The Art, Science and Role of Empathy behind Lean-Agile Leadership

with Jennifer Fawcett
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What I learned
There’s something missing...
The Art (ie: not the Train)
Embody SAFe core values

Alignment
- Provide the relevant briefings and participate in PI Planning
- Help with backlog visibility, review and preparation
- Help with value stream organization and coordination
- Constantly check for understanding
- Communicate the mission, visions and strategy at every opportunity

Transparency
- Visualize all relevant work
- Take ownership and responsibility for errors and mistakes
- Admit your own mistakes
- Support others who acknowledge and learn from their mistakes. Never punish the messenger.

Built-in quality
- Demonstrate quality by refusing to accept or ship low quality work
- Support investments in capacity planning for maintenance and reduction of technical debt
- Ensures UX, architecture, operations, security, compliance, and others, are part of the flow of work

Program execution
- Participate as an active business owner in PI execution
- Celebrate high quality and predictably delivered program increments
- Aggressively remove impediments and demotivators
Reinforcing the Lean-Agile Mindset

House of Lean

VALUE

Respect for people and culture
Flow
Innovation
Relentless improvement

LEADERSHIP

Value in the shortest sustainable lead time

Agile Manifesto

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

SAFe Lean-Agile Principles

#1 - Take an economic view
#2 - Apply systems thinking
#3 - Assume variability; preserve options
#4 - Build incrementally with fast, integrated learning cycles
#5 - Base milestones on objective evaluation of working systems
#6 - Visualize and limit WIP, reduce batch sizes, and manage queue lengths
#7 - Apply cadence, synchronize with cross-domain planning
#8 - Unlock the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers
#9 - Decentralize decision-making
As we relate, so we think!
Conway’s Law

Organizations that design systems are constrained to produce designs that are copies of the communication structures of these organizations.

Social Structure

Design Structure

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melvin_Conway
The Intermediate Corollary

Social Structure

Knowledge Structure

Design Structure
Amplification

One Way (simplex) sharing of information
(low empathy environment)
Externally defined relationships

vs

Two Way (duplex) sharing of information
(higher empathy environment)
Primarily independently generated relationships
Create knowledge structures that foster information flow (duplex)

As we relate, so we think!
Is your Organization designed for Information Flow?

- Find a Partner
- Take two minutes to quickly draw your organization’s hierarchy and share it with your partner
- After 2 minutes switch
The Science
Agency

The ability of an individual to interact in an authentic fashion with other people, as well as a deep knowing of oneself.
What’s your Agency?

- Find a Partner
- Take two minutes to write down your authentic behaviors, and the agency behind it, and share it with your partner
- After 2 minutes switch
There is no “ideal state.” Understand that when you get to your “target condition”, there will always be another one in front of you.

– Dr. Jeffrey Liker

Humans are inherently defective. - jwf
The Role of Empathy
What is Empathy?
De Waal’s Empathy Pyramid

Perspective Taking

Concern for Others

Emotional Contagion

Lower levels are nested in higher levels

Frans De Waal, primatologist professor of primate behavior Emory University.
Mirroring Behavior

Lower levels are nested in higher levels

- Emotional Contagion
- Concern for Others
- Perspective Taking

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Emotional Empathy

Lower levels are nested in higher levels

- Perspective Taking
- Concern for Others
- Emotional Contagion

Frans De Waal, primatologist professor of primate behavior, Emory University.
Rational Empathy

Lower levels are nested in higher levels

- Perspective Taking
- Concern for Others
- Emotional Contagion

Frans De Waal, primatologist professor of primate behavior Emory University.
Empathetic Leadership

Find yourself in the service of others.
– Gandhi
Self similarity – ‘Fractal Structure’

Leadership sets the pattern

Top down

Bottom up

Emergent Behavior
Principle of Reinforcement

Organization

Individual
Extend your Agile leadership with empathy to connect the people and systems for better outcomes.
Empathy Interviews

Let’s experience it together!
Empathy interview exercise (part 1)

- Turn to a person next to you. Determine who has old shoes, and who has new shoes. Old shoes will be the interviewer.
- Practice interviewing with a neutral verbal tone and body language.
- Start with this question: “What’s going well for you today?”
- Follow-up with this question: “What’s not going well for you today?”
- Dig in. Ask “Why?” Ask “Why not?”
Empathy interview exercise (part 2)

- Switch interviewers.
- Ask, **“As you think forward to the next quarter, what has you motivated?”**
- **“What has you worried?”**
- Dig in, and ask, **“Why?”**
Gifts for you

Release
Train Engineer

Lean in
And for more....

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<tr>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Do</th>
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| *Never Split the Difference* by Chris Voss | Empathy interviews  
  - Prior to Program Increment (PI) Planning  
  - Prior to Portfolio Planning  
  Bring customers and/or partners to PI Planning | Empathy interviews to other Scrum Masters, RTEs, and facilitators |