Creating a High-Performance Agile Team

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Mary is Vice President of IT Strategy and Transformation at S&P Global Market Intelligence

During her more than 20 years of experience with financial, healthcare, and SaaS-based products, Mary has held VP, Director, and Manager level positions in various software development organizations.

A seasoned Leader and Coach in agile and testing methodologies, Mary has direct experience building and leading teams through large scale agile transformations. Mary's expertise is a combination of agile scaling, agile testing, and DevOps that her clients find incredibly valuable.

She is also Chief storyteller of the book **The Three Pillars of Agile Testing and Quality**, and avid keynote and conference speaker on all things agile and agile testing.

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BOB GALEN

ScrumAlliance®
Certified Enterprise Coach

Scrum Alliance CAL EDUCATOR

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Principle Agile Coach at Vaco Agile in Raleigh, NC

Agile Trainer & Coach at RGalen CG

- Somewhere “north” of 30 years experience
- Wide variety of technical stacks and business domains
- Roots of a software developer
- Senior/Executive software development leadership for 20+ years
- Agile “Coach of Coaches” and Leaders
- Deep XP, Lean, Scrum, and Kanban experience since late 1990’s
- From Cary, North Carolina; husband, father, grandfather, and dog lover

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Agile Leadership & Coaching PDF eBooks, free copies

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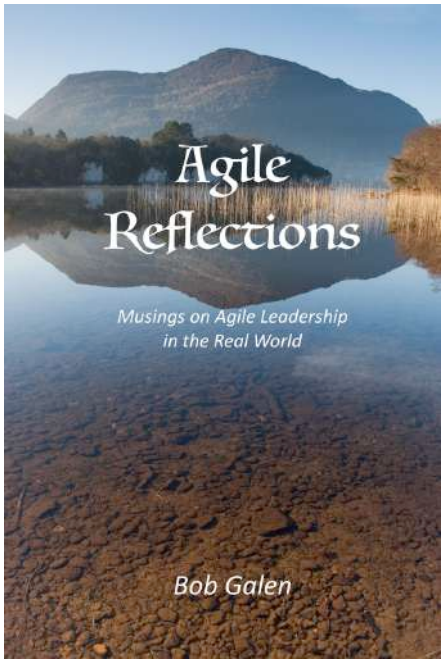

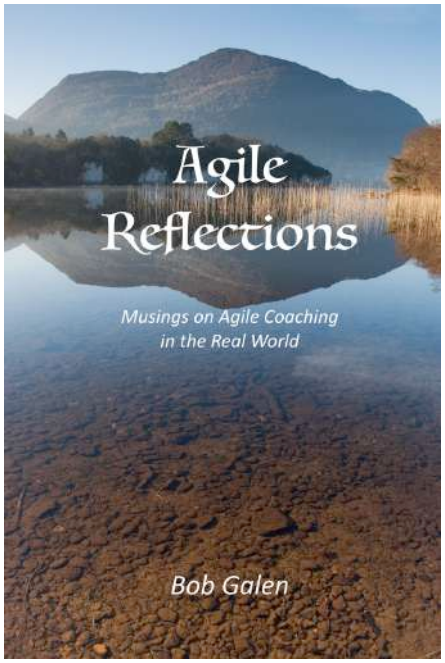

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First, let's explore…

- What are the basics of "Agility"
- What would be indicators (patterns) of Agile maturity?
- What about Agile immaturity?
- Let's rank order some of them; I.e. what do you think are the more impactful patterns in either direction?

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"Doing" Agile vs. "Being" Agile?

- One debate in the agile community surrounds agile maturity. A way of characterizing it surrounds
  - **Doing Agile** – focusing towards is tactics, ceremonies, and techniques vs.
  - **Being Agile** – focusing towards team mindset, leadership mindset, behaviors, organizational adoption, etc.
- As an entry exercise, can we brainstorm aspects of Doing vs. Being to capture how you view the differences?
- The Mature Patterns workshops sort of crosses both, with an emphasis towards the Being-side of the equation.

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Outline
Maturity Patterns

1. Truly Emergent Architecture
2. Aggressive Refactoring
3. Pursue Ruthless KISS
4. Behaving Like a Team
5. Naturally Becoming: T-Shaped
6. Truly Collaborative Work
7. Lean Work Queues
8. Opportunistic Pairing & Swarming
9. Healthy Distributed Teams
10. Quality on ALL Fronts
11. Testing is Everyone's Job
12. Active Done-Ness
13. Stopping the Line
14. Product Ownership takes a Village
15. Pervasive Product Owners
16. The Nuance of a Healthy Backlog
17. Righteous Retrospectives
18. Experimentation
19. The Power of Complete Transparency
20. Doing More than Thought Possible
21. Emphasize Strength-Based Teams
22. Show a Healthy Respect for Management

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For each pattern… workshop discussions

- For sets or groups of patterns, we'll pause and discuss the patterns in small groups

- Looking for examples where you've seen the pattern in operation and have a story to tell

OR

- Examples where you've seen related anti-patterns in operation and have a counter-story to tell

- Either way, we'll be looking for group-based discussion around the ways and means of achieving agile maturity

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Technical Patterns

#1) Truly Emergent Architecture

- Comfortable with on-the-fly de-composition;
  - *no BDUF!*
- Sprint #0's as appropriate
- *Backlogs contain learning activity – Research Spike stories*
- Should demonstrate architectural evolution in Sprint Reviews

- Architects work in "slices"
  - Perhaps 'skewed' a bit forward from other teams
  - Deliver architecture from within the Scrum teams
  - Publish system metaphors, guidelines, big picture views – to keep everyone focused on goals

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#2) Aggressive Refactoring

- It's easy to refactor on new work or greenfield project…so clearly do that.
  - But what about hairy, old, fragile code?
- Aggressive refactoring
- *Put it on your Backlogs*
  - *Justify / explain it in business terms*
- Remember the relationship to automation – making refactoring effective & *Fear-Less*

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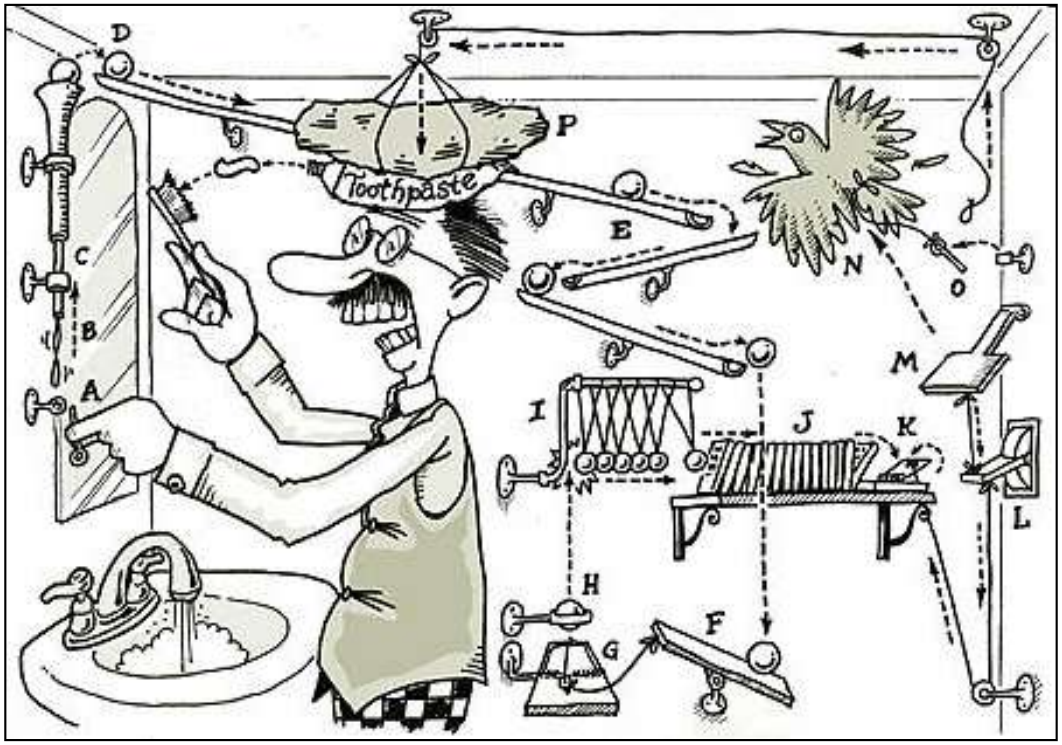
#3) Ruthless KISS

- Getting LEAN deep into your cultural DNA
  - Fight complexity
  - People & Collaboration over Process & Tools
  - *Fight Gold-plating developing (Just Enough) of EVERYTHING!*
- Deliver small increments (Just in Time) and pay attention to feedback
- Continuously engage your Product Owner



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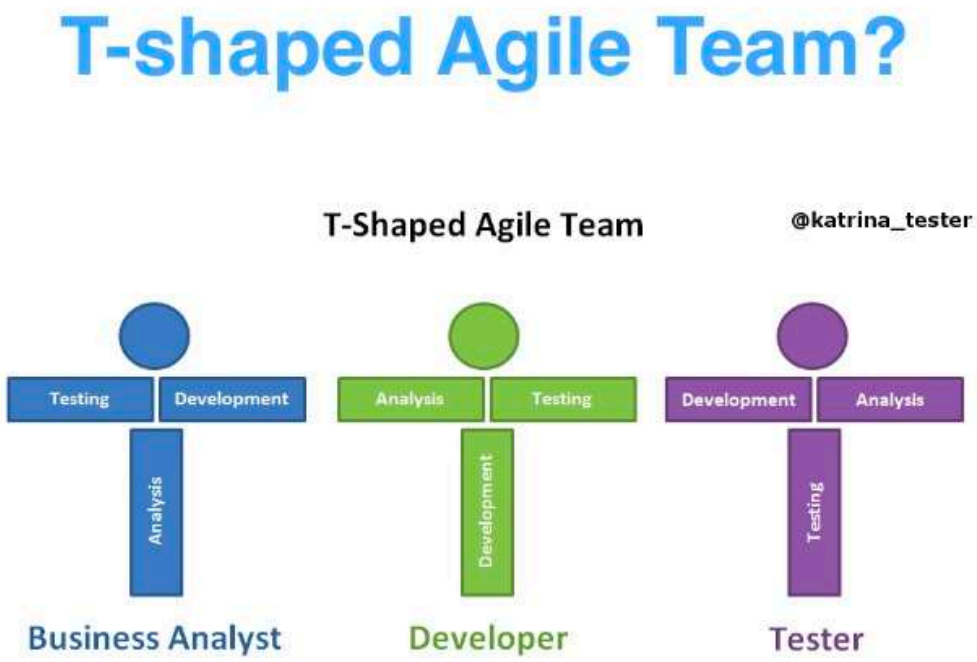
#4) Naturally Becoming: T-Shaped

- Core skills and shared skills
  - Inquisitive breadth
  - X-Training
- All skills are fair game:
  - Development
  - Testing
  - Design & Architecture
  - Non-functional (performance security)
- *Breadth and depth; no trivialization of any skill (ex: testing)*



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Breakout – Technical Patterns

- Individually, in small groups, or at your table
- Pull together a 3-5 item short list of what YOU believe the KEY maturity patterns are in this area.
- Perhaps identify things I missed?
- Discuss the WHY behind your decisions. Be ready to explain or defend your thinking
- Privately, do a “gap analysis” for your teams back home. What would be 1-2 actions you could suggest/influence to increase team level maturity?

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Teaming

#5) Behaving Like a Team

- Includes the Scrum Master and Product Owner
- Developing trust
  - Congruent feedback
  - Getting the “Elephants” on the table
  - Asking for help; helping each other
- Spending personal time together
- *Passionate debate; Healthy conflict*

- Strengths & weaknesses; adjust to each; maximizing & minimizing
- Succeeding or failing – as a team

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#6) Truly Collaborative Work

- Co-located teams
- Avoiding Scrummerfall-like dynamics
  - Stages and gates within the team
  - Long queues with hand-offs
- Listening to each other; mutual respect, honor experience
- *Caves & Commons*

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#7) Lean Work Queues

- *Limiting WIP*
  - Fewer things “in process” and small tasks
  - Visible workflow
  - Kanban is interesting variant of the ‘correct’ team behavior
- Blending roles – individuals doing more themselves and handing off less
  - Focusing on delivering value
- *Think in terms of reducing & eliminating WASTE*

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#8) Opportunistic Pairing & Swarming

- Mob programming
  - Minimally trying it as an experiment
- *Opportunistic Pairing*
  - Dev-to-Dev, Test-to-Test, Everyone
- 3-Amigo behavior surrounding the work (stories)
  - Story lead
  - Shepherding a story to ”Done”
- *Everyone participates in the Sprint Review/Demo*

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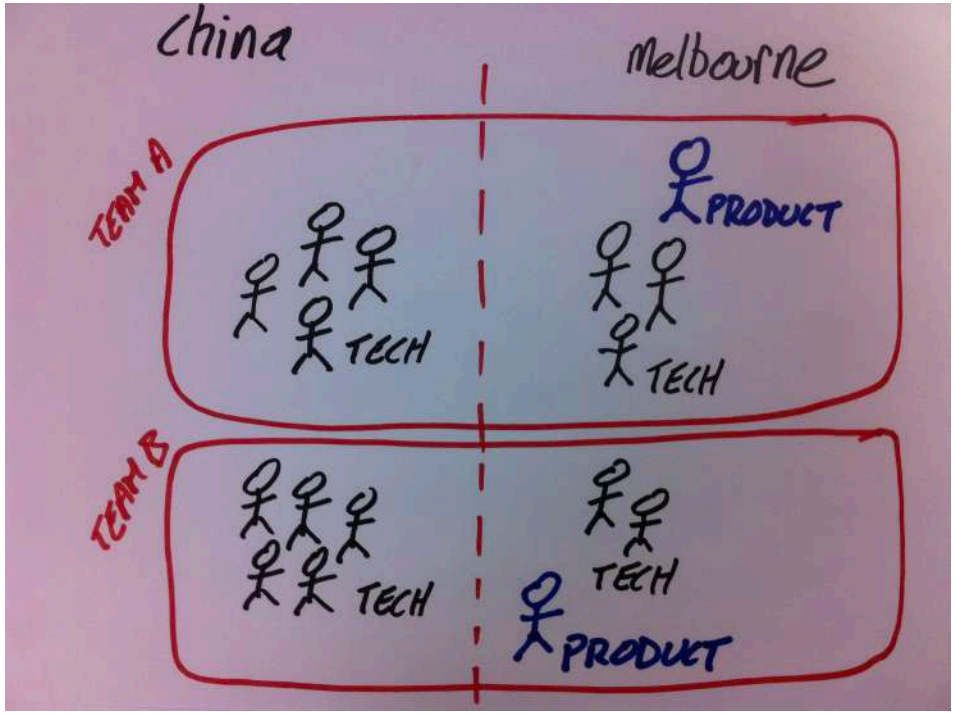
#9) Healthy Distributed Teams

- It's not an excuse for bad behavior
  - Overcome the challenges
- Keep the ceremonies active and engaged
- Whole team engagement
- Product Owner is well-connected to the team; active refinement
- Same "rules"
- *If you video recorded any "activity", it would look the same as a co-located team*



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Breakout – Teaming Patterns

- Individually, in small groups, or at your table
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Quality & Testing

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#10) Quality on ALL Fronts

- Leaving behind the notion of "Testing in quality…"
- Professionalism within the team
  - Doing the right things…doing things right
- Self-inspecting; self-policing
- Just enough quality
  - Quality has a cost and should be variable based on your context
- Focus on *Craftsmanship and Professionalism*

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#11) Testing is Everyone's Job

- *Willingness on the part of the whole-team to pitch in for testing*
  - All types, even manual
  - Extending it to test automation
  - Never letting tests break
  - Building in testability
- Listening to test estimates as part of work estimation
- Understanding functional and non-functional testing
- Root Cause Analysis as a team

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#12) Active Done-Ness; Readiness

- Actively create and automate Acceptance Tests on a Story or a Feature basis
  - Customer heavily involved with definition
  - Not functional tests
- Have established a view to multiple levels of *Done-Ness*
  - Work - Done
  - Story Acceptance
  - Sprint Goals
  - Release Criteria & Goals
- Think in terms of traditional Entry, Exit, and Release criteria

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DoD – another view

Task:

- Implemented
- Unit Tested
- Code commented
- Code peer reviewed
- In source trunk
- In CI build
- Coverage met
- Standards met
- Tracked
- Other metrics?

Story:

- AC met
- All agreed tasks done
- Functionally tested / auto test built
- All known bugs fixed
- CI success, including DB / config updates
- Smoke-tested
- Integration tested
- Tracked
- Documented for user view

Sprint:

- End date met
- Stories demo'd
- UAT complete
- Retro held and documented
- Product backlog updated
- Exploratory testing done
- Performance (etc.) tested
- Regression suite updated and verified
- All bugs closed or postponed
- Installation works
- Documented for tech. view

Release:

- All agreed sprints done
- Integration tested / hardened
- Documentation "tested"
- Install packages complete
- Release notes
- Marketing collateral
- Regression test suite complete
- Security testing
- PO sign-off

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#13) Stopping the Line!

- Fix your bugs
  - *Ruthless testing; immediate testing; immediate feedback*
  - Less logging more fixing
- Build is broken ?
  - Fix it!
- Need automation for a key area?
  - Build it!
- Need to refactor ugly legacy code that is bug infested?
  - Refactor it!
- Key impediments to your team?
  - Resolve them!

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Breakout – Quality & Testing Patterns

- Individually, in small groups, or at your table
- Pull together a 3-5 item short list of what YOU believe the KEY maturity patterns are in this area.
- Perhaps identify things I missed?
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Product

#14) Product Ownership takes a Village

- *Fostering an environment where the entire team 'owns' the Product Backlog*
  - Freely contributes User Stories
  - Passionate debate on priority, themes, and release goals
- Shared—
  - Vision & Goals
  - Business Values
  - Technical direction
- Functional, Technical, and Product 'voices'

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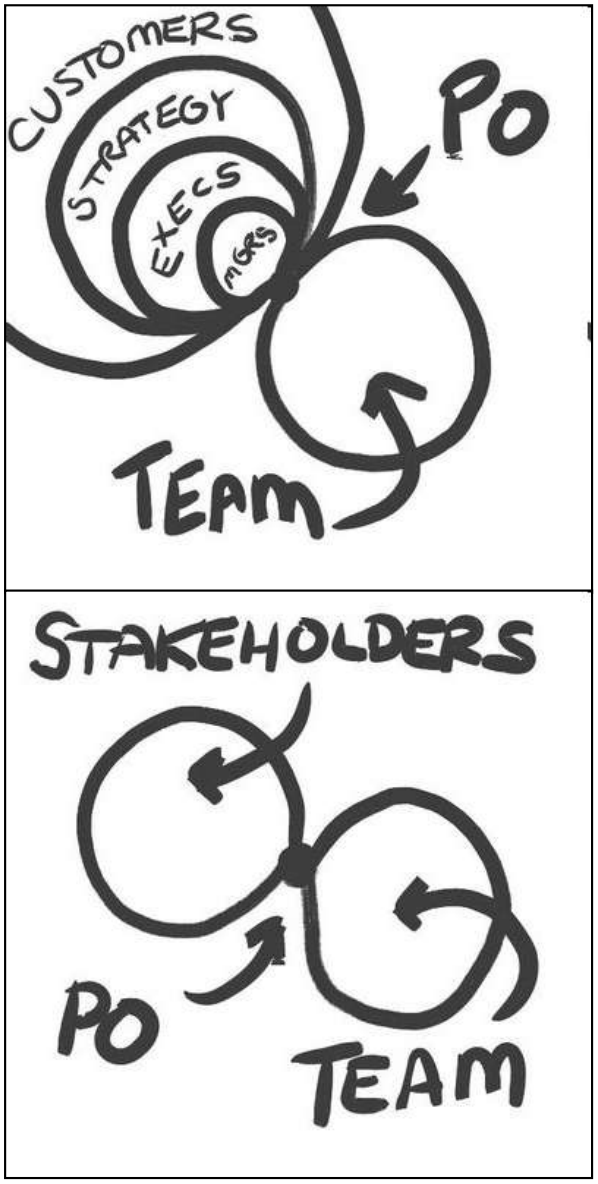
#15) Pervasive Product (Customer) Owners

- Can be a 'team', but needs *a unified decision-maker*
  - Organizationally 'sticky' decisions
- Engaged as a team member
- Outwardly focused toward the market & stakeholder demands
  - Advocate for the team
- Engage the customer and stakeholders



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#16) The Nuance of a Healthy Backlog

- Considering it a tapestry of work that is considered in turn:
  - Architecture & design
  - Quality & Test Automation
  - Technical debt, Infrastructure
  - Bugs
  - Innovation & creativity
- As well, planning
  - Feature workflow & value
  - Dependencies & risk
  - Ultimately deployment
- *You're never "done" refinement*

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#17) Experimentation

- Open minded to trying out new ideas
  - In design, in code, in testing
  - In process & teamwork
  - In the product, with the customer
- *ALL ideas get heard*
- Willing to:
  - Take risks, fail, make mistakes
- Hypothesis
- *All the while…Learning! Pivoting!*

T-Shaped Curiosity
Continuous Learning
Community of Practice - Sharing

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Breakout – Product Patterns

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Organizational

#18) Righteous Retrospectives

- For the team!
- Remember Norm Kerth's "Prime Directive":
  - Everyone tried their best
  - Safe environment
- Drives "Continuous Improvement"
  - Challenge one other!
- Get the "Elephants" out in the open
- *Be creative – try new things; take some risks*

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#19) The Power of Complete Transparency

- Opening up your stand-ups & Sprint Planning to everyone
  - Even sales folks and customers
- Rampant Information Radiators
- Tell it like it is
  - Congruent truth-telling
  - Courage
  - Success or Failure
- *Expect organizational engagement* – questions, suggestions, trade-offs towards core goals

- It is what it is…now how do we *ADJUST towards our GOALS*

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#20) Doing More than Thought Possible

- Stretch goals within Sprints
- Creative
  - solutions – not simply following the Story or Task lists
  - exploring alternatives with Product Owner
  - The Wisdom of Crowds
- Iterations that lead towards… "Good Enough"
- Fighting *Parkinson's Law* and *Student Syndrome*

- Supporting – *Slack Time*
  - Innovation Time
  - Creativity thinking
  - Experimentation

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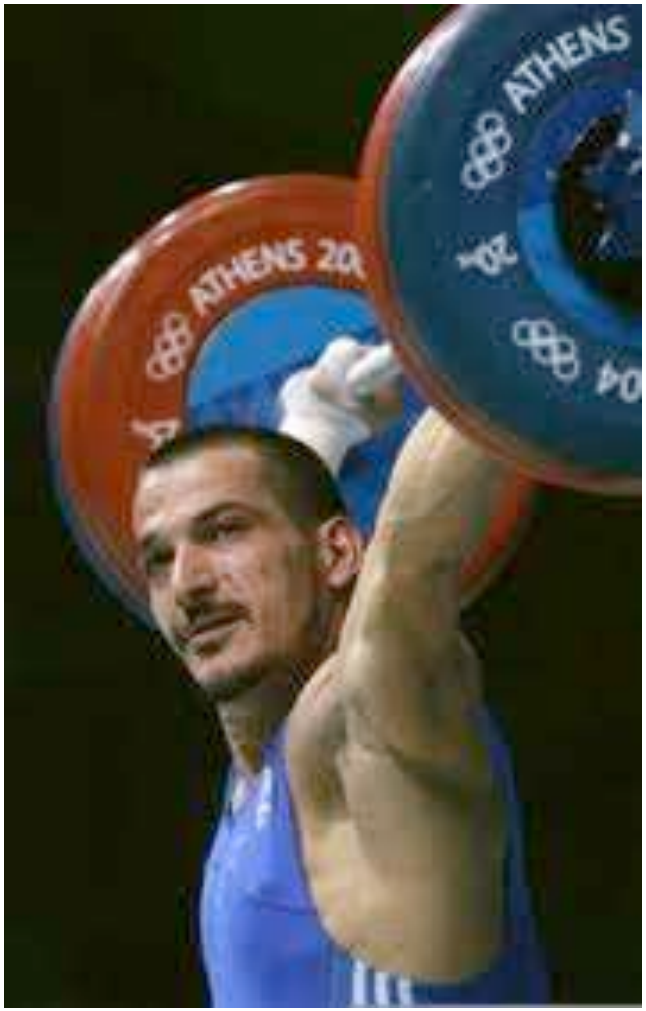
#21) Strength-Based Teams

- Individuals focus on what they're good at; inspires joy
  - While still 'stretching' themselves
- Notion of *Appreciative Inquiry* leveraged in retrospectives
  - And continuous improvement
- Team-building - interview for *complimentary strengths*
- At scale, consider strengths
  - When Release Planning – loading work
  - Load-balancing teams by skill-set



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#22) Healthy Respect for Management

- Avoid blaming everything on leadership or management
  - Stop expecting management to solve all of your challenges
  - Stop "looking upward" or "asking for permission"
- No marginalization! It's a *partnership* between
  - Servant Leadership and
  - Self-directed teams
- Leaders are allowed to:
  - Establish Mission & Vision
  - Establish and hold teams to their Goals
  - Ask questions, be inquisitive
  - Hold teams accountable to their commitments
  - Seek continuous improvement
  - Expect and receive results

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Breakout – Organizational Patterns

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Workshop Wrap-up

- Overall, what were the MOST compelling patterns?
- What KEY patterns did I miss?
- Final questions or discussion?

Thank you!

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Contact Info

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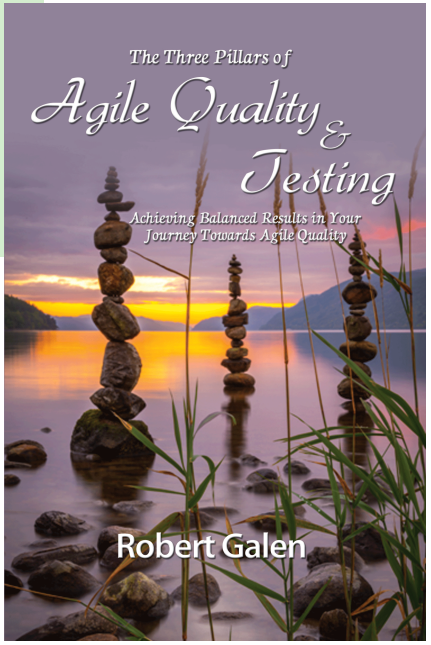
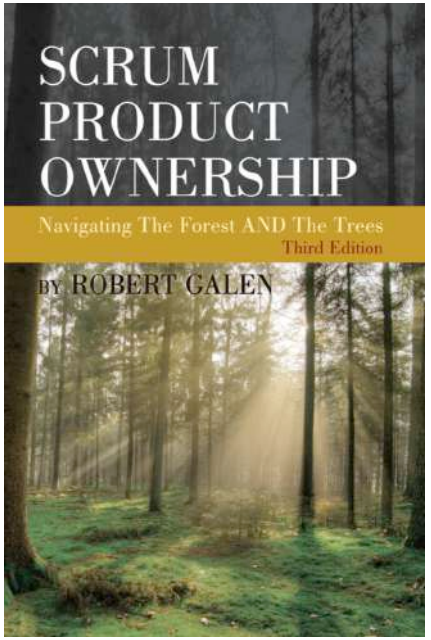
President,
RGCG





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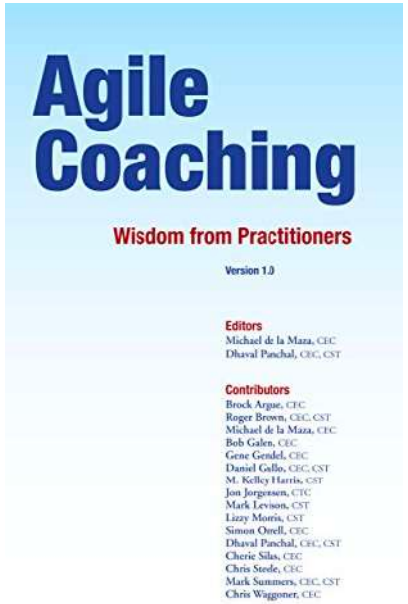

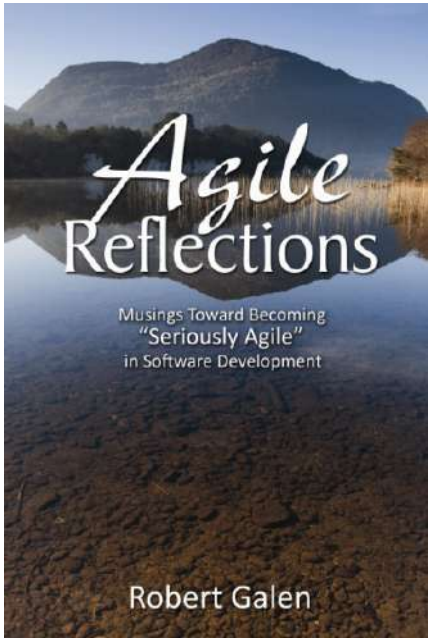

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Kanban Pizza Game
Part-1

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Kanban Pizza Game
Materials

- Break up into teams of from 4-6 individuals
- Get your materials:
- Post-Its in three colors: yellow (pineapple), pink (ham*) and green (rucola i.e. rocket salad)
- Index cards (white or yellow or some other light color so that you can draw tomato sauce on them)
- Red markers
- Glue or transparent tape (to make the Post-Its sti
- Masking tape (aka. painter's tape)
- Scissors (one small + one large per team)
- Stopwatch
- Order cards - one set per team
- Oven plate - one per team
- The Kanban Pizza Game slides

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Kanban Pizza Game
Objective

- Make as many pizza's as you can in the allotted time
  - I will keep time and stop you at some point; I will also keep counts for each team/round
  - **Round one** – make Pizza (1 kind – Hawaiian)
    - Kanban
  - **Round two** – develop Kanban board, make Pizza (1 kind)
    - Improve & modify system
  - **Round three** – customer orders, 2 styles of Pizza Hawaiian and Rocket Salad)
    - Improve system
  - **Round four** – final round, fine-tune the system
  - Visualize the process on the tables; then debrief as a group

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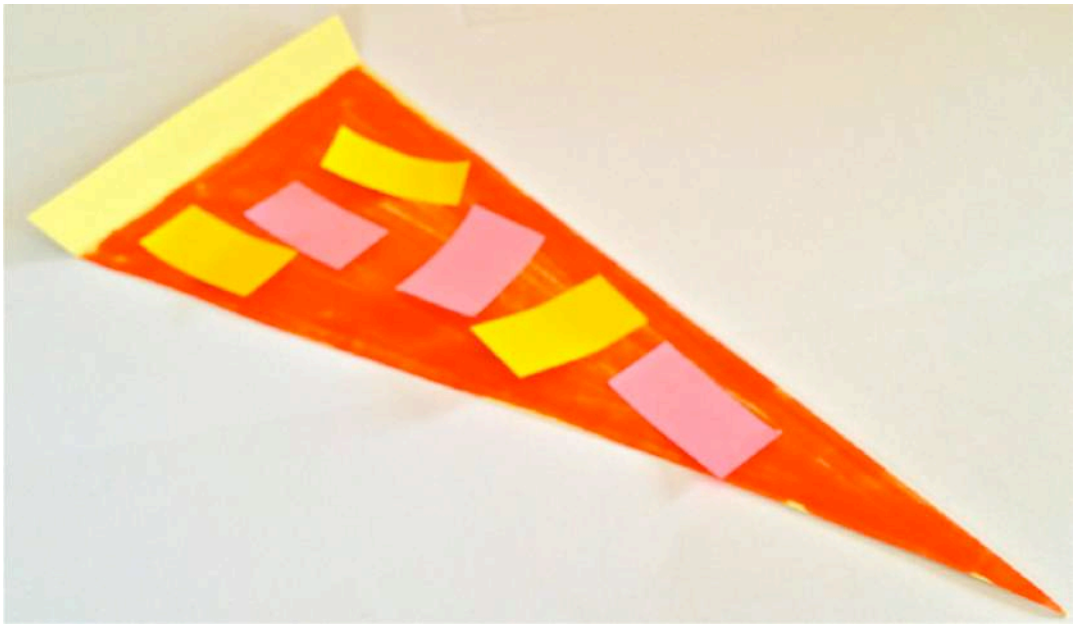
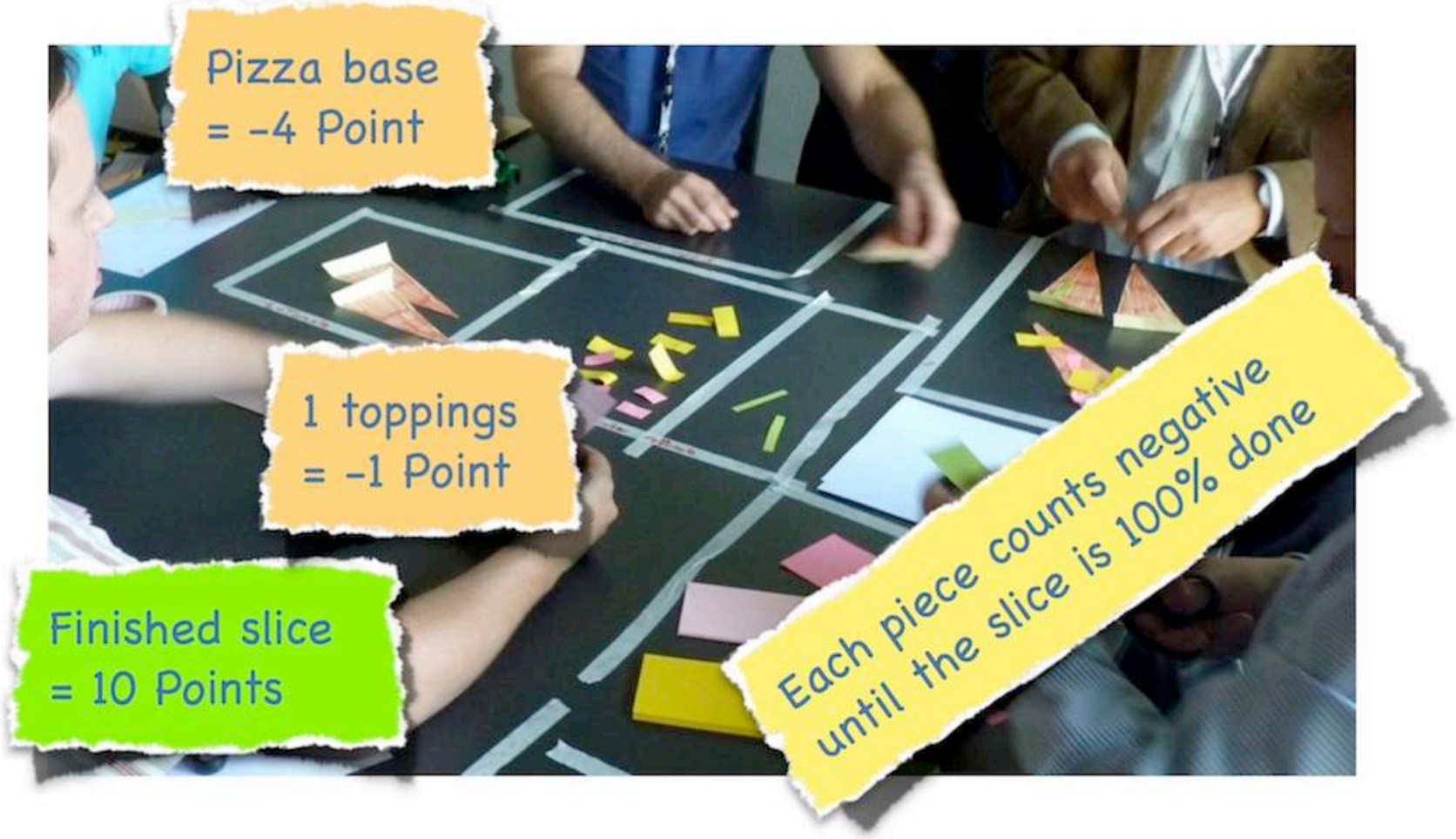
Kanban Pizza Game Rules

- Pizza composed of crust, sauce, toppings,
- Up to 3 slices in the oven at once, 30 seconds minimal cook time
  - No adding / removing slice while cooking
- Hawaiian style: 3 pieces of Pineapple, 3 pieces of Ham



Kanban Pizza Game
Scoring



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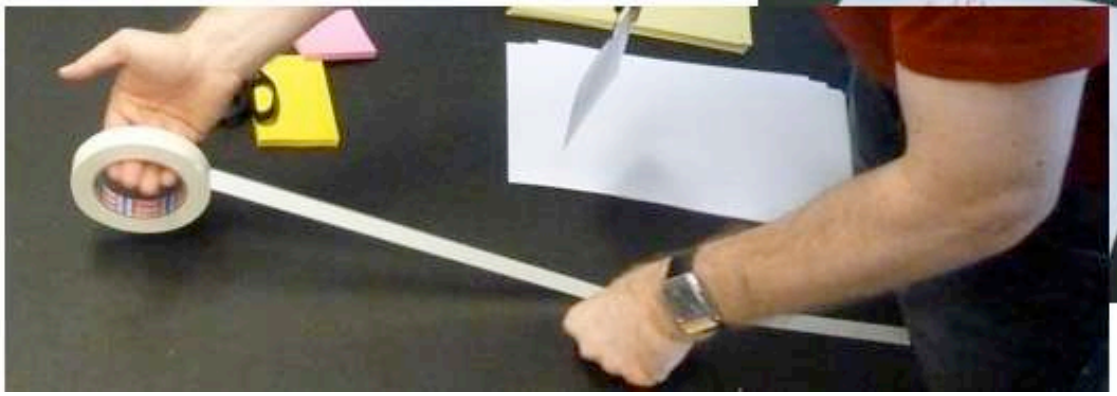
Kanban Pizza Game
Table Setup, Round 2-4

make your workflow explicit
Limit the WiP for each station



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Kanban Pizza Game
Table Setup

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Kanban Pizza Game

New! New!! New!!!
"Pizza Speciale"

Slim green post-its as rucola (rocket salad)

Each piece has 7 of them

Rucola burns in the oven
(Pieces have to be put on a baked pizza)

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