

# An Agile Mindset for the Post Pandemic Workforce...

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## Future of (Agile) Leadership

BOB ELLIS AND AGILE NEW ENGLAND, SEPT, 2023



## Bob Ellis

### “An Agile Mindset for the Post Pandemic Workforce... Future of (Agile) Leadership”

In this session we will review how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the norms and expectations of our workforce, and how these changes create an unprecedented need for a redefined Agile mindset.

We will discuss three case studies from the lens of intrinsic motivational and continuous improvement measures:

- too fast
- too slow
- just right

We will examine how leaders can avoid the pitfalls of the all too common “TACO” (terms and ceremonies only) transformation and instead to lead their organizations to adopt a mindset that enables a sustainable journey of continuous improvement.

# **COVID HAS MADE US THINK ABOUT LIFE**

WHAT ARE YOUR NEW DEMANDS?

# WORKFORCE DEMANDS

"The meaning of life is to find your gift;

the purpose of life is to give your gift to others."

Pablo Picasso

PURPOSE

	Pre-Pandemic	New Norm
Work from Home	Career Limiting	Norm
Cold symptoms	5 sick days per year	WFH Keep others safe
Child Sick or Day care closed	Not my problem	Accommodate
Work life balance	Work comes first	Life comes first
Disability accommodation	Exception	Diversity Equity Inclusion
Family illness	Support by exception	Support by default
Remote enablement	Office time and f2f is expected; technology limited	Video on is the norm; Chat platforms gaining share over meetings
Equal talk	A types and B types	Effective Collaboration expected among all
Genuine listening	Handful of "great" managers	Leaders promote sharing is caring
Motivation	Work for pay, promotion, career	Work for purpose, autonomy, mastery

# **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION ?**

Genuine Stakeholder Satisfaction ?

# TYPICAL HISTORY OF A LARGE ORGANIZATION

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Economies of Scale – as we grow, we deliver higher volumes at lower cost giving us an advantage

Departments hire experts and maximize efficiency

However, optimization of silos can sub optimize the end-to-end system...

To save money, we also batch. When there is growth and no changes, batching optimizes the system.

However, batching introduces queues and delays. Today 95% of lead-time of a typical organization's delivery is wait time.

Culture is built around the successes of the company, the processes, the efficiency of each department.

Long lead times drives inflexibility, excess inventory, lower customer satisfaction, less learning.

Grow with flow first, cost second  
Or... Change mindset and culture

# **WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION'S COST OF DELAY?**

What area of your industry has accelerating changes ?

# THE (OPPORTUNITY) ENORMOUS COST OF DELAY

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- First mover advantage
- Can test and define new markets
- Can pivot or persevere
- ... or with delays you may have
  - Loss of market share to disruptors; lower lifecycle volume
  - Lower margins
  - Lower earnings x P/E= lower stock price
  - Lost jobs, including executives
- Delays sacrifice
  - Learning
  - Customer feedback
  - Time to revenue
  - Cash flow
  - Market share
  - Competitiveness
- Acquisition becomes reality
  - Who are the start-ups in your industry

Fact: Anthem grew from start up to 60% of claims processing for the medical insurance industry.

Fact: for a \$5B product line, a singular missed GA date can impact life cycle profits by \$1B+

Economies of scale create growth  
Growth at scale is poor at change

Creates opportunities for new business  
Capitalism



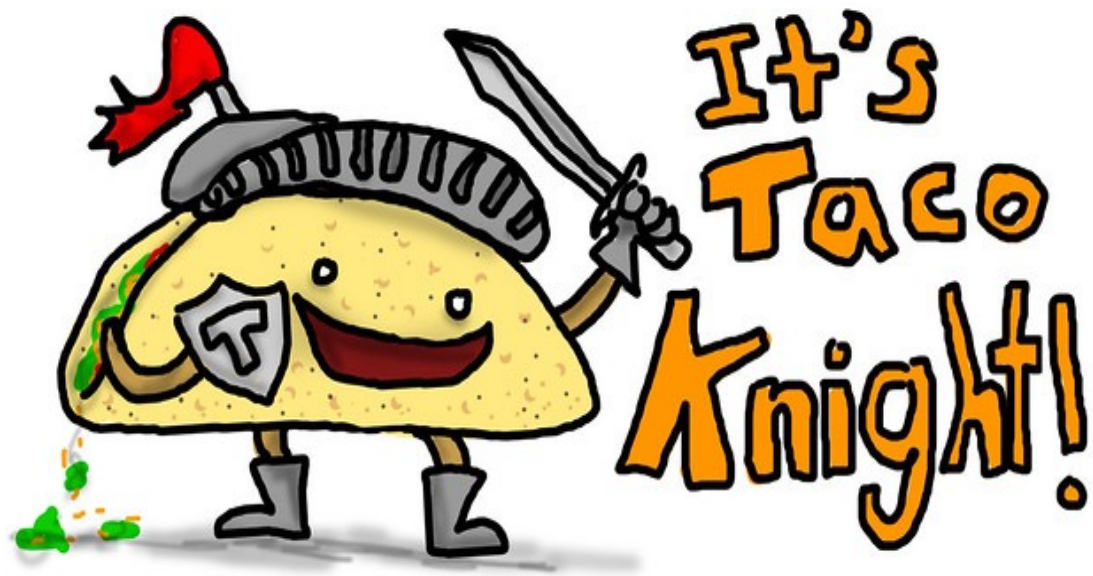
# WATCH OUT FOR TERMS AND CEREMONIES ONLY

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Scrum is a foundation  
for *learning*.

Agile is a mindset

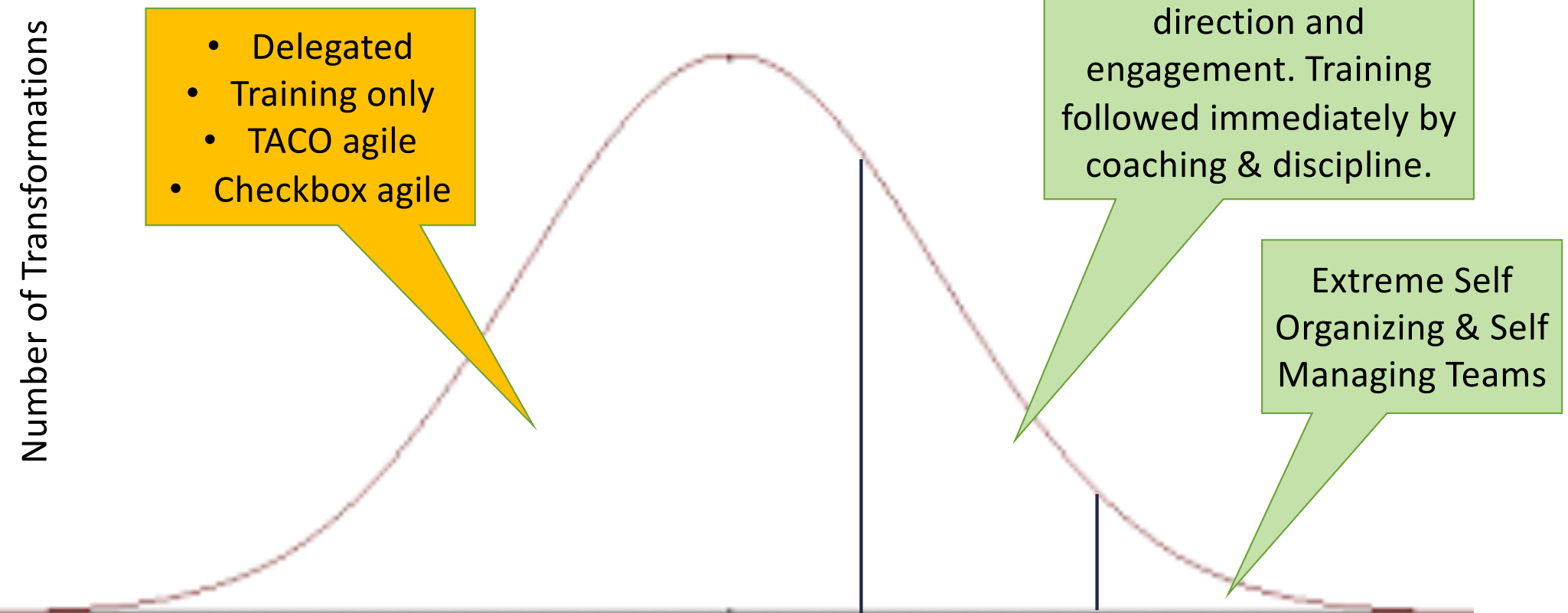
- Agile is a process
- We are done !



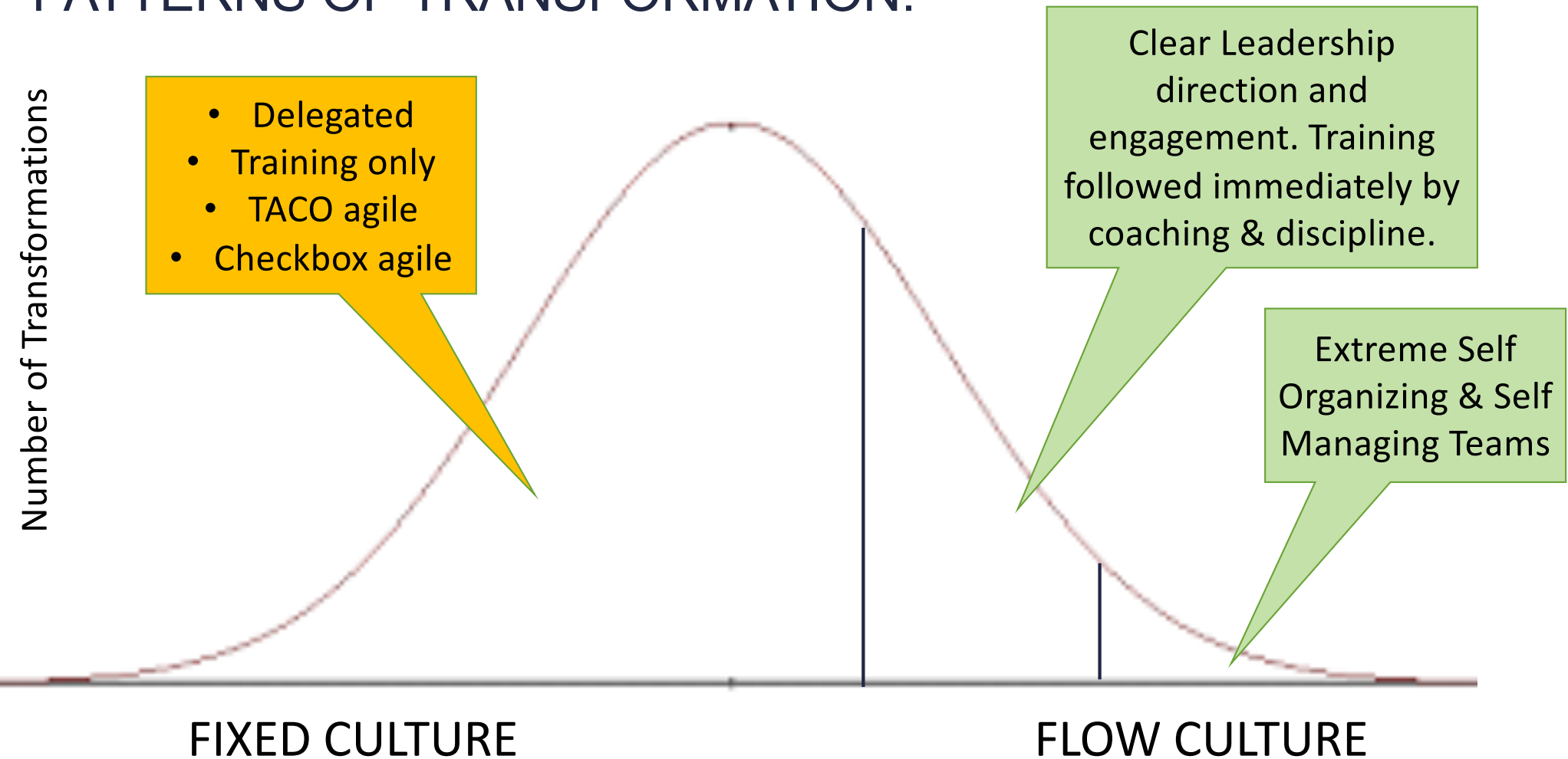
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EVERY DAY, DO YOU ASK OTHERS: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED TODAY?

# PATTERNS OF TRANSFORMATION:



# PATTERNS OF TRANSFORMATION:

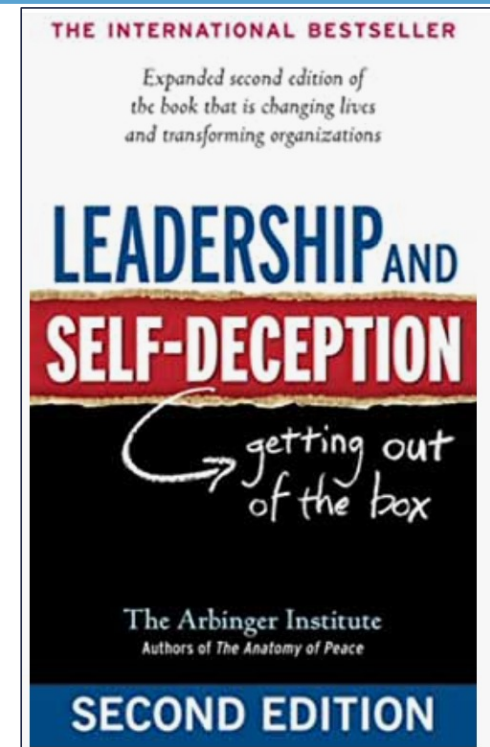


# LEADING THE TRANSFORMATION

- David Marquet
  - Greatness, Turn the Ship Around
- Who's solution is it?
  - The manager or the knowledge worker
  - The Scrum-Master or the team?
  - The parent or the teen
- Are you Stuck? If yes, you are “solutioning”
  - Deming: “Understanding the problem is 95% of the solution”
  - Ask what the problem is... there are always dozens of solutions

**AUTONOMY**

**GREAT LEADERS provide GUIDANCE and BUILD COMPETENCE**



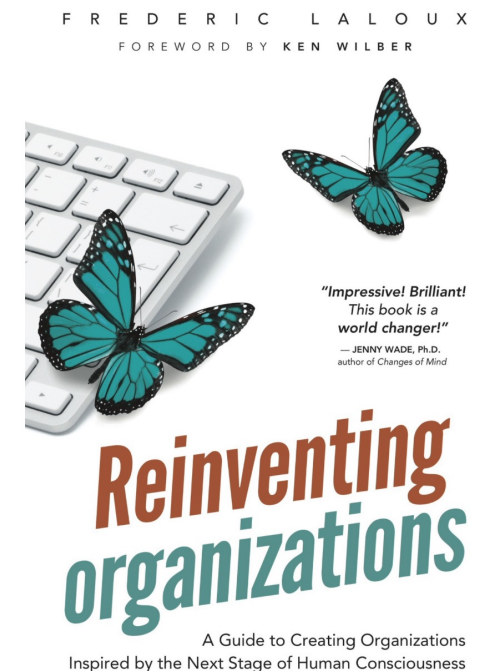
Are we objects? Or people?  
Develop genuine interest

# ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

- **Hierarchical**
  - Four + Layers
- **Profit Maximization**
  - Efficiency
  - Process
  - Return on investment
  - Quarterly earnings
  - Lowest global costs

## Self Organizing and Self Managing Teams

- Whole Foods each department bonused on profit / clocked hours built a market cap 4X normalized that of nearest competitor
- Joss DeBlok created Burtzoorg in 2006 team of 10-12 nurses and no management could provide great care and delighted patients. 9000 nurses and 60% of home health aides in the Netherlands
- FIRST FRC 8567 Team Ultraviolet



AUTONOMY

# INNOVATION... DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, PSYCH SAFETY WITH LEADERSHIP GUARDRAILS

What is your largest risk? “Risk of Silence”

Amy Edmondson’s three step recommendation

1. It’s a complex environment and all of us together can best solve these problems.
2. Confirm one’s own lack of understanding, naivety, vulnerability
3. Genuine interest through deep listening and exploration of others’ ideas

MASTERY



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8>.

TED Talk

# LEARNING TO LEARN... MOST VALUABLE SKILL OF THE FUTURE

For workforce mobility

Foundation of the new higher Ed

For teams to be highest performing

Teams to be resilient

To build mastery

To build relationships

People - reinforce "why"

- Genuine curiosity
- Enjoyment

Higher Ed – question tradition

- Interactive, experiential learning: pairing, mobbing

Organizations

- Hire learners
- Incent learning & teaching
- Incent cross functional skills
- Separate the specialists

MASTERY

GROWTH MINDSET FOR ALL



# FUTURE (AGILE) LEADERSHIP

Communicate communicate communicate your  
inspiring PURPOSE

Demonstrate and reinforce genuine curiosity,  
equal talk time, and an environment of open  
communication, trust and INNOVATION.  
Consistently recognize and reward learning

Increase awareness of organizational “cost of  
delay.” Collaborate on and maintain a backlog of  
decisions to build competency, remove decision  
latency; value AUTONOMY

In summary, reinforce innate motivators

autonomy

mastery

purpose



# Questions?



Open Agility Resource Community  
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## Bob Ellis

Coaching High Potential Leaders | Founder of Open Agility Resource Community | I help product companies ACCELERATE Time To Market | Contact Bob for a no charge consultation

Greater Boston · [Contact info](#)

**500+** connections



Analyze Innovate Transform



MIT Sloan School of Management

A portrait of Bob Ellis, a middle-aged man with short, graying hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored checkered shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

**“Agile Bob”**

**Bob Ellis**

I would be honored to continue our discussion

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# REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Anthony Colanino – Growth Mindset
- Dan Pink – What truly motivates us
- David Marquet - Leadership
- Jeff Sutherland – ANE – Agile history
- Eric Reis – The Lean Startup
- Rich Kasperowski – ANE – High Performing teams
- Google Aristotle Project – What makes a high performing team
- Lisa Edmundson – Psychological Safety
- Arbinger Institute – Leadership and Self Deception
- Frederick LaLoux – Organization structure
- Joe Justice – ANE

These and more can be found at Open Agility Resource Community

[www.analyzeinnovatetransform.com](http://www.analyzeinnovatetransform.com)



Decades of employers, clients and people who gave me the experience, learning, and a fantastic journey