DIGITAL MATURITY

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Abstract: *Agile working is indispensable in today's world. However, it is not only important that agile methods are applied as a way of working, but leadership behavior must also adapt to the new values if a company wants to get used to agile work. Therefore, companies need to know how to integrate the agile mindset into their leadership behavior.*

Keywords: *ESG, sustainability, sustainable leadership, triple bottom line, bee sustainable leadership philosophy*

In today's business world, traditional leadership behavior has changed due to the ever-changing demands and rapidly increasing expectations on companies (Slack et al., 2022). Lean and Agile methods must be applied to respond quickly to change. Agile working and professional leadership behaviors are an essential part of achieving an organization's goals. Agile leadership behaviors, based on flexible and maintainable outcomes, can help companies achieve a customer-centric state and implement effective change management processes. However, in order for an organization to reap the benefits of agile ways of working, leadership behavior must be transformed into agile leadership behavior (Hofert, 2018; Scherber & Coldewey, 2015). Agile leadership behavior differs greatly from traditional leadership behavior in the way expected outcomes are generated (Chase et al., 2007; Reupke-Sieroux et al., 2020). Agile leadership behavior is a more flat hierarchy, where value and an agile-oriented culture are the main things identified. Agile leadership strives to delegate more ownership to enable employees to achieve holistic results (Morrison, 2019).

Agiles Führungsverhaltens legt die Schwerpunkte auf eine Kultur der Zusammenarbeit, Self-Leadership, Anpassungsfähigkeit, Transparenz und pro-aktives Feedback. Effektives agiles Führungsverhalten basiert auf drei grundlegenden Erfolgsfaktoren: Vertrauen, kontinuierliche Verbesserung und Delegation der Verantwortung im täglichen Umgang mit dem Team (Hofert, 2018; Kupiek, 2021).

The first thing to do is to establish a good relationship of trust between managers and the direct report (Denison, 1984, 1990). Leaders must gain the trust of employees so that they will help them and devote their full efforts to the company's purpose. Traditional leadership models, such as exhortation or reward, become less important here (Stevenson 2020). Instead, leaders must rely on trust as the foundation of leadership behavior. If employees are unable to rely on their own judgment and special skills, it can be difficult to achieve consistent results. Continuous improvements to the process and product are key aspects of agile leadership behaviors. Change doesn't always have to be significant; leaders should make small changes every day for the good of the business. To do this, leaders need to be resonant and constantly working on the process. This shows employees that they are valued and appreciated. The final and arguably most important component of agile leadership behavior is delegation of responsibility. Leaders must be willing to pass decision-making power to team

members. They are supported in their new roles and should be empowered to make decisions on their own. Delegating not only strengthens the team, it also increases motivation. It also increases productivity and reduces failure. Leaders can be encouraged to pursue agile leadership behaviors and increase their participation to educative and collaborative change process (Bersin, 2016; Kupiek, 2021; Maximini, 2022). They can also turn to mentors or coaches to help implement agile methods in the business world. Organizations should also assess the impact of agile leadership styles on the organization as a whole and then build on it in a slow and controlled process. Agile leadership methods can help companies resolve conflicts and achieve goals. To integrate agile methods into the corporate world in a professional manner, companies must empower leaders to recognize agile values (Kupiek, 2021). Agile leadership behavior requires trust, continuous improvement, and delegation of responsibility (Hayward, 2021). To make the implementation of these values as effective as possible, it is important that leaders make an effort to delegate responsibility to employees so that they have the opportunity to work independently. When this is enabled, companies can absolutely benefit from agile methods and leadership behaviors.

Agile working and the Agile Manifesto

Agile working is a methodology that enables teams to respond quickly and efficiently to the unexpected while delivering the highest possible value to the product. The agile approach emerged from the need to adapt to an ever-changing economic landscape (Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985; Morrison, 2019; Orantek, 2014). This method represents a wave of change and a deliberate departure from common management methods, particularly traditional planning processes. Although there are different approaches, the eight principles of the Agile Manifesto are considered standards when it comes to aligning teams with the agile opportunity (Canedo et al., 2021; Darrin & Devereux, 2017). First, the Agile Manifesto enables flexible and rapid adaptation to changing environments so that the product or service can be efficiently brought to completion.

Second, the manifesto provides a clear response time to comments and suggestions on the part of the team. It also emphasizes that teams must be self-organized: Colleagues must act on their own responsibility and be involved in the final design of the product.

In the same way, the manifesto presents the continuous collaboration of people from different departments. It is encouraged to have a prevailing exchange of ideas and recognition of needs (Morrison, 2019; Preußig, 2015).

In addition, the Agile Manifesto supports the use of short working hours as well as the testing of new ideas in short intervals (so-called slicing). In this way, continuous iterations can emerge to adapt to current customer requirements. Furthermore, the manifesto supports the focus of employees on their respective work environments, which enable them to implement tasks efficiently. It likewise underscores that people are the greatest value to the quality of the product across everything. Furthermore, the Agile Manifesto includes simplified communication: whether within the team or with customers, the goal is to develop consistent and clear understandings that ensure customer requirements are met.

It is essential that everyone in the team has an idea of the history and values of the Agile Manifesto on a consistent level. In addition, the customer's goals must be defined and it is essential to ensure continuous communication and inclusion of the

customer's requirements throughout the process (Preußig, 2015). The challenge for leaders is to be able to create sustainable value while adapting to current customer needs. The Agile Manifesto is a document that proclaims four values that are considered the foundation of agile working. It was created by representatives of software development, project management, and other experts in 2001 and sets out the principles of agile work (Jawawi et al., 2014; Rahardja et al., 2020).

The first value of the agile manifesto is Individuals and Interactions. This means that communication and collaboration should be the driving force for a compelling end result. Teams should focus not only on their roles, but on the people involved in them (Conboy & Fitzgerald, 2004; Kadenic et al., 2023).

The second value of the Agile Manifesto is "Working Software" (Working Code). This emphasizes the importance of a team being productive and effective. Working software means that the solutions a team produces work and deliver worthwhile results.The third value of the Agile Manifesto is Customer Collaboration. It means that teams work with their customers to develop ideas and concepts that work and add value. It's about sharing ownership of the outcome and having a dialogue where customers provide their feedback. The fourth value of the agile manifesto is Responding to Change. This value emphasizes the importance of feedback and adaptability in a team's work. This is very important because there are unique situations and challenges that a team must respond to. The Agile Manifesto calls for leaders to manage their teams in a collaborative and adaptive environment based on ownership. Leaders who want to introduce agile working into their organizations need to create a suitable environment in which teams can problem and change manage. To do this, it is critical to create a culture of learning where it is encouraged to innovate and make mistakes. It is essential to create a space where team members not only feel safe, but also can continuously contribute ideas and suggestions for improvement (Reupke-Sieroux et al., 2020). Such a corporate culture should have clear goals and guidelines defined by the highest-level executive.

Agile values and their influence on collaboration

To sum up, agility influences corporate culture and collaboration in many ways. The tangible impact on business performance, quality and productivity is astounding and, most importantly, it changes the way teams work in a positive way. Agility contributes to better understanding and mutual respect - it stimulates team collaboration and enables much more speedy and efficient work. Responding quickly to change and being able to develop new solutions quickly helps companies move forward better, find valuable ideas, and meet goals. Overall, the desire of companies to work according to agile values proves that agile is a dynamic, effective and profitable approach to achieve set goals. (Healy et al., 2023)

It means following agile values to promote sustainable growth and success of both the organization and its employees. Agile values are a collection of principles that a group or organization can refer to in order to manage the business. These values include general ideas such as openness, honesty, and axial adaptation process. Agile values support a culture of sharing, learning, and personal growth, and create a cryptax between experience, expertise, and progress.

This helps build a culture of sustainable collaboration, innovation, and flexibility. It enables teams to work more efficiently and adapt to change more quickly by making continuous changes and achieving higher product quality. Agility also impacts collaboration by improving communication between teams and members and fostering social impact in terms of team and business performance. (Jeschke, 2013)

A key advantage of the approach is its flexible response to changes in conditions or shifting objectives. Because agility involves the incorporation of innovative ideas, changes in requirements, and the sharing of resources, teams are able to adapt to dynamic market and customer demands. (Contingency Approach to Management - organization, levels, school, company, business, Contingency perspective and organization theory, n.d.; Cooper, 2011) This supports collaboration between teams and the incorporation of different perspectives and ideas that lead to a more creative and consistent outcome. Agility also allows teams to build on the dynamism and trust in the touchpoints between people to achieve a superior experience for the customer.

In this way, companies can build a culture of sustained growth and continuous learning enabled by a continuous improvement process. Agile values are an important building block for a global understanding of goals within a company (Jeschke, 2013; Mazzarol & Reboud, 2020). When organizations are able to incorporate the right agile values into the culture, an environment is created that fosters higher productivity and creativity. Agile fosters a culture of learning in which employees are more productive by practicing and learning from mistakes. Teams learn what, when, how and why to produce in short cycles. This creates a dynamic, productive and loyal work environment that minimizes risks during a project.

The main agile frameworks

Agile methods and frameworks help manage change through processes and technologies and enable progress in a variety of business areas. Whether it is in IT, marketing, or manufacturing, agile methods and frameworks provide direction, focus, and speed in achieving successful results (Conboy & Fitzgerald, 2004; Maximini, 2022). Agile methods, such as SCRUM, design thinking, OKRs, and Kanban, can generate more value and transparency (Canedo et al., 2021; Darrin & Devereux, 2017; Healy et al., 2023; Kadenic et al., 2023). They enable teams to become more self-organized and focus on research (needs analysis and requirements engineering), feedback, and learning through iterative development processes. Agile frameworks can be easily scaled in organizations, making it possible to respond quickly and flexibly to changing circumstances.

Scrum

The agile approach SCRUM is a practical method that allows projects to be classified due to its flexible, collaborative approach, continuous learning and constant adaptation. SCRUM is an event-driven, iterative and incremental framework that enables structured project execution and fast and efficient workflows. It incorporates features, processes, and structures that divide a single application requirement into manageable, understandable, and prioritizable subtasks so that multiple requirements can be worked out per iteration. The goal of SCRUM is to predict outcomes and team behavior in order to maximize the cost, risk, and utility of the end result. Using this method, software projects can be approached as a series of iterations where starting points are known and new methods, practices, and processes can be introduced during development to respond to dynamic requirements (Preußig, 2015). SCRUM creates a framework for collaboration and communication among stakeholders. To be successful, members of a team must understand the principles, processes, roles, and responsibilities. Critical to success is that the team develops a culture of open exchange. The team is committed to creating a working product during each iteration. This includes both organizational skills and a willingness to stay current throughout the development process. The main advantage of SCRUM is that an iteration is short

and provides quick feedback. This ensures that changes can be implemented quickly and a deliverable is produced within an acceptable scope. The iteration methodology allows teams to easily manage requirements and receive regular feedback, improving future planning. By focusing on qualitative implementation of the requirement instead of quantification, there is increased value for all stakeholders (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lang & Scherber, 2018; Nuttall et al., 2011). It also ensures that the customer has access to the latest features of the project and that employees have deeper insight into the requirements, leading to increased satisfaction and motivation. SCRUM allows smaller teams to work more closely together, resulting in faster product development. Larger teams can work through multiple iterations at the same time, which speeds up development all the more. It also simplifies priority management, as customer requirements are selected according to importance to minimize individual tasks. In addition, the regular stand-ups enable better and more efficient exchanges between stakeholders, fostering close collaboration. SCRUM also offers advantages in risk management. On the one hand, critical risks can be identified and managed so that the decisions necessary for the solution can be made in a timely manner (Murphy, 2002). Second, it ensures that people involved in the project are identified early enough to take appropriate action. In terms of cost efficiency, SCRUM offers the possibility to minimize the time and cost factor by prioritizing requirements.

Design Thinking

Design Thinking is an innovative method for solving complex problems. It puts people at the center and combines proven ideas from different disciplines to address problematic situations. The approach considers the needs, goals, and contexts of the person it might affect and addresses agenda-based thinking. Design thinking uses techniques to unleash creativity and talk-constructive ideas, it focuses on design proposals and prototypical designs, and commits to turning such ideas into realistic outcomes and products. The design thinking approach is a formal method that uses existing techniques, interdisciplinary approaches, and iterative processes to solve problems. It enables a collaborative, forward-thinking, and user-centered development process that allows it to permeate more rigid hierarchical organizations. Design thinking is very different from traditional project management approaches. The design thinking approach focuses on five core steps: understanding, ideation, development, prototype, and testing (Conboy & Fitzgerald, 2004; Meinel et al., 2011).

The first step is understanding. This step builds on research and creative interviews to work out the main users, their needs and goals. Ideation and development can then take place. Ideation is about generating ideas by identifying different views, insights and directions in an open process. Development focuses on building forms, structures, and logics that follow the ideas. \Finally, the prototype can be created and tested. Because Design Thinking relies on cyclical events and responses, newly discovered problems can be brought back to iterate and advance areas that promote what has been learned. Design Thinking offers a number of advantages that make it superior to other methods. Its use is based on a theory of principles that enables understanding issues of the problem by adhering to the founding conditions of the problem (Baruch, 2017; Pereira & Russo, 2018). In addition, it enables a conscious view of the problem environment, allowing new approaches to the solution instead of deciding on precious solutions. Design thinking also allows providing flexible, intuitive, and innovative ideas. Some of the most common techniques of design thinking are brainstorming, brainwriting and six thinking hats(Piccoli & Ives, 2005). Each of these techniques is specific to the process that enables a more diverse and wider range of possible

solutions. Design Thinking enables individuals, groups, and organizations to design not only products, services, and business models, but also a broad range of what they own, control, and consume. Design Thinking represents a deeper theory and method of thinking. It combines unique concepts of creativity and problem solving with a specialization in serving users. This makes it ideal for large companies that want to revise their strategic approach. It helps with idea generation and processing and supports both well-established and innovative business models (Achi et al., 2016; Mustonen-Ollila & Lyytinen, 2003). Design thinking is characterized by a process that involves people in planning and engages them in a collaborative, iterative, and active way. It is a highly efficient method for developing products and services that often provides more results and value to users than traditional approaches. Design thinking enables systematic and clear conceptual intent and provides a unique parameterization of defined models to respond to user needs and goals.

Kanban

Kanban is a method used in the execution of projects to produce products more efficiently and ensure high quality. This method, also known as a pull system, help organizations stay focused on production and constantly respond to waiting customer requirements (Solinski & Petersen, 2016).

Basically, Kanban is a manufacturing process that uses a series of visual boards and cards to visualize the progress of a project. The cards represent activities or tasks that need to be performed within the project. The boards can be grouped into different stages based on the stage of the project. By visually representing the cards on the board, everyone involved in the production can get a better overview of the progress of the project. A great advantage of Kanban is that it is very easy to implement and allows customization to meet the needs of a project. There is no need to set up complicated software, the setup is very simple. Costs are also minimal, as there is no need for special equipment or documentation that is difficult to understand. Another key benefit is that it allows for a more efficient amount of resources, as processes can be visually represented and reviewed for timeliness and availability. Another benefit is that Kanban makes it very easy to increase the flexibility of processes. Process and workflows can be adjusted to meet specific goals and enable faster time to market. (Larson & Chang, 2016; Piccoli & Ives, 2005) This enables management and development teams to manage processes efficiently and quickly. In addition, Kanban makes it very easy to monitor productivity and the quality of deployed resources. This is very important as it allows operators to propose actions to make processes more efficient and ensure that customer requirements are met. By moving forward properly in a project, resources can also be quickly identified when problems occur, ensuring that processes are continuously improved.

The concept of Kanban has received a lot of popularity and recognition in recent years and is also used today as an approach for the introduction and implementation of projects in many industries. It helps teams not only with individual processes, but also in managing teams with different skills and abilities. (Silva da Silva et al., 2011) To understand the Kanban concept, it is important to look at the three basic principles that characterize it. These include limiting work into work, visualizing work processes, and tracking cycle time. These basic principles make it possible for organizations to visually track the progress of a task so that each step in the process can be easily identified. This allows managers to more easily identify deficiencies and modify processes to achieve a reduction in lead times. Overall, Kanban provides an innovative and efficient solution for managing production and projects. By visually

displaying the progress of production, anomalies and problems can be quickly discovered, drastically reducing lead times without much effort. It also allows managers and development teams to manage resources quickly and efficiently while ensuring that quality processes are followed. In other words, Kanban is an inexpensive and efficient way to successfully execute projects and meet customer requirements on time. (Gruber et al., 2015; Ingle, 2013)

OKRs

OKRs, short for Objective and Key Results, is a leadership method that has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially in the corporate world. OKRs originated in Silicon Valley and were developed as a way to define goals, set priorities, measure results and enable success. They were originally introduced by Andy Grove, ex-chairman of technology company Intel, and allow a company to set strategic goals, define measures and track progress. OKRs are an important part of corporate strategy. They help keep a company on track and moving in the right direction. Without OKRs, corporate goals often remain unattainable or become too broad and unstructured. OKRs enable companies to define goals and measure the results of achieving them. At the individual company level, goals must be defined and actions taken to achieve those goals. This set of objectives and measures is referred to as OKRs. An OKR usually consists of a goal (the Objective) and a set of key results (Key Results). Objectives must be clear, measurable, and achievable. Key Results are metrics or measurements that can be used to measure steps toward achieving the Objective. Examples of OKRs might be "Increase the number of customers by 20 percent this year" (the Objective) and two Key Results: "Increase revenue per customer by 10 percent" and "Increase the number of customer visits by 50 percent." At the enterprise level, OKRs help maintain organizational focus on strategic goals. Goal setting allows employees to prioritize and focus work based on goals and key outcomes (Arora, 2004; Vallon et al., 2018). It also gives employees the opportunity to develop an understanding of how their tasks and goals contribute to the overall organizational goal. This enables employees to do their part in achieving the organizational goal. Furthermore, OKRs can be used to keep teams on the same Strategic Course. With the help of OKRs, teams can focus on a commonly defined goal, which leads to better results. This allows teams to break large tasks into smaller subdivisions, making it easier to achieve the goal. By tracking OKRs, organizations can measure progress and make strategic adjustments. Tracking goals allows the company to track progress and see if it is on the right track. Proactive adjustments can improve results for goals. For companies considering the use of OKRs, it is important to understand that OKRs need to be broken down into goals and key results. For this reason, it is important for companies to define clear goals and then translate those goals into specific key results. This allows employees to focus on a clear goal and easily measure progress. Another benefit of OKRs is that they enable team building. Teams can be built and nurtured around the goal to achieve the business objective. OKRs provide the opportunity to work collaboratively and complete tasks more efficiently, increasing the focus on achieving the goal. In the corporate world, tracking OKRs is an important tool to drive results and enable success. It enables organizations to define clear goals, take action, and track progress. It also enables teams to work more efficiently and move towards the previously defined goal. Therefore, the use of OKRs is a very useful measure to support the corporate strategy and achieve success. (Berntzen et al., 2023; Kunrath et al., 2022; Stray et al., 2022)

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