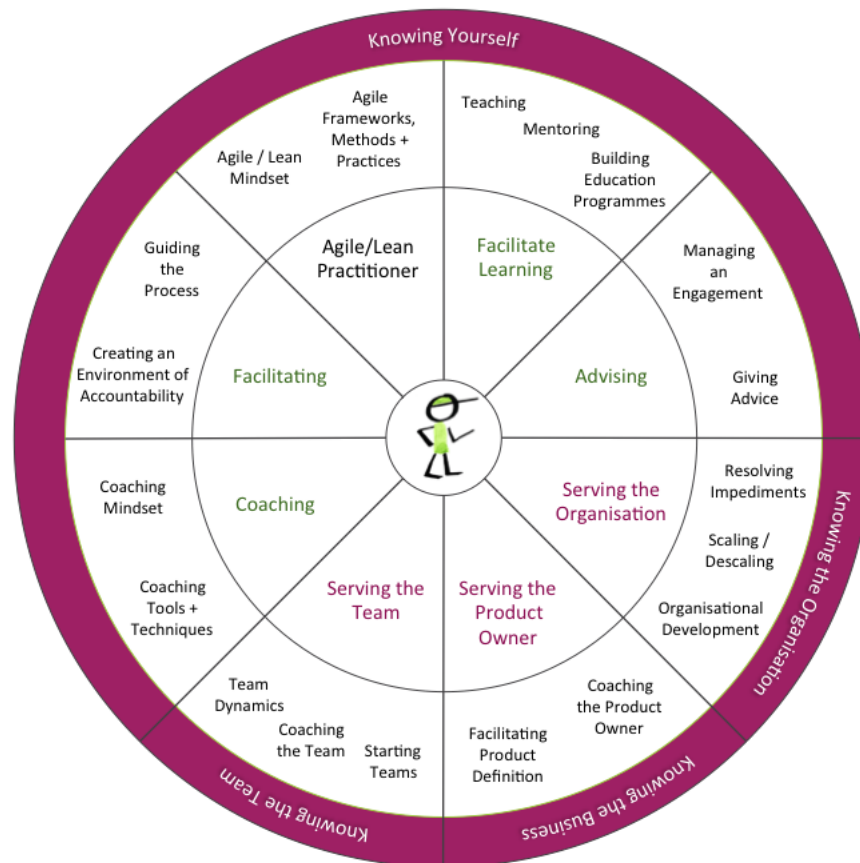


EBAC Appendix

The Agile Coaching Growth Wheel

The Beginning



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The Journey

In 2013, I had attended the second Scrum Coaching Retreat¹ in Phoenix so I could bring the format back to Europe in 2014. It was unlike any other event I had attended. We worked mostly in Scrum teams for the duration of the event, going deep into topics we were passionate about. I worked on a team reviewing the application process for certified coaches, although I had lost my voice, so was mostly

¹ These events are now called Agile Coaching Retreats, and are a Scrum Alliance event for agile coaches.

communicating via sticky notes. The experience was immersive. Every time I have been part of a team at these retreats, the depth of connections I've made with my team has been amazing. Literally doing half-day sprints means you go through a kind of accelerated team growth curve over three days.

In 2014, we hosted the retreat in London, using the theme "Growth of coaching in order to transform the world of work." This theme was born out of the notion that to really make a difference in the world we need competent coaches helping people make transformational changes. I believe now, as I did then, that if we can work together as a community, then the profession of agile coaching will have a huge positive impact on the world and ultimately make people's lives better. I wasn't part of a team in 2014, as I was holding the space as a facilitator, however this theme set the scene for many of the teams I was part of during future retreats.

In 2016, at the Geneva retreat, I joined a team looking at how we could help managers transition to a coaching stance in large organizations—in other words, a pathway for them to become internal agile coaches. Looking back, I realize that most of my work since has been helping people make the transition to being internal coaches. Our thinking then can still be seen online (agilecoachingacademy.org). It includes a pathway for growth, suggested structures around development programs, and some suggested initial learning objectives.

The work we did in Geneva built on the work done by Roger Brown and a team at the very first Scrum Coaching Retreat in Boulder, Colorado. The central idea was that an agile coach's capability increased as they learned from their experiences and education. We drew a version of this to guide our conversations (figure 1). Think of this as an early map for the growth of agile coaching capabilities.

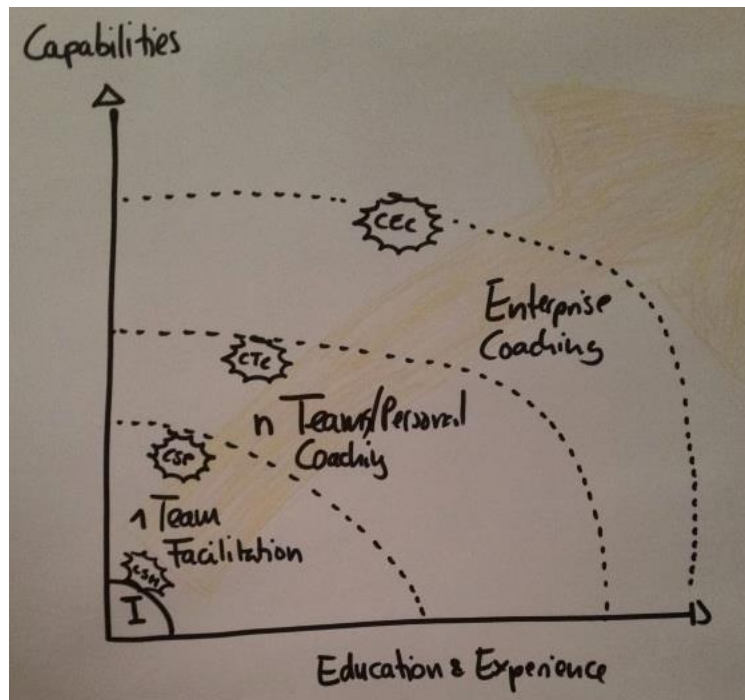


Figure 1, 2016 Coaching Retreat – Agile Coaching growth path

The other important aspect of this map is context—the idea that a less experienced agile coach may be working as a team facilitator or Scrum Master. As they grow, they may transition to being an agile coach

working across a number of teams. At some point they may also be involved in enterprise coaching, working with leaders, and supporting agile transformations.

This view matched our personal journeys, and the Scrum Alliance certifications map nicely along this pathway. However, the linear view of the path risks creating a narrow, one-way view of growth as an agile coach. In reality, there are very experienced agile coaches who choose to work as team facilitators or Scrum Masters, because that's where they feel they have the most impact. I have also encountered people working as enterprise agile coaches who got there without ever being a team coach. They took a different path, starting maybe as professional coaches or organizational change agents, and learned about agile later.

So we have tried to make the Agile Coaching Growth Wheel map more sophisticated. It still includes the notion that your capability increases as you gain experience and education; however, context (am I a team coach or an enterprise coach) has been replaced by behaviors, skills, and knowledge around eight core competency areas. As the agile coach grows in competence, their behaviors and skills mature. At the same time their knowledge gets both broader and deeper.

In 2017, at the retreat in Copenhagen, we formed a new team that looked at the following problem statement: "Misconceptions exist with clients and coachees, in regards to what agile coaching is. This confusion has resulted in unqualified people presenting themselves as agile coaches who may end up hurting clients and coachees, if not themselves and ultimately the profession." What came out of that retreat became the website *What Is Agile Coaching* (<http://whatisagilecoaching.org>), which we viewed as a first draft of a baseline for the profession. Since then, members of both the Geneva and Copenhagen teams have been working with the various agile bodies and the community at large to professionalize the world of agile coaching. This is our continuing mission.

At the Agile Coaching Retreat in 2018, we wanted to get a bit more practical and build something that would help agile coaches reflect where they are on their journey and grow. Also, as part of our mission to professionalize the world of agile coaching, we felt we needed an agreed-on competency model for agile coaching.

Back in 2011, Lyssa Atkins and Michael Spayd created a competency framework for agile coaches. Atkins, L., Spayd, M. (2011). What they produced was intentionally not a competency model, as it did not define specific behaviors, skills, knowledge, or levels of proficiency. However, the creators of the Agile Coaching Growth Wheel believed that by 2018 more definition was required to professionalize the world of agile coaching.

However, by 2018 we felt more was needed to professionalize the world of agile coaching. We believe that defining the agile coaching journey will allow educators and other coaches to better support the growth of agile coaches by developing learning and development programs. It will also build confidence in the industry around the future profession of agile coaching, making it easier for an organization to confidently select the right coach for them.

Developing the Wheel

The 2018 retreat team quickly decided on a wheel metaphor, where the spokes would represent different agile coaching competencies.



Figure 2, 2018 Coaching Retreat – Initial Wheel Brainstorming

In Figure 2, you can see the team (well, at least their feet) gathered around discussing and building the Wheel. You will notice that there are a lot of spokes—one for each competency—and a lot of small sticky notes representing what it means to be competent in each of those areas. By the end of the retreat, we had done a lot of groundwork, but it wasn't a viable reflection tool yet.

- After the retreat, we agreed that the spokes would represent competency areas, each containing two or three competencies.

This left us with eight competency areas at the core, represented by the spokes. However, we still had some supporting knowledge areas which are not core, but may aid an agile coach's practice. We visualized these as the tire that supports the coach's practice as they come into contact with their clients.

References

- Atkins, L., Spayd, M. (2011) "Developing Great Agile Coaches: Towards a Framework of Agile Coaching Competency – Part I" (white paper). Agile Coaching Institute.