Managing Agile Environments

An Integral Agile Workshop in Applying Adaptive Management within Complex Enterprises

High-Level Overview of the Workshop

Managing Adaptive Environments is a two-day workshop for managers who manage agile teams and programs. Highly interactive and experiential, this workshop is designed to dramatically increase the manager’s ability to support the emergence of high-performing agile teams and programs, and to grow the broader organizational environments in which they grow and thrive.

The workshop has two parts. In the first part, we focus on what it takes for managers to foster dramatic improvements in agile team delivery. Understanding and championing the integrity of the agile process architecture, and balancing the management of technical debt with a focus on delivering customer value, are key here, as is the ability to support the leadership capacity of team members by having skillfully executed coaching conversations.

In the second part, we focus on what it takes for managers to increase throughput and flow throughout their area, as well as how to cultivate a culture of trust, empowerment and accountability. Developing a lean- and a systems-thinking mindset is essential to identify and reduce sources of waste and drag, which obstruct your agile teams from performing at their peak.

Outcomes

By participating in this workshop, you will

• Know and “own” your role as an agile manager: when to step in and direct a team, when to step back and let a team make its own decisions, when to coach, when to mentor, and what to pay attention to across the broader organizational environment.
• Have a deeper understanding of the agile process architecture and where you can fudge things and where you can’t.
• Learn how to have 1-on-1 conversations with direct reports that help them grow as leaders.
• See clearly that maximizing product life cycle profits is a key job of the agile manager, and understand the degree to which this outcome rests on managing the delicate balance between focusing on customer value, on the one hand, and managing technical debt, on the other.
• Learn how to apply systems thinking and lean thinking tools to characterize and resolve your greatest organizational challenges.
• Understand what it means to empower your teams in ways that does not require you to abdicate your responsibility as manager to the larger organization, or your leadership.
• Understand yourself better as a leader in an agile environment.

**Key Workshop Topics**

*Managing Agile Environments* is grounded in an Integral perspective of organizational and change work, one that offers a comprehensive, systemic view of organizations and provides managers with the levers and dials they need to create highly adaptive organizational environments. The workshop’s main topics track this model.

1. **Competencies and Products: Being a Champion of Team Excellence**
   One of the key roles of an effective agile manager is to be a champion of agile team excellence. In this module, you will learn what this means and how to do it. You will learn and come to appreciate the interlocking nature of agile practices, and why compromising on one practice can lead to puzzling behaviors and results that plague agile implementations. You will also learn the keys to maximizing lifecycle profit, as well as approaches to balancing the payment of technical debt with the drive to increase customer value.

2. **Leadership & Engagement: Leaders Grow Other Leaders**
   One of the most common questions managers ask is: “How do I support agile teams to be self-organizing but also accountable?” Of vital importance to the growth of self-organizing teams is the presence of small-I leaders: people who are able to exercise leadership and act effectively, even in the midst of complexity and change. You will learn key skills in listening and asking powerful questions that help develop the leadership capacity in others. In the process, you will work with The Leadership Circle: a powerful framework to help you clearly see yourself as a leader, including both your problem-reacting tendencies (and how they might impede your effectiveness as a leader), as well as your outcome-creating ones (and how amplifying these increases your leadership effectiveness).

3. **Organizational Architecture & Environment: Focusing on Throughput & Flow**
   Effective agile managers must become obsessed with increasing flow and value. But organizations are complex, and agile managers need new tools and approaches for managing that complexity. Two thinking toolsets are presented and explored. The first of these, systems thinking archetypes (based on the work of Peter Senge and Donella Meadows), are thinking tools that help managers see the otherwise hidden organizational dynamics that are the source of systemic waste. The second toolset, derived from lean thinking, takes the form of an integrated set of eight lean principles that are key to increasing throughput and flow. You will learn these eight principles, and work deeply with one or two of them within the context of a major
challenge you are encountering in your work environment. Coming out of this module, you will have a set of tools with which you can begin to reduce the wasteful conditions that slow down your agile teams.

4. Organizational Culture & Shared Vision: Fostering a Culture of Trust, Empowerment & Accountability

In this module we revisit the question “how can I, as a manager, help teams to become self-organizing and high performing?” First, we address the question not from the individual performer perspective, but from the team perspective. A key competency for growing self-organizing teams is Relationship Systems Intelligence™, which is the ability to see the whole of groups (and teams), and to help them better see and improve themselves. Second, you will gain a deep understanding of the nature of ‘empowerment.’ You will learn that ‘empowerment’ is not something that managers grant teams, but is rather a ‘social contract’, which allows and enables the team to act autonomously, while at the same time holding the team to a much higher level of responsibility and accountability than they may be accustomed to. Finally, you will learn techniques for orienting the broader cultural environment in order to generate greater alignment within your department or unit.

5. Inspiring and Supporting Individual and Organizational Change

Agile transition efforts invariably mean significant organizational change. Change can be very stressful, yet also exhilarating for people. Here we introduce two change models—those of Daryl Conner and Arnold Mindell—not from the perspective of change strategy or architecture (which typically fall under the prevue of executive leadership) but from the perspective of actually bringing about change in ways that leave people inspired and aligned. Here you will gain insight into the process of change itself, both at the individual and organizational level.

Who Would Benefit From This Workshop

Managers who have direct responsibility for the performance and development of agile teams and programs and who want to significant deepen their capacity for managing and leading agile transformation.

Prerequisites

This is not an introductory Agile class. Attendees must have basic training in Agile, such as Scrum or Kanban, and should be currently managing an Agile implementation, or preparing to do so.

1 *Relationship Systems Intelligence is a trademark of CRRGlobal.