Table of Contents

Introduction

Introduction

The NCB Agile Coaching 101 playbook is designed to assist team leads/coaches in guiding their teams through the journey of mind-set shifts to being agile as the organization embarks on its transformational "Accelerate" programme.

This playbook provides information on how to help teams adopt agile behaviours, learn new skills and continuously improve to do their best work each day. Through practise, the expected outcome is high performing agile teams contributing to an agile culture, an agile way of working and an agile workplace, making NCB an agile organization in the near future.

AGILITY

AGILE ORGANISATION

AGILE CULTURE

AGILE WORKING

AGILE WORKPLACE

1 Attitudes, skills, practices, processes and infrastructure that are holistically designed to enable rapid change without cost or pain.

2 Leadership, attitudes, behaviours, workplace rituals and skills that are explicitly supportive of agility in every aspect of business.

3 Working practices that enable people to work when and where it is appropriate for them and their units.

4 IT, telephony, policies and spaces designed to enable people to have their best day at work every day wherever they are.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the following persons or group of persons for initiating and starting the agile coaching journey in 2017 as we became creative in how to support the growing numbers of agile teams in the organization.

- **McKinsey & Co** for starting the journey with the initial agile teams and for immersing the first group of 7 persons forming. the NCB agile coaching team (ACT) from the EPMO in 2018.

- **American School of Professional Education (ASPE)** - conducted on site coaching training in 2019 facilaiting the ACT to become Certified Agile Facilitators and Agile Coaches by the **International Consortium on Agile (IC-Agile)**

- Fellow **ACT** members for conducting research and sharing their knowledge.

What Is Coaching

What Is Coaching?

What is Coaching?

Thought-provoking partnership & creative process that inspires

Active Listening to elicit understanding

Insightful curious questioning that pass comfort zones

Conversations that result in committed actions

Qualities of an Effective Coach

A coach is a master question asker

The key is to know the right question to ask at the right time. This takes practice, experience, patience and awareness. Always strive to ask more thoughtful questions of your team members and associates.

A coach has sensory acuity

A coach stays aware of the surrounding environment- watches body language, tonality and other nonverbal forms of communication to better understand what others are saying

A coach is a master listener

An effective coach is highly empathic and intuitively connected to team members. Listens intently—especially to what's not being said.

A coach is inspirational

Knowing that a business-as-usual attitude is an easy way to stifle creativity, a coach is constantly looking for ways to uplift teams. Provides moral support utilizes inspiring ideas and events—anything to raise the team's spirit

A coach is sensibly direct

A coach does not play office politics, crafting words to elicit a particular response from team members. In fact, office politics destroys teams. The coach is however, sensible and uses discretion as needed.

A coach challenges thinking

There is always room for growth and a coach is committed to facilitating your development. Instilling certainty of purpose, the effective coach provides meaningful direction.

A coach has high integrity

Honesty, trustworthiness and integrity are the cornerstones of a coach's state of being. Only after team members and associates trust and respect their coach (or leader) will major progress be achieved

Why Coach Agile Teams

Why Should I Want to Coach my Team?

This is a question any committed team lead should ask …………and one that every team lead should seek to answer

Would your answer be………. "*I want to coach my team so that they can become the best high performing team delivering quality products and services to delight our customers…*

One thing for certain………. *In any organizational transformation coaching needs to be in the DNA of every committed team lead……*

Why Does My Team Need To Be Agile?

Together, we must accelerate towards the goals that we set !! ....We committed to them!!!

To achieve these goals we must have an Agile Mindset......

- ✓ continuously improve
- ✓ scope flexibility
- ✓ team input
- ✓ open and trusting with each other
- ✓ deliver essential quality products

Agile is not something we 'do',
Agile is something we 'are'...... 'being' Agile is our North Star!!

Some Key Operating Principles To Enable Effective and High-performing Teams

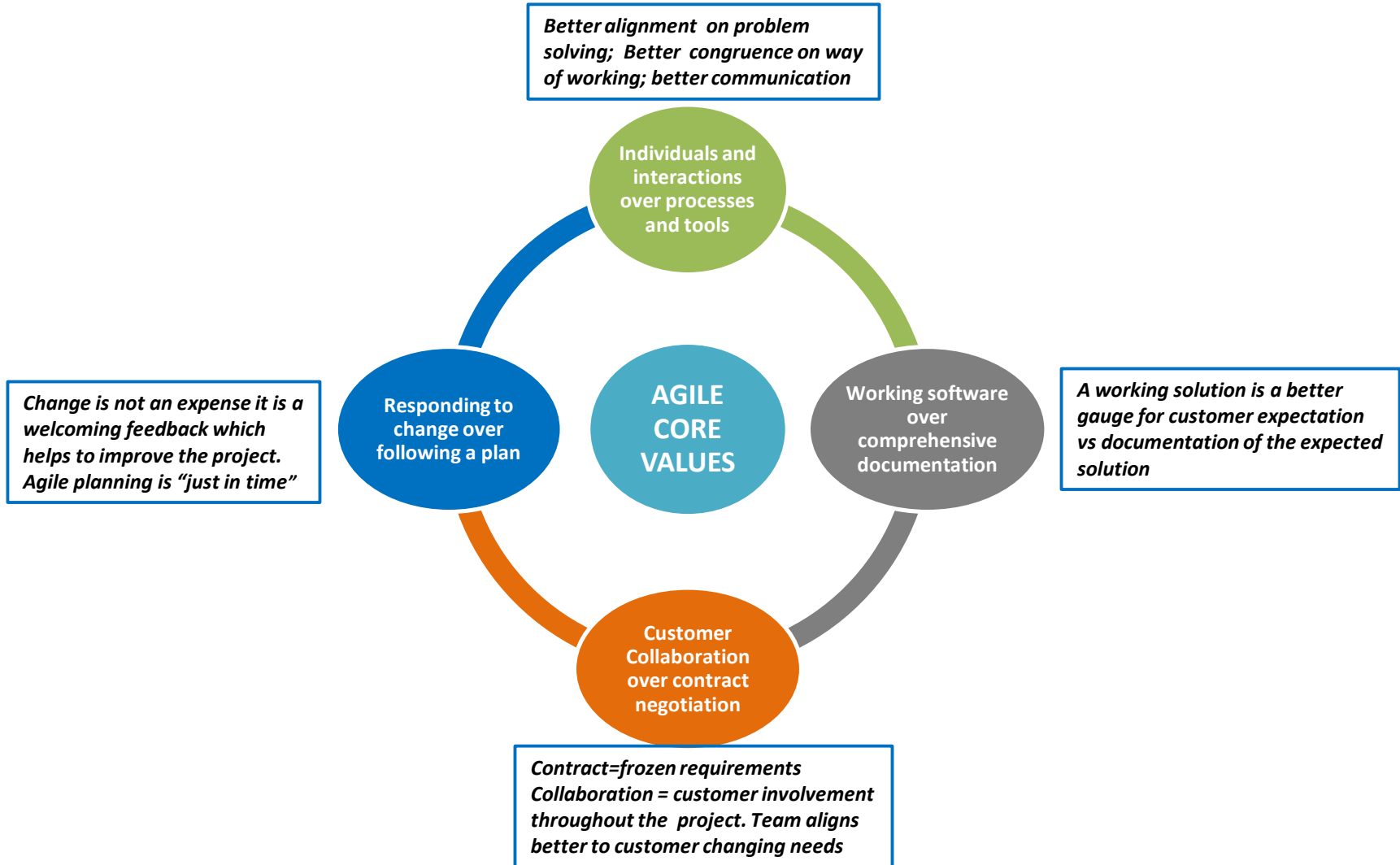| Team Characteristics	Operating Principles
Self-Organizing	*The team decides how to best to organize themselves to meet the team's goals*
Self-Managing	*Every member of the team is responsible for their role on the team and for guiding the team*
Cross functional	*The team requires multiple range of skills sets from ideation to product or service release*
Right-sized	*Team size must be optimal to deliver output*
Committed	*Individuals are committed to the team and to delivering on the product or service vision*
Empowered	*The team has authority to do what is needed to meet the required functionalities to deliver on the product or service visions*
Focused	*Team members should be adequately dedicated to the team as required and not spread too thin*
Stability	*Team structure remains stable for at least 1 quarter*

Starting The Coaching Journey

How Do I Start This Coaching Journey……?

*1. To get out of the 'Starting Blocks' I must become familiar and live the **4** Agile Core Values……..*

Better alignment on problem solving; Better congruence on way of working; better communication

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Change is not an expense it is a welcoming feedback which helps to improve the project. Agile planning is "just in time"

Responding to change over following a plan

AGILE CORE VALUES

Working software over comprehensive documentation

A working solution is a better gauge for customer expectation vs documentation of the expected solution

Customer Collaboration over contract negotiation

Contract=frozen requirements Collaboration = customer involvement throughout the project. Team aligns better to customer changing needs

How Do I Start this Coaching Journey……?

2. I must have a high level knowledge of the execution approaches my team is utilizing…

Although Kanban and Scrum are Agile frameworks, they differ in philosophy and application:

Similarities:

Both Scrum and Kanban

- Break down large and complex tasks for incremental execution
- Place high value on continual improvement and optimization of the work and the process
- Focus on a high visibility of work flow making project execution transparent

Kanban [Pron. kambaN]

kan, 看 / カン
means "visual"

ban, 板 / バン
means "card" or "board"

Differences:

	Scrum	Kanban
TimeBox	• Sprints and commitments are timeboxed; recommended not to make changes to the sprint once it starts	• No sprint timebox; Work is prioritized just-in-time – any changes are welcome beyond work in progress
Key Metrics	• Velocity	• Cycle Time
Roles	• Product owner, scrum master and development team	• No prescribed roles – roles are defined by the team as appropriate
Cadence and release methodology	• Regular fixed length sprints – release at the end of each sprint	• Continuous flow – the team releases as soon as there is value

Although Kanban does not prescribe any roles, the product owner role is highly recommended/ best practice

How Do I Start this Coaching Journey……?

Context to consider when choosing Kanban vs. Scrum

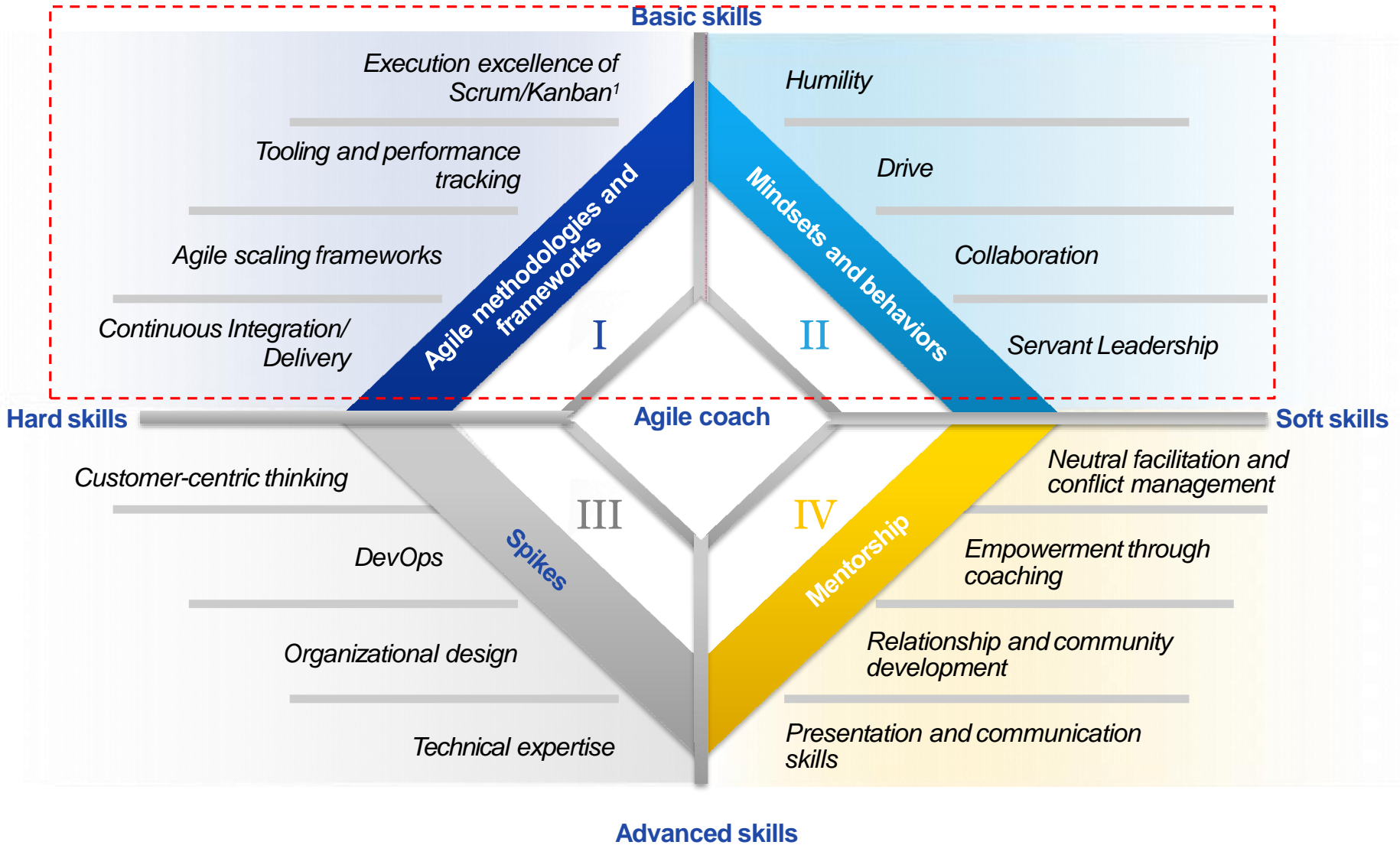|	Scrum	Kanban
Type of work	• Teams are typically aligned on delivering a single product • Requirements remain stable for the sprint timebox	• Proven to work better in support / service / ticket based environments • Highly changing requirements
Change in priorities	• Priorities are locked in for the duration of the sprint	• Priorities can be re-evaluated "as needed" as long as they are not "work in progress"
Work unit delivery	• Teams are able to deliver a cohesive unit of work every sprint	• Teams may deliver multiple units of work on a continuous basis
Examples	• A team developing an end customer facing mobile application and requiring regular feedback	• A team handling daily customer service requests where priorities may change on a regular basis

How Do I Start this Coaching Journey……?

3. Build my coaching capabilities by learning the basic skills in the coaching framework………………

Basic skills

Execution excellence of Scrum/Kanban[1]

Tooling and performance tracking

Agile scaling frameworks

Continuous Integration/ Delivery

Humility

Drive

Collaboration

Servant Leadership

Agile methodologies and frameworks

Mindsets and behaviors

I

II

Hard skills

Agile coach

Soft skills

Customer-centric thinking

DevOps

Organizational design

Technical expertise

III

IV

Spikes

Mentorship

Neutral facilitation and conflict management

Empowerment through coaching

Relationship and community development

Presentation and communication skills

Advanced skills

Expected Daily Roles & Habits

What Roles Am I Expected To Play Daily As A Coach?..................

No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it
— H.E. Luccock

The main aim of the facilitative leader is to leverage the resources of group members
— Ingrid Bens

It is a misuse of our power to take responsibility for solving problems that belong to others
—Stewardship by Peter Block

- Collaboration Conductor
- Facilitator
- Problem Solver
- Teacher
- Conflict Navigator
- Mentor

The art of teaching is the art of assisted discovery
– Mark Van Doren

For good ideas and true innovation, you need human interaction, conflict, argument, debate.
— Margaret Heffernan

A friend loves you just the way you are. A coach loves you too much to stay that way
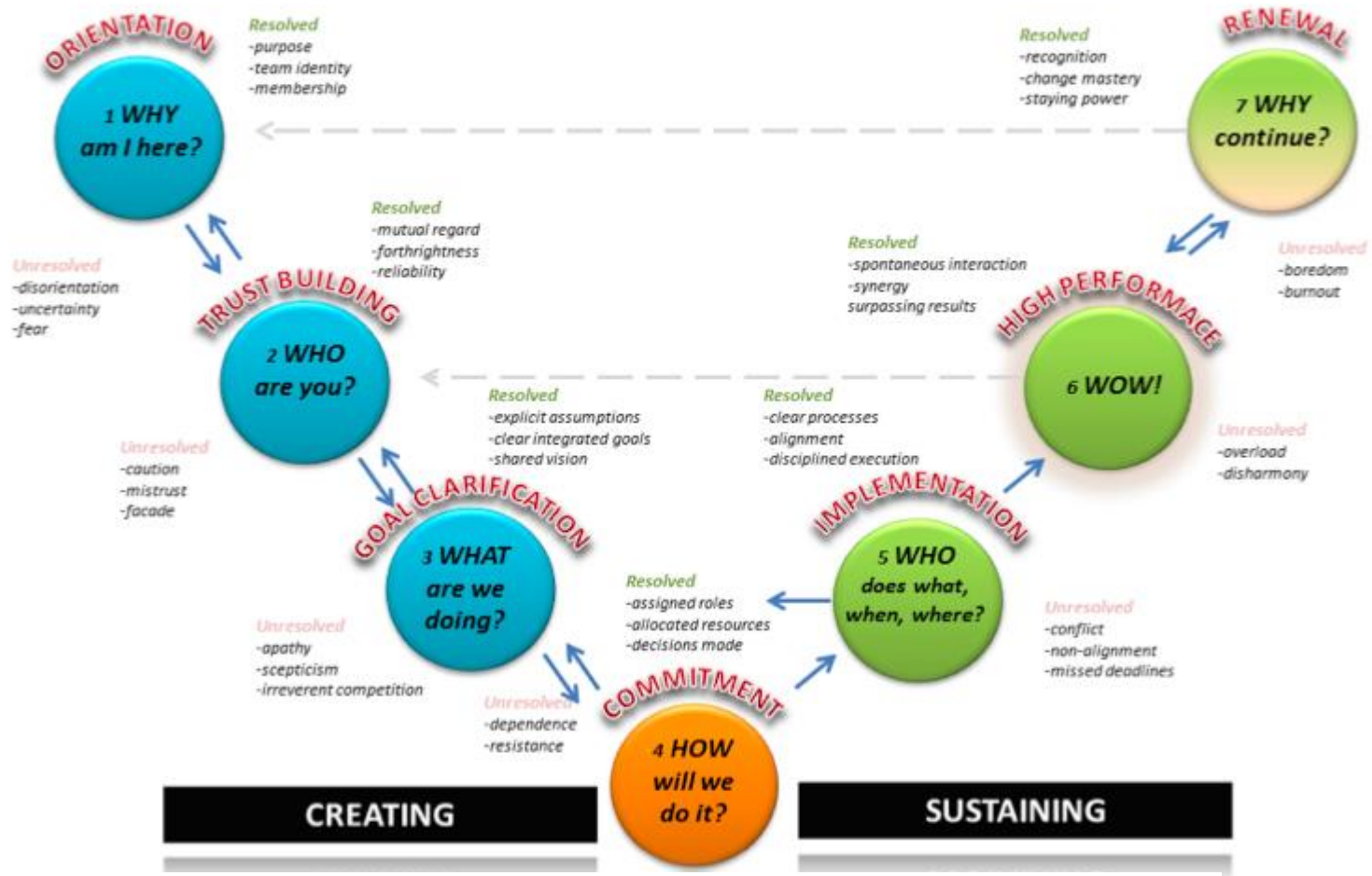
What Are Some Habits I need To Display Daily As A Coach?..................

"I am not here to answer your questions. I am here to question your answers"

Relevant and timely feedback- Appreciation; Advice; Evaluation

Ask Powerful Questions

Providing Feedback

Practise Emotional Intelligence

Active Listening

Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Management

Listening to understand is the way we connect. Connections result in openness and trust

Challenge Team status quo

Support Team experiment and exploration

Question assumptions, limitations, obstacles without being defensive

Recognizes and helps teams acknowledge and appreciate strength and potentials

Assessing Coaching Success

How Is My Team Progressing?

Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Model

Adapted

After all that …What Does Success Looks like?
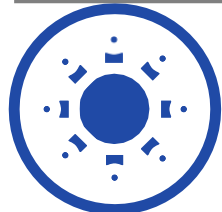
- Working team, delivering the results
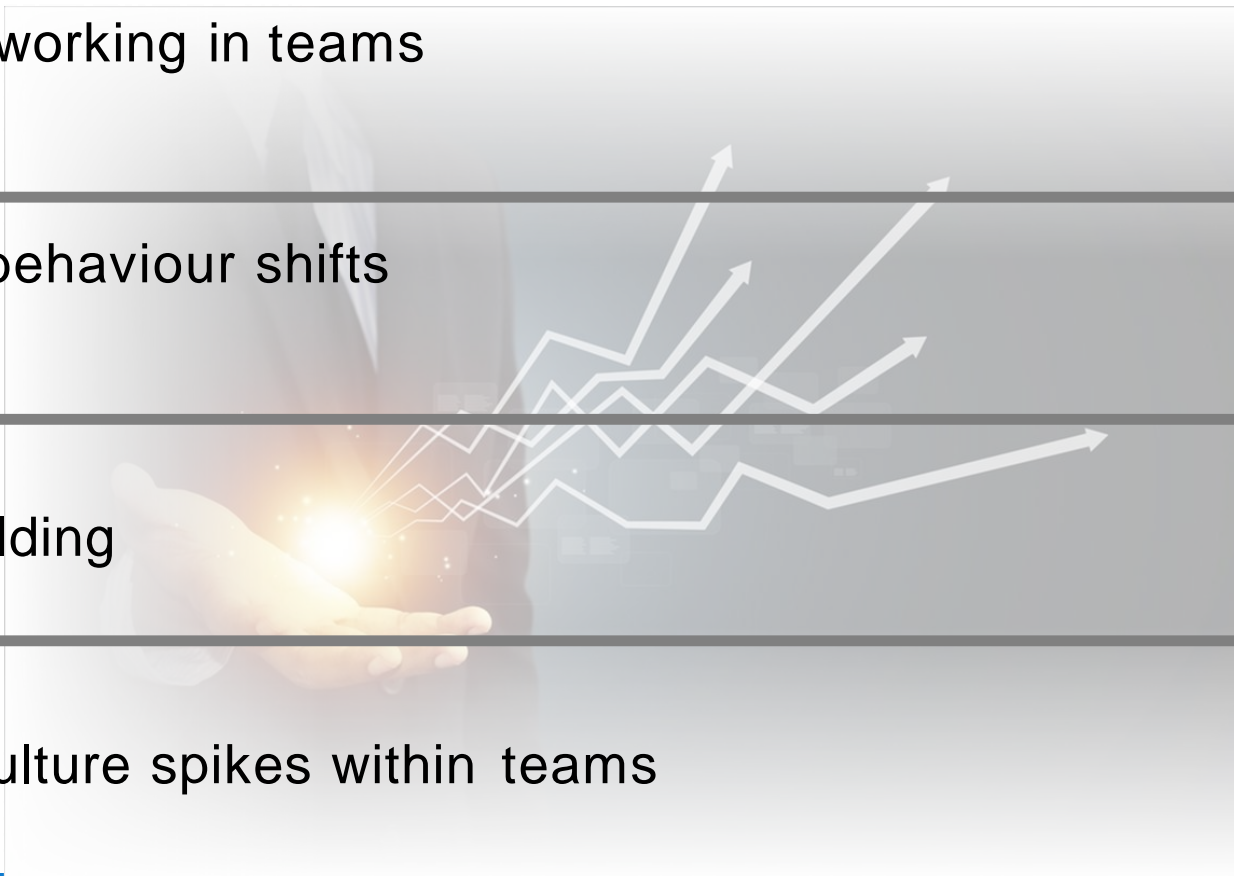
- New ways of working in teams

- Mindset and behaviour shifts

- Capability building

- Energy and culture spikes within teams

One on One Coaching

The Importance of One on One Coaching

"Coaching in its truest sense is giving the responsibility to the learner to help them come up with their own answers." – Vince Lombardi

One on one coaching provides a safe space and opportunity for both coach and coachee to unravel a problem, execute a new task, master a new skill or find direction, purpose, create balance in work and life, ultimately increase one's value

Builds Trust & Rapport

Facilitates Self Development

Employee gets Focused Attention
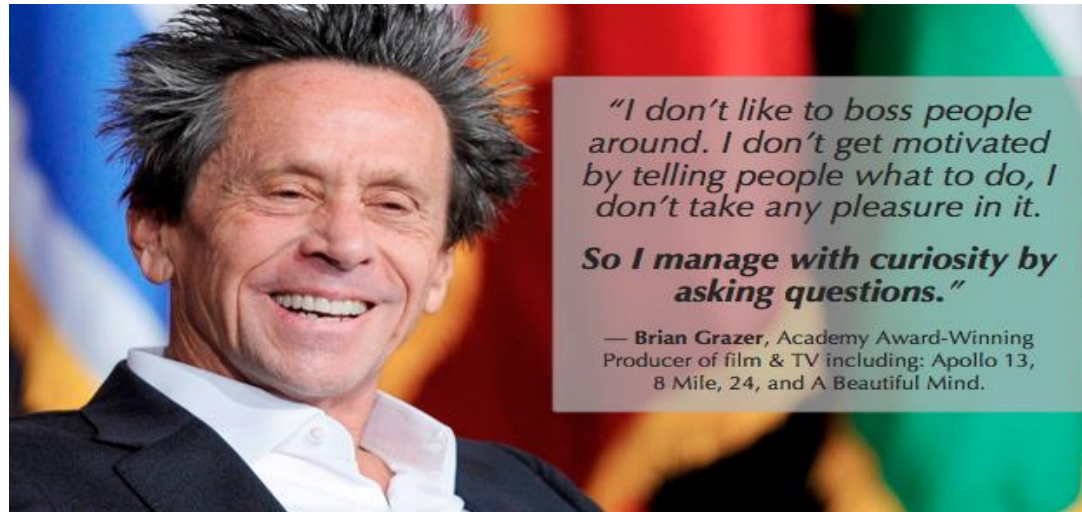
Facilitates Improved Productivity

Sample Questions for Effective One and One Coaching Session

Frame questions around…

- ❖ **Building Rapport & Trust**
- ❖ **Career Goals & Development**
- ❖ **Giving and Receiving Feedback**
- ❖ **Ways to Improve individual & team performance**
- ❖ **Checking in on General Happiness**

"I don't like to boss people around. I don't get motivated by telling people what to do, I don't take any pleasure in it.

So I manage with curiosity by asking questions."

— **Brian Grazer**, Academy Award-Winning Producer of film & TV including: Apollo 13, 8 Mile, 24, and A Beautiful Mind.

Sample Questions – Career Goals, Interests and Growth

1. Start by focusing on the goals……

- ❖ *What work are you doing here that you feel is most in line with your long term goals?*
- ❖ *What do you want to be doing in 3 years? 5years? 10 years?*
- ❖ *What are your long term goals? Have you thought about them?*
- ❖ *Who do you really admire? Why? (People often admire those they want to become)*
- ❖ *What are your superpowers? What powers would you like to develop?*
- ❖ *What do you want to do in your next job?*
- ❖ *Do you feel challenged at work? Are you learning new things?*
- ❖ *What area of the company would you like to learn more about?*
- ❖ *What skills would you like to develop right now?*
- ❖ *Who in the company would you like to learn from? What do you want to learn?*
- ❖ *What additional training or education would you like?*
- ❖ *Are there any roles in the company you'd like to learn more about?*
- ❖ *What do you think are the key skills for your role? How would you rate yourself for each of them?*

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – Career Goals, Interests and Growth

2. ……then make progress together via an action plan

- ❖ *Do you feel like you're making progress on your big goals here? Why or why not?*
- ❖ *What's one thing we could do today to help you with your long term goals?*
- ❖ *Do you feel we're helping you advance your career at a pace you would like? Why or why not?*
- ❖ *What are your big dreams in life? Are you making progress on them?*
- ❖ *Could you see yourself making progress on more of your goals here? What would need to change to do so?*
- ❖ *What skills would you like to work on most right now?*
- ❖ *Are there any events or training you'd like to attend to help you grow your skills?*
- ❖ *Who in the company would you like to learn from? What do you want to learn?*

"Of all the things that can boost emotions, motivation, and perceptions during a workday, **the single most important is making progress** in meaningful work."

— **Teresa Amabile**, Stanford PhD & Prof. at Harvard Business School & **Steven J Kramer**, UVA PhD

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – How to Build Rapport and Trust

The short answer is to be human! Find out what's important to them and what their interests are. Start by getting to know them and then revisit asking about the things they care about in future one on one meetings.

- *How are you? How is life outside of work?*
- *How do you feel your work/life balance is right now?*
- *What's one thing we could change about work for you that would improve your personal life?*
- *If around a holiday: Do you celebrate [Holiday]? How was it?*
- *How are your parents/grandparents? Where do they live? Do you visit them?*
- *If they have children: How is [name of child] doing? (Ask something related to their age like starting school, playing sports, or other interests.)*
- *What do you like to do in your free time? What are your hobbies?*
- *What did you do for fun in the past that you haven't had as much time for lately?*
- *What drives you? What motivates you to come to work each day?*

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – Giving Feedback

Feedback helps everyone gets better. The privacy of a one on one is the best opportunity to be candid with each other, focusing on areas for their improvement. Also helps you understand where they may be most receptive and interested in your feedback and coaching

- ❖ *How do you prefer to receive feedback?*
- ❖ *Do you feel you're getting enough feedback? Why/why not?*
- ❖ *What's a recent situation you wish you handled differently? What would you change?*
- ❖ *What's an area of your work you want to improve?*
- ❖ *What aspect of your job you would like more help or coaching?*
- ❖ *How many hours a day do you feel you're productive? How could we help you be more productive?*

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

— Ken Blanchard, PhD, management expert, and best selling author

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – Receiving Feedback

Feedback goes both ways…..remember to get feedback. It opens valuable insights from which you can learn!!!

- ❖ *How can I better support you?*
- ❖ *What could I do as your team lead to make your work easier?*
- ❖ *What is something I could do better? What is a criticism you have for me?*
- ❖ *What aspects of your work would you like more or less direction from me?*
- ❖ *What would you like to know about me?*
- ❖ *What could I do to make you enjoy your work more?*
- ❖ *What do you like about my management style? What do you dislike?*
- ❖ *Is there a situation you would like my help with?*
- ❖ *What's your favourite thing I do as a manager*
  I should keep doing?

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

— John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

Sample Questions – On Team Improvement

Team members are closer to problems and opportunities with customers and other employees than you are. Vantage points vary and it allows them to get things off their chests & get them to think like owners

❖ *How could we change our team meetings to be more effective?*

❖ *What would convince you to leave for a job somewhere else?*

❖ *Do you feel over-worked, under-worked, or just the right workload?*

❖ *Do you feel like you're on the same page with the team? How often do you think you need meetings to ensure you stay that way?*

❖ *Are there any meetings or discussions you feel you should be a part of that you're not? Are you included in any you don't want to be a part of?*

> "Ultimately, the one sustainable competitive advantage that a company can have is a culture that enables its people and the entire organization to learn faster.
> — Amy Pressman, President & co-founder of Medallia
> In NY Times on April 17, 2016

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – On Team Improvement Cont'd

❖ *Who would you like to work more often with? Why?*
❖ *Is everyone pulling their weight on the team?*
❖ *Who is most influential on the team? What have they done?*
❖ *Who on the team do you have the most difficulty working with? Why?*
❖ *What do you like most about working on our team?*
❖ *Do you help other members of the team? Do others help you when you need it?*
❖ *Are you uncomfortable giving any of your peer's constructive criticism? If so, why?*
❖ *What's an inexpensive thing we could do to improve our office environment for the team?*

Fast learning has to come from a place of people feeling safe to talk about what's working and not, of recognizing that their job is not to appear perfect but to get better."

— Amy Pressman, President & co-founder of Medallia
In NY Times on April 17, 2016

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Questions – On General Happiness

You can't know unless you ask directly …….. one and one session is a safe place to be honest………..

* *Is your job what you expected when you accepted it?*
* *What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment here?*
* *When was the time you enjoyed working here the most*
* *Are you happy with your recent work? Why or why not?*
* *Are you happy working here?*
* *What's something you feel is undervalued that you contribute to the team?*
* *What part of your job do you wish you didn't have to do?*
* *What's not fun about working here?*
* *What do you enjoy most about working here?*
* *What worries you? What's on your mind?*
* *What would make you leave this job for another?*

"While it's not the manager's job to set the agenda or do the talking [in a one-on-one], the manager should try to draw the key issues out of the employee.

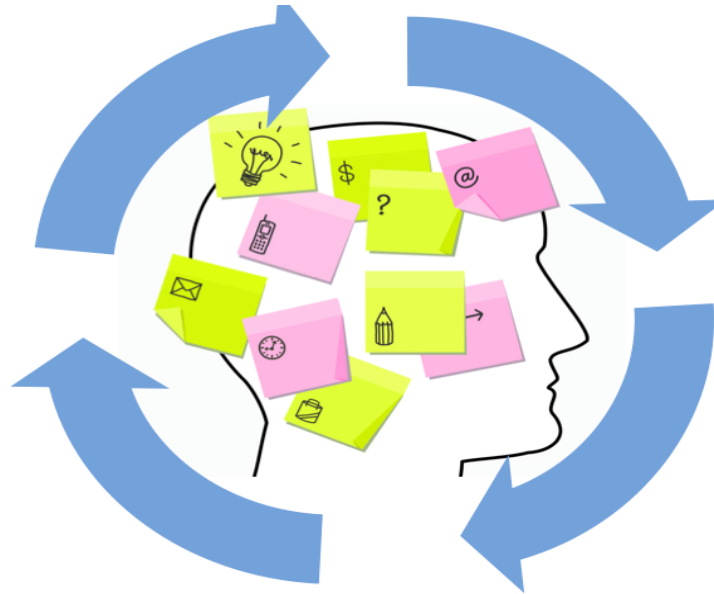*The more introverted the employee, the more important this becomes."*

— **Ben Horowitz**, VC at A16Z, and author, *The Hard Thing About Hard Things*

GetLighthouse.com/Blog

Sample Coaching Template

COACHING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Why should I improve?

What habits are limiting to me as a leader?

Why do I have limiting habits?

How will I practice and improve?

What is my process for learning?

COACHING SESSION DATE: Feb 21 2020
COACHEE: Cheryl Hall
OVERARCHING GOAL: Achieving High Performance

Topic: Achieving High Performance

GOALS:

1. **E.g. To effectively guide team to continuously improve**

CHALLENGES:

1. **Leading people well:**
i)Unable to handover work to team as too much is taken on and therefore too deep in hands-on execution, impacting throughput of team
   - **Impact:** i) Not able to effectively guide the team on assigned work ii) Not able to develop team capabilities iii) Team burn out and loss of team drive

ii) No limits are set with internal customers on throughput of team. Feels Manager does not have the full understanding of what is required to complete the assignments. There is a disconnect in the understanding of the level of effort required to get work done
   - **Impact:** i) Leaves coachee with feeling that he is not a high performing worker ii) High risk for potential failure of team

OBSERVATIONS:
- Coachee demonstrated the passion for delivery
- Absence of big picture roadmap to provide visibility on planned and current work
- Absence of a resource plan to given visibility to team capacity and hence provide data on throughput/velocity and resource gaps
- No visibility of value being delivered even at high levels
- Absence of structured team engagement
- Obvious need for synergy with Manager

Topic: Achieving High Performance

Agreed Action	Session Raised	Timeline	Owner	Update
Prepare delivery roadmap for next 3 months indicating dependencies, impact, high level value	1	Next Coaching Session Feb 28		
Prepare Resource plan indicating capacity/ gaps and plans to address gaps	1	Next Coaching Session Feb 28		

Guiding Points on Coaching
Scrum Teams

Specifics On Coaching A Scrum Team

Event/Practice	Approach	Areas of Focus
✓ Ceremonies	Observation	Discussion with Scrum Master and Product Owner for them to identify the areas of concern
✓ Mindset	Observation	How agile are the teams
✓ Scrum Practice	Observation	• How are teams living by the principles? • Establishing channel for Scrum Master to avail coaching services
Tools	Standardized/ Best fit	• Create a coaching Card; Use Standardize Canvas/template

Discovery of Challenges/Issues	• Observation
	• Probing to elicit information and confirm
	• Use of tools
		• Working agreement
		• Good facilitator (speaking freely, influencing)
		• Scrum Master's level of involvement
		• Information Radiators:
		   ✓ Board view to determine bottle necks (eg. Progress of stories)
		   ✓ Concentrative level of tasks (e.g. Dev. vs. Testing)
		   ✓ Control charts & flow diagram view
		• Manner/energy of coach upon 1st visit:
		   ✓ Trust, rapport & how we "sit in space."
		   ✓ Open to learning from team
		   ✓ Never compare 2 labs
		• Focus on no more than 3 main issues at a time
		• Create and utilize a coaching canvas to assist in better framing the problem/challenge

Specifics On Coaching A Scrum Team

Event/Practice	Approach	Areas of Focus
Growth	Evidence based Reports	<u>For the Team</u> • How are teams collaborating to continuously learn and increase knowledge? • How is the scrum master addressing self-learning? <u>For the Coach</u> • Share approach and results of coaching with the Business owner/key stakeholder – discuss using coaching canvas • Be open to feedback from team and key stakeholder/business owner/coaching partner • Conduct ongoing introspection- share with partner coach • Create self-learning roadmap- share learning progress e.g. articles; forums; certs; coaching session outside of assignments etc

Additional Resource Material

Agile coach typically uses three levers to work with the teams

Question

Engage

Challenge   Facilitate   Clarify

Reflect

Explain   Express concerns   Listen   Paraphrase

Tell

Ask

...helps you perform a new task, improve your performance in your chosen profession, develop a new skill or solve a problem. (Joseph O'Connor)

... teaches you that you can influence others, but you can only change yourself. (Eileen Mulligan)

... removes constraints on achievement and happiness and helps you build for the future. (Ian McDermott)

...someone tells you what you don't want to hear, has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be. (Tom Landry)

... is inspiring an individual or team to produce a desired result through personalized teaching, expanding awareness and designing environments for sustainable success. (N N)

...aims to enhance the performance and learning ability of others. It involves providing feedback and is based on helping people to help themselves and does not rely on a one-way flow of telling or instruction. (Max Landsberg)

... is the art of facilitating the performance, learning and development of another. (Myles Downey)

...enables you to focus your thoughts, actions and time so that you will be able to increase the quality of your life. (Edward Fisher)

... is unlocking people's potential to maximise their own performance. through learning rather than teaching (John Whitmore)
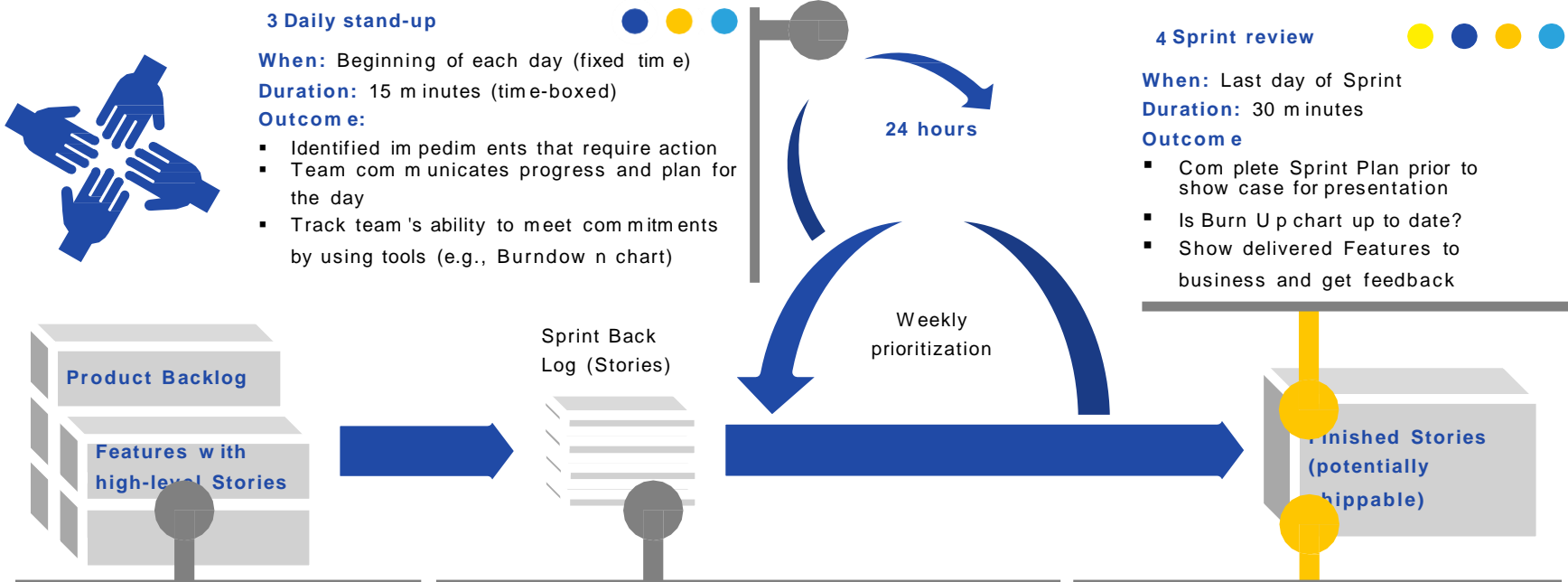
What happens if we only use **telling**?

What happens if we only use **asking**?

Scrum is a framework
that lends structure to the Agile principles

3 Daily stand-up

When: Beginning of each day (fixed time)
Duration: 15 minutes (time-boxed)
Outcome:
- Identified impediments that require action
- Team communicates progress and plan for the day
- Track team's ability to meet commitments by using tools (e.g., Burndown chart)

24 hours

4 Sprint review

When: Last day of Sprint
Duration: 30 minutes
Outcome
- Complete Sprint Plan prior to show case for presentation
- Is Burn Up chart up to date?
- Show delivered Features to business and get feedback

Product Backlog

Features with high-level Stories

Sprint Back Log (Stories)

Weekly prioritization

Finished Stories (potentially shippable)

1 Release plan

When: Project Start
Duration: Allocate a full day
Outcome:
- Start with 'Epic planning' for business priorities
- Assumptions, risks, dependencies identified
- Prioritized Stories allocated to Sprints

2 Backlog Refinement and Sprint Planning

When: Beginning of each Sprint
Duration: Allocate 1-2 hour
Outcome:
- Prioritized Stories based on complexity, dependencies, team availability and business priority
- Action plan to close open items and manage cross team dependencies
- Acceptance Criteria defined
- Stories for Sprint clearly understood (includes testing)
- Team committed to Sprint Planning

5 Retrospective

When: Last day of Sprint
Duration: 30 minutes
Outcome:
- Appoint a different team member to facilitate the discussion to promote active participation
- Review previous Sprint empirically with team and identify improvement actions
- Assign owners and target dates to actions items

Five steps to implement Kanban

1 Visualize the workflow
- Capture all stages of work from to-do to done; cards represent the tasks going through the process, with each stage being a column.
- Each team defines their own Kanban board

2 Limit work in progress
- Limit the maximum number of tickets on each stage – this will help increase throughput and raise visibility of bottlenecks

3 Monitor cycle time
- Measure cycle time and its variance to identify potential issues and bottlenecks
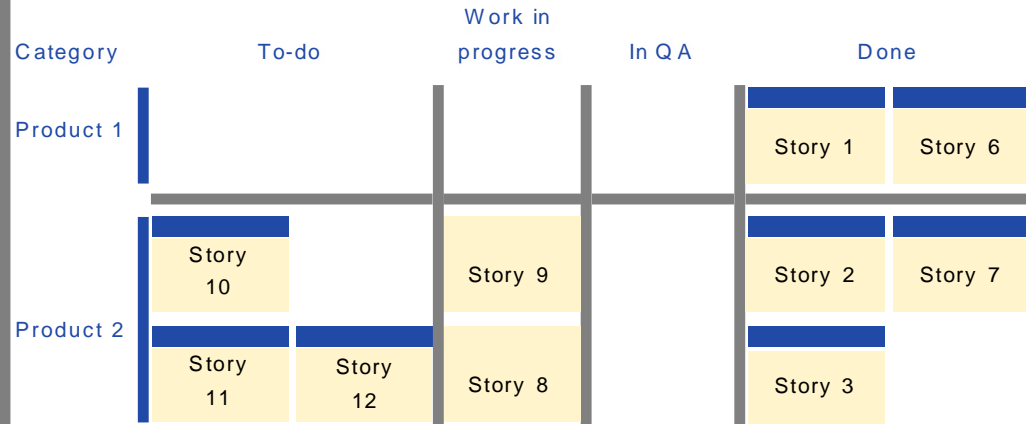
4 Define Explicit Policies
- Define explicit policies to enable the team to agree on the rules before a ticket can move from one stage to the other on the Kanban board

5 Ensure continuous improvements
- Reflect on what is working and identify bottlenecks. Use experimentation to set WIPs, policies and evolve the process

Example workflow

Category	To-do		Work in progress	In QA	Done	
Product 1					Story 1	Story 6
	Story 10		Story 9		Story 2	Story 7
Product 2	Story 11	Story 12	Story 8		Story 3	

References

References

- ***Agile Coaching Workshop-** ASPE Training*
- ***Coaching Agile Teams –** Lyssa Adkins*
- ***The Coaches' Casebook-**Geoff Watts & Kim Morgan*
- ***NCB Agile Coaching Team (ACT) Training Manual-** McKinsey & Co.*
    - *ACT Team: Nikki Chen; Malikah Peart; Angelee Crooks: Michael Grant; Jewel Angus Harris; Cheryl McIntyre-Hall*

- https://7geese.com/how-to-effectively-conduct-one-on-one-coaching-sessions/

- https://getlighthouse.com/blog/free-book-10-steps-amazing-one-ones/