

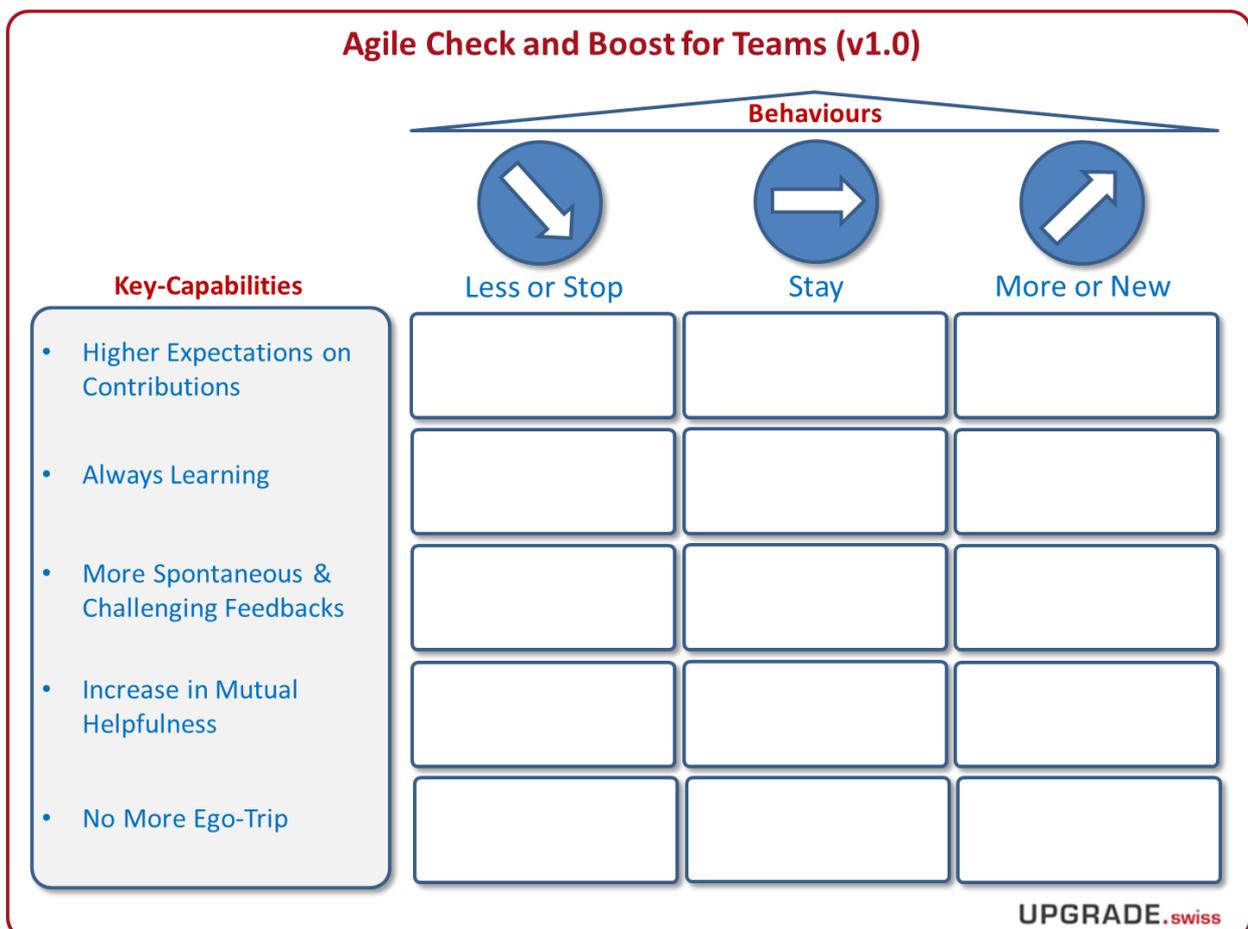
Agile Check & Boost for Teams

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You started to work in an agile mode a couple of weeks ago (self-organization, scrum, ...). You urgently need quick result improvements, not only to deliver faster and in better quality, but also to convince stakeholders about your decision (to work in an agile mode). You are wondering how to monitor and boost your agile shift.

The “Agile Check & Boost for Teams” allows a quick monitoring and boost of your agile shift. It is based on the belief that it is better to “quickly try, learn and adapt” than to “carefully conceptualize, train and pilot” in order to make an agile shift. It is built on the following principles:

- Strengthens the attention on the improvement of capabilities that enable the agile shift.
- Focuses on a handful of key-capabilities that are a prerequisite for best agile teamwork. The choice of these key-capabilities is based on numerous observations of various teams. It does not pretend to be exhaustive.
- Catalyzes the sharing of (new) learning and good practices and allows the participation of a coach for new impulses.



I first present the key-capabilities, then the tool itself and finally some options how to use it.

The five Key-Capabilities

You find below a couple of possible observations demonstrating that the agile shift is taking place for each key-capabilities.

1) Higher Expectations on Contributions

Each team member has higher expectations regarding his own contributions, those of his colleagues and the results of the team. The non-achievement of the results (for instance for a product owner) brings a frustration comparable to that of a sports team which has just lost a match. We also observe that when a member of the team cannot contribute satisfactorily to a specific project, he or she retires without any emotional problem. Eventually, team members become allergic to idle or unproductive time and request new tasks if necessary.

2) Always Learning

To reach the set objectives, interdisciplinary team members "have to" show interest in the disciplines of their colleagues and deepen their knowledge. What may have been an obligation at first soon becomes a pleasure. Even the experts who at the beginning tend to "protect" their knowledge quickly become trainers for their colleagues and enjoy it. We also observe that learning happens on-the-job, spontaneously and naturally.

3) More Spontaneous & Challenging Feedback

The willingness to give useful feedback that improves collaboration and results as well as the acceptance of critical feedback increase. Team members feel safe about actively giving their opinion in the team, even if it strongly contradicts their colleagues' opinion. Furthermore, they have no issue when their own contributions meet criticism. Moreover, team members feel comfortable about giving their colleagues unfiltered and regular feedback on their personal achievements.

4) Increase in Mutual Helpfulness

As goals are common and attractive, each member is motivated to reach them. This common motivation stimulates the team members to spontaneously help each other. The team members actively offer their colleagues a hand as soon as they realize that it is necessary for the team performance (achievement of deadline and quality). We also observe that the team members recognize and solve bottleneck autonomously. They define and take the necessary measures (multiplication of knowledge for example). In addition, problem solving in general becomes more spontaneous and fluid. Team members become less angry (or not anymore) and tackle the problem with sovereignty.

5) No more Ego-Trip

Probably the most difficult key-capability. As the performance is a team performance, there is no more room for "the hero who needs the trophy for himself". Notorious Ego-Player are not happy and leave the team. Further, the team will not automatically judge or reject a person that is not at ease in a project or has difficulty to deliver. On the contrary, the team will try to support the person or redefine the task as far as possible. Moreover, high transparency about doing and results is welcome and no threat anymore.

The Tool “Agile Check and Boost for Teams” itself

As the agile shift only happens when behaviors evolve, the “Agile Check and Boost for Teams” focuses on behavioral evolutions. On the left side of the tool are the 5 key-capabilities. The other side of the tool allows to visualize the evolution of the behavior for each key-capability. The three columns have the following meaning:

- 1) **Less or Stop:** this column is used to identify current behaviors that are representative of the hierarchical mode and not suitable for the agile mode. In order to achieve the agile shift, it is necessary to weaken or eliminate these behaviors.
- 2) **Stay:** this column is used to identify behaviors that sustain the agile mode and are already part of the daily work. It is necessary to continue to practice them. By the way: most teams already have behaviors that sustain the agile mode, and this before making the decision to make an agile shift.
- 3) **More or New:** this column is used to identify the behaviors that are necessary for the agile mode and that are not yet or insufficiently available. This is about adopting or reinforcing these behaviors on a daily basis.

How to use the “Agile Check and Boost for Teams”

You have different possibilities to use this tool. In each case, you have to fill the tool with your reflections.

- 1) **Individually:** to reflect on the evolution of your personal behavior.
- 2) **Between colleagues:** you reflect on one of your colleagues' behavioral evolution and give him a feedback. This can also happen in team, where every member gives his feedback to all the other members. A person outside of the team should ensure the moderation.
- 3) **In team:** you reflect together about the changes in behavior within the team. In this case, you conduct a dialogue allowing the sharing of good practices and the decision about the desired future evolutions. An effective way is to draw the "Agile Check and Boost for Team" on a large poster and visualize the reflections using post-its with different colors for each column. It is worthwhile to keep the result for later review. The behaviors that have been successfully introduced or reinforced since the last review can be moved from the third to the second column. The behaviors that have been successfully weakened or eliminated since the last review can be removed from the first column to the the edge of the tool. Doing this way, it is possible to monitor the evolution. Moderation can be ensured either by a member of the team or by someone outside the team. In this second case, it is worth to choose a coach able to reflect your way of doing things and complete the knowledge of the team.

Feedback welcome

I wish you every success with your agile shift.

I would be pleased if you share with me your experiences with the “Agile Check & Boost for Teams”. Feel free to write me a few lines about it or contact me.

Warm regards.

About the author



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Some Books that also inspired this tool

- Valentin Nowotny, *Agile Unternehmen: nur was sich bewegt, kann sich verbessern*, Business Village, 3e Auflage 2017, 391p.
- Svenja Hofert, *Agiler führen: Einfache Maßnahmen für bessere Teamarbeit, mehr Leistung und höhere Kreativität*, Springer Gabler, 2e Auflage 2017, 272p.
- Mohammed Musthafa Soukath Ali, *Get SAFe Now: A Lightning Introduction to the Most Popular Scaling Framework on Agile*, independently published, 2017, 107p.