Essential Patterns of Mature Agile Leadership

In this webinar, agile experts, Bob Galen and Shaun Bradshaw explore the patterns of mature agile managers and leaders in the context of "Doing" Agile vs. "Being" Agile.

"Doing" vs. "Being" Agile

- **"Doing" Agile**
  - **Focus:** tactics, ceremonies, and techniques
  - At stand-up team members will answer 3 questions for Scrum
  - What leaders can do:
    - **Lead by example:** Support them and emphasize maturity

- **"Being" Agile**
  - **Focus:** on team mindset, leadership mindset, behaviors, organizational adoptions, etc.
  - **Stand Up**: Team member mentions challenge that they are having and developer automatically offers help after call
  - **What leaders can do**: Recognize successes

- **Top 5 Barriers to Adoption** *(Source: VersionOne Survey)*
  - Ability to change organizational culture
  - General organizational resistance to change
  - Pre-existing rigid/waterfall framework
  - Not enough personnel with necessary agile experience
  - Management support

The 11 Patterns of Mature Agile Leaders

1. Leading with …V-M-G-T
- *Vision* & *Mission*
  - Leaders have to bring the why to the vision and mission
  - Ask why team is behind rather than beating up on the team

- *Goals*
  - Release goals
  - Sprint goals
  - Done-Ness
  - Standards

- **Transparency**
  - Straight-talk
  - They can handle the truth
  - Teams will be honest with you and trust will build
  - Leader must make cultural shift to be transparent

- Continuous talking about Being Agile
  - The more you can talk about this as a leader, the better

2. 3-Tier Adoption Strategy

- Establish an adoption tempo that is **organizational-wide**, not technology wide
  - Teams
  - **Mid-level Management**: Line Managers, Project Managers, HR (One day class is not effective) Takes coaching, peer to peer mentoring. Move from "doing" agile to "being" agile
  - Senior Leadership
  - Need buy in across the organization. If leaders are disengaged, agile transformation won't be sustained.
  - HR plays a significant role

3. Trusting Your Teams

- Trust the team to come up with their own solutions
- Foster an environment where they feel free to experiment and innovate
- Be careful how you react to failures. If team can learn from failure, and then improve, that is ok
- Are the teams accountable to their commitments? Are they working toward an overarching goal? Encourage that.

- **Middle Manager**: is only over one group and wants heavy processes and tools together. Instead of dictating, can work with teams to establish guilds where the craft of software development needs some guidance from Middle Management
- In a nutshell, **leaders have to change**. Status can be gained from agile differently than waterfall. Posture of demand and control has to change. Information can radiate from the team. Go and respect the team!
- Leadership coaching can help this
- Leaders look themselves in the mirror in the morning and ask themselves if they trust their estimates, their craftsmanship, plans, motives, skills, etc.
- Checkpoint yourself to make sure your behavior shows you trust the team.

4. Always Remember the TEAM
- Shift to **team rewards** and not individual rewards
- Recognize and acknowledge the behavior within the teams
- **Change your language**:
  - Stop referring to developers vs. testers
  - Instead of Why didn't the testers find the bugs say why didn't the team find the bugs.
  - **Cohesive group** and not set of individuals
- Hold the TEAM accountable to results, commitments, and support of standards of craftsmanship.

5. Champion your Teams' Results
- Leaders should always be the cheerleader for the team
- Share agile stories of success and learning everywhere
- Look back at your progress
  - Compare to previous performance
- Defend your teams
- Defend your agile journey
- Provide cover for your team

6. Continuously Reinforce Accountability
- Influence at the sprint/release endpoints
  - Goals and commitment
  - Quality and delivery

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- Call it-success or failure
  - Sprints and releases
- Expect significant & continuous improvement
- Reward-results, effort, and attitude

7. Foster Innovation & Slack Time

- Beyond reducing multi-tasking
- Google, 20% Time
  - Innovation Days
  - Hackathon's
- Collaborative projects
  - Sign-up for what interests you
  - Time to think
    - Immersion
    - Innovation & Creativity
- Slack Time and Flow Time

8. Saying NO as a leader

- Knowing when to say no
- Putting on the hat of the observer and laying it on the table for the team
  - Asking questions
- Courage to tell it like it is
- Behind the scenes, 1:1 Coaching toward Agile behaviors

9. Personally Engage Agility

- Start practicing agile techniques at a leadership level
- Stand-ups, backlogs, transparency
- Be coachable and inquisitive
  - Become a student of agility
  - For example, personal kanban
- Understanding that agile isn't a speed play, it's a quality, flow/predictability, and value play

- As leaders, you have to walk your talk
- Leaders need to show that they failed

10.   Fostering FUN!
- Create space for fun
- Hire positive people
- Natural skepticism not pessimism
- Show that it is ok to fail
- Don't allow teams to get too serious
- Take this seriously because we enjoy it
- Maximize the joy that team has while getting things done

11.   Ask, Don't Tell…. did I say ASK? (metapattern)
- Leaders that tell the team what to do is "doing" behavior
- Asking is "being" behavior
- Move from telling posture to inquisitive posture
- Be principled in your inquisitiveness