

Creating an Agile Center of Excellence

Purpose of Agile Center of Excellence (CoE)

Change is hard. Adopting, continuously improving, and scaling Agile requires strategy support by a centralized leadership team that promotes collaboration and Agile best practices across the enterprise. ICON can help you protect the investment you have made in your initial Agile Transformation by developing an Agile CoE.

After an Agile Transformation, many organizations label themselves as being Agile, but a closer look may reveal that they are Agile in name only. Furthermore, the Transformation is often too focused at the Scrum team level with little Agile Transformation at the program and portfolio levels, or within the rest of the organization.

An Agile CoE can help you sustain the momentum of your transformation efforts, so that the entire organization realizes the benefits of Lean-Agile principles and practices are effectively scaled throughout business and operations.

What is an Agile CoE?

An Agile CoE provides:

- A gathering of thought leadership to support and maximize the Agile Transformation investment
- An information radiator to share and scale Agile process and practice innovations throughout the enterprise
- Support for strategic enterprise goals and specific program/project goals
- A focus on people and their work in the Agile ecosystem
 - Resource management of Scrum Masters, Product Owners and other key roles may be through the Agile CoE

A desire to support, to sustain, and to scale Agile work and behaviors should be the primary motivation for creating an Agile CoE, and should serve as the foundation for its creation.

An Agile CoE increases the long-term effectiveness of adopting and scaling Agile methodologies. Since very few organizations can support a fully functioning Agile CoE at the start of a Lean, Agile or other organizational improvement program, most start by deploying a steering committee and getting expert training and coaching. ICON offers seasoned Agile Transformation coaches who have deep experience guiding and mentoring effective Agile CoEs.

Why you might need an Agile CoE

An Agile CoE address issues such as:

- People
 - No standardized training for Agile fundamentals
 - No central resource for teams to refer to for help and guidance
 - Assuming that Scrum Master is just a different title for Project Manager
- Processes
 - Current efforts are just mini-time-boxed waterfall phases
 - No common tool usage—not only can a CoE encourage common tool usage, but also the CoE can make education available to facilitate effective tool usage
 - No overarching vision for Agile across teams which lead to confusion
- Practices
 - Agile/Scrum ceremonies are not being held or adhered to
 - Agile development practices are not implemented; such as continuous integration, automated deployments, automated testing, Test Driven Development, Test First Development, readily available environments, etc.
 - Lack of common tool usage
- Portfolios and Programs
 - Little or no cross project/department communication and collaboration on Agile projects
 - General perception that Agile circumvents the need for documentation, pre-deployment testing/inspection, or satisfying regulatory governance practices

Growing an Agile CoE

Growing an Agile CoE takes time. The following steps can be taken to initiate an Agile CoE:

- Gain support at the right level with a focus on delivering value
- Identify people for leadership, and other key roles, that are passionate about deepening their skills and delivering results using them
- Document and share skills and methods; get training and mentoring where skills fall short
- Apply skills in pilot projects, that are important to the enterprise, while mentoring others to expand their capabilities
- Put in place output measures that track results delivered
- Formalize the team, integrate it with strategic planning, and expand it across the organization
- Continue to improve, adapt, and advance capabilities

Initial Duration, Resources, and Key Activities

ICON can help your organization establish a thriving Agile CoE to maintain the momentum of your Agile Transformation.

Initial Duration: 6-8 weeks

Resources: One Transformation Coach

Key Activities:

- Establish Agile CoE Charter
- Create communication plan
- Identify Train the Trainer and Coach the Coach Program
- Develop an adoption strategy
- Gather metrics and feedback
- Report progress
- Identify improvement opportunities

For more information, contact your sales rep or sales@iconagility.com.