

OPO: 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 organization? (Closed question)
2. What are your key responsibilities? (Open question)
3. How do your responsibilities relate to the XFT [NAME]?
4. Have you been working here before the transition towards agile?
 - a. What was your role during that time?

Agile Transformation & Ways of Working

5. 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?

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

Probing Questions

- 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

7. How do you relate to other roles?

Probing Questions

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

8. How volatile is team's sprint backlog during the sprint?

Probing Questions

- A. (If changes) Where do the changes come from?
 - a. How recurring are they?
 - b. How is the decision to introduce a change to an ongoing sprint is made?
 - i. Who is involved in the process?
 - c. When you discuss the change and possible resolutions, who do you discuss it with?
 - d. In such discussions, are there any blockages in the communication line that slow down or hinder its resolution?
 - e. How are changes communicated to the XFT?
 - f. How does it affect the existing items in the backlog?

Agile & The Organisational Structure

9. How dependant is the work of an XFT on other organizational structures?

- a. What interfaces does the team have to these structures (both inwards and outwards)?
- b. What are the team's responsibilities towards other roles?
 - i. How frequently are these responsibilities followed?
 - ii. How time consuming are they?
- c. How dependent are other roles on the progress of the XFT?
 - i. How does stagnation affect the XFT's environment?

10. Where do you see the biggest problems in communicating with other parties from different roles within the organization?

Probing Questions

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

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

Probing Questions

- a. 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?
- b. How is information shared from the XFT back towards its environment?
 - i. How is feedback given to higher levels within the agile (POs) organisational structure?
- c. On what occasions do XFTs normally reach out of the agile context and which issues are solved within the teams?

Agile, PO & customer interaction

12. How is interaction between the different POs organised?

Probing Questions

- a. How quickly do decisions among POs affect the XFTs?
 - i. How optimal is it?
 - ii. How could this be optimized?
- b. What are the problematic areas within this chain of communication?
 - i. What can cause delays or other obstacles?
 - ii. How can it be improved?
 - iii. How big is the distance between OPO, to APO and TPO?
- c. How is the team involved in decision making affecting the backlog?
 - i. How is the XFT's feedback from sprints incorporated into future ones?
- d. How immediate can adjustments from a TPO be affecting a team?
 - i. How does the PO chain lower responsiveness in regards to adjusting quickly?

13. How does the line and program management of the organisational structure affect the PO chain?

Probing Questions

- a. How do interests from a DM and PgM level influence your work with XFTs?
 - i. In which ways are they different?
 - ii. How can it build tension towards the XFTs?
 - iii. How can this impact customer input and sprint realisations?
- b. How are responsibilities separated and ranges of influence limited towards you?
 - i. (If negative) How can this lead to a communication overhead or decision blocking?
 - 1. How can it be improved?
 - ii. (If positive) How is the role understanding established (formal or informal)?
- c. How is the communication from the PO chain towards the line and program management organized?
 - i. How is it different between the two?
 - ii. How do you integrate with decision making?

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.