The little book of AGILE WISDOM

Agile culture, mastered and manifested

a behavioural change toolkit
by Jérôme Grimm & Anton Podokschik

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For all our loved ones.

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INTRODUCTION

Our journey

Over the last ten years, we have navigated through the dynamic world of Agile. We have coached and led numerous Agile teams, guided large organisations on their Agile journey and empowered many leaders to embrace an Agile leadership approach. Throughout these years, we have witnessed both, successes, and setbacks. A critical factor distinguishing successful Agile teams from the rest is the genuine adoption of an Agile culture. While many teams excel in Agile processes, frameworks, and methodologies, true success lies in also embodying and live an Agile culture. We have seen that teams that fully adopt this culture are the ones that thrive in their endeavours, realising the full potential of Agile principles.

This book is born from those experiences and aimed at leaders like you.

Whether you are a Scrum master, a release train engineer, an Agile organisational unit lead, an Agile coach, or have any other Agile leadership role, it should help you to guide your team to a truly Agile culture.

Adopting an Agile culture is more than just a strategic shift. It is a paradigm change that can be both challenging and rewarding. As leaders, you play a crucial role in leading this change. It is imperative, therefore, to understand the key driving forces behind an Agile culture. Let us explore its essence and look into the core elements that define and shape it.

The essence of Agile culture

Defining an Agile culture can be challenging, with many interpretations of its nature. This book chooses an approach centred on the following six key areas where leaders should actively engage with their teams.

1. **FOCUS ON VALUES** – Build your team culture based on Agile values. Encourage your team to align every action with these values.

2. **FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP** – Ensure your team experiences supportive leadership. Be an Agile role model.

3. **FOCUS ON EFFECTIVENESS** – Help your team focus on the customer. Encourage them to prioritise tasks that directly create value.

4. **FOCUS ON INNOVATION** – Support your team to seek out and try new ideas. Make innovation an ongoing objective.

5. **FOCUS ON PRODUCTIVITY** – Drive with your team efforts to optimise throughput. Streamline workflows and reduce waste.

6. **FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT** – Empower your team to constantly evolve. Establish a continuous learning environment.

We have witnessed firsthand how teams that integrate these pillars survive and thrive, unlocking Agile's full potential. These focus pillars collaboratively contribute to the vibrant manifestation of an Agile culture. Now, the question arises: How do you make these pillars stand within your team?

Culture evolution through behaviour change

Cultural change is a subtle art. While culture cannot be directly reshaped, altering behaviours can influence and gradually transform it. If you want to effectively initiate these behavioural changes, it is crucial that you cultivate an environment where the new behaviours are encouraged and actively rewarded. Moreover, it is important that you recognise that teams require time to adapt to these new behaviours. Overburdening them with too much change at once can be counterproductive. Therefore, pacing the introduction of new behaviours is essential for you and your team to ensure the change is sustainable and deeply integrated within your team's culture.

The crucial role of leadership in cultural transformation

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping a team culture. As a leader, you are both the guardian and a primary influencer of the team culture. You are responsible for setting boundaries, exemplifying behaviours, and steering the team towards desired practices and norms. Your actions and decisions have the power to either reinforce the current culture or challenge your team to evolve. This involves not just directing but also listening, adapting, and growing alongside your team. Effective leaders understand that their behaviour sets the tone for the team's behaviour. Therefore, your commitment to truly embodying the principles of an Agile culture is essential in guiding your team through their transformative journey.

How we support you on the cultural journey

This book is designed to help you on that cultural journey. It offers guidance on how to foster an Agile culture by tangibly working with your team on behaviours along the six mentioned focus areas. Each area has a collection of eleven key behaviours essential for your team's cultural evolution.