Sustaining Agile in the Organisation

The Agile Business Conference: ABC15

Now in its thirteenth year, the Agile Business Conference (ABC15) has built a reputation for high quality delivery and enriching content. On the agenda this year is that most tricky of challenges: how to sustain an Agile culture to drive your organisation’s competitive edge. This year, organisers DSDM® Consortium and UNICOM are further boosting the delegate experience with offerings including tailored Agile business coaching sessions, round tables, case studies and the opportunity for delegates to participate in a live Kanban Game.

Here’s a preview of what’s on offer…

**BOOK YOUR DELEGATE PLACE AT ABC15:**

6th and 7th October 2015
155 Bishopsgate, London, EC2M 3YX
Visit [www.agileconference.org](http://www.agileconference.org) to secure your place

**Don’t miss…**

**The Kanban Game**

Join us for these fast-paced, interactive Kanban sessions which will take place twice on each day, morning and afternoon. Games will last approximately 90 minutes.

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The View from the Keynote:

Why Do Managers Hate Agile?

Steve Denning, Keynote Speaker, ABC15

“Why don’t Agile and management get along? In polls conducted by Scrum Alliance amongst people working in many different firms where Agile and Scrum are being implemented, 80% to 90% of respondents report tension between the way Agile/Scrum teams are managed in their organisation and the way the rest of the organisation is managed. Very few report ‘no tension’.

The reality is that ‘management’ and ‘Agile’ are two different worlds.

The world of management is vertical. Its natural habitat is in tall buildings in places like New York and London. Its mind-set is also vertical. The organisation is run from the top. Power trickles down. Big bosses appoint little bosses, who tell people what to do. Bosses get reports on whether performance conforms to plan. Individuals compete to climb the hierarchy. The best way to get ahead is to do what you’re told. Pay depends on position.

The purpose of this vertical world is self-evident: to make money for the shareholders, including the top executives. Its communications are top-down. Its values are efficiency and predictability. The key to succeeding in this world is tight control. Its dynamic is conservative: to preserve the gains of the past. Its workforce is dispirited. It has a hard time with innovation. Its companies are being systemically disrupted. Its economy - the Traditional Economy - is in decline, largely because it can’t cope with the shift in power in the marketplace from seller to buyer. It conceals the extent of the decline through financial engineering of various kinds. Central banks also mask the decline with central planning of the economy, and the injection of massive free money into the private banks, thus distorting prices, fuelling the stock market, stimulating mergers and acquisitions, creating financial bubbles, exacerbating inequality and deferring real solutions.

The world of Agile is horizontal. Its natural habitat is in low flat buildings in places like California, although it is also spreading rapidly like a virus and has already established footholds in most of the tall vertical organisations. Its purpose is to delight customers. Making money is the result, not the goal of its activities. It achieves this by continuous innovation. Its dynamic is enablement, rather than control. The mind-set in the world of Agile is also horizontal. Its communications tend to be interactive conversations. It aspires to liberate the full talents and capacities of those doing the work. It is oriented to understanding and creating the future. It believes in accommodation, not necessarily banks. It believes in transport, not necessarily cars. It believes in health, not necessarily hospitals. It believes in education, not necessarily schools. The economy of Agile—the Creative Economy—is thriving.

The world of Agile is advancing. But those who believed that once a better way of managing had been discovered, it would be embraced by all as a better way, have often been disappointed. The entrenched interests of traditional management are making strenuous efforts to maintain the status quo.

Achieving Agile management at the level of the organisation has turned out to be a more intractable problem than thought leaders expected it to be. Instead of traditional management being a set of linear mechanisms that can be “fixed” one-by-one through implementing proven remedial measures, it has acted more like an ingeniously morphing virus that steadily adapts itself to, and ultimately defeats, intended fixes and returns to its original state, sometimes more virulent than before.

Nevertheless the world of traditional management is dying and the Creative Economy built on Agile principles is being born, even as the death throes of the declining world of traditional management and the birth pangs of the thriving Creative Economy are causing angst and damage.

As the Creative Economy steadily puts traditionally managed firms out of business, the issue becomes: will the transition to the Creative Economy continue to be agonisingly slow and ugly and bloody, with disruption of existing businesses, bankruptcies and loss of jobs? Or can it become quick and elegant and intelligent?

This conference is about generating the latter outcome. I look forward to welcoming you there.
When an organisation says ‘we want to be more Agile’, that’s actually a very big statement. An Agile way of working involves a set of principles that challenge conventional working practices and organisational structures. If you’re not able to continuously engage with that challenge, the result can be sub-standard implementation. And that applies even more when you go beyond a single team and start to scale Agile out across the organisation.

All of this makes achieving a sustainable Agile approach a difficult business. That’s where Agile business coaching can really add value.

The very nature of Agile demands trust and conversation as a basis of working together. Sadly, that’s something that is missing in a lot of organisations. A skilled Agile business coach can help to address relationships that may have been eroded or even broken in the past, and work with participants to rebuild trust. It’s about recognising and shifting behaviours – keeping what works and adapting what doesn’t. Agile business coaching helps to identify where a person or team’s comfort zone lies, and where that comfort zone can be stretched to achieve new learning, but without pushing people so much that they panic. It’s about understanding what Agile principles are and where we can apply them to address current practices, adjusting them to better suit the organisational goals and customer priorities.

I work with organisations at many different levels. In my experience, the success of Agile business coaching lies in a tailored approach that recognises where the organisation is now, where it needs to be, and what the potential barriers are to getting there. The coach can help you to understand how to approach challenges and improve delivery in an Agile way. The process will inevitably be different for every organisation, because every organisation has its own inherent practices and culture. So the coaching must be carefully tailored – no matter whether the journey involves a wholesale change or an incremental process.

But it’s also important that the organisation itself is brave enough to engage in continuous reflection and improvement, and to move away from potentially limiting beliefs and behaviours. Many organisations create an upfront business case - but they don’t engage in continual measurement. As a result, they aren’t properly equipped to react to whether their activities are actually adding value for customers on an ongoing basis. Ultimately, Agile business coaching is about building an organisation from a set of discrete departments into a living, dynamic organism that’s geared up to match the complexity of the external world, react rapidly to external influences and therefore deliver faster and better for its customers.

These are tough cultural challenges. The Agile business coach can play an invaluable role not just in initiating the process, but in embedding and sustaining Agile into the organisation’s lifeblood. That’s why we’re thrilled at ABC15 to be offering one-to-one coaching sessions. Our coaches all have at least 10 years’ experience of applying Agile in a rich variety of contexts and organisations. Delegates will enjoy 30 minutes of impartial, specialist support from a coach - either individually or in small organisational teams. They can talk through the challenges they are facing and get new ideas around how to apply Agile principles to tackle those challenges. Some of our lead speakers will also be joining the coaching sessions, giving a rare opportunity for face-to-face time with speakers: something you don’t usually find at most conferences.

We believe that these highly tailored coaching sessions will significantly enrich the agenda for ABC15. We’re aiming to open up new avenues for delegates to explore, so that they leave ABC15 with plenty of food for thought and the opportunity to take Agile business coaching further if they feel it’s the right path for their organisation and their own continuous professional development.

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ABC15: The Agenda

Day 1: 6th October

Introductory Keynote:
The Inexorable Rise of Agile  
Steve Denning

Additional Keynotes from TCS and IndigoBlue

Seminar Sessions:
Monitor Agile Progress and Health – A Common Ground  
Ian Spence

Nurturing People who Nurture Ideas  
Claire Kemp

How to combine PRINCE2 with Agile and get the best of both worlds  
Keith Richards

Radical Management in Practice: A Holistic Approach to Management in Agile Enterprises  
Simon Roberts and Steve Denning

PLUS:  
A special guest seminar from Kim Wylie, Change and Transformation Lead at Google

Make sure you book early for...
Tailored Agile business coaching sessions
Specialist round table discussions
The Kanban Game

Day 2: 7th October

Featured Case Study:
The Agile Software Factory  
– Delivering success year on year  
Johan Lybaert and Arie van Bennekum

Seminar Sessions:
What price Agile?  •  Stewart James
Is there a doctor in the house!  •  Dot Tudor
How to Blend Agile Approaches  •  Rose Chu

PLUS: Back by popular demand...
Delivery Mapping: Building an Agile Organisation  
Dan North and Chris Matts

Dan North has been coaching and consulting for over 20 years, using techniques from Lean operations, Theory of Constraints and Agile software development to help IT organisations anticipate and respond to the challenges of changing business needs. Chris Matts is an Agile Transformation Coach, helping senior executives solve organisation-wide challenges using agile and lean principles.

Join Dan and Chris to explore how the emerging areas of Delivery Mapping and Skills Liquidity can create a rich landscape of options for achieving genuine business agility.

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www.tcs.com

Keynote presented by TCS
Driving Business Agility – Agile Transformation Journey of a Large Financial Services Organisation

In this session Manav Mehan, Head of Agile Consulting, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) along with a large Financial Services client will share their experiences of organisation-wide Agile transformation. They will focus on embedding Agile Culture, addressing the practical challenges of Global Scale & Distributed working.

Platinum Sponsor
IndigoBlue Consulting

IndigoBlue is the leading management consultancy dedicated to introducing and embedding Agile and incremental thinking within organisations, regardless of their size and complexity.

www.indigoblue.co.uk

Keynote presented by IndigoBlue
Optimising and Sustaining Agile Within an Organisation

It is possible to successfully apply Agile at the fringes of an organisation and achieve significant benefit. However, to fully maximise value from the approach and to ensure that the transformation endures requires a deeper and wider change that fully encompasses up-stream and down-stream activities. In this keynote IndigoBlue will draw on a number of real-world examples to discuss the Agile operating model and the transformation challenges this brings.

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“Practical and pragmatic approach! Highly valuable!”  ABC14 delegate

“Really engaging. Interactive and informative and very well presented.”  ABC14 delegate