Agile action learning – how criticality can enhance scrum and the agile movement
Bernhard Hauser

Despite all efforts for social distancing: No Oktoberfest this year...

We look forward to welcome you in Munich next year 🍻

"Agile Action Learning"

- Work in progress

- Using Action Learning and Critical Action Learning in agile and hybrid (agile and conventional) organizational settings.

- Seeking dialogue with other schools / approaches

- Exploring what al/cal can add to different situations and approaches applied in organizations to deal with agile and hybrid situations.

- Questioning the own practice in a critical way with a dedicated openness to learn.

Agile Project Management & Action Learning

Results from a recent explorative study with project managers in Germany:

- 8 out of 10 believe project management will become more agile or hybrid

- 7 out of 10 have never heard of action learning (al)

- 3 out of 10 started to like the idea of al when it was explained to them

- 2 out of 10 plan to test action learning and could imagine using it

- 1 out of 10 practices action learning and with good results – the one using it is a start-up

What do you think keeps organizations sometimes from applying action learning?

Mentimeter

use other stuff

loosing control

time constraints

no facilitator

time it takes

what is it

learning not outcome

other models promoted

not fancy enough

it seems like more work

learning is soft

takes time

lack of understanding

impatience

need to control and comma

lack of time

they are unsure about it

lack of practice

lack of participation

no knowledge of al

they want experts

they do not know how

don't know about it

focus on tangibles

do not understand

don't know

too novel

12

Further approaches to collectice learning & action

- Scrum and agile project management
  - fast software development through self-organization and customer involvement
  - agile manifesto

- Agile movement
  - transformation of the scrum framework to all areas of an organization

- Extreme teaming
  - tackling complex problems in rapidly changing teams

- Design thinking
  - innovation by tackling complex and uncertain challenges, 'wicked problems'.

- ...

They all tackle problems, have an action concept and a learning focus

Question

How can we integrate (critical) action learning into Scrum projects?

Story-telling: Example from a Scrum team

- ➤ Scrum team consisted of 9 software developers

- ➤ Diversity as to experience, specialization, legal status, pay

- ➤ Situation: a highly paid colleague who was rated as the top performer suddenly left the team and Senior management was worried

- ➤ But: there was no drop at all in performance.

- ➤ Only then it became transparent that the colleague was not what he had seemed to be. Quite the contrary: he had been a long-time burden to the team, made everything more difficult and the team tacitly began to bypass him doing extra work to fulfill all requirements.

- ➤ Estimated damage to the project € 250.000,-

Criticality in action learning

has a number of distinguishing features, including:

- it's emphasis on the way that learning is supported, avoided and/or prevented through power relations;

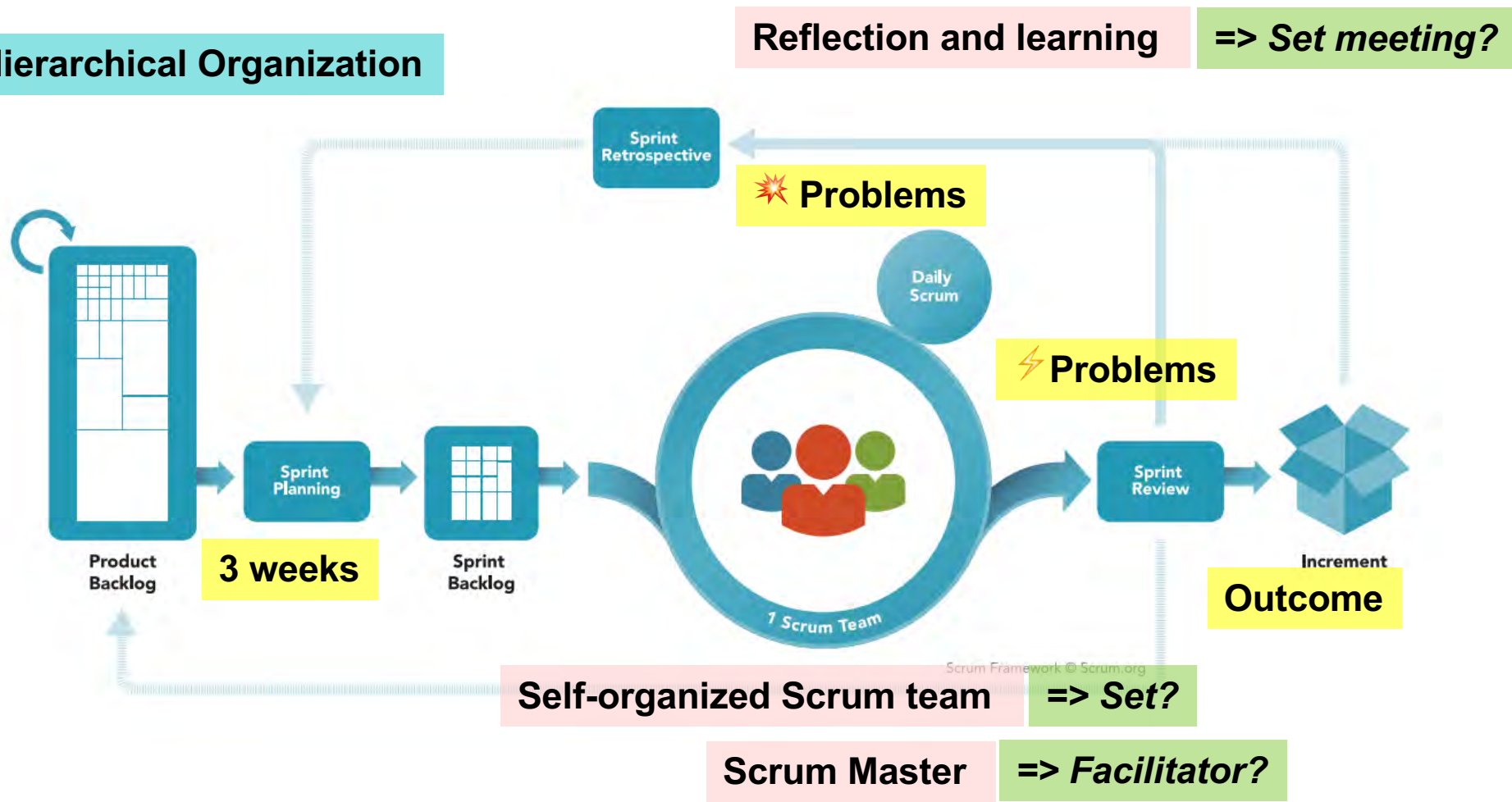- the linking of questioning insight to complex emotions, unconscious processes and relations

Kiran Trehan

Could (critical) action learning be helpful?

- Why did the team protect someone who let them suffer?

- What kept them from openly expressing their concerns to project management?

- Why did self-organization work in a self-exploiting manner for the team members and for a long time?

- What kept the Scrum master from addressing this stressful and costly situations towards management or encouraging the team to address it?

- What characteristics in the overall project structure and culture did support this?

- What was the impact of the job situation of the employees (freelancers, subcontractors)?

- What anxieties, implicit behavioural norms, micropolitics, power dynamics were at work?

- What learning is required for different actors? ...

Scrum framework

Hierarchical Organization

Reflection and learning => *Set meeting?*

💥 **Problems**

⚡ **Problems**

Sprint Retrospective

Daily Scrum

Sprint Planning

Sprint Backlog

1 Scrum Team

Sprint Review

Product Backlog

3 weeks

Increment

Outcome

Scrum Framework © Scrum.org

Self-organized Scrum team => *Set?*

Scrum Master => *Facilitator?*

Scrum framework – scrum of scrum and how to connect to action learning...?
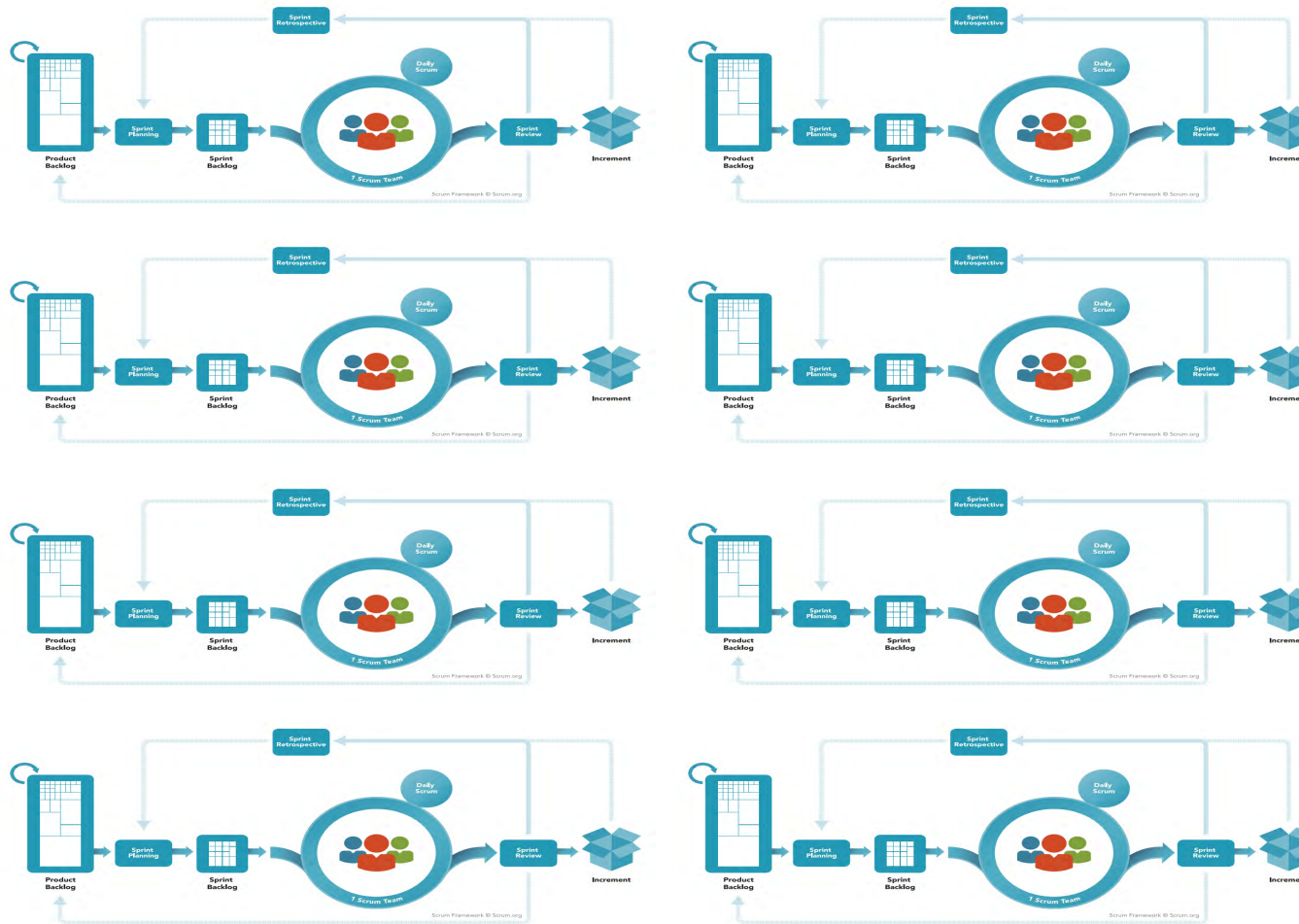
Break-out rooms

☞ What is valuable about action learning that organizations presently could profit from?

☞ What is it that action learning might have to learn?

Please add comments and further questions from your conversations

Thank you for your comments!