# Scaled Agile

Izi Peled

## General

Organizations can adopt the Agile mindset in many ways. Scrum, being an Agile subset, is one of them. However, focusing on Scrum only and not adopting a true End-to-End Lean-Agile process will challenge the organization capability to deliver true value to its customers. The challenge is even greater in large organizations. To deal with this challenge "Scaled Agile" approach may be taken into consideration. "Scaled Agile" approach will enable large organization to sync large number of teams and continuously deliver value.

In this article I will present the fundamentals of the "Scale Agile" approach and how it was implemented in various organizations I work with.

Value Delivery is a complex task. It involves large number of activities and teams that have to be effectively coordinated in order to deliver value. Accelerating value delivery and reducing process waste will require a development of Lean-Agile End-to-End process. For that many issues should be addressed. However, the top two issues will be:

1. Definition of Basic unit of value – this unit will serve as the basis for the value creation and delivery. The organizational backlog will be comprised of these basic units.
2. Teams synchronization mechanism – when large number of teams is involved the organization have to understand how teams are synchronized to deliver the basic units of value within a short time. A good way to sync will be using organizational cadence and establishing Teams-of-Teams.

## Basic Unit of Value

In order to achieve maximum flexibility, the organization can define a basic "Unit of Value" that will be the foundation of the entire End-to-End Lean-Agile process. My recommendation will be to arrange it in a form of MMF – Minimal Marketable Feature:

- Minimal – the smallest possible features
- Marketable – provides significant value to the customer
- Feature – something that is observable to the user

MMFs make the best unit of planning for MVPs/Project/Releases while allowing the organization to manage the changing priorities. As A Result, the organizational backlog will be comprised of MMFs that are managed in one place. The prioritization of the MMFs will be done for the entire organization and be derived from its strategy. As part of the backlog refinement, MMFs are constantly added, sized and prioritized. This will allow a relentless flow of MMFs (that is, value units) towards the teams. Based on the MMFs flow, the teams will able to incrementally deliver business value to the customers at minimum waste and maximum flexibility.

**Teams Synchronization Mechanism**

Once the units of value and its hierarchy is defined the organization will be able focus on the team's synchronization in order to achieve minimum handovers, minimum process waste as well as maximum flexibility.

For that, Organizational planning will be on a quarterly basis whereas the team planning will be on a sprint/iteration basis. The planning will be based on the prioritized backlog MMFs. To achieve maximum synchronization, all teams will work in organizational cadence that will serve as the heart bit of the process. Organizational cadence will be defined in two levels:

- Quarters – organizational iteration of 12 weeks. Represents the strategic/planning level
- Sprints – 6 team iteration of two weeks. Represents the executional level

Supplementary to organizational cadence, all teams may be arranged in a form of Scum-of-Scrum that will serve as a team of teams that is responsible for the teams' synchronization and flow management. This team of teams will oversee the quarterly planning and will make sure the teams properly plan the sprints. Scrum-of-Scrum can be implemented in various ways (e.g. ART - Agile Release Train as defined in SAFe)

**Scaled Agile Frameworks**

The scaled Agile approach is presented in various frameworks such as SAFe of Less. Many organizations adopted these frameworks in different ways. Some of them took it as a whole and some of them adopted parts of it. In my view the right tactic will be to adopt the parts that meet the organization's needs.

In order to enhance organizational flexibility, I have developed in recent years the LAND – Lean Agile Network Diagram, a Scaled Lean Agile knowledge base that was implemented in many organizations. It is a bullet proof Scaled Lean-Agile process that has been continuously improved over the years. After implementing Agile in many organizations, I believe that no matter what you choose, just make it work for you.

**Summary**

Delivering value rapidly is a complex task. Organizations striving to improve Time-to-Value can adopt "Scaled Agile" approach. At the minimum they should define unit of value, organizational cadence as well as team of teams. This will serve as an envelope to the Scrum/Kanban teams.

Furthermore, organizations implementing Agile mindset should consider implementing the "Scaled Agile" approach from the very beginning of the process. Establishing the right approach from the beginning of the Agile journey will allow the organization to grow rapidly when needed.

Good luck!!

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