

AgileCraft Tip Sheet

Establishing a Scaled Agile Center of Excellence



Scaled Agile Centers of Excellence

Centers of excellence have long been commonplace in large and medium sized companies, providing guidance and standardization for many long-term initiatives from Business Intelligence to Business Process Management and Technology to HR/Training soft skill improvements. So, it comes as no surprise that with the popularity and rise of agile at scale frameworks and implementations the need to establish dedicated centers of excellence is rising as well.

When establishing a center of excellence, especially for agile at scale, it is important to keep these key six fundamental concepts in mind.



People

People are the heart of any organization. The COE supports people by bringing new ideas into an organization, providing coaching and acting as the change agent to foster these ideas into standard, repeatable operations.



Process

Agile COEs support operations by identifying core processes, establishing and growing the use of relevant metrics, facilitating Communities of Practice and determining tools to support process standardization.



Leadership

Ensure senior management and executive stakeholders are united with the objectives of the COE. Include executives in the process changes to maintain alignment with strategic objectives and goals.



Agile

Agile is a set of processes. The fundamental reason for an agile COE is to provide practitioners (both business and development) with tools, techniques, training and competencies needed to be an agile organization.



Inspect

Establish regularly scheduled inspection points through the supported processes. Understand what's working well and what's not working. Identify where, when and how to improve areas of the supported processes.



Technology

Leverage technologies to standardize processes, provide collaboration spaces and visualizations to enable the organization. COE's often include supporting and training the rollout of new technologies.



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Center of Excellence Backlog

The Work and Intent of the Scaled Agile Center of Excellence

When establishing your COE, keep in mind that no two centers of excellence are alike. Scaled agile centers of excellence can vary widely in starting points, areas of focus and even staffing. The work and intent of the scaled agile center of excellence, however, should remain consistent.



Defining a common set of practices

- Select a framework standard
- Engage in the discussion Lean Portfolio Management vs. traditional waterfall. With the alignment of leadership, choose one and move forward with it
- Establish strategic planning intervals



Consistently assessing the maturity of existing practices

- Hire a vendor who specializes in this area
- Contract expert consultants to conduct surveys and interviews



Provide direct or indirect training to support specific technology sets (tools, content, templates, etc.) that will be leveraged during the transformation

- Establish standard templates within the team tools (i.e., JIRA)
- Create standard roles to support management and decentralization of decision making
 - Be sure to seek guidance from internal legal, compliance and finance teams to ensure external requirements are met



Keep It Simple Stupid! Yes, the “KISS Method” is vital when establishing your COE

- Don't attempt to take on everything at once
- Define what success looks like up front and lay out a plan to get there

Power Tip



Be certain to ensure that a single, integrated, aligned approach exists in concert with other COEs within your organization, particularly if a PMO exists. There is nothing worse than two COEs with conflicting practice standards for causing churn and destabilizing great intentions. This is especially important where Project Management Offices exist. PMOs have historically had responsibility for all things related to the SDLC, so make sure to coordinate with them to define success metrics, processes, (especially funding) and change control rules.

AgileCraft at a Glance

AgileCraft® delivers the most comprehensive software solution available for scaling Agile to the enterprise. AgileCraft transforms the way organizations enable and manage Agile productivity across their enterprise, portfolios, programs, and teams by aligning business strategy with technical execution. The AgileCraft platform combines sophisticated planning, analysis, forecasting, and visualization with robust, multi-level collaboration and management.