



ARCHITECTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT

for Enterprise Agility...

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The ENABLER – Organization's culture

Enabled Workforce

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CONTENTS

Abstract.....	3
Introduction	3
Details of the paper.....	5
Conclusion	13
References	13

ABSTRACT

Objective:

Agility and Organization's culture: How team culture and maturity plays a big role in agile adoption at a product development organization? What tools and technology are helpful in improving team culture to enhance agility of organizations and enabling teams and individuals. How to overcome the challenges with Lean principles, structural changes, coaching and community sharing of success.

Scope:

Tools and methods to measure team culture. Strategies and tactics to move lower maturity teams to high maturity and its impact on agile adoption. Learning from team agile transformation to create organizational agile transformation.

Result of paper:

Cultural transformation as key enabler for agile adoption. How are we overcoming challenges in a matrix style traditional captive engineering R&D set-up?

Business value:

Balancing autonomy vs control. Getting teams to align with organization's shared values using agile and lean principles.

Key differentiator:

Value people more than fancy tools and approaches - Make transformation aligning with core values of your business. Understand the focus areas by analysing few simple criteria's.

Short feedbacks that works- focuses more on eliminating root cause rather than finding a temporary fix but still coping with the pace of change in today's world

INTRODUCTION

Only an empowered workforce can create agility for organizations. Workforce is people. An organization in our definition is a set of **'relationships'** between people. If we look further deep, an organization fundamentally is a set of **'conversations'** that creates these relationships. Work relationships are created in conversations that happen anywhere within - from a coffee table discussion to an all-important board room meeting called by CEO. **Culture** of an organization manifests in conversations that happens within it. Organization Culture plays a key role in adopting of agile **values** by persons and teams to create agility. Most importantly to identify a **common bigger purpose** for which teams can get enrolled to.

We need to understand and measure a team's culture before setting out to discuss any new ways of working for them. **Strategies and tactics** for adopting new set of values are formed on the basis of team's **cultural maturity**. In our case this included **changes and adaptations to team structure, redefining existing roles and introducing new collaboration tools**. A structured assessment of lean product development maturity and practical application of **lean principles** to product development teams along with **coaching and mentoring** was an important step towards agility. We also reused an existing organizational initiative called **'values in action'** to align individual and team values to that of our organization.

We did face many challenges working with existing hierarchy and mind-set while dismantling team structures, removing non value adding rituals and ceremonies that was part of existing way of working. We overcame them by coaching, mentoring and creating powerful **enrolment** conversations rooted on **'Three laws of performance'*** and **'Tribal Leadership'****

Result of our engagement was that we were able to transform a multi-location product development team within a period of two years to one that is **empowered** and easily **adapt changes** in market requirements, **continuously releasing** product versions with significant **efficiency gains** certified by customer.

Scaling this transformation initiative was achieved by changes in **governance structure** of business unit, coaching managers and assigning clear roles and responsibilities to people and linking the actions to existing global initiatives.

DETAILS OF THE PAPER

Key challenges

The success of any organization is the value that it gives to its culture. The enabled workforce and its actions are the direct indication about the culture that it follows. As we are living in a truly globalized world than ever, people from east to west, all working together in same scrum team and each individuals has their own approach & style to deal with any problem that they encounter every day.

The cultural differences that one faces in this context is very unique and measuring of the impact it makes in team's progress is very challenging. The actions to overcome this challenge also need to be balanced between individual's values to the organization's core values. This can be achieved only if we have the transformation of culture that keep's organization's core business values on high spirit in all respect.

Before getting into the details about what steps that we have taken for the cultural transformation and thereby how we achieve in preparing the enabled workforce, we must have to understand the key challenges that we all have today. This will enable the readers to correlate their real world scenarios with the challenges that are outlined below.

Connection with organization's core values

Mapping individual's aspirations with organization's core values is a challenge from the people management. The core business and its relevance to individuals work should be related. The individual's target/development plans are to be in synch keeping the business impact in mind.

Insensitive to NPS

"Nothing to do with me" attitude by majority of the workforce leads to nil to very negligible awareness to the Net Promotor Score initiatives. We have the process with which we shall understand the mood of our key customers. This is called Net promoter score. The team in all hierarchy must be able to relate their contributions at least to one of the questioner which is part of NPS. Failure to this would have a direct impact on work force not be in synch with the management's commitment to the customers.

Distributed locations & Trust

In today's global team structures, the members of one scrum team are situated in different countries which makes the daily synch-up difficult. In practical, it is very tough to get the confidence of each other because of less interactions among each other in day-to-day activities.

Legacy products – knowledge Sharing & transferring of ownership

In our domain, products are meant to be active in market for minimum of 5 and maximum of 10 years because of its hardware integrations & complexity involved with the process that it supports. In this context, person who is working in the product development from the early days will master in the requirements & architecture. However sharing or transferring the knowledge to the new person who join the team in the middle of life cycle would be a big challenge, because of the vast history involved during the product development life cycle.

If we analyze the root cause of the challenges that were discussed above has a clear indication that we need to focus on the cultural aspect of the team which would be the enabler to make any team with true agility.

Methodology/process followed:

Assessment of team's cultural maturity:

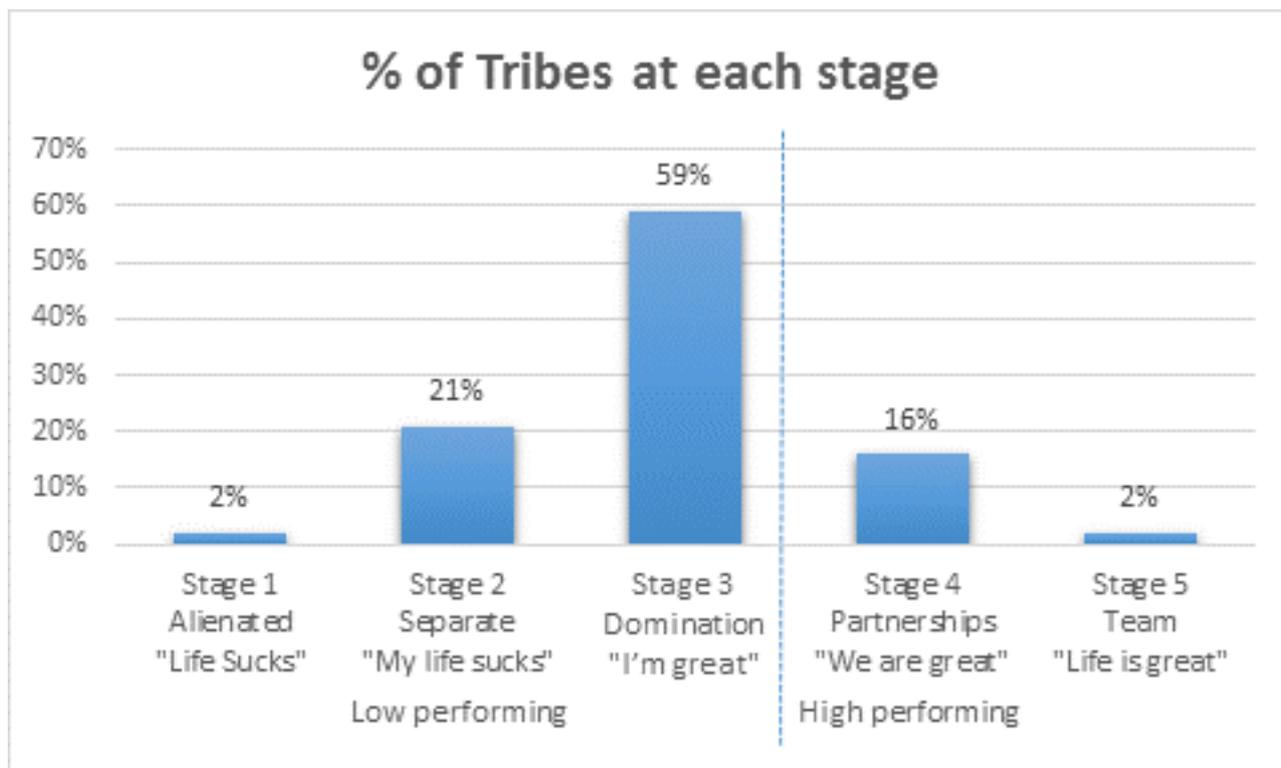
We assessed team's cultural maturity using 'Tribal leadership' primarily using an individual anonymous survey based on a set of questions. Tribal leadership Maturity model is explained here:

Tribal maturity Stage	Prevailing Sentiment	Team behavior	Relationship to people	Examples
Stage 1	<i>Life Sucks. Anyone that tells you different is selling you something.</i>	Undermining	Alienated	Prison culture, gang culture.
Stage 2	<i>My life sucks. Yours might be great, but mine sucks.</i>	Apathetic Victim	Separate	Workers in Dilbert/Office Space style workplaces.
Stage 3	<i>I'm great, (and you're not).</i>	Lone Warrior	Personal Domination	Managers of Dilbert/Office Space style workplaces.
Stage 4	<i>We're great, everyone else sucks</i>	Tribal Pride	Stable partnership	Groups united around values, working to outdo their competition.
Stage 5	<i>Life's great. Anyone that tells</i>	Innocent	Team	Rare stage. Example:

	<i>you different just hasn't had the epiphany yet.</i>	wonderment		An Amgen employee, when asked to identify their main competitor, said "Cancer".
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A set of simple online survey questions based on the maturity model was sent to about 80 product development team members at 4 locations anonymously followed up telephonic or face to face discussions persons who rated as 1 or 5 to understand their view point without countering. The key is to listen to their 'complaints' without judgement or evaluation influenced by your 'past' experiences of such surveys.

Outcome of this exercise led to a distribution of team members at different level of cultural maturity for a specific product development team we were engaging, closely matching with the research study specified in the Tribal Leadership book. This team was trying to adopt **SCRUM** approach without success for a few months when this survey was conducted.



It was clear from the result that in order to achieve agility for this team, majority of the team members should be in stage 4 and 5. Moving people from one stage to another require us to build certain types of relationships between people in teams.

Lack of trust between management and team members required managers to be listening their concerns without bias and judgement.

Our prime focus on this transformation initiative was Application of **Three Laws of performance** in coaching people in transforming a team to that of high tribal cultural maturity. We had to coach the management team collectively in closed room brainstorming for a day followed up with sessions for teams.

the three laws of performance

- 1 How People Perform Correlates To How Situations Occur To Them**
Leadership Corollary: Leaders Have A Say, And Give Others A Say, In How Situations Occur
- 2 How A Situation Occurs Arises In Language**
Leadership Corollary: Leaders Master The Conversational Environment
- 3 Future-Based Language Transforms How Situations Occur To People**
Leadership Corollary: Leaders Listen For The Future Of Their Organization

First Step: Urgent Case for action and plan for agile transformation.

Even though everyone in the management and teams wanted to make a difference to the existing ways of working, they were not converging on the few actions that will make a huge difference to **being agile**.

Key to applying three laws of performance was to create an **urgent case for action** looking in to the future from resource managers, team leads, scrum masters and product managers bringing them together in brainstorming sessions asking the following questions:

The **Urgent Case for Action** emerges in the answers to the following questions:

- What is the default future of our product development team or organization?
- If we don't take action now, where will we end up?
- If we don't act now, what risks will we be exposed to?
- If we don't act now, what opportunities will we miss?

The result was a set of **actions and targets** with timelines that the team was committed to.

This urgent case for action with technical targets was then discussed with Business unit stakeholders, local management decision makers to align with organizations 'values in action' initiative and their commitment in terms of resources, budgets and time was received.

Key actions are listed below by their **importance** in addition to other technical targets.

Action 1: **Identify and declare core values** of the team. **(Most important)**

Action 2: Change the **team's structure** based on individual's tribal maturity. **(Important)**

Action 3: Bring clarity in **defining accountability and responsibility** based on competency in domain and technical. **(Supporting)**

Second Step: Declare Team's core values as *Team manifesto*.

There were focussed closed room workshop conducted with the team to identify team's core values as defined below.

Core Value 1: Being in Integrity: You will honour your word (commitments) on time. Whenever you becomes aware that you can't keep your word (on time), you will communicate to everyone impacted:

- a) that you will not be keeping your word , and
- b) that you will keep that word in the future, and by when, or, that you won't be keeping that word at all, and
- c) What you will do to deal with the impact on others of the failure to keep your word (or to keep it on time).

Core Value 2: Being with Authenticity: Being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others in the team, and who you hold yourself to be for yourself (being authentic about your inauthenticity).

Core Value 3: Being committed to the bigger purpose of the organization along with being passionate to lead and to develop others (in the team) as leaders, and be the source of persistence when the path gets tough.

Core Value 4: Being “cause-in- the- matter” of being agile is the empowering context from which you will take a stand (in adverse circumstances).

We as coaches influenced and guided the team in taking ‘**definitions**’ of these **core values** from the teachings of **Werner Erhard**^{***} . These core values were **declared together** by reading out and **agreed** with each member **signing** on it and published as **Team’s manifesto**.

Third Step: Establishing the conversational environment – dealing with ‘out of integrity’ for breakthroughs.

At the start, we observed that SCRUM meetings were used as extensive discussions on specific issues often lasting to 1-2 hours or even sometimes blame-game often resulting in chaos and resentment which is typical to stage 2 and stage 3 tribal maturity teams. Many technical discussions involving cross locations were inconclusive and scrum masters were not aligning with dependent tasks for integration plans.

We had to **moderate** SCRUM meeting discussions and technical discussions and at times needed **group coaching** when teams were **deviating** from the urgent case for action and Team’s manifesto.

It is important to identify and address ‘**out of integrity**’ behaviours from anyone who is in the team against the declaration of core values and targets in Team’s manifesto immediately as and when it occurs to create ‘**Trust**’.

Our observation over two years of application of the concept is that Stage 1 persons (we had only a few) were ‘**always**’ and Stage 2 persons were ‘**some times**’ ‘**out of integrity**’ as defined in team’s manifesto core value 1. Stage 3 persons although were in integrity **most** of the time, had issues with being **authentic** (core value 2) and were at times putting down team’s interest for their own. Stage 4 persons always aligned, committed and focussed to the purpose and naturally became or chosen as leaders in the team. Stage 5 persons (very few) always were using ‘**future**’ looking language in their conversations and were considered ‘**innovators**’ and leaders in the organization.

Fourth Step: Moving to High performing tribal stages and creating new future of organizational agility.

Teams does not work for monetary rewards alone even though it’s important. Coaching and mentoring as culture to build teams and setting ambitious targets were critical for this transformation to higher stages. Note that there is **no possibility of skipping stage** to reach higher level for a team member.

Transformation from Stage 1 to Stage 2:

Stage 1 persons were put on a focussed **performance improvement plan** and were coached by someone at Stage 5 maturity within the team or by a transformation coach well versed on application of tribal leadership and three laws of performance.

Transformation from Stage 2 to Stage 3:

We created **Dyadic relationship (pairing)** for moving a person from Stage 2 to Stage 3. Creating one on one conversations with common targets with a Stage 4 or 5 person as a coach to Stage 2 person was an important step in moving him or her to Stage 3. They were for a specific period '**paired**' in work and **scheduled** to have coaching conversations on 'Team's manifesto' when core values get broken. There are limitations with pairs as the agreements are only between two persons and many a times a lower stage person will break the agreement.

Transformation from Stage 3 to Stage 4: Introducing lean product development practices

We formed **Triadic (3 persons) relationships** for moving persons and teams from stage 3 to stage 4. Creating triadic networks of people with a highly ambitious 'target or goal' for a period of time, more than 6 months in most cases, till the cross-location, cross- function relationships are established between key resources to get stability, innovation and scalability is key here.

We also introduced many lean product development practices at this stage – Personal and team KANBAN - Limiting 'work in progress', Backlog grooming and burndown charts, Fixed release cycles etc.

Case in action: lower maturity to higher maturity transformation (Stage 3 to Stage 4) from our experience: Applying core values.

Program manager, Product manager and a Scrum master were enrolled in to achieving 35% end-to-end engineering workflow efficiency for an Engineering tool (product) within two years compared to the previous major version released.

This Triad was selected based on commitment to core value 3 (**Being committed to the bigger purpose of the organization**) and were at stage 3 of Tribal Leadership already. Based on our coaching on 'Three laws of performance', they went on to create networks of experts from within and outside of their business units to help them achieve the above said target. They also 'enrolled' and created more triads covering important functions such as training, pricing and licensing, marketing and sales which were common functions but usually with its own priorities, sometimes conflicting with that of products being developed. The network of relationship created a convergence of requirements, ideas and most importantly '**actions**' around the common purpose of achieving the set targets. In this process they created many informal and formal forums for conversations focussing on weekly targets and daily actions.

Transformation from Stage 4 to Stage 5: Sustaining 'Agility.'

Sustaining the tribal leadership maturity. We are experimenting with actions here and are not mastered this yet. We had to propose, get buy-in and make changes at the way **structure of development programs** that were run based on the tribal maturity assessment of teams across locations and break the silos that were killing productivity and agility. We are also using collaboration tools (Yammer) more effectively and are experimenting

with Visual management (Microsoft Office 365 Planner) to create transparency and trust across development locations. One of the suggestion getting implemented is to sustain informal networks created using a 'Communities of practitioners' or a 'guild' of common interest groups with some research ideas.

We started measuring **Lean product development maturity** across teams and created a structure to take the maturity forward by **embedding** team's Tribal leadership maturity as an important area for measuring it. This initiative is now kicked off across the organization as a global transformation initiative.

We gained tremendously from this transformation initiative listed in the below section.

Quantified benefits to business:

- When team members converged to "cause-in-the-matter" of being agile (**core value 4**) resulted in Release cycle time reduction for end to end major version releases from 2 years to 1 year.
- Result of commitment to **core value 3** of the team manifesto by team- Product's Efficiency target (most important product's critical success factor) was validated by customers from three continents (U.S.A, Italy and China) – consistent improvements up to 50%, exceeding a set target by 15% in their second year of being formed.
- High team bonding and retention was a direct result of **Core value 1 and 2** across releases in 3 years.
- Improved **R&D to business collaboration (cross function triads)** – number of demos & pilots went up and there were clear responsibility and accountability agreement between these two teams.
- Consistent **reduction in technical debt** by meeting long pending customer expectations were achieved by teams sharing and addressing real '**root causes**' in work flow inefficiencies.

Critical success factors

- **Management/Executive sponsorship and commitment** to make necessary changes to team and organizational structures.
- **Emotional maturity** while dealing with key stakeholders, customers and most importantly handling stage transitions of team members.
- Focus on **Optimization** of business value delivered instead of just delivering 'scope' committed by team.
- Using all Avenues and planning for **Customer involvement/ interaction** with team members.
- Team's Commitment to core values in **Team manifesto**, Being able to **relate** their work with core values and aligning it with Organization's shared values.

CONCLUSION

Most important aspect in agile transformation of any team or organization is to identify its **cultural maturity** and **declaring together** with their **core values** and use these core values as a **manifesto** to bring about **agile culture**.

We have trained the scrum masters and made them as '**Tribal leadership**' coaches. They understand how to enable team members to move to **higher tribal leadership maturity stages** and apply '**Three laws of performance**' to support adapting **agile values** by teams through their **actions**. Watch out for the language that people use in their work interactions so that their actions can be continuously assessed and altered by the coaches who is well trained in this process.

We also introduced **collaboration tools** and **lean** principles & practices when transforming Tribal stages of teams from low maturity to high maturity and made necessary changes to organizations structures to see the enabled workforce.

This transformation initiative has enabled teams to adopt to the changes in business scenarios while meeting to the delivery commitments consistently. We feel that our industry lacks a common way of looking at culture aspects as an enabler for the agile work force. Hence we believe our experiences here that has worked for us will also benefit you in transforming your organization to greater agility.

REFERENCES

- [1] * [*Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*](#) Paperback – June 7, 2011 by **Dave Logan** (Author), **John King** (Author), **Halee Fischer-Wright** (Author)
- [2] ** [*The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life*](#) Paperback – August 30, 2011, by **Steve Zaffron** (Author), **Dave Logan** (Author)
- [3] *** [*Course Materials for: "Being A Leader And The Effective Exercise Of Leadership: An Ontological / Phenomenological Model"*](#) by **Werner Erhard**, Independent, **Michael C. Jensen**, Social Science Electronic Publishing (SSEP), Inc.; Harvard Business School; National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER); European Corporate Governance Institute (ECGI) and **Steve Zaffron**, Landmark Worldwide LLC; Vanto Group