How Scrum Helps Managers, Ver 11

Joe Little — April 4, 2025

Webinar — **LeanAgileTraining.com**

REMINDER (to myself)

- I will send a PDF of this slide deck if I have your email.

- If unsure, then add your email address to Chat.

- Or send me an email (info@leanagiletraining.com) with your email.

Intro

Who's the audience?

- Which group are you in?

  - Manager

  - Agile advocate wanting to influence a manager

  - Experienced Agile person

  - Less-experienced Agile person

  - Other?

What is the state of managers today?

- What are your thoughts? — I'll start sharing, but you add in…

- I ask, because you cannot speak to a person effectively or usefully unless you know where they are coming from.

- Let's assume our business as managers is technology innovation. (Of course, not true for all managers.)

Some thoughts -1

- Under pressure for results

- Feel rushed; no extra time to think

- Concerned about quality (bugs, but also are we "fit for purpose" enough?)

- Want a happy and engaged staff, which in general is more distracted than before

- Feel the need to be more competitive (as a business)

- See tons of problems that might be fixed

Some thoughts -2

- See the need for "business agility" (adapting to change faster and better)

- Used to dealing with political reality

- Surprised by the political / economic changes

- Seen half-baked agile - not what expected. Unclear why

- Tried a "transformation", but common that it has not worked out that well (many reasons, seen and unseen)

Some thoughts -3

- Confused: what to do now?

- See a need to take an agile team and connect it better within the company's "business system". But how?

- Tried SAFe. Meh!

Some thoughts - Questions

- Where do you disagree?

- What did I miss?

For the future

- I want to discuss these issues more.

- I think the CEOs and managers need help.

- I think we agile people need to address their needs and wants

- Open a conversation (or continue one)

- Equally CEOs and managers need help re-envisioning "agile" now

For now:

- Let's address an easier problem.

Simple and Hard

- Scrum is simple and "hard to master"

- Why hard? (some reasons)

  - Changing the mindset (and we revert)

  - Requires new mindset (to get real value)

  - Incomplete; requires additions

  - Reveals our own weaknesses and the company's

Some Managers Love Scrum

- Quickly

- It is, or soon is, obvious to them

- They see it gives names and a structure to ideas they have already been using

- These folks probably need help getting more success (with agile)

Scrum <u>Not</u> for Some Managers

- I think there are some managers who will never like agile-scrum. Why?

  - There are some managers who prefer power and hierarchy

  - They are comfortable in those ways of managing

  - They may not like a real Team

  - They may not want to let the Team "self-manage" (lose too much power)

- Do what with these managers?

Some Managers Need Help

- Scrum is not obvious to them. To be fair, Scrum is not obvious to MANY people, and that includes some managers (and executives).

- But with explanation, they start to like it

- Do what? Explain and help these managers to "get it"

- In general: We agile advocates do a poor job of explaining it to managers

- Understanding it and seeing that outcomes can be even more compelling

Webinar for you if…

- You are a manager who needs help understanding

- OR: You are an agile advocate who wants to try to help some managers

- Maybe for others too?

The Main Points

First: Scrum is NOT for everyone

- Not everyone wants to be on a Team.

- Similarly: Some managers will never like Scrum

- What to do?

- Don't "force" managers (who will never like it) to like it

- Managers have freedom, just like everyone else. Let them be free.

- The best solution might be: Help these managers get a promotion to another company still doing waterfall. They will be happier there.

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Why not?

Here are some hypotheses:

- They learned waterfall, and they are stuck in it.

- For some reason(s), they are not able to see the agile values-principles

- They prefer to manage from power.

- They prefer to have a "hierarchy", and people lower in the hierarchy must "follow orders."

- These ideas are contrary to Agile-Scrum.

- Agile is fundamentally different than Waterfall. How to explain that is harder.

Is there room for "non-Agile" managers?

I think: usually yes. How many??

Some areas that will never be agile need a manager.

Concern: that a negative attitude toward agile has a bad effect on others.

Now: the main points

- ..for those who have ears to hear

- For those who can be educated

- First: ultimately, they must convince themselves. Or at least decide to give it a fair trial.

- But you can help.

Achieve "Business Agility"

- This is a big buzzword these days.

- We will define it quickly this way: having the capability to identify incoming changes, to filter them, to respond quickly to them, and to maintain or achieve greater competitive advantage.

- So: respond more quickly and more effectively.

- Agile-scrum in teams is part of what can achieve this. Commonly, more must be added or changed in the organization to be good at "business agility"

Achieve business goals

- Agile-Scrum helps achieve business goals, better.

- Ex: "deliver the product more quickly with higher ROI over the time-frame (eg, 1 year)"

- If a Manager believes that Scrum will do that (or usually), often that is all they need
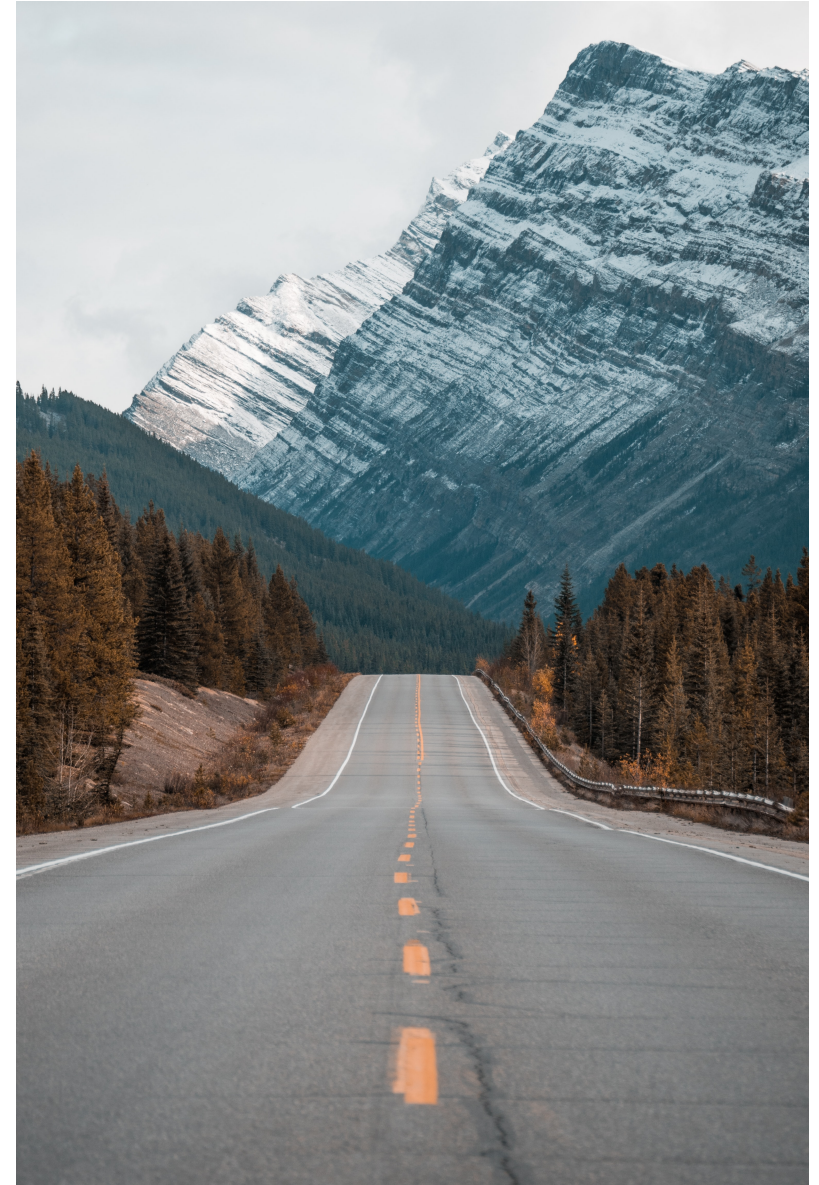
Business goals

- Such as:

- More business value

- More productivity

- Happier people (staff)

- Higher quality

- Faster releases

- Better Time-To-Market

- More Business Agility (adaptation to market or changes) [partial]

- Higher retention of people

Greater visibility

- The agile-scrum word is transparency.

- Visibility of team progress (or not)

- Visibility about the product

- Visibility of things that can be improved

- Just the sense that "I understand what is happening"

- Managers have told me: "If I only get more visibility and nothing else improves, that is enough!"

Less Stress

- Both for the Team and the Manager

- The stress is more "even" over the project duration, and lower for several reasons

- The Visibility partly reduces the stress

- Fun partly reduces stress

- Learning reduces stress

The Manager can focus on the biggest Impediment

- Easier to identify the most important thing

- Greater confidence that it is the most underline important thing

- Greater satisfaction when that impediment is fixed or mitigated

- Manager feels more effective. A more satisfying job

Manage the Team

- As a Manager, you focus on the Team, not on the Individuals

- You expect the Team to manage themselves fairly well

- You manage the Team to help them be more successful overall

- Simpler!

- Related: I am assuming a front-line manager manages 4 teams. (Maybe 2 to start.)

Motivate, not Push

- Managers motivate, and help. They should not push (knowledge workers).

- This is a big difference. Some managers like motivating. They respect people as adults.

- This does not require believing that the Team makes no mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes.

- Pull, not push. Mostly.

It all fits together

- This is a key issue, especially for some, and may take time.

- In waterfall, they had a notion of how it all worked, end-to-end.

- Scrum gives only a partial picture of this. Scrum is only a bare framework.

- In some situations or with some managers, they must see (or fairly soon see) how the bigger picture all works together.

- The bigger picture must fit the situation reasonably well. This requires active manager engagement (maybe by several managers).

What's my new job?

- We must explain how the manager's job is different in agile.

- And better.

- Enable self-managing by the Team.

- More Guide; promote Team's internal emergent leadership.

- Help 4 Teams fix their impediments.

- Help 4 Teams find the right "chickens" in the organization.

- Build morale, get better feedback, deliver higher business value, learn to deliver faster.

- Tight collaboration with the Business side and with other areas of the firm.

- Manager is now responsible for both Technical success and Business success

How to do the change

Let the "Agile" managers talk

- As peers, they are likely to have credibility

- They are advocates, and seen as unbiased

Give Time

- Give some reasonable time

- This is not just an intellectual process

- It includes an emotional decision

- Some people just need time to adapt to change

More than just Explain

- Yes, do explain some. A lot. And explain again.

- Try experiments!

- Sometimes the Managers must get involved to see the Value

- Helps if they have good Teams (and the Team wants to do agile-scrum)

- We need:

  - An emotional change

  - A will to act further in this way

Some Specific Things to Explain to Managers

Values / Principles

- Some managers like the values and principles of agile-scrum. Or will.

  - Agile Manifesto

  - Agile Principles

  - Empirical Process

  - 5 Scrum Values

  - Lean Thinking (a lot to this!)

Values / Principles

- Team self-organizes

- Team self-manages

- "The bad news doesn't get better with age."

- Manager must help the Team (some)

- Manager cares about overall business success. Full "responsibility"

- It is more Fun!

- Many others!

Explain Basics

- A Manager needs like and see value in:

  - The 3 Roles

  - The 4 Meetings

  - PB Refinement

  - Key Artifacts

- Not just what they are. But WHY they work or how they help. Do NOT assume this is obvious to a manager. Do NOT assume a manager remembers the why.

How Explaining Helps

- A Manager may say "I know it when I see it"

- So, explaining helps. More than a name and a few ideas

- Explaining by showing <u>examples</u> of success, or other <u>examples</u> that are compelling

- For some managers: only when they see the Team and see it being successful, are they convinced.

Suggestion about structure

- Manager manages 4 Teams

  - Too busy to micro-manage

  - Managers works to make the teams more successful

    - Helps fix their impediments

Explain - Summary

- Explain the WIIFM

- Explain the Agile Manager job (duties, etc).
  It is (somewhat?) different than many
  expect

- Ex: The Manager should encourage self-
  organizing and self-managing

- Show the Manager how the Manager can
  be successful

Manager's role

- To help the Teams (maybe 4) be more successful

- Help motivate

- More transparency

- Work on (some) impediments

- Organization will help and will <u>change</u> over time. Manager helps here.

ACTIONS (of advocate)

- Explain

- Try an experiment

- For negative group:

  - Prepare to move some managers out (eg, to another Dept)

  - Maybe prepare to "promote" a few people

- For most: the Managers, if you give sufficient attention, should soon be quite happy

Promoting people to another company

- Agile is not a religion. Not liking Agile does not make you "bad".

- But, at some point, you need to be in or not.

- Being "into" agile does not mean you can't argue and complain about some things.

- Treat all people with respect. Give them a chance to "get it". But at some point, HELP some people have a better career at a waterfall company (or a different LOB).

- Reminder: you probably have some manager jobs where being into agile is not relevant.

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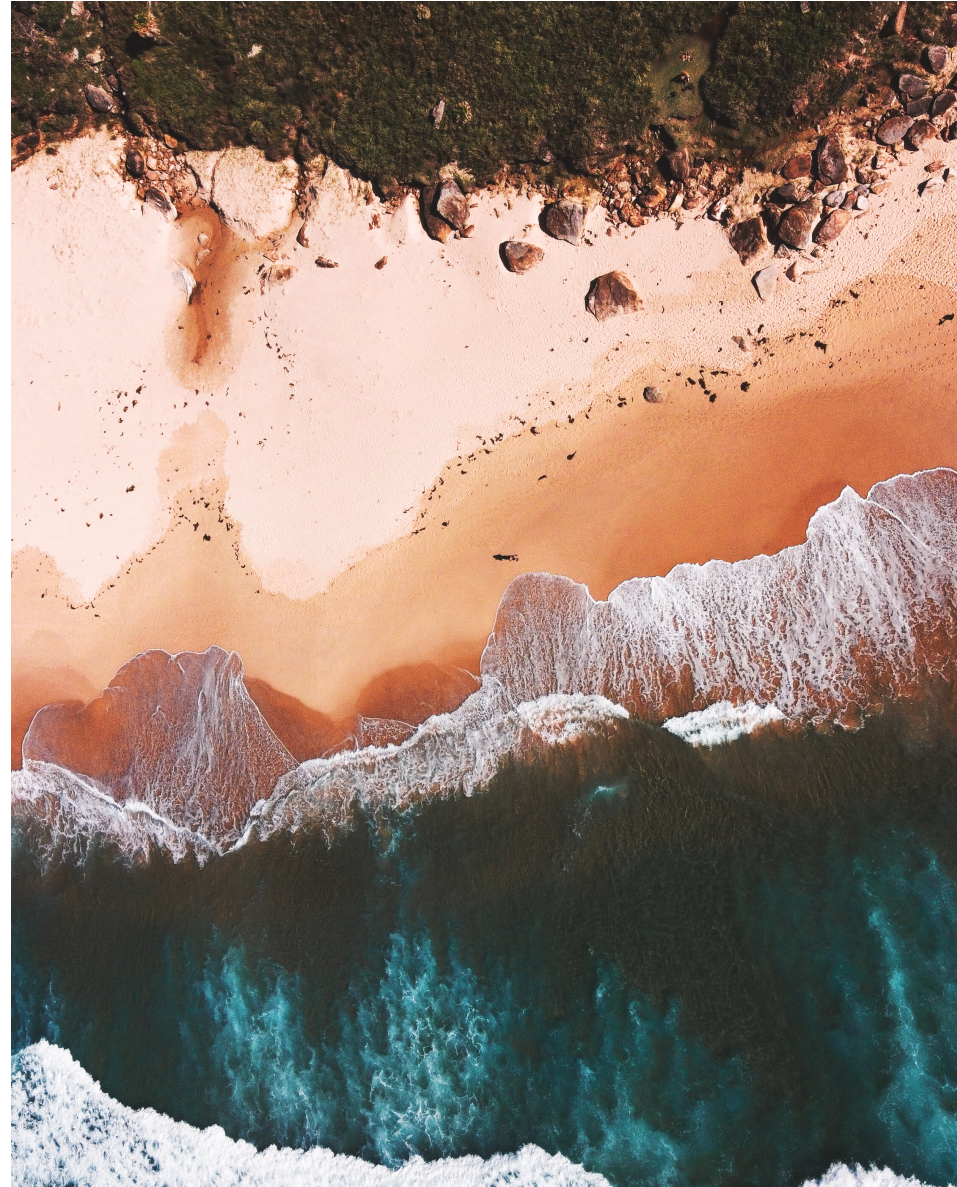
Discussion, Questions

Discussion, **Questions**

- Don't be shy!

- Turn off the mute

- OR: Type questions in the Chat

Other webinars

- Two Types:

  - About courses and workshops (30 mins)

  - About agile questions or issues (60 mins)

- Where:

  - LeanAgileTraining.com

  - MeetUp (Lean Agile Training Webinars - group)

Contact Info

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