

BEST PRACTICE

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BEC:

A comprehensive agile transformation with SAFe®

Interview with Lone Mariboe,
Head of Development, BEC

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SAFe® - scalable agility

In this edition of Best Practice, we focus on Scaled Agile Framework® - also known as SAFe®. An agile framework that is becoming more prevalent among companies today. The framework gives the answer to how you scale the agile practice from the team to the program and across the entire organization along with creating collaboration between the agile teams and create transparency. This means that you are able to accelerate productivity, shorten time-to-market, and increase quality. Profits that will make most development organizations attentive.

ProData Consult have visited BEC who is in the process of

implementing the framework in the development organization. You will meet Lone Mariboe, Head of Development, who has been a key player in the implementation of the substantial agile transformation. She talks about the transformation in BEC and how they have approached the task. Furthermore, you can read about two ProData-consultants; a scrum master and a solution architect who will pass on their experiences from their work with SAFe.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our clients, collaborators, consultants, and employees who all have made 2017 a

substantial year for ProData Consult. In the previous year, we have grown by 30% and have provided more consultants to our clients than ever before. At the same time, our client satisfaction has never been better, and our consultants' performances are rated 4,02 on a scale from 1-5 where 5 is the highest score. A result we are very proud of.

We are looking forward to a just as exciting and challenging year in 2018.

Søren Rode
CEO

What is SAFe®?

THE FIRST EDITION OF SCALED AGILE FRAMEWORK (SAFe®) WAS INTRODUCED IN 2011. SINCE THEN, THE FRAMEWORK HAS CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVED, AND THE LATEST VERSION, SAFE 4.5, WAS RELEASED IN THE SUMMER OF 2017. BUT WHAT IS SAFE®, AND HOW IS IT INTENDED TO CREATE VALUE FOR THE ORGANIZATIONS?

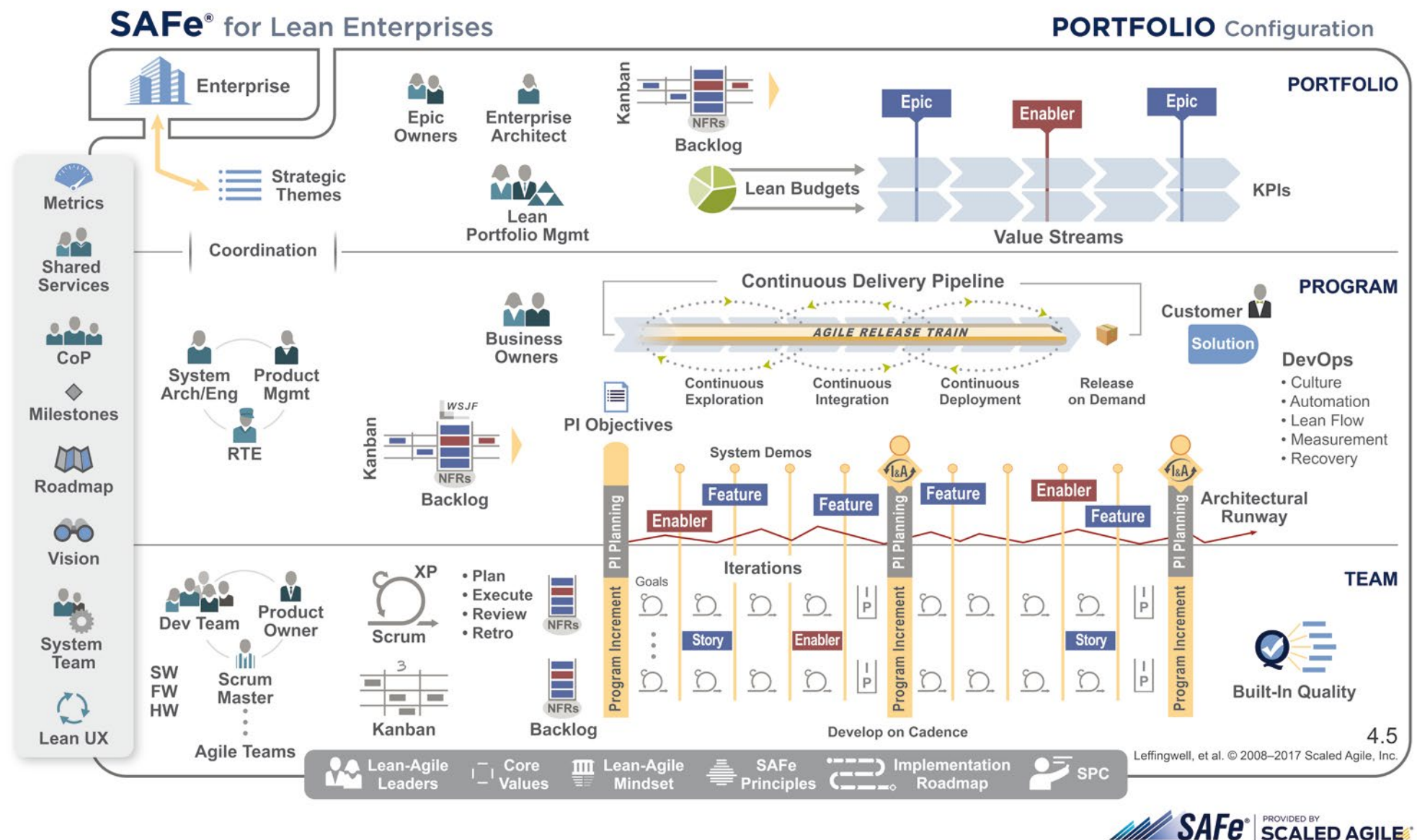
Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®) is a scalable and configurable framework that helps organizations provide new products, services, and solutions with most possible quality and value, but also in the most efficient and sustainable way. SAFe is adaptable to the organization's needs and situation. It can support small organizations with 50-100 employees as well as large, complex organizations with more than 1,000 employees.

According to Scaled Agile®, who is behind SAFe, the framework describes the roles, responsibilities, artifacts, and activities that are necessary to implement Lean-Agile development. The

framework is based on knowledge and experience, and it is a well documented approach to develop complex systems and software from a Lean-Agile mindset.

Overall, SAFe provides the solution for how to scale the agile practice from the team to the program and across the entire organization in order to deliver faster and better results. Additionally, the framework is based on how to best organize the employees in relation to creating value, so that deliveries and value creation happen efficiently without delays and bureaucracy as might occur in a traditional hierarchical organizational structure.

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SAFe also provides means to manage dependences among teams and to create transparency across teams, programs, and value streams. It also helps to measure and control the agile teams' performance, their work, and how to help the team improve without creating additional obstacles.

According to Scaled Agile, SAFe also answers how you construct an organizational environment which produces collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. It explains how to actively create a culture that tolerates mistakes and rewards willingness to learn and take risks.

The illustration above shows the configuration SAFe® Portfolio. There are four different configurations of the SAFe-model: 'Essential SAFe', 'Portfolio SAFe', 'Large Solution SAFe', and 'Full SAFe'. These configurations offer organizations the opportunity to start out simply and gradually expand the framework as the needs increase.

Scaled Agile Framework is a framework which aims to synchronize collaboration and deliveries across several agile teams. It strengthens the organization's agility, increases productivity and quality, shortens time-to-market, and enhances employee involvement and satisfaction. 📌

Sources:

SAFe®4.5 introduction – Overview of Scaled Agile Framework for Lean Enterprises, A Scaled Agile, Inc. White Paper, August 2017

Website: <http://www.scaledagileframework.com>



BEC:

A comprehensive agile transformation with SAFe®

AS A RESULT OF COMPETITION AND NEED FOR FASTER DEVELOPMENT, BEC HAS TRANSFORMED THEIR DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION. BY USING THE SAFE-MODEL, 513 EMPLOYEES NOW HAVE NEW AGILE WORKFLOWS AND EVALUATIONS ALREADY SHOW A POSITIVE EFFECT – ALL IN LESS THAN A YEAR. IN THIS ARTICLE, HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT LONE MARIBOE TELLS ABOUT THE TRANSFORMATION.

Interview with Lone Mariboe, Head of Development in BEC.

In 2016, BEC began to change their development organization with the use of the agile framework SAFe®. The reason for the change was increased competition and a need to develop and adjust projects even faster and continuously. The result? In less than a year, BEC has implemented agile workflows for 513 employees divided into 47 teams.

"We have made the entire development organization work after the new framework and it is working. But we are not done yet. If we want to really reach our goal, we have to stay focused for years to come," says Lone Mariboe, Head of Development, who has been one of the key drivers in the project.

METHODICAL APPROACH

From the very beginning, the obvious choice for Lone Mariboe and the rest of the development group was – not surprisingly – to go in an agile direction when they had to rethink the workflows in BEC. After a thoroughly preliminary effort, it became clear that SAFe was a good fit for BEC's needs.

"How do you combine 14-days deliveries with long, heavy programs? SAFe takes this into consideration. SAFe has many components, thoughts, and experiences incorporated and it suited both our own

and our clients' needs," says the Head of Development.

"How do you combine 14-days deliveries with long, heavy programs? SAFe takes this into consideration. SAFe has many components, thoughts, and experiences incorporated and it suited both our own and our clients' needs."

Lone Mariboe, Head of Development in BEC

With the framework in place, the development group rolled up their sleeves and started the transformation based on the grounds of the SAFe-model. This was crucial for the process. Lone Mariboe explains:

"In the beginning, you can be inclined to say that 'this does not quite suit us so we should adjust it to fit our reality and make our own version'. But you cannot just choose single parts since there are so many intertwined components in the framework

and they are mutually dependent. You have to accept the entire package for it to work and to gain the fully profit."

The persistent and methodical approach to the framework has been beneficial for BEC. Both because the development group has had a plan and a frame of reference when problems inevitable have occurred, but also because it has created a common understanding in the organization.

"Even when the concepts were very unfamiliar, we insisted on using them. This means that to this day everyone speaks the same language and has a more homogeneous understanding of the division of work and the meaning of the roles," Lone Mariboe explains.

FROM THE BEGINNING

Before the actual implementation of the model started, the development group tested SAFe, as the work with the transformation project was done based on the model of the framework. This meant that the colleagues who were to later implement the model in the organization had already worked in the new setup with personal hands-on-experiences which are explained in the framework.

"We got to try to be part of the setup. We

got the meaning of the concepts in place, learned a great deal, and we also tried to fail which was an important part of the learning process,” says the Head of Development.

The implementing has been a continuous process throughout the past year. Instead of making the change in the entire organization at once, the development group chose to do the implementation ‘one area at the time’. Capital Markets was first.

“We broke everything into pieces. We drew up value streams, customer journeys, systems, user interfaces, what data was

“At first, you contemplate if it truly is beneficial to pull all employees out of the office for two whole days every three months? Does it make sense and is it valuable for everyone? It is. It becomes very clear how everything is connected across the teams, and you obtain transparency and optimize the way everyone works.”

Lone Mariboe, Head of Development in BEC

used, correlations between systems, and much more. We mapped everything,” says Lone Mariboe.

Afterwards, the area was restructured into new teams, employees were educated, and introduced to their new roles. As the implementation began to speed up, the development group quickly realized that the original plan to implement SAFe in the course of 18 months was too long a transformation phase. The demand and impatience to join the change process shown by the individual areas resulted in a decision to scale aggressively and utilize momentum and willingness to change by cutting six months off the original time plan.

A JOINT MISSION

The SAFe-model has a lot of components, but according to Lone Mariboe it is

particularly the organization of teams into so-called agile release trains – or ARTs – and the appertaining program increment planning, also known as PI planning, which are worth accentuating. At BEC, there is a setup with 8 release trains each with a number of agile teams consisting of 6-9 participants. The head of development says:

“Each ART has a joint mission. This helps to create correlation between the various teams, the dependences are visualized, and the cooperation between teams is increased.”

Every three months, all the employees of each ART, relevant decision-makers, and managers are gathered for a two-day PI planning session. Here deliveries and dependences for the upcoming three months are planned.

“At first, you contemplate if it truly is beneficial to pull all employees out of the office for two whole days every three months? Does it make sense and is it valuable for everyone? It is. It becomes very clear how everything is connected across the teams, and you obtain transparency and optimize the way everyone works,” says Mariboe.

Furthermore, everyone involved takes great ownership of the three-month-plan as a PI planning does not end until everyone agrees on the contents. Each team commits to deliveries that are part of the overall plan, and this obligation is expressed by the team to the entire ART. The combination of increased transparency and the obligation to deliver in relation to a greater whole works. The head of development says:

“It is magical. I have never been part of something this efficient. The two days away from the office are time well spent.”

The individual teams work in 14-days sprints as self-organizing units after the Scrum-method. The team is always aware of the joint defined deliveries, and they know the consequences for the rest of the ART if they do not deliver. Additionally, PI planning contributes to creating transparency vertically in the organization. The top managers get a better understanding for the

“We started from the bottom and now we have the engine room up and running. We are presently at the point where we add the upper layers and where we move from mastering techniques to integrating the whole mindset as a regular part of our everyday work.”

Lone Mariboe, Head of Development in BEC

engine room, but it also becomes evident where it is necessary to make decisions and prioritize to avoid bottlenecks in the development.

HALVING THE TIME TO FIRST DELIVERY

A Lean-Agile Center of Excellence has been established to ensure that the SAFe transformation will continue to be a success and will be implemented in the entire organization. A unit in the organization which makes sure that the necessary focus is present in BEC. Because there is still some way to go.

“We started from the bottom and now we have the engine room up and running. We are presently at the point where we add the upper layers and where we move from mastering techniques to integrating the whole mindset as a regular part of our everyday work,” Mariboe explains.

Although the SAFe-implementation is still in process, it is evident that it is already a success: Evaluations show that BEC has reduced the time to the first delivery by half. At the same time the client satisfaction has improved. BEC has also seen a decline in critical incidents and in some cases an impressive decline in error cases. Last, but not least, the implementation of SAFe has had a positive effect on the employees. Lone Mariboe says:

“There is a decreasing tendency in stress reports and sickness absence, and while a great part of the employees has new roles in connection to the transformation, we have seen an increase in employee satisfaction.”



Who's who:

Name: Lone Mariboe
Title: Head of Development
Age: 49
Edu.: HD, Informatics and financial management

Since 2014, Lone Mariboe has worked as Head of Development in BEC with previous experience as Head of IT Development and Head of IT Project Management in PFA Pension. In the summer of 2017, she was chosen as Head of Development at the Lean Agile Center of Excellence in BEC, which is a unit dedicated to ensuring the implementation of SAFe.

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Being scrum master in a SAFe-setup

A LARGE REORGANIZATION IN BEC IS CHANGING PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS FOR ALL THE EMPLOYEES IN THE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION. IN THIS INTERVIEW, PRODATA-CONSULTANT TROELS JAKOBSEN TELLS ABOUT THE SCRUM MASTER-ROLE AND THE ADVANTAGES OF WORKING IN A SAFE-SETUP, ALONG WITH HOW TO TACKLE SOME OF THE MOST CRUCIAL CHALLENGES IN A BIG AGILE TRANSFORMATION.

Interview with ProData-consultant Troels Jakobsen, Scrum Master in BEC.

BEC is on a mission. The mission is to implement SAFe® and agile workflows in the entire development organization – a huge reorganization that affects everyone. As scrum master in BEC, Troels Jakobsen's most important job is to ensure that the agile principles and the SAFe-method is embedded at team level. He is responsible for the team's ability to handle and coordinate its own tasks. In a transformation of this size, the role of the scrum master is to act as change agent, facilitator, and coach.

"I help my team members embrace SAFe and the agile mindset. I support and coach them through the new workflows and make sure that they do not fall backwards but gain the intended value of the method," says Troels Jakobsen.

It may sound like a simple task but it takes persistence to change the way people think and the culture in a large, well-established company where everyone has been used to do things a certain way.

"It is an immense exercise to convert people from planning to finish tasks in 6 months to doing so in 14 days. It is a fundamentally different way of thinking and a big change of the way people work," says the scrum master.

SEVERAL ADVANTAGES OF SAFE

BEC is still well under way of implementing and embedding the SAFe-model but it is already clear to Troels Jakobsen that SAFe contributes with some obvious advantages to the organization. The advantages are particularly evident at the so-called

"You get an overview of the dependences between the various teams. You are more abreast of what has to be delivered and when, and how this fit into the larger picture"

Troels Jakobsen, Scrum Master in BEC

PI planning sessions. Here, deliveries, dependences, and risks are planned and mapped for the upcoming 3 months. You get an overview of how each individual team's deliveries fit into the joint vision for the entire Agile Release Train (ART) which is the central unit – a team of teams.

"You get an overview of the dependences between the various teams. You are more abreast of what has to be delivered and when, and how this fits into the larger picture," Troels Jakobsen explains.

In a large organization, it can be difficult to figure out the relation between the various scrum teams and, therefore, it can be problematic for the team to know how their deliveries are connected to the big perspective. SAFe gives an overview of this.

"The team can see the value of their work and how it makes sense. It is a good feeling when your work is brought to use in a sensible manner. This is rendered visible with SAFe and it is highly rewarding for the team but also for the scrum master," Jakobsen elaborates.



SAFe makes it obvious how the team's performance and deliveries add value to the organization and thus the clients. The PI planning sessions ensure that the gap between the decision makers and the executors is reduced. The sessions also create a better understanding of coworkers' issues across the organization. With this overview, you are also more capable of prioritizing, and it generates a transparency in the organization, which makes it possible for relevant decision makers to adjust scope, resources, or time, if necessary.

CHANGE HAPPENS FROM INSIDE

During the reorganization, the employees in BEC have gotten new roles, new colleagues, and new ways of working. Even though there has been profound obligingness towards the work with SAFe, there will be inevitable resistance to the change in such a big transformation. The key to success is to make the change happen from inside by getting the team to take ownership of the new initiatives. According to Troels Jakobsen, this will make it more trustworthy and apparent for the team why SAFe makes sense and how it adds value. To make the change happen from the inside, the scrum master tries to establish some ambassadors within the team who takes ownership and can show the rest of the team how to succeed with the new methods.

"It has to be the team that drives the change forward. If it comes from the scrum master, it can appear like management requirements that are forced upon the team. Instead, it is important that the team members train and guide each other based on their experiences, for the method to be properly embedded," the scrum master says.

It is also important that there is an understanding of the joint responsibility the team has to one another but also to the entire ART. This is an aspect that can help carry on the change.

"It is important that the team members report to each other and not to the scrum master. It is crucial they understand that they are accountable to each other and handle the tasks they are facing jointly. It can take time to create a culture like this."

And to oblige to the frustration a team might face in a transformation phase, Troels Jakobsen always makes sure to nudge the team. He uses every opportunity to clearly and openly brief the team about what is next and why. Troels Jakobsen says:

"The clearer the battle lines are drawn the fewer surprises the team will experience. This generates security and clarity for the process and purpose."

"The clearer the battle lines are drawn the fewer surprises the team will experience. This generates security and clarity for the process and purpose"

Troels Jakobsen, Scrum Master in BEC

SAFE CAUSES LEARNING, SOLUTIONS AND INNOVATION

Working with continuous improvement is a fundamental element in SAFe. You have a retrospective approach to learning and development both in the individual teams but also across the ART. Joint problems across the ART are handled at workshops, where solutions to the shared challenged are discussed. The exchange of experiences helps the team to continuous

improvement and optimization of workflows and processes within the SAFe framework. But in addition to handling problems there is also room for innovation. In a meaningful context, the team gets 1,5 days at the end of each 'PI' to be creative and think out of the box. This offers an opportunity to find alternative solutions and create further improvements.

"For example, we have tried to combine two different technologies. In the beginning we did not know if this was beneficial for the ART, but we managed to apply the new technology. A solution we would not have found if we did not take time to be creative."

Fundamentally, BEC has had an open-minded approach to learning during the transformation. According to Troels Jakobsen, this has paid off as they have taken the time to get to know the framework and methods instead of just forcing it on people all at once.

"BEC has used a 'step by step approach'. We learn as we grow. That is an approach that works," the scrum master concludes.

THE SCRUM MASTER'S ROLE

"Scrum Masters are servant leaders and coaches for an Agile Team. They help educate the team in Scrum, Extreme Programming (XP), Kanban, and SAFe, ensuring that the agreed Agile process is being followed. They also help remove impediments and foster an environment for high-performing team dynamics, continuous flow, and relentless improvement."

Source: <http://www.scaledagileframework.com/scrum-master/>



Who's who:

Name: Troels Jakobsen
Title: Scrum master, ProData Consult. On assignment in BEC.
Age: 42
Edu.: Civil Engineer, DTU

Troels Jakobsen is SAFe SPC4 certified and also has certified scrum coach and scrum master on his CV. Since 2016, he has worked as scrum master in a SAFe-setup at Nordea and presently BEC, but he has more than 10 years of experience working in agile environments – for example as scrum master.

A unique team spirit with SAFe®

IN THIS INTERVIEW, PRODATA-CONSULTANT KENT MEILING SØRENSEN TELLS HOW SAFE® AND THE APPERTAINING WORKFLOWS AND PROCESSES CONTRIBUTE TO CREATE A UNIQUE GROUP DYNAMIC AND A GOOD COLLABORATION IN THE TEAM.

Interview with ProData-consultant Kent Meiling Sørensen, Solution Architect in BEC.

In BEC, it is evident how the implementation of the agile framework SAFe® is present. Scrum boards, program boards, PI objectives, and large amounts of post-its decorate the walls when you step into the big IT company. In one of BEC's 47 agile teams, Solution Architect Kent Meiling Sørensen and his team are working on the deliveries they have committed to. In the so-called PI-planning sessions, the team has jointly defined what deliveries they are able to deliver in the next three months and, thereby, committed to this explicitly to the other teams in the Agile Release Train (ART).

A JOINT RESPONSIBILITY

The fact that the team has jointly committed to the deliveries towards a larger number of teams who are dependent on these deliveries, create a unique group dynamic and collaboration.

"If we promise something, we will keep it. We all agree upon that. In this team, we have a culture which implies that we all have to help each other if we want to reach our goal," Kent Meiling Sørensen says. He elaborates:

"For example, we were extremely busy right before we had a particular delivery and we were especially under pressure on the testing part. It was very natural for the rest of us to step in and assist even though the least of us were responsible for testing. It was more important that we, as a team, reached our target with the delivery."

Even though you do not have key competences within a specific domain, it is

part of the group dynamic of the agile teams to help each other and get the deliveries done in the agreed upon time and quality. In the team, the joint sense of responsibility has contributed to the creation of a culture where everyone will take responsibility, contribute, and bring new ideas to the table. This also makes the process of learning and development in relation to how the team cooperates more natural because everyone can ask questions and challenge one another. Learning and development is a necessity since few workflows and processes are perfect from the beginning.

"For example, we still have a lot of

discussions on how to break down and refine our 'user stories'. In the beginning, we just tried our way but over time we have become more and more incisive. It is a continuous process where you have to work with the method and there is still room for improvement. Of course, it has something to do with training but the development would have been slower without the group dynamic".

The good collaboration which is shaped internally in the team but also across all teams in the ART is not the only advantage. According to Kent Meiling Sørensen, the

THE AGILE TEAM

"The SAFe Agile Team is a cross-functional group of 5 to 10 people who have the ability and authority to define, build, and test some element of Solution value—all in a short Iteration timebox. Specifically, the SAFe Agile Team incorporates the Dev Team, Scrum Master, and Product Owner roles. While operating within the context of the ART, teams are empowered, self-organizing, and self-managing. Without effective Agile Teams, composed of empowered and motivated individuals, organizations cannot achieve the larger business benefits of Lean-Agile development."

Source: <http://www.scaledagileframework.com/agile-teams/>

”
Nothing
beats an
agile team
”
- SAFe mantra

distinct articulation and illustration of the dependences between the teams and between the team members that is evident when you are working with SAFe® enables you to spot problems earlier in the process than you normally would have:

"Everything is brought to light faster which means that we register errors and wrong solutions much earlier in the process. Meanwhile, we are not waiting around for everyone else because we are constantly aware when the mutual deliveries are due. We are also working to get our end users to have an active part earlier in the process" Sørensen explains.

"If we promise something, we will keep it. We all agree upon that. In this team, we have a culture that implies that everyone is aware that we have to help each other if we want to reach our goal"

Kent Meiling Sørensen, Solution Architect in BEC

AN INSPIRATIONAL ATMOSPHERE

The agile environment is inspiring in BEC. It is obvious how the implementation of SAFe® and the agile workflows permeate the entire organization. And for the ProData-consultant, it has been inspiring to be part of BEC's agile journey so far.

"From top to bottom there is an incredible enthusiasm about SAFe®. The whole organization is behind and it is clear that BEC really wants this. I like this approach and it is exciting to be a part of," Kent Meiling Sørensen concludes. ●



Who's who:

- Name:** Kent Meiling Sørensen
- Title:** Solution Architect, ProData Consult. On assignment in BEC.
- Age:** 52
- Edu.:** EDP-assistant (what the IT degree was called in 1985)

Kent Meiling Sørensen is an experienced IT-consultant within the financial sector. Amongst other, he has solved tasks for FinansSystem, PBS, SDC, and now BEC.

SCALABILITY & FLEXIBILITY

THIS IS WHY YOU NEED AN EXPERIENCED PROVIDER OF CONSULTANTS

Interview with Jan Wolff, CCO in ProData Consult

Today, companies are working hard to stay on top of their customers' needs. The IT departments are - to a greater extent than ever before - confronted with demands to become more agile, re-adjust faster, shorten time-to-market, and provide continuous value to the business. Everything is changeable, and what we know today is gone tomorrow. A situation like this requires a flexible and scalable model when competences and resources have to be brought to the organization.

"The demand of a specific IT competence often emerges acute and becomes a necessity for the delivery of the solutions the client needs. To bring a consultant on board is an easy and flexible way to handle this situation," says Jan Wolff, who has more than ten years of experience with pairing the clients' needs with the right consultants.

In addition to bringing resources when there is an acute need, the usage of consultants gives the company an opportunity to

obtain a high level of scalability. If you are going through a big transformation, such as the example of BEC's transformation to working with SAFE®, it is crucial that you have access to a large amount of

"The demand of a specific IT competence often emerges acute and becomes a necessity for the delivery of the solutions the client needs. To bring a consultant on board is an easy and flexible way to handle this situation."

Jan Wolff, CCO in ProData Consult

qualified resources. This is also applicable if the organization is experiencing a greater amount of pressure, and according to Jan Wolff, it requires a partner who can deliver when the need occurs.

"At ProData Consult, our business is

based on our ability to combine speed, quantity, and quality. By this, I mean that we can deliver expert consultants in immense quantities and with short notice. That is what our clients expect."

An experienced provider of consultants offers the scalability and flexibility that is necessary to operate on a market and in situations which are constantly changing. Furthermore, it gives the organization a feeling of security as the provided consultant has the experience and ability to assert themselves.

"When you work with experienced consultants, it is expectable that they deliver from day one. You get a resource who can deliver value right away," Jan Wolff explains.

Are you in need of an experienced provider of consultants? Contact us through our website: www.prodataconsult.com or call Jan Wolff at +45 60 43 11 70 for a non-binding talk. ●



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ProData Consult delivers the most qualified business and IT consultants, with competencies ranging from software development to business management. We can provide you with quick access to expert consultants with the skills and cutting-edge knowledge your business needs – and at least five years of documented experience within a main field of expertise or primary competence. In fact, our IT consultants average over ten years of experience.

Our consultants can assist you with over 4,000 different business and IT specializations. Because we have specialists in handling virtually all types of business and IT projects for both the public and private sectors.

We always strive to handpick the right consultant and send a CV within twenty-four hours of receiving a request.

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