

A #NoFrameworks Approach to Agility



Presented by: Scott Duncan



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Presenter: Scott Duncan

Scott has worked in software since 1972 as a developer, technology transfer researcher, process consultant & trainer in domains such as:

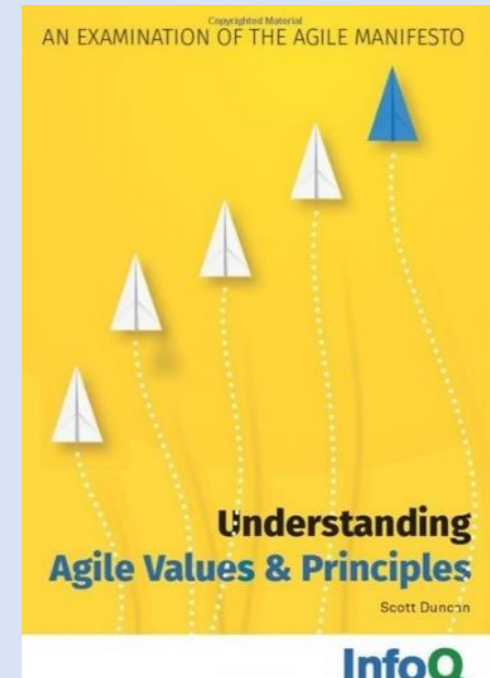
- Book distribution
- Law & public safety
- Mainframe database & natural language query products
- Credit card transaction processing
- Telecommunications (14+ years in Bell Labs, Bellcore, & Telcordia)

Scott has also been a(n):

- Internal ISO 9001 Auditor & CMM assessor
- Member of ISO & IEEE Standards Committees

Since 2004, Scott has been working in various Agile contexts:

- Coaching & training with Scrum, XP and Lean/Kanban (including 2 years on Scrum Alliance Board of Directors)
- Recent full-time coaching work for a company that created software for the design, construction, & operation of “big things” as the enterprise coach for 144 Scrum teams in the US, India, Israel, UK, Germany, France, and Canada.
- Currently independently coaching and training



Agenda/Topics

Frameworks Not Essentially
Bad

Prescriptiveness vs Change

Training & Certifications

Possible Framework
Problems

What Agilists Have Said

Your Potential Role

Next Steps

#NoFrameworks Coaching
Agenda

I Don't Think Frameworks are Essentially Bad

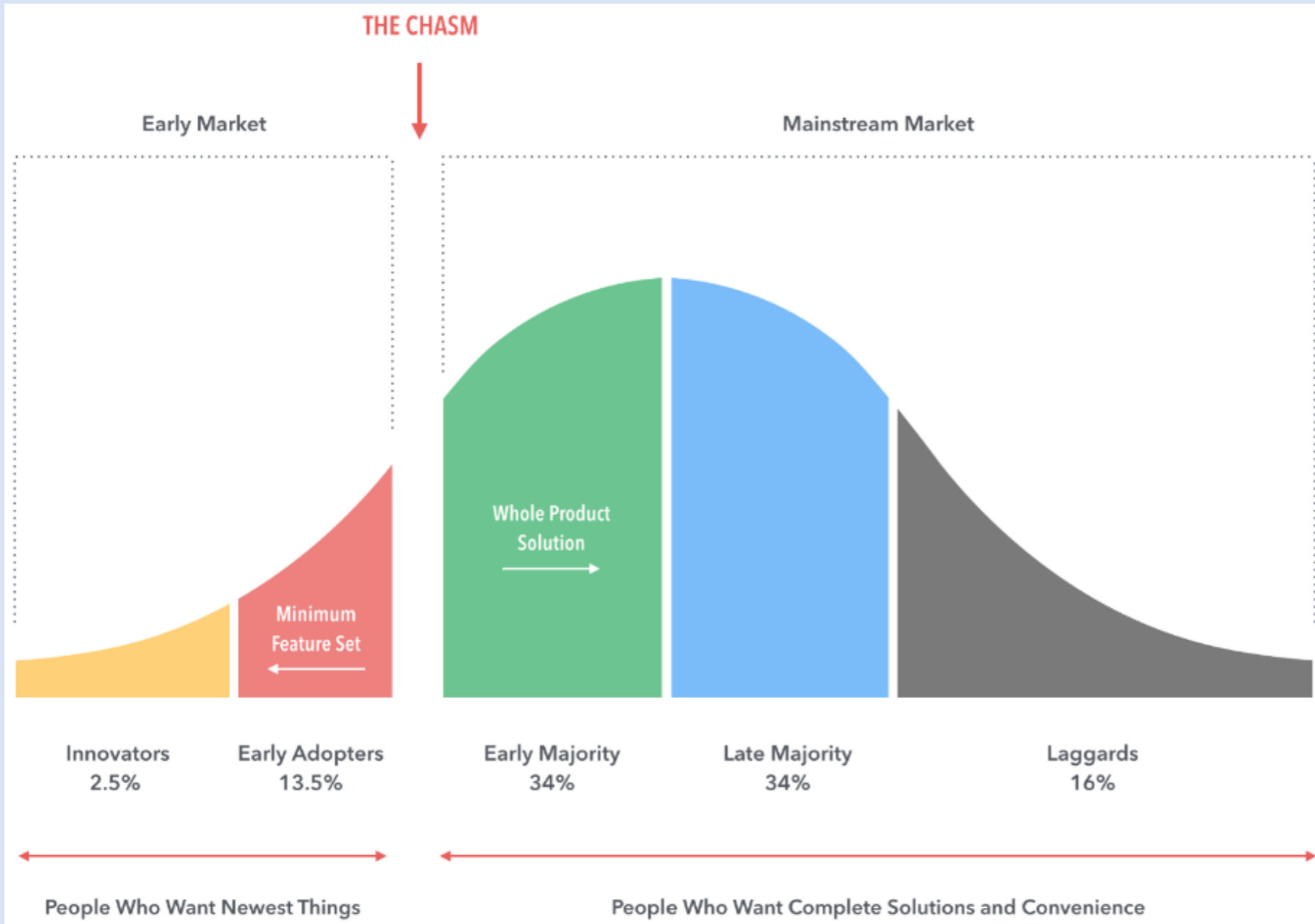
But shouldn't be the first (and only) introduction to becoming Agile.

- Initial framework training (and certifications) can hold back some organizations from becoming truly Agile.
 - It may constrain them to a mental model before they consider their own possibilities.
 - Frameworks suggest that “being” Agile is about “doing” the framework.
 - “Doing” a framework becomes the goal instead of a more meaningful goal or purpose.
- I ask people why they think an Agile approach is the right thing to pursue.
 - Do they understand the implications of the Agile Values and Principles in doing so?
 - Understand values and principles then consider practices to achieve those values and principles.
- The Manifesto authors had different ideas about practices but agreed on a set of values and principles that broadly applied.

Prescriptiveness vs Change

- One of the key ideas about agility is how to deal with change.
 - However, at one level, framework roles and practices are prescriptive.
- Frameworks talk about inspecting and adapting yet do not want you to do that to elements of the framework.
 - If you do, proponents will tell you that not doing the framework “correctly” is why you are not successful with Agile.
- Alistair Cockburn has said, “At the beginning, the rules used to coordinate people’s work helps; as the rules and ceremonies increase, effectiveness per person drops.”
- The prescriptiveness has led to a view of agility as training leading to certifications.
 - I believe this has led to excluding other ways of approaching agility.

Geoffrey Moore's "Chasm"



Source:
<https://smithhousedesign.com/models-predicting-future-geoffrey-moores-crossing-chasm/>

Training and Certifications

- After ~10 years since the Manifesto was written, traditional corporate organizations wanted to pursue Agile.
 - They waited this long to see evidence of legitimacy for doing so and certifications seemed to offer this.
 - But this does not necessarily offer an effective understanding of what Agile means.
- I cannot totally blame frameworks and their proponents as it is what the market sought.
 - Training and certifications grew to fulfill a demand from Early and Late Majority organizations.
- Companies accept such programs without understanding what is trained and what certification means.
 - Such training usually just certifies that a person has been exposed to some knowledge after 2-3 days.
 - Attendees may be better prepared to practice agile ideas, but it does not certify expertise to do this.
- The corporate approach to training is often what people call “sheep dipping.”
 - People, batch by batch, are exposed to a couple days of training then, perhaps with little or no guidance, are expected to practice the framework.
 - It is a significant expectation to go from this to effective performance in a few weeks (if people are even given that amount of time).

Possible Problems with a Framework (Only) Focus

- Missing the purpose of agile activities versus practicing the form of them.
- Limited emphasis on organizational change versus product creation.
- Focus on process principles with a focus on technical ideas declining.
- Not understanding how self-organizing teams fit with managerial or leadership roles.
 - Training focused on specific “how” concepts, not problem-solving techniques.
 - Expecting people to return from training able to “do” the framework as evidence of agile effectiveness.
- Addressing organizational issues without needed customization, e.g.,
 - Learning to support customer solutions in short iterations will take time.
 - Business people may or may not have the patience for that to develop.
 - Thinking of a whole delivery rather than sooner, but smaller, pieces of the delivery.

What Agilists Have Said

Recall Alistair's comments on rules and their impact over time as they increase.

- Joshua Kerievsky has noted that policies and procedures are there to protect the customer and companies but in volume can become stifling.
- Allen Holub has stated that “Frameworks make Agile more palatable to management who don't want to be agile, i.e., something you do around agile.”
 - He also stated “it's all the stuff people have added to it [a framework] over the years” that now make it problematic.
 - Continuing, he stated the Schwaber and Beedle book (*Agile Software Development with Scrum*) claimed Scrum was a wrapper around XP practices to be more acceptable to management.
- Allen Holub also stated that “If you can get a certificate in it, it's not Agile.”
 - “You can't certify ‘do what works & if it doesn't work, fix it.’
 - “You can't certify ‘talk to each other.’
 - “You can't certify ‘build small.’
 - “You can't certify ‘treat people with respect.’
 - “You can't certify ‘pay attention & learn.’”

What Agilists Have Said (cont'd)

- Then there is Alistair Cockburn's Heart of Agile.
 - He says people can tell if they are collaborating, delivering, reflecting, and improving.
 - You don't need to be trained or certified to recognize that these things are (or are not) happening.
 - What you are willing to do about implementing or improving them is another matter.
 - If you want to pursue them, that's an important reason to consider them carefully for the impact that may be required in your organization if they are not working well.
 - Also, Alistair has said that you may know what it takes to collaborate, but may not want to do so.
- Andy Hunt has noted that
 - “agile practices are popular and more-or-less widely adopted, but practiced without understanding what it means to *be* agile We've forgotten that the aim is to adapt” and “tend not to tolerate *any* innovation in our methods.”
 - a “concept such as ‘inspect and adapt’” are likely abilities “only present in practitioners with much more experience” than people coming new to Agile ideas.
 - “Agile methods ask practitioners to *think*, and frankly, that's a hard sell. It is far more comfortable to simply follow what rules are given and claim you're ‘doing it by the book.’ It's easy, it's safe from ridicule or recrimination” and “there is safety and comfort there” though “to be agile — or effective — isn't about comfort....”

What Agile Leaders Have Said (cont'd)

- Ron Jeffries, regarding framework and program competition, said,
 - “It would be far better for us all to shout ‘Breakfast Cereal’, than for different ones of us to be shouting ‘Grape Nuts’ and ‘Corn Flakes’ and ‘Cheerios’ and ‘Cinnamon Toast Crunch’ and ‘Lucky Charms’.”
- Finally, Mike Cottmeyer said that
 - the answer “to ‘Is Agile Right For My Company’ [is] almost always ‘no’.”
 - Though a company could benefit from “a more agile approach to building products, most [aren’t] willing to fundamentally change anything to make agile genuinely work in their particular context.”

My years of working with people and companies have only reinforced my belief in what these agilists have said.

Your Potential Role

HOW WOLVES CHANGE RIVERS

**There is NO Silver Bullet...
Someone has to take the risk**

Next Steps

What does

- ...your organization
- ...your management
- ...your team(s)
- ...you

now need to do to work toward transitioning to a more Agile way of working?

#NoFrameworks Coaching Agenda

Day One

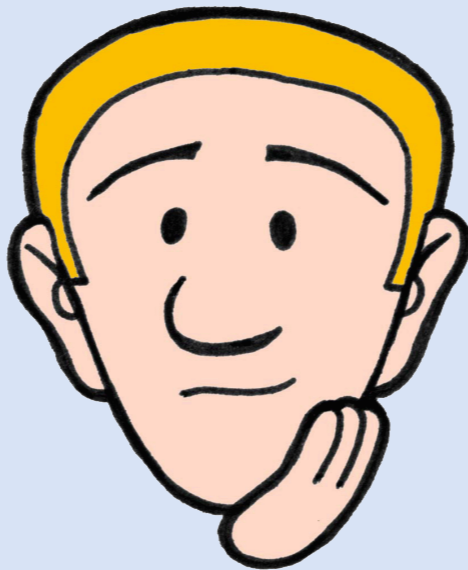
- Mindset
- 3 Things
- Values
- Principles:
 - Customer-Focused
 - Project-Focused
 - Team-Focused

Day Two

- Mindset Breakout
- 3 Things Breakout
- Values Breakout
- Principles Breakouts
 - Customer-Focused
 - Project-Focused
 - Team-Focused

- “Next Steps” Commitments
- Final Adoption Considerations

Questions?



Upcoming Webinars

March 2024: Topic of the Month – Peer Reviews

- March 7: Are Peer Reviews Synonymous With Shift-Left? presented by Robin Goldsmith
- March 13: Peer Reviews presented by Mark Paulk
- March 20: A Formal Inspection Process presented by Linda Westfall
- March 27: What's a 'Peer'? Are They Really Best to Review My Work? presented by Robin Goldsmith

<https://www.softwareexcellenceacademy.com/webinars>

Agile Training Series from Scott Duncan

Instructor: Scott Duncan

The self-paced series consists of 14 modules, each including a video from 60-90 minutes long. These modules are paired in sets of 2 to create seven classes covering:

1. Module #1: Basic Agility Concepts & Module #2: The Agile Manifesto
2. Module #3: Roles & Module #4: Teams
3. Module #5: Frameworks & Module #6: Iteration Events
4. Module #7: Iteration Practices & Module #8: Quality Practices
5. Module #9: Key Roles In More Depth & Module #10: Project Structure/Planning
6. Module #11: Stories Part 1 & Module #12: Stories Part 2
7. Module #13: Leadership & Module #14: Coaching

**Each class (2 modules) is \$100 or
all 7 classes (14 modules) are available for \$500.**

Live Courses From Linda Westfall

Software Risk Management

April 29-30, 2024

9:00 am – 6:00 pm Central Time

Peer Reviews & Inspections

May 13-14, 2024 (New Date**)**

9:00 am – 6:00 pm Central Time

<https://www.softwareexcellenceacademy.com/Live-Courses>

Live Courses From Robin Goldsmith

**True Shift-Left Secrets to Truly Quicker, Cheaper,
but Better Software**

April 11-12, 2024

10:00 am – 6:00 pm Eastern

Avoid User Story Conversation Traps

April 25, 2024

10:00 am – 6:00 pm Eastern

<https://www.softwareexcellenceacademy.com/Live-Courses>

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