

Why Tailored Agile Transformation Solutions Are More Effective, Less Expensive, and Less Risky

by Al Shalloway



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A Net Objectives Essential White Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Our contention and experience is that solutions tailored to an organization's current situation, challenges, and culture can be more effective and less costly than predefined ones that are applied out of the box. While there are risks to the former, these can be avoided. The different set of risks to taking predefined solutions, ironically, can only be avoided by tailoring them. This article discusses the values and risks of both approaches and how to get the benefits of both.

When we think of tailored suits or custom-built cars we think, "Nice, but expensive." But it would be a mistake to think the same thing with transformation solutions. A predefined solution must be less expensive, correct? No. But if predefined solutions are not less expensive, then why are they so prevalent? Two words – fear and comfort.

Taking an approach that others have enables one to start under the guise of "this is an established approach, if things go wrong I am not to blame for pursuing this." Thus, we are comfortable in our decision and have avoided making a decision that puts us on the line. This, of course, does not mean we should throw out all predefined solutions, it means we must think how to apply them so that they work best for us.

THE RISKS AND WASTES OF PREDEFINED SOLUTIONS

By definition, packaged solutions will have aspects to them that are not needed in your organization's transformation. This does more damage than merely adding complexity to your transformation, which will be difficult to remove later. It undermines your transformation by increasing resistance to it. This occurs because people will know some aspects of the solution are not necessary. This will increase their resistance to other aspects that are necessary but which they don't understand.

The flip side is also true – some required insights and practices will not be undertaken since a predefined solution can't fit all needs (there is no one size fits all). Hence, critical aspects of the solution needed for your organization may not be present in your undertaking. This will almost

certainly create new difficulties. Significantly, because we've been following a path instead of learning to understand what path we should be taking, we will be ill-prepared for these situations. At this point the easy gains of the initial transition get overcome by the extra complexity and gaps that are present in the canned approach.

The real value of predefined solutions

The real value of predefined solutions is often the "all-in" they may provide. There is no question that alignment is very important. But aligning around the wrong solution does have its own dangers as described earlier.

WHY COMPLEX SYSTEMS REQUIRE SIMPLE ADAPTIVE SOLUTIONS

While we don't question that the end-result for different organizations may be surprisingly similar, the path to get there is usually quite different. The challenges in an organization are intricately tied together. Unfortunately, we cannot always just implement everything at once. Doing so typically overwhelms people and causes great resistance. Ironically, we already have great evidence for



Alan Shalloway is the founder and CEO of Net Objectives. With over 40 years of experience, Alan is an industry thought leader in Lean, Kanban, product portfolio management, Scrum and agile design. He helps companies

transition to Lean and Agile methods enterprise-wide as well teaches courses in these areas. Alan has developed training and coaching methods for Lean-Agile that have helped Net Objectives' clients achieve long-term, sustainable productivity gains. He is a popular speaker at prestigious conferences worldwide. He is the primary author of *Design Patterns Explained: A New Perspective on Object-Oriented Design*, *Lean-Agile Pocket Guide for Scrum Teams*, *Lean-Agile Software Development: Achieving Enterprise Agility* and *Essential Skills for the Agile Developer*. Alan has worked in literally dozens of industries over his career. He is a co-founder and board member for the Lean Software and Systems Consortium. He has a Masters in Computer Science from M.I.T. as well as a Masters in Mathematics from Emory University. You can follow Alan on twitter @alshalloway

this: How many initiatives that were so clear to management have we undertaken that fail, due the lack of cooperation by those it was intended to help? While we do not subscribe to the maxim that people always resist change, change without understanding or perceived benefit will usually be resisted and sabotaged.

Perhaps more important, organizational change is often like untangling a ball of string with many knots. You not only need to disentangle the knots, but you need to do it in the right order. The road map for change must attend to where people are.

Our situation and the approach to affect it are shown in the figure below.

In other words, being in the dilemma that one size doesn't fit all, people want solutions yet they can't be overly complex implies our best course of action is to start appropriately simple and grow our methods as we learn. Hence, the need for an "adaptive framework" is one where you start where you need to start (having done an assessment to determine that). Then, as you adopt it and learn, extend it at the pace best suited to your organization.

THE LESSONS TO BE FOLLOWED

As is usually the case, predefined solutions provide us with insights on the correct course of action to take. While tailored solutions are more effective and efficient, building them on top of existing

"one-size fits all" solutions often provides an ideal approach. In this manner, we accommodate our own unique situation, while building off of an existing platform that people can understand. When considering the cost of a transformation it is important to remember that the biggest costs are not what we are paying for consulting and training, the real costs are in the lost productivity of our organization while this transition is going on as well as the lost productivity gains lost by not taking the better course available.

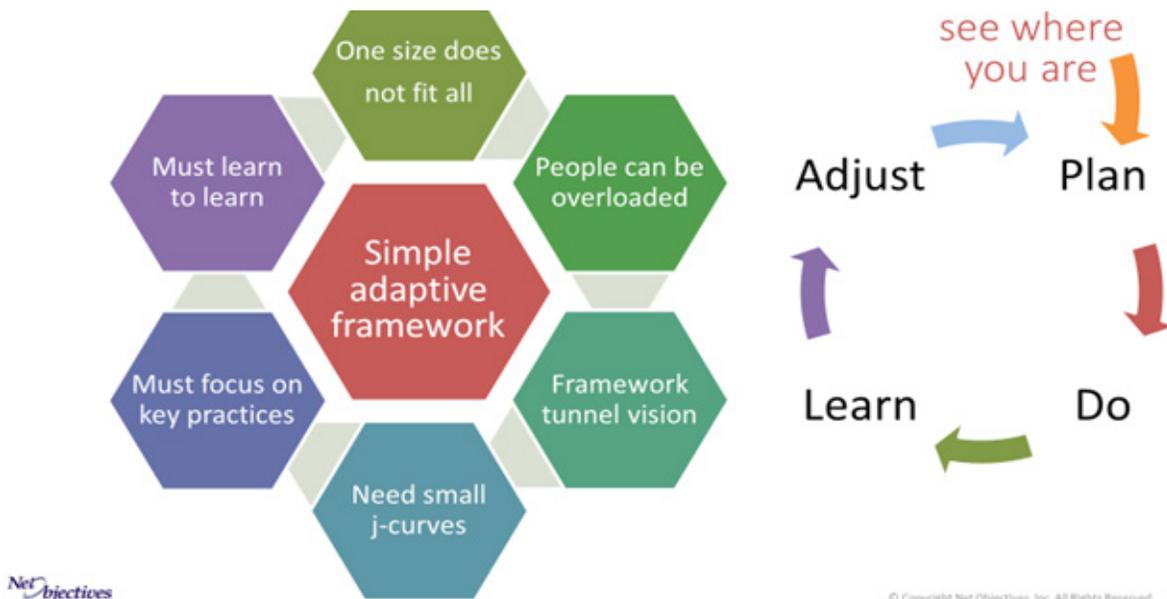
The best approach is therefore one that takes into account where your organization is, is tailored to fit that and whose transition approach attends to the culture of your organization so it doesn't go too fast or too slow in its adoption. By taking advantage of proven solutions you don't have to reinvent the wheel, but by tailoring these very same solutions you ensure they fit your needs.

OTHER ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Go to www.netobjectives.com/articles to see the following articles:

- Net Objectives Approach to SAFe®
- The Business Case for Agility

Check out the Net Objectives Portal at portal.netobjectives.com where an extensive amount of online self-study is available.



A COMPLETE CURRICULUM

Net Objectives offers a comprehensive range of courses for successful Lean-Agile implementation. The goal of Lean-Agile is higher agility in realizing business value and accomplishing this goal requires agility across the business, management, teams, and technology capability. You are assured of consistency in methods and terminology across the entire organization. Workshops offer a valuable combination of on-site training and customized coaching.

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- Product Manager / Product Owner Essentials
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- Emergent Design
- Sustainable Test-Driven Development

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- Leading SAFe 4.0

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NET OBJECTIVES SPECIAL TRAINING ON SAFE

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- Using Kanban in SAFe at Shared Services and the Team

ONLINE TRAINING

- Essential Skills for the Agile Developer
- Lean-Agile Software and IT
- Taking Agile at Scale to the Next Level



YOUR ROADMAP TO LEAN-AGILE SUCCESS

Growing numbers of organizations are realizing the need to become more Agile. Some are weighing the risks and benefits and seeking guidance. Others are implementing initiatives and are looking for ways to improve their return on investment.

The road to Lean-Agile success has become less risky as the early adopters have paved the way for the next generation of Lean-Agile methodologies and practices that solve the common problems, and transcend the limitations that early adopters have struggled with.

Net Objectives has been a thought leader in each of the Agile methods of the past decade. This uniquely enables us to provide the most effective approach to our clients' needs.

For more than a decade, Net Objectives has been training and facilitating large and small organizations to achieve agility.

We serve organizations at the team, management, and enterprise level with comprehensive organizational consulting, coaching, and training.

We do not promote one method as most other firms do – rather we pull from a broad knowledge base to offer an approach tailored to your situation.

UNDERTAKING YOUR TRANSITION TO AGILE

There is no one method that guarantees success at the team level. Our full assessment services will answer these questions to help you to determine which to choose.

- Do cross functional teams already exist and if not, how difficult will it be to create them?
- Are certain staff essential for multiple teams
- How many concurrent projects are teams working on at one time?
- What challenges face the organization in integration and deployment?

Throughout your transition, Net Objectives will help ensure everything is in place through appropriate Lean-Agile training:

- **Teams** are capable of delivering value quickly with high value
- **Businesses** are capable of selecting, sizing and prioritizing business capabilities to be developed
- **Management** takes responsibility for improving the value stream and removing impediments facing teams

Our coaches enable your teams with skills, and competencies to leverage the power of agility as part of your value stream. Our consultants collaborate with management, stakeholders, executives, and experts to provide insight and guidance from the organizational view.

UNDERSTANDING AGILE

The first step toward success is drawing a clear distinction between enterprise agility, and team agility. The benefits of Agile at the team level are very different than benefits at the enterprise level. The paths to success and the challenges presented are also very different.

Enterprise agility enables an organization to effectively respond at the enterprise level to changing business needs while reliably delivering business value.

Team agility is a component of that capability – a component – and not the equivalent of enterprise agility. This understanding is essential since team methods alone cannot deliver enterprise level benefits.

First generation methods made the assumption that team agility translated to the enterprise. This has been a costly simplification.

Many organizations have attempted to achieve enterprise agility simply by creating more Agile teams. This often starts well, but usually ends up being impeded by enterprise level problems that team solutions do not solve.

The next generation of Lean-Agile openly acknowledges practical truths, limitations, and organizational structures required to fulfill the needs of the entire Lean-Agile enterprise.

From assessment and planning to pilot and rollout, our goal is to facilitate your organization with custom approaches and solutions that are appropriate to your needs, structure, and goals. Let us show how the next generation of Agile can benefit your organization.

LEARN TO DRIVE DEVELOPMENT FROM THE DELIVERY OF BUSINESS VALUE

What really matters to any organization? The delivery of value to customers. Most development organizations, both large and small, are not organized to optimize the delivery of value. By focusing the system within which your people are working and by aligning your people by giving them clear visibility into the value they are creating, any development organization can deliver far more value, lower friction, and do it with fewer acts of self-destructive heroism on the part of the teams.

THE NET OBJECTIVES TRANSFORMATION MODEL

Our approach is to start where you are and then set out a roadmap to get you to where you want to be, with concrete actionable steps to make immediate progress at a rate your people and organization can absorb. We do this by guiding executive leadership, middle management, and the teams at the working surface. The coordination of all three is required to make change that will stick.

OUR EXPERTS

Net Objectives' consultants are actually a team. Some are well known thought leaders. Most of them are authors. All of them are contributors to our approach.



Al Shalloway



Alan Chedalawada



Guy Beaver



Scott Bain



Max Guernsey



Luniel de Beer

SELECTED COURSES

Executive Leadership and Management

Lean-Agile Executive Briefing
Preparing Leadership for a Lean-Agile/SAFe Transformation

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Lean-Agile Product Roadmaps
PM/PO Essentials

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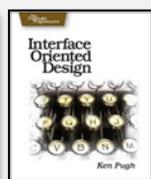
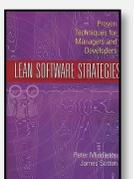
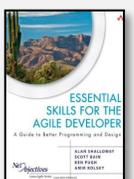
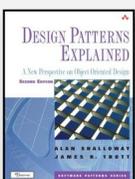
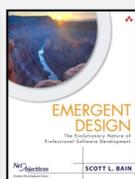
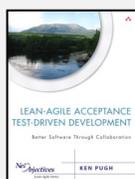
DevOps

DevOps for Leaders and Managers
DevOps Roadmap Overview

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Leading SAFe® 4.0
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Architecting in a SAFe Environment
Implement the Built-in Quality of SAFe
Taking Agile at Scale to the Next Level

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