i. How does stagnation affect the XFT's environment?

**14. Where do you see the biggest problems in communicating with other parties from different teams or other roles within the organization?**

Probing Questions

- n. Which events tend to cause high levels of communication between roles?
- o. What communication patterns tend to cause delays for a sprint?
  - i. Especially occasions in which progress is blocked?
- p. How are information sources needed for more input on a task found?
- q. How readily/easy are responsible coworkers found or available in case of missing information?
- r. Do you see any moments in which the way of working or environment for the team could be improved?
  - i. (If yes) How?
- s. How well does the organisational structure and its segregation of responsibilities allow for maintaining progress as an XFT?

**15. How would you describe the flow of information around the XFT and its environment?**

Probing Questions

- t. How is assignment of responsibilities and tasks organised?
  - i. What is the decision making process around them?
  - ii. How does it tend to be a collaborative process?
- u. How is information shared from the XFT back towards its environment?
  - i. How are learnings and insights shared among XFTs?
  - ii. How is feedback given to higher levels within the agile (POs) and normal organisational structure (SM/DM)?
- v. On what occasions do XFTs normally reach out of the agile context and which issues are solved within the teams?
- w. How is communication between XFTs organised?
  - i. How optimal is it?
  - ii. How could it be improved?

**Closing**

Thank you for your response. To summarize, [SUMMARIZE KEY ANSWERS AND OPINIONS], is this correct?

We will transcribe this interview and provide you with the transcript so you can point out and correct any misinterpretations.

Was there anything in the interview you found not appropriate to the context? Would you like to add anything/change your response?

If you want to get in contact with us regarding this interview, you can find us [LOCATION].

We would like to ask you not to discuss the contents of this interview with your colleagues to avoid the learning effect.

Thank you for your time, your input is very valuable to our research.