



Agile Facilitator Training

Why agile facilitator training?

“The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams”, the Agile Manifesto announces. But what do we need in order to support this self-organization? Could there be any way of helping this special kind of teamwork to emerge? Or is it just a matter of time and patience until things get going?

Following the Manifesto’s statement that face-to-face conversation is a key success factor of agile development, we start our answers to these questions with the basic assumption that everyone is able to communicate. Although this would seem to be common sense, there is strong evidence that this does not match the reality of traditional software development: software architects are busy of planning while teams do “their own thing”; developers don’t talk to testers; project managers aren’t interested on the staff’s perspectives; and neither customers nor stakeholders are continuously asked for their feedback to the development process.

In line with Paul Watzlawick’s famous saying that the greatest enemy of communication is the illusion of it, we observe a lot of failures in Agile processes as well. ScrumMasters and Product Owners stick to the classical command-and-control paradigm; they neglect everyone’s contribution; they miss the diverse energy of the whole group; they don’t ask the right questions; and, if they do, they respond defensively. Obviously, in order to be a successful agile leader, it is neither enough to know the basic rules of Scrum, nor to focus only on content-related issues. Rather, as experience shows, it is the role of agile facilitator which enables successful software development. The creation of this role starts with a general understanding of ourselves and one another and ends with special skills such as understanding group dynamics, following an emergent process or having enough self-awareness to be able to “get out of the way”.

How do you learn?

As with professional communication, the ability to facilitate is not a given. In order to support self-organizing teams effectively, special training is helpful. Combining the essential soft skills of professional facilitation with agile know-how, you develop a very different mind-set to the one conventionally assumed when attempting to “manage” the process of a meeting. By practising a macro-level attitude towards participant’s minds and hearts, as well as micro-level interventions such as listening deeply, inviting people to say more and creating a common understanding, agile facilitator training ignites a sustainable learning process. On the one hand, you use a range of challenging exercises to improve your facilitation capabilities, both on the level of content and on the level of relationships; on the other hand, you learn how these capabilities are shaped by a profound understanding of agile principles. In other words, as a professional agile facilitator you recognize the whole agile process in every single meeting you support.



Professional training makes a difference

Agile facilitator training gives you the opportunity

- to discover the full importance of professional communication as a key factor for agile processes
- to test your facilitation skills and implement new impulses in a series of different exercises
- to increase your self-awareness and your self-confidence as an enabler of successful software development
- to practice specific interventions such as paraphrasing, acknowledging, reframing, summarizing, helpful questioning or providing appropriate feedback
- to see what “good practices”, guidelines and tools are, and how they work in tricky situations
- to improve your ability to communicate, facilitate and lead in an agile environment

Agile facilitator training follows a special learning choreography

To maximize the quality of each participant's learning, Agile Facilitator Training uses

- semi-structured questionnaires to learn about individual backgrounds, needs and interests
- careful clarification of starting points, goals, and key challenges in different Agile environments
- a tried and tested design for a process-oriented training
- a review “meeting” at the end of Day One
- an impediment backlog
- a retrospective as the basis for a short-term evaluation of the training
- a special follow-up coaching, focusing on personal feedback and tailor-made advice for further improvement measures
- a checklist for a mid-term evaluation of the training impact on your daily business.

Your trainers

Siegfried Kaltenecker

Siegfried Kaltenecker is an Organizational Consultant with 15 years of experience in facilitating, training, and coaching. He co-owns and co-manages Loop Organisationsberatung GmbH, an open consulting network, specialised in IT business, financial services, and industry. Siegfried Kaltenecker has already been involved in many international companies such as Alcatel, bwin, Aperture, Hewlett Packard, Raiffeisen, T-Systems or Uniqq.

Peter Beck

Peter Beck is a Certified Scrum Practitioner, a passionate Agile Coach and facilitator with a sound background in software engineering. He has trained and coached development teams, business departments and project managers in using agile planning and engineering practices. He has used his experience as facilitator for project retrospectives, improvement workshops and numerous Scrum meetings to write the Scrum Checklists published at InfoQ.com.