

Building a Sustainable Agility Practice

ICON's goal is to empower and improve our clients' own internal coaching organizations by creating a sustainable Agility practice. This entails two important steps: creating an Agile Center of Excellence (CoE), and then building an Internal Coaching Practice within the CoE.

1) Create an Agile Center of Excellence (CoE)

a) What is an Agile CoE?

An Agile Center of Excellence (CoE) is an internal agile consulting practice that enables an organization to be self-sufficient. It's a structure that provides leadership, best practices, training and coaching for driving Lean-Agile adoption across the enterprise. It acts as:

- A governing body for bringing the right training capabilities, consistent coaching practices, and standardization for processes and tooling
- 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 or project goals
- A focus on people and their work in the Agile ecosystem, including resource management of Scrum Masters, Product Owners and other key roles

b) What is the purpose of an Agile 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.

An Agile CoE helps sustain the momentum of your transformation efforts. It helps the entire organization realize the benefits of scaling Lean-Agile principles and practices. A desire to support, to sustain, and to scale Agile work and behaviors should be the primary motivation and foundation for creating an Agile CoE.

Since very few organizations can support a fully functioning Agile CoE at the start of a Lean-Agile 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 to guide and mentoring an effective Agile CoE.

c) What problems are addressed by an Agile CoE?

- People
 - No standardized training for Agile fundamentals
 - No central resource for teams to refer to for help and guidance
 - Role confusion
- Processes
 - Current efforts are just mini-time-boxed waterfall phases
 - No common tool usage or tool education protocols
 - No overarching vision for Agile across teams
- Practices
 - Agile/Scrum ceremonies are not being held or adhered to
 - Agile development practices are not implemented
- 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

d) How do you start and grow an Agile CoE?

- Gain support at the right level with a focus on delivering value
- For leadership and other key roles, identify people 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 important skills in pilot projects, 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

e) Initial Duration and Key Activities

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

Initial Duration: **12-18 months**

Key Activities:

- Establish Agile CoE Charter
- Develop transformation strategy, roadmap and backlog
- Develop reusable assets and service offerings
- Develop Train the Trainer and Coach the Coach Program
- Develop an engagement model for the Internal Coaching Practice
- Provide leadership coaching
- Develop an adoption strategy
- Develop OCM (Organization Change Management) strategy
- Gather metrics and feedback
- Identify improvement opportunities

2) Build an Internal Coaching Practice within the Agile CoE

a) What is an Internal Coaching Practice?

An Internal Coaching Practice is set of carefully selected internal coaches who coach other employees in the organization. To help you build this practice, internal coaches are temporarily coached by an ICON team of experts to grow Agile capabilities within an organization.

b) What is the purpose of an Internal Coaching Practice?

Internal coaches reduce dependency on external coaches over time, which allows agile adoption to scale in a cost-effective manner. An Internal Coaching Practice enables, empowers, and improves your internal coaching capability.

We collaborate with you to create a Coach-the-Coach program and help you gain various certifications and accreditations for coaching future courses and internal instructors.

c) How do you start and grow an Internal Coaching Practice?

- Identify and then strengthen the skills of Agile coaches who can sustain, advance, and spread internal coaching capabilities after external resources depart.
- Create learning cohorts and provide each cohort with knowledge, practice, feedback (during learning and in real-world situations), and confidence to coach

others on how to improve the flow of value within a single team and across teams of teams.

- Understand and appropriately use facilitating, coaching, teaching, and mentoring skills.
 - Improve listening, observing, providing and receiving feedback, and related coaching and continuous improvement skills.
 - Embody the Lean-Agile mindset and coach others in its application.
 - Ensure sufficient understanding of values, principles, patterns, and core practices to be an effective coach. Frameworks would include Scrum, Kanban and Lean, SAFe, design thinking, usability, and/or others as appropriate for a cohort.
 - Recognize one's bias and triggers; use self-awareness and self-management techniques to become and remain an effective coach and servant leader.
 - Explore challenges, opportunities, and then coach to take actions to address the situation.
 - Expand the ability to facilitate change and to deal with conflicts and resistance to change in a positive manner.
 - Establish working agreements and expectations between the coach and the teams.
- Establish and use measures of coaching effectiveness.
 - Inspect and adapt the Coach-the-Coach program.
 - Establish and/or support coaching communities of practice.

d) How do you gain buy-in to the Coach-the-Coach approach?

First, determine if the program and its rollout will be organized by value stream, geographically, or other means. The program's speed will also need to be determined (e.g., run one cohort at a time or run several staggered cohorts in parallel). Then we would work with your internal instructors and select certification bodies to gain accreditation for the courses.

e) How do you identify candidate coaches, organize cohorts, and begin training internal coaches?

ICON uses a mix of communication and recruitment strategies to identify candidate Agile coaches who can sustain, advance, and grow internal coaching capabilities after external coaches depart. Candidates come from a variety of roles and backgrounds, serving all aspects of the business.

To create an effective learning environment and support system, all selected internal coaches are divided into cohorts of 5 – 15 people each. These cohorts are part of a larger coaching community of practice. Each cohort performs a self-assessment and then progresses through the coaching educational and practical sessions together.

ICON pairs with and guides the coaches through a mix of interactive learning sessions, games, practice sessions, and real-world coaching activities. ICON coaches provide continuous constructive and positive feedback. As coaches gain the desired skills and experience, they will graduate from the program, yet continue to be part of their cohort and the community of practice.

f) **How do you Inspect and Adapt to keep improving?**

As the Coach-the-Coach program is executed, you perform retrospectives and assess key measures. We use that data to adjust our approach, accordingly, including adding additional internal coaches as identified and needed.

g) **Initial Duration and Key Activities**

ICON can help you establish a successful Internal Coaching Practice to support, promote and enhance the momentum of your Agile Transformation across enterprise.

Initial Duration: **12 -18 months**

Key Activities:

- Identify Internal Agile Coach candidates
- Create and organize learning cohorts
- Establish and use measures of coaching effectiveness
- Educate and guide candidate coaches through the Train the Trainer and Coach the Coach Program
- Add internal coaches as identified and needed
- Establish and support Communities of Practice, including a Coaching Community of Practice
- Identify improvement opportunities through continuous Inspect & Adapt

References available upon request. Please contact iconsalesteam@iconagility.com