Starter Kit for Enabling Business Agility

A curated collection of practices that help you kickstart your agile journey

Business Agility is the capacity of an entire organization to renew itself, to adapt quickly to market changes, and to react flexibly to customer needs.

This agility helps an organization to stay innovative and competitive in a complex and fluid business environment.

Co-operation, customer focus, and autonomy are the foundations of a modern and successful company. Business Agility applies agile values and principles to enhance your business with customer-centric end-to-end thinking.

What Drives Business Agility?
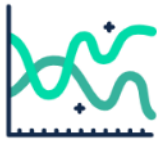
Volatile Business

"Business as usual" doesn't work any longer. Disruptions are increasingly common and digitalization is transforming the way we work. A growing customer base requires products and services that are new and different.

Lay out a vision for the future!

Uncertain Outcomes

Same old thinking leads to the same old results. When the efficacy of your results becomes uncertain, safe experiments help to uncover the needs of your stakeholders.
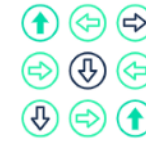
Generate new insights and act on them!

Complex Environments

Our world is more connected than ever before. Within your organization, people are grouped into teams which are in touch with external services and customers. You can never do only one thing, but you can impact everything at once.

Enable clarity and autonomy!

Ambiguous Signals

Making sense of anything grows more and more complex. Understanding mixed signals and comprehending information in your business is not something that anyone can do individually. It requires collaboration from all parts of the organization.
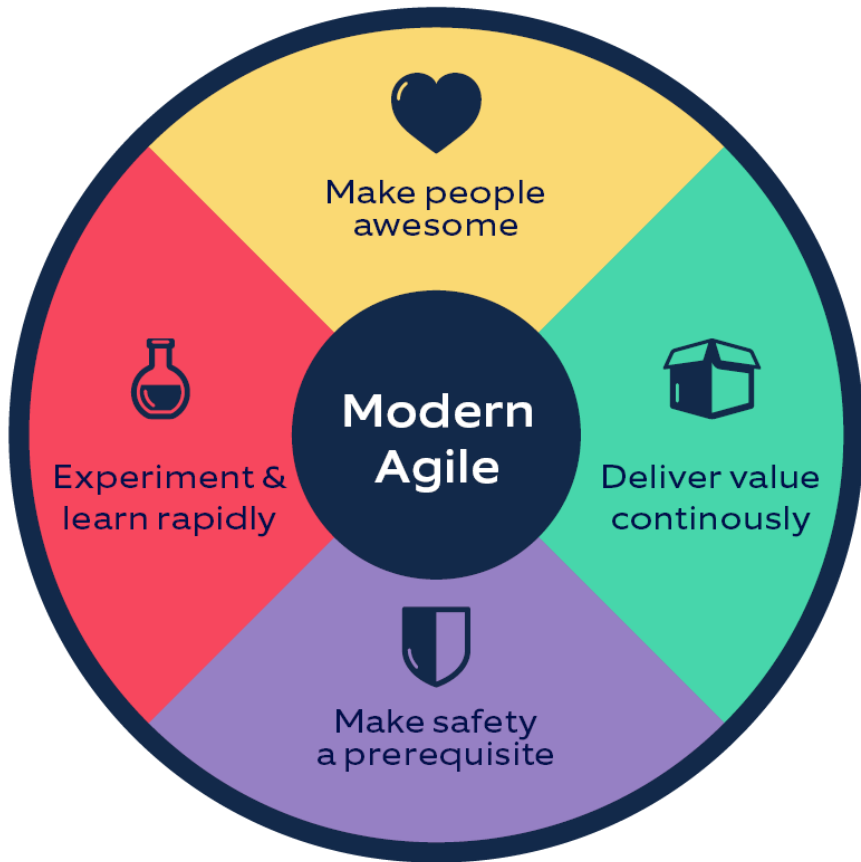
Employ agility to collaborate!

The way towards Business Agility

Business Agility cannot be attained by simply applying IT mechanics, like Scrum or Kanban, companywide.

To sustainably reap the benefits of an adaptive learning organization, you need to shift the culture, strategy, and tactics of your organization.

What do we want to achieve?
Goals, Customer Focus, Organizational Structure, Long-term thinking

How do we want to work?
Processes, work practises, communication, efficiency

Who do we want to be?
Identity, Vision, Values, Engagement

Culture

Adaptive Learning Organization

Tactics

Strategy

> "
> *Modern Agile is a community for people interested in uncovering better ways of getting awesome results. It leverages wisdom from many industries, is principle-driven and framework-free.*

Joshua Kerievsky
CEO, Industrial Logic

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Modern Agile Thinking

Experiment & learn rapidly

We make our experiments "safe to fail" so we are not afraid to conduct more experiments. When we get stuck or aren't learning enough, we take it as a sign that we need to learn more by running more experiments.

Make safety a prerequisite

We actively make safety a prerequisite by establishing safety before engaging in any hazardous work. We protect people's time, information, reputation, money, health, and relationships. And we endeavor to make our collaborations, products, and services resilient and safe.

Make people awesome

In Modern Agile we ask how we can make people in our ecosystem awesome. This includes the people who use, make, buy, sell, or fund our products or services. We learn their context and pain points, what holds them back, and what they aspire to achieve. How can we make them awesome?

Deliver value continuously

Anything that isn't delivered isn't helping anyone become more awesome or safe. In Modern Agile we ask ourselves, "How could valuable work be delivered faster?" Delivering value continuously requires us to divide large amounts of value into smaller pieces that may be delivered safely now rather than later.
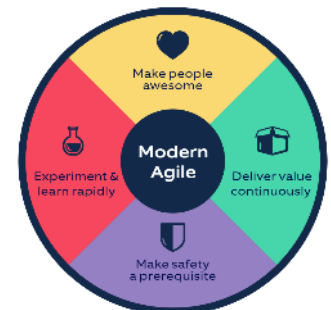
Doing & Being Agile
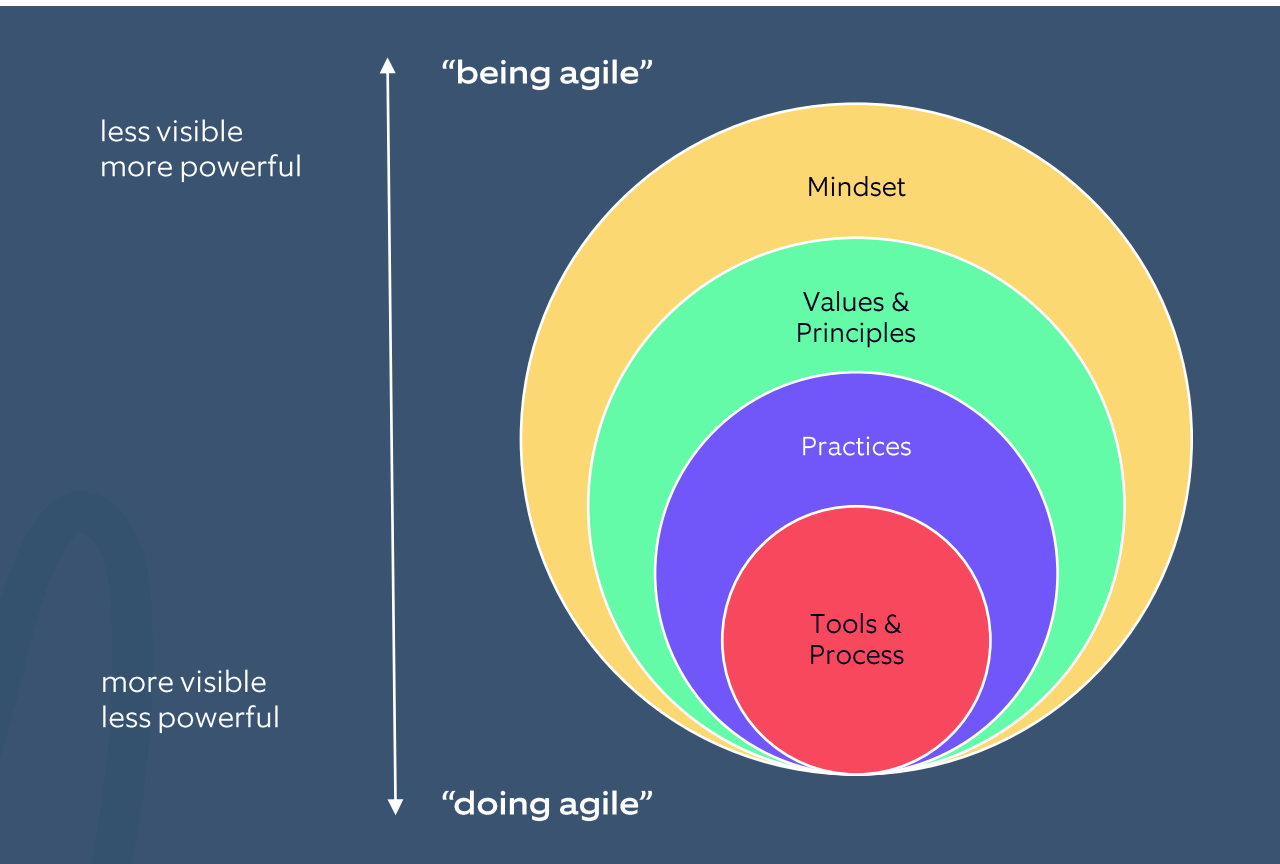
Achieving Business Agility is not easy. There is no single framework that will bring you all the benefits of agility. It requires constant work and improvement to build and refine the necessary skills and thinking.

Starting with a set of reliable practices is a first step on the larger journey to becoming an agile organization. Practices build understanding of underlying principles. Applying principles fosters understanding of the agile core values. Living up to agile core values evolves mindsets and thinking.

Simply "doing agile" brings benefits in and of itself. "Being agile" unleashes your full potential.

Your Starter Kit for Business Agility

🛡️💛 **Delegation Boards**
Make boundaries visible to enable responsibility

💛🛡️ **Team Chartering**
Aligning teams for greatness

🛡️💛 **Core Protocols**
Creating safe spaces with common practice

Retrospectives ⚗️🛡️
Regular improvement drives agility

Daily Planning ⚗️📦
Rapidly adapt your plans

Task Boards 📦
Increase flow with visualization

Culture

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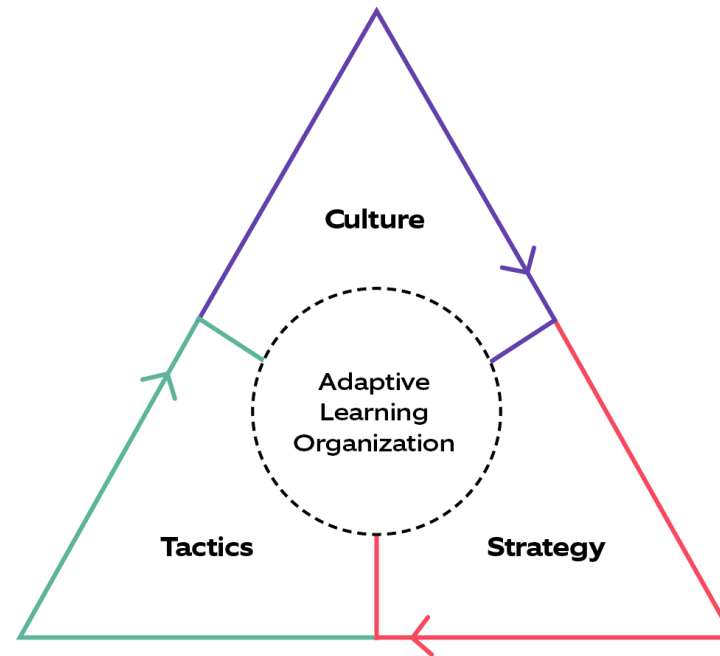
💛 Make people awesome   📦 Deliver value continuously   ⚗️ Experiment & learn rapidly   🛡️ Make safety a prerequisite

Retrospectives

Regular improvement drives agility

Retrospectives are engines for continuous improvement and learning. At regular intervals, you come together to discuss how to improve. In each retrospective, your goal is to define at least one concrete action and improvement goal as you move ahead.

Unlike typical "lessons learned," you set up retrospectives at regular, short intervals (e.g., monthly).

Everyone meets at eye-level and works together to drive common improvement.

Retrospectives

Why?

- Retrospectives are a simple way to institutionalize new behaviors. When you execute retrospectives regularly, you explore various methods of improvement and create a culture of learning.

- Teams that frequently use retrospectives improve their communication, problem-solving skills, and collaborative performance.

Getting Started

1. Set up a monthly one-hour meeting with your team.

2. Get together and ask four vital questions:
   - What happened in the past month?
   - Which good things about the month do we want to keep?
   - What can be improved?
   - What do we need to do in the next month to be one step better?

3. Decide on up to three items and assign concrete actions to members of your team.

Task Boards

Increase flow with visualization

Task boards can be used by teams and individuals to visualize the state of their work.

Usually, such a board consists of multiple columns, each one representing a step in your workflow. This can be as simple as columns labeled "To-Do," "In Progress," and "Done."

Each task is noted on a sticky note and added to a column according to its current state of progress. When you are done with a step, move the sticky note to the next column.

Task Boards

Why?

- Task boards provide an easy and comprehensive view of your work as an individual or team.

- Driven by transparency, you can quickly identify if you are currently overloaded when tasks start to pile up. Also, you can quickly identify which tasks are sitting on your table because they are blocked, or they don't get enough attention.

- Having your work conveniently visualized enables conversation. Within your team you can discuss which tasks need more attention, who will work on what, and where you need to resolve blockages.

Getting Started

1. List out all steps your tasks usually go through.

2. Add them as columns to a physical or virtual whiteboard.

3. Write down all the tasks you are currently working on.

4. Add these tasks to the respective columns on the board.

5. Update your board daily.

Team Chartering

Aligning teams for greatness

High-performing teams require common ground: alignment, shared values, and common goals. With the Team Chartering process you make this common ground visible, and create ties within the team by discussing common values, needs, and expectations.

Chartering is a perfect way to set up new teams, but can also reorient existing teams. The result of this is a charter, sometimes called a manifesto, that describes the team's purpose and ways of interacting.
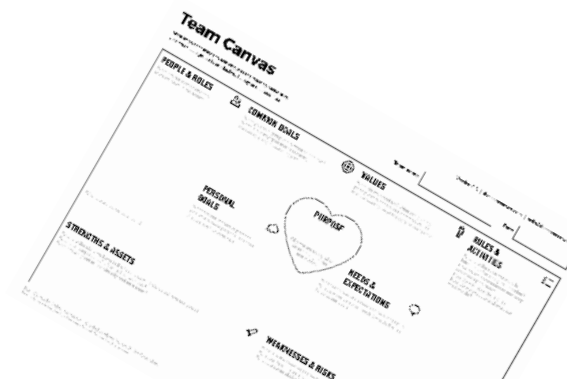
Team Chartering

Why?

- Goals, roles, and implicit team rules are made transparent. Transparency enables conversations and increases the quality of interactions.

- Exposing needs, common personal values, and goals create ties between team members. This generates a space of psychological safety that is the foundation for high performance.

- Making the strengths and weaknesses of a team visible enables you to act and improve. Reviewing the team charter regularly is a source of continuous improvement.

Getting Started

1. Get your team together.

2. Brainstorm and discuss the following questions:
   - What is our goal and purpose?
   - Who is in which role?
   - What do we value in a team?
   - What are our individual needs and expectations?
   - Which rules do we need as a team to improve interactions?
   - What are our strengths as a team?
   - What are weaknesses we need to overcome?

http://theteamcanvas.com/ provides a graphical canvas that works great for team chartering!

Daily Planning

Rapidly adapt your plans

Fast recognition of and acting on changing circumstances are at the core of agility. The faster we sense those divergences, the faster we can act on them.

Daily Planning is the fastest way to enable cycles of probing, sensing, and responding to changed circumstances. Checking on your progress daily raises issues quickly and enables you to correct your course every day.

Daily Planning

Why?

- Making daily planning a ritual increases communication within a team. This open flow of communication is vital to improve the quality of interactions in your organization.

- A fast feedback cycle enables you to detect blockages and problems early on.

- When you locate problems daily, you are able to respond quickly to changed circumstances and correct your course fast.

- Quickly responding to change makes experiments less risky, as waste is detected much earlier.

Getting Started

1. Find a daily timeslot that works for your team.

2. Gather your team in front of your task board.

3. Together, check on your progress:
   - Where are you today?
   - Where should you be?
   - What's currently important?
   - What do you need to react to?
   - Where do problems occur?

Core Protocols

Creating safe spaces with common practice

The Core Protocols are a set of common practices that enable everyone in an organization or team to participate as best as they can. These protocols are a set of commitments, describing a clear transparency-minded mindset, as well as a set of protocols, that describe concrete practices to adhere to.

With Core Protocols, you have a chance to create purposeful behaviour in your organization that leads to a culture of openness, collaboration, and psychological safety.

Core Protocols

Why?

- Adhering to the Core Protocols creates clarity of intent and encourages an open and clear mindset.

- The suggested protocols foster a culture of open communication of one's needs within a safe zone.

- In changing individual behavior, an improved collective culture emerges.

- The protocols act from a space of blamelessness, shared vision, and conflict resolution thus enabling greatness on teams by improving in-team interactions.

Getting Started

You can do this either on your own, or even better, with your team:

1. Read through the Core Commitments that constitute the mindset.

2. Self-Boot by learning some basic practices:
   - Pass/Unpass
   - Check-in/Check-out
   - Ask For Help
   - Perfection Game
   - Decider

3. Start practicing the protocols.

Delegation Boards

Make boundaries visible to enable responsibility

Am I responsible for onboarding the new team member, or is my boss? Do I need to check back with the latest project report, or may I act on my own? Why are my employees constantly asking me when to take vacation – can't they decide on their own?

Delegating work is not binary. When we are not aware of this, the boundaries of roles become blurred. Missing clarity in delegation causes delays, frustration, or – worst of all – inappropriate controlling behavior.

Delegation poker and delegation boards help to visualize the delegation of decisions and enable us to discuss them. This visualization makes them explicit and allows us to talk about how we delegate and distribute decisions in our daily work. With improved clarity, we can enable our colleagues to take on more self-responsibility and self-management.

Delegation Boards

Why?

- Making delegation explicit creates clear boundaries. Arguments about areas of responsibility are resolved in a constructive way.

- Delegation boards allow us to uncover differing expectations of responsibilities. We can discuss them and sort them out together.

- Explicit delegation can be used to develop self-management competencies of employees, while we gradually shift more and more responsibility towards them.

Getting Started

1. Manager and employee(s) get together.

2. Note down which decisions you need to make.

3. Each participant selects one delegation card privately, that describes how they think the decision should be handled.

4. All participants reveal their cards at the same time.

5. When different levels are picked, discuss the different views.

6. If necessary, take another round. In the end, the manager decides on the delegation level to be used.

Delegation Boards

Example

Further Practices

Other helpful tools to enable Business Agility

OKRs

Objectives and key results (OKRs) are a way to formulate compelling goals and align your organization with transparency and autonomy. Create pull towards a common direction and stay on track!

Horse's Rear Award

Feeling safe to fail is essential for agility. But crafting a safe-to-fail culture is hard. With the Horse's Rear Award, you celebrate the biggest failure of the month. Don't ask where you failed, ask what you learned!

Stakeholder Mapping, Personas & Empathy Mapping

In order to focus on continuously delivering value, you need to understand what is valuable to your customers. Stakeholder Mapping, Personas, and Empathy Mapping are great tools to map out your ecosystem.

Business is going Agile

A step-by-step approach for non-IT teams

PART - 1
Workshops

Five consecutive half-day workshop modules to build new skills and behaviors.

PART - 2
Guided Practice

2-4 weeks of guided practice by Agile Business Coaches between the modules to apply the newly learned knowledge in daily work and review the experiments and learnings.

PART - 3
Continued Coaching

Optional: Continued coaching by our Agile Business Coaches for deep dives, focusing on cross-team improvements and on anchoring what has been learned in the organization.

01 Business Agility Basics

02 Self-organizing Teams

03 Focus on Awesome People

04 Continuously Delivering Value

05 Integrating Agility in Business

About the author

Daniel Eder

Daniel Eder is an Agile Catalyst at Nagarro and guides teams and leaders to build high-performing, learning organisations. He values courage, trust and openness and puts individuals and interaction at the centre. Daniel's personal agile journey started in 2011 when he realised that traditional approaches were not working as promised. Since then, he has worked in many roles - from Developer, Scrum Master, Product Owner, Team Lead to Agile Project Manager, Agile Coach and Consultant.

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Let's start your agile journey together!
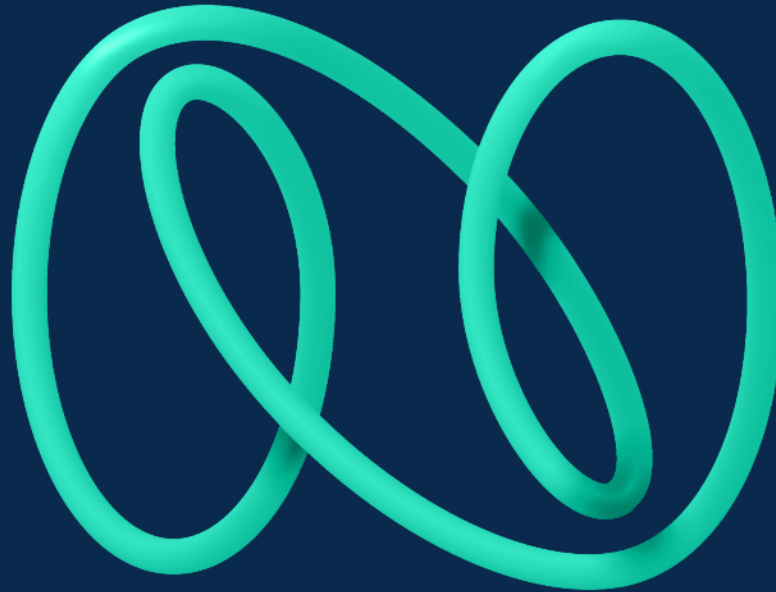
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