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**SPECIAL
EDITION**

BUSINESS

COACHING

**EXTREME AGILE
LEADERSHIP**





EDITORIAL

Agile is one of the most interesting stories to be told, especially these days. We can apply agile mindset in everything we do, both in business and in personal life.

In this special edition, we want to share the most useful articles that come from Sriharsha B, an agile caretaker and a good man. Publishing this format, we want to collect and share with you all the articles published by the authors only in the online edition as an added value to your knowledge. The thematic edition of the magazine always focuses on a single topic, and this time it is agile mindset.

The special edition is the latest format of the magazine that we've published. This magazine is smaller in format, but we tried to keep it large in content and design.

Enjoy your reading and stay safe!

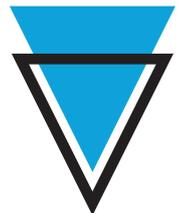
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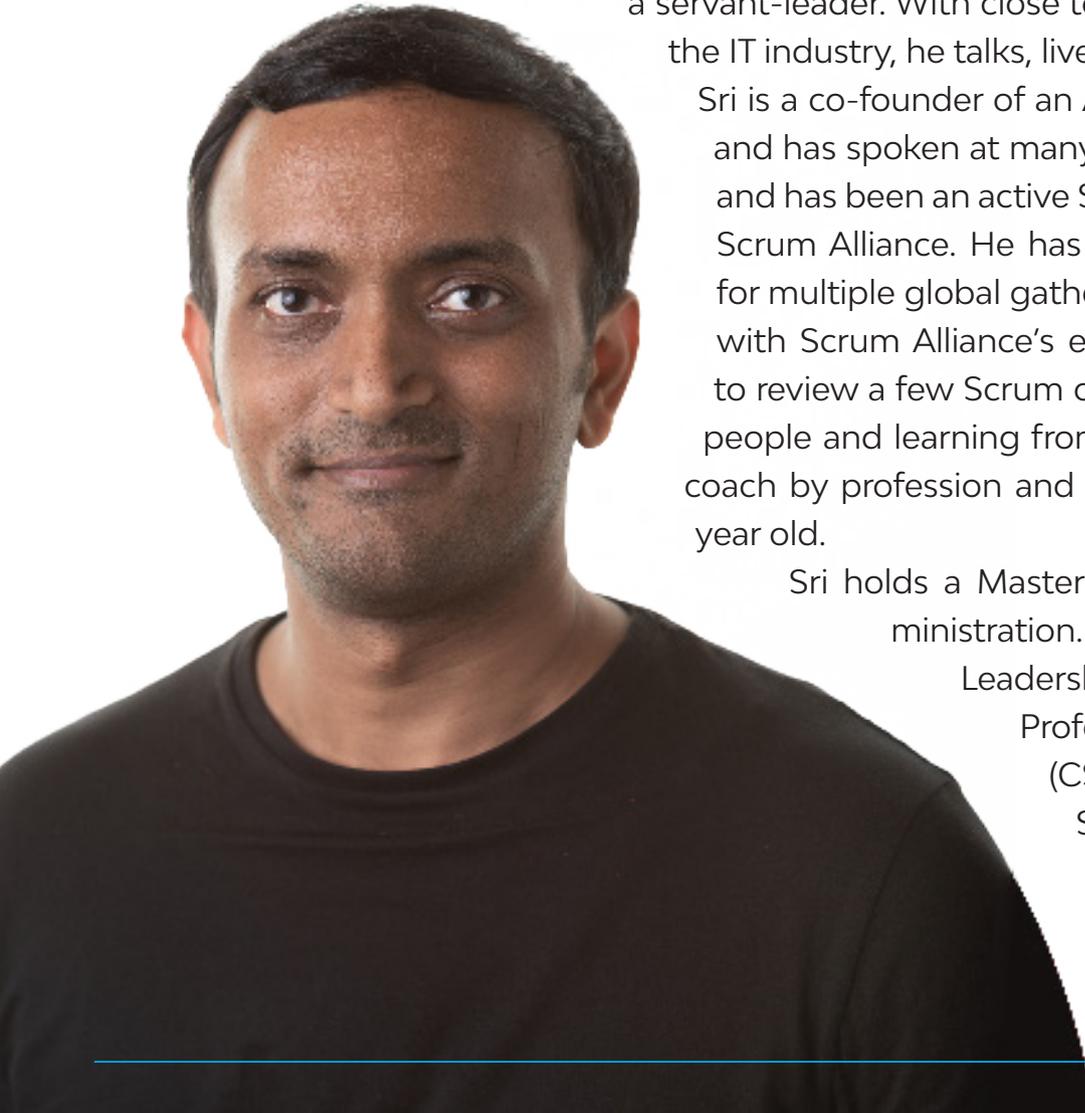


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ABOUT AUTHOR



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Sri is a co-founder of an Agile group in India- APGI, and has spoken at many international conferences and has been an active Scrum squad member with Scrum Alliance. He has been a program reviewer for multiple global gatherings. He has also worked with Scrum Alliance's e-learning curriculum team to review a few Scrum courses. Sri enjoys meeting people and learning from everyone. He is a Scrum coach by profession and is a proud father to his 10 year old.

Sri holds a Master's degree in Business Administration. He is also a Certified Agile Leadership (CAL1), Certified Scrum Professional Scrum Master (CSP-SM), and a Certified Scrum Master (CSM).

A FATHER - SCRUM MASTER OF THE FAMILY!



*Photo Source:
My son and I @ Scotland
looking at the horizon*

“The greatest mark of a father is how he treats his children when no one is looking.”
- Dan Pearce

I am sure most of you have seen or heard this statement. This has a deeper meaning, isn't it?

While any man may become a father of a child, it is important to become a special dad. Every dad's dream is to be a special dad to his children. The world looks at you in a particular way when you are a couple, as soon as you become a father, the whole equation changes, you now have a new little version of yourself to care for.

As uncle Ben stated, *“With great power comes great responsibility”*; Your responsibilities increase by multiple folds. You will stop thinking about 'I', 'myself' and start thinking about 'We', and 'US'. The transition of I to We to Us usually happens within minutes. A few responsibilities that a father assumes gracefully are:

1. A father takes care of his children's emotional and physical well-being.
2. A father protects his children and be their representative when required.

3. A father's lead by example is a stand out. Be a servant and take care of household and be a leader of the pack to drive them onto the right path.

4. Love and respect each other.

All the dads reading this post, if you are doing well on all four, then give a pat on your shoulder, because you deserve it more than these words explain.

Now, why am I talking about a father here in my Agile post? Yes, there is a reason for it.

Being raised under the guidance of a great father for the last 38 years, being a father for about 9 years, and having spent some time in Agile now, I can draw a great deal of similarities between the role of a dad in a family and a role of a Scrum Master in an IT company.

You have seen the father's responsibilities above. While that said, who is a Scrum Master? what are the responsibilities of a Scrum Master? How can you conclude that a Scrum Master is similar to a father?

Let me explain!

A Scrum Master by role is a Servant Leader.

A servant leader as stated by investorsin-people.com is:

“Servant leaders ultimately seek to cultivate a deep understanding of the personal needs, emotions, fears and skills of different stakeholders in the organization. This understanding allows the servant leader to assist and empower these people to be the very best they can be”.

My understanding of the words “Servant Leader” is very simple. Serve your people (team) as a servant to ensure they have no blockers or any impediments to move ahead. At the same time, be their leader or their representative to hold their hands and embark on the journey towards meeting the organizational goals.

Scrum Master is the person who shields the team from all the external interference and interruptions. Scrum Master is the one who owns the process, the Agile process. That’s his baby. He must take care of it and ensure people adhere to it.

People may not be influenced by listening to talks, reading textbooks, and internet pages. They are influenced and change their mind-set based on how influential you are and how impact-fully you facilitate your teams. Therefore, a Scrum Master must lead by the example always.

Keep yourself updated with the trends. Be at it all the time. Else, you may fall behind in the competition. Empower and nurture people to take up more responsibilities and celebrate their success as yours.

With all these said about Scrum Master, I am sure you have already drawn some conclusions yourselves on the similarities that I’ve talked about so far.

Just to put them down:

A Father



Protects his children from any external and internal deterrents.

Removes all sorts of hinderances to ensure his children are safe.

Single point of contact or represents his children at a wider community, social gathering, any other place.

Celebrates his children's success like his.

Absorbs any kind of stress and pressure to ensure that's not percolated down to his children and they remain happy and smiling all the time.

Walk the talk. He follows his own preach to ensure his children are disciplined and raise their bars when they grow old.

A Servant Leader at home.

A great motivator and encourages his children to go get something big.

A Scrum Master



Protects his/her team from any third person's interference.

Removes all the blockers that the team is facing to ensure they continue with their work to achieve their goals.

Represents the team in any Scrum of Scrum calls, any wider meetings etc. to ensure the team is not diverted from their focus to deliver sprint goals.

Celebrates team's success like his.

Takes the heat off from the management for the failure of delivery, not achieving the Sprint goal so that team does not get demotivated.

A Scrum Master is also called the Agile owner, he is the father of Agile processes. He should ensure everyone in the team follows Agile to its best.

A Servant Leader for the team.

A Scrum Master is a leader who motivates, nurture his people to master the skills that they are good at and not push what a Scrum Master wants them to excel in.

AGILE BEYOND THE DAILY STAND - UP MEETINGS (DSMs)



With so many opportunities to collaborate these days via Agile webinars, conferences, meetups, etc., I am sure you have heard this 'Akashvaani' (a celestial voice from the sky/heaven) stating "Don't just do Agile, be Agile". What does this really mean? Have you thought about it?

Here is my attempt to decipher that 'Akashvaani'.

A little story to narrate; a few years ago, I was working with a banking client who like everyone else wanted to go the Agile/Scrum route. When I visited the location of work to see how things are done (*Gemba*) at that moment, I asked them these questions:

1. "What do you really want? In addition,
2. "Why do you think you should adapt Scrum/Agile?"

To be very honest, I was not surprised with their answers to my questions. They said we do not know. We have another competitor in banking, moving into Agile/Scrum and hence we want to as well.

This is just 'doing' Agile without knowing what you are getting into. This is like taking a plunge into the pool without knowing to swim. The result of this 'forced activity' would

be a series of failed agile projects, less staff engagement, over killing a framework or a methodology, which may eventually lead to customer dissatisfaction in turn falling flat to taste the dust. What they did was just to embrace the word Agile and that's about it!

Why is it like this? Misconception may be...

There can be many reasons to it. To name a few:

- A group of people/organization think or possibly even conclude that if they are holding the DSMs, then they are Agile.
- Another group defaults it is thinking to Scrum, when they make the move from any traditional ways of working to the Agile ways of working.
- Company's culture not in-line with Agile values.
- Lack of experience with Agile ways of working.
- A namesake pressure from the client to follow Agile.

These may happen due to the lack of understanding of what Agile is all about, or someone within the organization who holds the baton to transform and fails to include all perspectives, areas and levels (People, Process and Technology).

Agile Adoption is a big thing. I am so glad I fell in love with it the day I understood how it can create miracles within me. If you want to 'Be Agile', then look beyond just doing the DSMs. Don't just apply the Agile concepts and practices only at work, for the sake of it.

The very first thing I tell people is to get their understanding clear and descriptive. I would not want to tell you how you would accomplish that, as you know there are many ways to deepen your understanding in this subject and believe in that.

You can start being Agile by looking for all the opportunities you can possibly to be Agile. For instance, try and introduce a practice of visualizing the workflow at home. You may have your personal reminders in your diaries or possibly your spouse reminding you to carry out a few repetitive tasks daily, weekly and/or monthly. Try and bring those on to a Kanban board and have an informal agreement between your family members to diligently follow it. You do not have to impress anyone around you but for your own self. Also, inspect and adapt. Use this board to slot your work items and see what works best for you and your family.

Here is my Kanban board that I have @ home on my refrigerator.



My family and I use this board to the best of our conscience & capabilities. This has done some miracles to me and my family to manage our tasks daily, weekly and monthly (*change for better - Kaizen*).

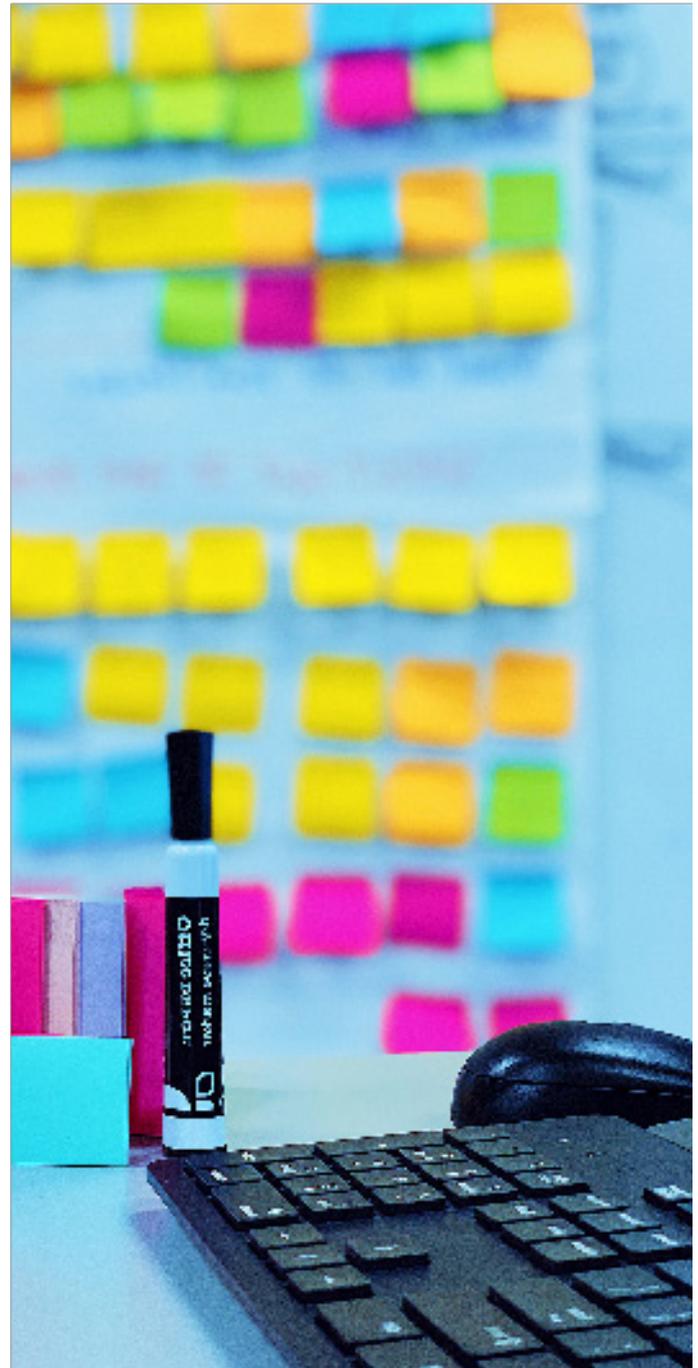
Alongside my day work, I volunteer into many other Agile activities that are happening globally. One such activity is for a group that I co-founded in 2015 called Agile practitioners' Group of India (APGI). The motive of this group is to speak Agile awareness within India. We conduct up meetups, Webinars and conferences. I have a great volunteer team within the group every year that is filled with energy and they always want to execute all the activities to put up a great conference using Agile ways. We inspect and adapt every week, we have a board to

track our tasks, we have task owners, and we do weekly Stand-up meetings to discuss our plan for the next seven days there on. There are specific roles within the volunteer team like PO, SM and team members that kind of helps us in running the calls, facilitating them and of course in the decision making (*a real walk the talk moment*).

To summarize, Agile is not 'only' about facilitating or running your DSMs every day. If you understand the way it works, Agile becomes your way of life. The more you practice, the merrier you will like it.



*Do not just do Agile,
BE Agile...!*



THE FORGOTTEN 'SALT & PEPPER' OF AGILE!



Photo Source:
www.pexels.com

How do you like your favorite dish without Salt or/and Pepper? The answer to this question is an obvious one isn't it? Do you think you can consume your food without these two ingredients? Yes, you can. But will it be to the best of its taste and your liking? Maybe not.

Are these two ingredients used just as a seasoning on the food or do they really have some value too?

Salt is a very essential part of our diet and health. It serves as the main source of sodium and chloride in the human diet. Sodium is essential for nerve and muscle function and is involved in the regulation of fluids in the body, while Chloride ions serve as important electrolytes by regulating blood pH values and pressure.

Pepper on the other hand is the source of minerals that help improve your stomach's ability to digest food and promotes intestinal health.

Ok, is this some kind of a food recipe or a dietician blog? I see there is 'Agile' in the title. What is this salt and pepper doing in Agile?

Let's go on a binge!

My guess is almost all who are reading this article are familiar and have had these below statements or questions fallen on to their ears.

"Looks like we are doing waterfall within two weeks and calling it Scrum."

"We should have an MVP at the end of every sprint, else we are not doing Sprint"

"Do we have a defined DOD/DOR all the time to comply with?"

"We are ready to do Agile, but our managers won't let us do"

"There is no motivation to work here anymore, regardless of us doing Agile or not"

"I'd like to make a lot of changes, but my manager will shoot them down straight away"

Have you come across these statements in your daily chores of work life? If yes, then hopefully this is a good read for you.

Being caught up in the need of the hour, being a participant in the race, being at a competitive edge all the time, have we forgotten the basics of what those 17 software professionals laid out in early 2000s?

Yes, I am talking about the Agile Manifestos and Principles. Most of the organizations today are some way or the other transforming

themselves from traditional way of developing software to Agile ways of working. How different is it? How difficult or easy is it?

A little stat from Agile Alliance: **42%** of the organizations *fail* to run projects in an Agile way, just because of their company policies and philosophies wouldn't match the Agile core values.

If I may give you a list of pointers that you can think through.

The organization Structure/ Company policies and processes: How does the organization structure help you in being Agile or Scrum? How accommodative are we as an organization to change or tweak a few policies to accommodate the change?

How do you want to **break the silos and help team members collaborate well?** Be it within teams, within the organization, or even with the customers and stakeholders. Agile always breaks the silos and promotes flattening the hierarchy within an organization. And that's for a reason, all these tie up to encourage and empower people, to decouple the command and control from the managers and move it straight down to the shoulders of the team members.

How good is your infrastructure to support you to collaborate? Do you have machines with the right configuration status to assist our customers on time? Considering the world is moving into distributed way of working, do we have good live collaboration tools to stay in touch with your extended team on the other side of the shore? Do we have good meeting rooms to carry out some essential discussions in the vision of enhancing your customer experience?

What are the ways to motivate your teams within the organization? Do you have any Rewards and Recognition mechanism to motivate your employees within the organization?

How equipped is our Learning and Development team to embrace the change? Considering this change is becoming inevitable these days, be it client driven or organization doing it voluntarily, educating the employees within the organization becomes extreme critical and important. And educating can happen through many ways, one of them is internal training programs. How adaptable is our Learning and Development to embrace the change?

The **mindset of people** has always been, it's not mentioned in my roles and responsibilities, why am I doing this task? So, to break this wall is our Human Resources Department ready to modify the job and role descriptions to **embrace the change and go Agile** on an Enterprise/org level?

Change in Customer engagement process?

What is your current customer engagement strategy? How frequent do you collaborate with your customers? Remember, customer collaboration over contract negotiations? Do you have a feedback mechanism within the organization? If yes, how can you tailor it to suit different client engagements within?

How adaptive is your organization's leadership team to change? Are they OK to fail fast? Are they OK to inspect and adapt?

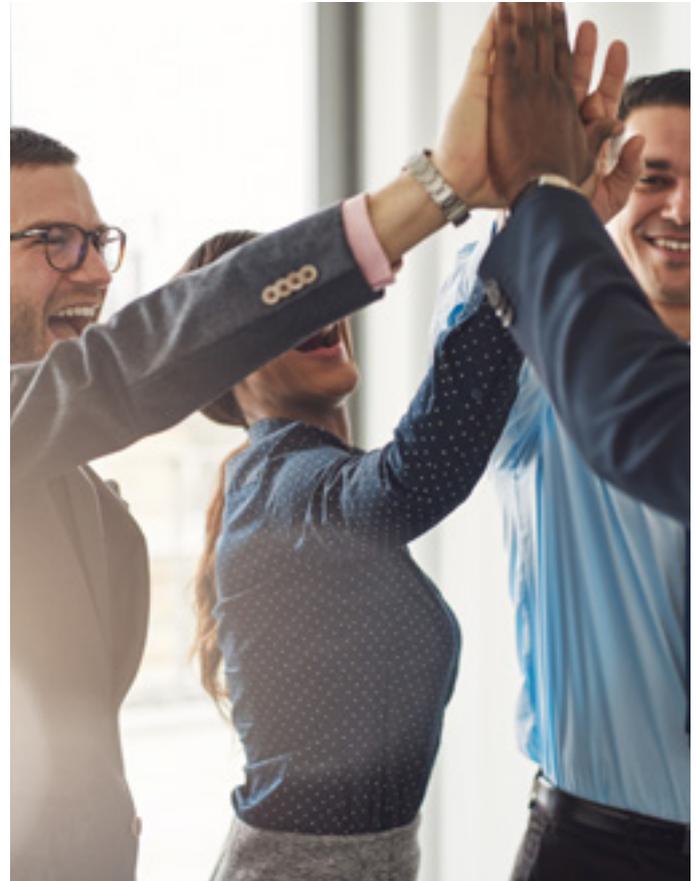
How capable is your organization to adapt all the technical practices within that enhances agility?

All these are combined to be termed as '**Culture**' and acts as an 'ingredient' or 'Salt and Pepper' to our main course called 'Agile'.

Remember, ***Agile is not a destination, it's a journey!***

As long as the culture aka the above mentioned 'Salt and Pepper' aren't forgotten while starting the journey or while on the journey, you will always give your customers a great delightful experience. These are just the pointers one can think of before they make that big decision. Because once 'THE' decision is made that we want to jump on that boat, there is no looking back!

Happy Agiling!



UBUNTU: FROM HUMAN BEING TO BEING HUMAN!



I'd like to begin this blog by asking our readers three simple questions, which are:

1) Your colleague accuses you of spilling company secrets. What would you do?

- a) Say something back
- b) Leave the place
- c) Don't say anything and hope your co-worker leaves the place

2) What will you do if you confront a bear?

- a) Run
- b) Fight back
- c) Play dead

3) Your team member Sam calls you at 9 AM to let you know that he can't attend the critical customer meeting as he must visit the grocery store today at the same time, what will you do?

- a) Approve his absence
- b) Decline the request

So, what happened within you when I asked these three questions?

Going back to the timeline of history, we all know about 13.5 billion years ago, the matter and energy appeared, which in turn gave birth to physics & chemistry, followed by the formation of Earth and then the emergence of organisms. Today humans transcend the

boundaries of planet Earth while we fear if tomorrow the humans are replaced by the super-humans.

With this history of evolution, human brains have also evolved to a greater extent. As soon as you are put into a situation, physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived event, attack, or a threat for survival.

This response is called **Fight** or **Flight** or **Freeze**.

Now, let us see a few virtues of humanity. Every Agile training starts off with quoting Agile/Scrum values however, how many of the participants understand the real intent of those values being in there? How many of our leaders, managers, front line employees know about the virtues of humanity?



We all know Openness, Courage, Commitment, Focus & Respect are the values. But there are a few more that we have never considered at home or at our workplace.

Like,

- Tolerance
- Wisdom
- Generosity
- Courtesy
- Integrity
- Justice
- Compassion
- Kindness
- Empathy

This brings me to a point to ask all my readers, if you have faced a similar situation as I have:

- a) I want to start a business and I want to do my own podcast. But life gets in my way.
- b) I want to spend time with my kids after work, but these emails have to be attended to...
- c) I don't know which task to prioritise today

If you have experienced a similar situation like me, then where do you think the problem is? What do you think is missing?

Personal Agility can be a possible way to work around the situation. Let's look at it!

Peter Stevens and **Maria Matarelli** define

Personal Agility as a simple framework for people who want to do more that matters and have more impact through their actions. In a nutshell, the Personal Agility System is:

- a simple framework
- six powerful questions
- one weekly event
- a set of tools to achieve one's Personal

Agility

After going through their website, you may probably ask how and when do I start the journey towards achieving my Personal Agility?

There is no better time than now to embark on this journey of your Personal Agility.

The answer is **NOW!**

As we across the globe are affected by the Pandemic, work from home, lock-downs, this is the time we start learning something new and put it to action.

When I think of Personal Agility, I think about these four steps:

EMPA:

Emotional Agility

Mental Agility

Physical Agility

Approach

Let me take you through each step one by one:

E – Emotional Agility

It is all about freeing yourselves from any entanglements, being adaptable to change which can make you strong, resilient and confident, and thrive in Work and Life.

M – Mental Agility

Mental Agility refers to mental quickness and sharpness of an individual.

P – Physical Agility

We all understand, there is no silver bullet for you to stay healthy all the time. Investing in your personal well-being by taking time to rest, eating food that energises you, drinking water and getting plenty of fresh air and exercise, will put a spring in your step.

A – Approach

Decide your way of doing things. Be it a Scrum, Kanban or a set of good practices that work for you. Just have an approach in place.

This is my approach; I use Kanban as my approach to achieve my personal agility at home.



So, what you see from this blog is that I've talked about the Fight, Flight & Freeze responses, the virtues of humanity and now the Personal Agility. Now let's see how they are interconnected.



The EMPA formula sits right in the middle of these three pieces. If you go back to the question, **If your team member Sam calls you at 9 AM....** the answer that you had in mind comes from the virtues from within you like Empathy and Compassion.

Likewise, if a web development firm had a target to build a \$100 million business, but due to the current COVID-19 situation, they know they could only achieve \$85 million. Is that acceptable to you?

In this situation you can really have two options:

Option 1: The outcome won't change but actions to achieve that can change - like work for extra hours a day. This can be a **Fight** response to the situation.

Option 2: Redefine the outcome to be something different, not the same like before, but acceptable. This can be a **Flight** response to the situation.

So, this is where your human elements of caring, compassion and empathy comes alive in you, which makes you a true human being.

A few tips to be a human that just be a human being during these COVID-19 times and beyond. I'd like to categorize these under the below five headers:

Connect

- Have set work timings even if you are working from home to avoid burnouts
- Connect with your families & friends
- Take a break in between your work-day to walk your pets, take your children to parks etc.
- Keep Friday post lunch time open for a virtual catch-up over drinks - don't talk about work, talk about families, pets, children, hobbies etc.

Plan

- Help plan the tasks for your team
- Prioritise them using priority mappings (as explained within Personal Agility Framework) or using any other visual information radiators
- Offer help to team members, lend a hand, plan for contingencies
- Plan for timely breaks & meals
- Plan your expenses & finances

Act

- Responsible
- Be Patient
- Be respectful
- Humility is the key, be modest
- Be open to ideas from the team and

Embrace them

Communicate

- Be open and transparent
- Voluntarily talk to people and don't wait for them to come to talk to you
- Be Polite
- Be tolerant

Compassion

- We all are in this together. Be compassionate towards your fellow human being (be it your team or your family member).
- Be empathetic.

I am because we are!

Ubuntu exactly means this. We think we operate individually in this world we are living in, which is not true. We are all intrinsically connected with each other and all the actions that you perform affects others and even the mother nature in many ways.

So, as the great leader MK Gandhi once stated, *"Be the change you want to see in the world"*. You should walk the talk. Being a human is more important as human beings.



EXTREME OWNERSHIP; WE ALL ARE LEADERS!



How many of you have read this book “*Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy Seals Lead and Win*” by Jocko Willink & Leif Babin?

We did a little ping-pong conversation between us about the excerpts of the book and how we draw parallels to the Agile principles that was crafted by seventeen software authors in 2001.

Here is my attempt to write these comparisons between Extreme Ownership principles and Agile principles for our readers. I would leave it to you to interpret on how these principles relate to your professional and personal lives.

The book is authored by two Ex-US Navy Seals who narrate different situations that they have come across during their service and how important it is for one to be an effective leader to overcome those situations and be on the right side of the result at the end of the day.

The book explains 12 extreme principles of Extreme Ownership which is nicely categorised into three parts:

- 1) Winning the War Within
- 2) The Laws of Combat
- 3) Sustaining Victory

Before I go down the route to interpret my comparison between these 12 principles and Agile principles, let me pen down my understanding of what ‘Extreme Ownership’ is.

The term **Extreme Ownership** basically means Leadership as something that is applicable to every layer, every person, every hierarchy within a troop or a military group, and *not* just about the top layer of the group.

They go further ahead to explain Extreme Ownership as each person’s responsibility and accountability and not just one person who is the head of the group. They must take their own decisions for the better good of the group or the community or perhaps, even a country.

Talking about everyone becoming a Leader, there are a few more important leadership characteristics that one should know and master such as being humble and controlling your ego as a leader. Dan Rockwell is called as a ‘Leadership Freak’ and he describes 5 practices of a humble leadership

Those are:

- 1) Bragging about others.
- 2) Courageously learn.
- 3) Turn conversation towards others, rather than a self-centric talk.

- 4) Raise your hand when it is time for you to take the responsibility and
- 5) Combine passionate drive with humility.

So, let us get straight to the principles.

WINNING THE WAR WITHIN

Extreme Ownership Principle no 1: Extreme Ownership

Leaders must own everything in their world. They cannot go blaming others for their failures. They are responsible for everything - that's Extreme Ownership. We often have people say, "It is not my job". That is where we differentiate between an efficient leader and an inefficient one.

Extreme Ownership Principle no 2: No Bad Teams, Only Bad Leaders

Teams that are usually driven by their superiors can sometimes slip into this mode of finding excuses that we are not the reason for failure, but we did what our manager told us to. Have you heard that?

This principle talks about leaders not making any excuses for the failures and taking complete ownership of it. The first principle leads us to think everyone's a leader by taking re-



sponsibilities for their failures, which means there are no bad teams. Each one within a team is a leader, there can be only efficient and inefficient leaders but *not* bad teams.

Extreme Ownership Principle no 3: Believe

This is such an important principle to me. In order to convince and inspire others to accomplish a mission, a leader (you) must be a true believer in the mission. Simon Sinek is a renowned Leadership Speaker, and he says, *"There are only 2 ways to influence the human behaviour - manipulate it or inspire it"*.

Agile/Scrum teams should believe in what they do, be it sprint goals, or the management team believing in their team delivering value to their customers. This should work both ways - the top-down and the bottom-up. This ties well with Agile principle no.5, *"Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and*



Good and effective leaders control their ego. Agile Maven states *“One of the examples how most organisations fuel the ego is during recruitment when we expect a certain number of years of experience for a job. I won’t deny that a certain level of skills is necessary for any job, blanketing it to believe that this comes only from years spent in an industry seems wrong. And this usually fuels the Hippo behaviour during meetings or the Highest Paid Person’s Opinion. If we see in a way, the newer generations have access to more information and experience that was ever available to their relatively older generation. So, in theory, the skills of someone who’s spent 15 years in an industry is possibly the same as someone who’s spent 10 years, just because they came 5 years later”.*

support they need and trust them to get the job done.”

Extreme Ownership Principle no 4: Check The Ego

Ego is a big impediment in many ways when you want to become a successful leader. It just wouldn’t allow you to think outside of yourself, which will close those openings that lead you to become an effective leader.



Now, about controlling ego, it builds on as you gain more success and fame. This is

termed as a hubris syndrome by a couple of professors from the Duke University. We all understand when we talk about Leadership, we talk about people. But we also realise people change. So, the rise of ego should be controlled, if you want to be a successful leader.

LAWS OF COMBAT

Extreme Ownership Principle no 5: Cover and Move

In simple terms, I would call this as 'Team-work'. The book explains this principle by giving a live incident that happened with them. As narrated, two teams in Iraq were in a combat. One deep in the enemy territory far away from their base, another team on a tower nearby to their base. Team 1 that was deep in the enemy territory successfully came back to their base and were extremely happy with their achievement. However, it did not impress their superiors as 'Cover and Move' was not effectively used with Team 2 there.

Likewise, within our business scenario, you may have taken up work items that are not just your team's responsibility to deliver, but it requires us to collaborate with other teams external to yours, communicate effectively,

show the sense of oneness and deliver the solution/product as ONE team.



Extreme Ownership Principle no 6: Simple

This principle needs no explanation. In no means I say it is easy to follow. You may draw a straight line towards one of the Agile principles around simplicity "*Simplicity—the art of maximizing the amount of work not done—is essential.*"

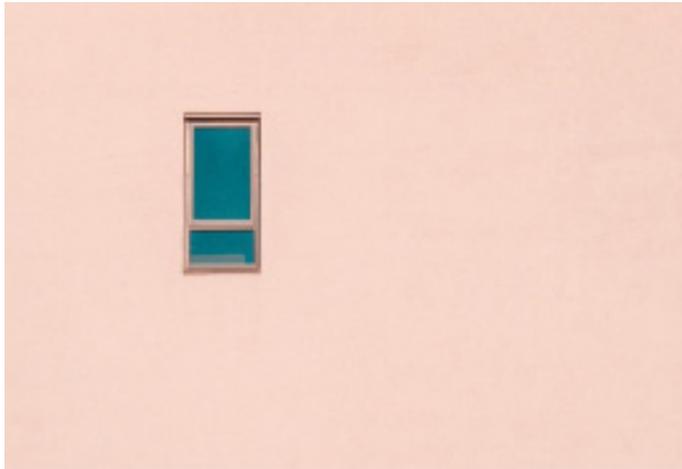
Complex plans, processes, interactions, instructions, practices can only bring a lot of unrest within the team and the members of the team tend to make more mistakes as complexities create confusions.

To be an effective leader, one must keep it simple. Be it communication, laying out pro-

cesses within the teams, ways of working, coding standards, plans etc.

would prioritize the tasks (to do activities) and execute them.

Another example is when you plan to host a few guests at your home. You plan, prioritize the activities, and then execute it to give them a great experience. Is it not?



Extreme Ownership Principle no 7: Prioritize and Execute

I wear the hat of a Product Owner here to explain this principle. In a usual Scrum scenario, the product owner picks up the highest priority items and feeds that into the Dev team, while team works on it to produce Minimum Viable Product (MVP). This is exactly what they mean by 'Prioritize and Execute'. It is important for any effective leader to prioritize their tasks and execute.

This principle can be practised by anyone within your team, anyone from within your family too. How many of you agree with me when I say there are no better leaders than our parents? We have seen how best they



Extreme Ownership Principle no 8: Decentralized Command

This extreme principle talks about decentralizing the command and control. Wiki defines 'Decentralization' as *the process by which the activities of an organization, particularly those regarding planning and decision making, are distributed, or delegated away from a central, authoritative location or group.*

How apt is this principle when it comes to Agile ways of working? Agile talks about letting go off command and control. This is required to empower your team members. Allow them to self-organise, let me take their decisions, allow them to experiment, that is when creativity makes its way in.



This principle is so relevant to today's lean approach and to be on top of the list amidst your competitors. Rather than senior leaders making decisions for the team, the junior leaders or the team members should have the authority to take decisions and be able to get the support of their senior leaders. Agile principle (The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams) supports the same too.

SUSTAINING VICTORY

Extreme Ownership Principle no 9: Plan

Principle no.9 of Extreme Ownership is just the opposite of one of the Agile Manifestos that states, *"Responding to Change over Following a plan"*. Is that the right interpretation? Let's look into it.

While all the four Agile Manifestos say while there is value in the items on the right, for Agile to work in the organisations we value the items on the left more. This means, you still need a plan, may not be an upfront plan for say 6 months to 1 year, you still need a plan for small iterations. With no plan, you have no direction to proceed. Agile teams have their planning at different levels. Be it at their Daily Scrum – planning for the next 24 hours, or the sprint planning – planning

their work for 1-4 weeklong iterations.

So, plan is important, if you do it for short duration and evolve and build on to it further. While prioritizing and executing them are equally important too for sustainable value delivery.

Extreme Ownership Principle no 10: Leading Up and Down the Chain Of Command

This Extreme Ownership principle talks a wee bit different from Agile principles here. In Agile, we do encourage decisions made by consensus of the team rather than one person taking those decisions. However, Extreme Ownership encourages you to not only lead up, but lead down the chain of command.

To give you an example, if you are sitting in a team meeting and your boss takes a decision on your teams' behalf, it is important for you to not confront the decision taken. As a responsible Leader, it is important for you to constructively challenge the decision in a safe, conducive environment in a respectable way. That shows you are not revolting against the decision taken, but you would like to understand the reasoning behind the decision taken. **That is Leading Up!**

The Leading Down is to keep it simple. It can be the communication, can be the processes, structures, the Vision of your team etc. If you want the others to look up to you as an effective Leader, then you got to look at yourself and inspect and adapt every now and then to shape yourself up to deserve the position of an effective Leader. **That is Leading Down!**

Extreme Ownership Principle no 11: Decisiveness Amid Uncertainty

As most of us know, there is this famous saying '*Be the change you want to see*' - by M.K Gandhi. This is precisely what we need to do and be. We need to demonstrate those qualities that we expect from our team members. As leaders, it becomes important to walk the talk. This is the best way to get your team members' trust, and they start believing what you say to them after that.

Not all decisions can wait until everything is in place to make it. There are certain times when you need to go with what you have and that is what the book says about Principle no 11. You may fail or succeed, which is secondary. What is important here is to take that decision with given options to you at that point.



Extreme Ownership Principle no 12: Discipline Equals Freedom -The Dichotomy of Leadership

The authors of this book have authored another book that entirely talks about the dichotomy of leadership. So, what does 'The Dichotomy of Leadership' mean?

This means a leader should own everything within the team, but also empowers the team to take appropriate decisions

I'd always like to bring the flavour of a family in all that I do. Think about how a father/mother is to their child. They must give their child that freedom to explore, be creative, make mistakes, learn from it, while they also need to ensure the child is very well disciplined and becomes a great human being in

future. Now, this requires a fine balance between those two and if you are a father or a mother reading this, you probably would be agreeing with me.



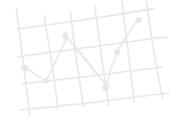
This is what the principle no 12 talks about a leader needing to find the equilibrium in the dichotomy of many qualities that are demonstrated.

Another point the authors make here is, if you are a leader and ready to lead, you should also be ready to follow. Which means, if your team has a better suggestion, idea, that works for the team, then you as a leader should be ready to follow that, if it is better suited to your team. This way, you walk the talk, show your team that you are ready to accept feedback and open to ideas with less or no criticism.

All these 12 Extreme principles are my interpretation of reading this book *“Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy Seals Lead and Win”* by Jocko Willink & Leif Babin. You may have different perspective to it.



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