

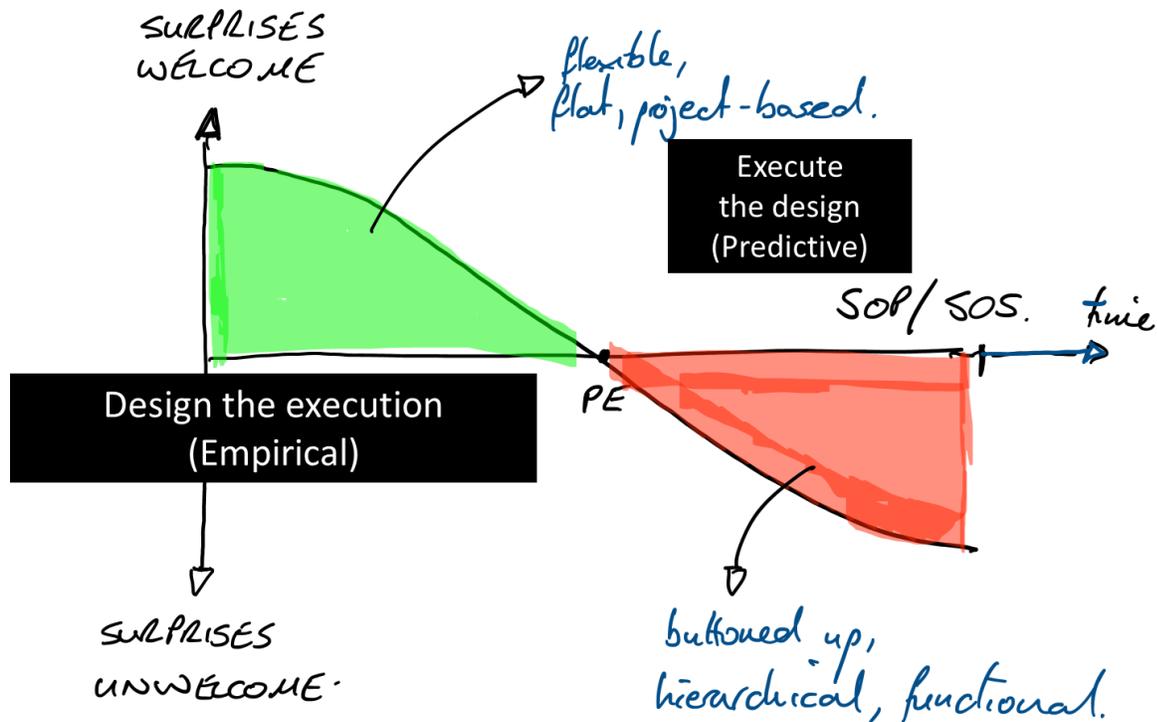
Scrum @ Gillette - GTFS2020

Presented by David Ingram and Yuval Yeret

The Context

Gillette's research and product development has been managed using a very high-discipline execution-focused phase-gate waterfall approach. One of the downsides of this approach during Design phase is later than ideal assessment of the holistic proposition combining both the technical solution as well as the commercial perspective.

The key realization is that as a program proceeds towards execution – there's a dramatic change in the ability to take on new learning. In earlier phases fast empirical learning is crucial in order to converge towards a holistic proposition that works. Learning comes with surprises and these surprises are welcome at this point if they help find a winning technical/commercial concept/approach. At later stages as bigger investments need to be committed to ready the manufacturing process and the go-to-market machine for this new product, surprises can be devastating, or at least extremely costly. In execution phase, predictability of budget and timeline become paramount. This means that different approaches might be appropriate in different stages. The "Execute the Design" phase is one in which Gillette (and P&G in general) excels. The problem is that this approach is too buttoned-up, hierarchical and constraining to support the "Design the execution" phase.



With this realization in mind, In the last year we've been working on using Scrum to overhaul the Design phase using a more empirical approach that seeks to integrate the holistic proposition on a frequent basis (Every Sprint).

No software development in sight

What is unique here is the context in which Scrum is applied. As you can imagine, Gillette is in the business of blades and razors. Digital/Software is part of some offerings (See Gillette.com, for example), but the major components of every product have more to do with mechanical engineering, industrial design, and chemistry. In addition, the fact that we are looking to integrate the holistic proposition including the commercial aspects brings brand managers, marketing experts and designers into the picture.

Using Scrum in Gillette

Scrum has been used in a couple of program teams in 2018-2019. In January 2020 we implemented Professional Scaled Scrum in a program that needed to converge on a winning proposition under very aggressive timelines.

We started with a leadership workshop for key program stakeholders and leaders in which we learned about Scrum theory, rules, principles, and values and discussed how to setup Scrum in the program, with the constraint that we had a very short “runway” in which to take off – which meant we had to be careful about the depth of changes we’re going to implement.

We then trained everyone on the teams (Using the highly experiential Scrum.org Professional Scrum Foundations (PSF) class) and quickly headed into our first Planning session. The foundation for the scaling approach was Nexus¹ - meaning our Integrated Planning session included a plenary opening, team breakouts, and a plenary integration of the team’s plans.

One key win early on was to take over a whole floor in a building at the Gillette HQ in South Boston and create both team areas with places to visualize their Product and Sprint Backlogs as well as a shared area for all teams to work on their integration.

As we headed into Sprints, One key question we struggled with initially was the meaning of the Increment. The Scrum Guide and most Scrum practitioners talk about “Potentially Releasable” Increments – the thinking being that only when being potentially releasable does the Increment really provide the full transparency that enables inspection and adaptation (Empiricism). Being potentially releasable in Gillette terms means for example having molds ready for manufacturing, Intellectual Property patents filed and other high-cost/overhead activities. Deciding to aim for that each Sprint would be a major overhead that would inhibit innovation. We decided to aim for an Increment that’s useful/valuable (As in the 2020 Scrum Guide). Useful/Valuable from the perspective of understanding whether we actually have a winning holistic proposition in our hands or not. One example of what this enabled is running consumer learning panels using 3d printed parts rather than waiting for molds to be created (which would introduce delay and additional cost). Considering that a

¹ <https://www.scrum.org/resources/nexus-guide>

valuable learning mechanism and not “Technical Debt” is one example where being pragmatic while having the Scrum Spirit in mind were crucial to our success.

We guided the teams to present to consider the Sprint Review as an opportunity to ideally make a go/nogo decision on whether we’re ready to go into “Prepare to Execute” mode. It was obvious that in early Sprints the answer will be “We’re not there yet” and that was ok. One key challenge at this point was that the Product Backlog had to include both learning-related items as well as execution-readiness items with long lead time. Basically – in order to ensure that upon the “green light” we could actually go into execution mode we had to parallel path – assume we will find a winning proposition and make some decisions accordingly.

Managing these two types of work that require a different “Definition of Done” and have totally different intent of what usefulness and value looks like is a tension we’re still learning about how to manage.

Early Results

Fast forward to Fall 2020, Scrum’s empiricism has already helped accelerate learning and convergence in the strategic program and we have several other programs in various stages of using Scrum. Participants and stakeholders appreciate the visibility across the entire program, the frequent touch points with Sponsors and the quick pivots those enable, and the Autonomy for the development team that enables speed and efficiency.

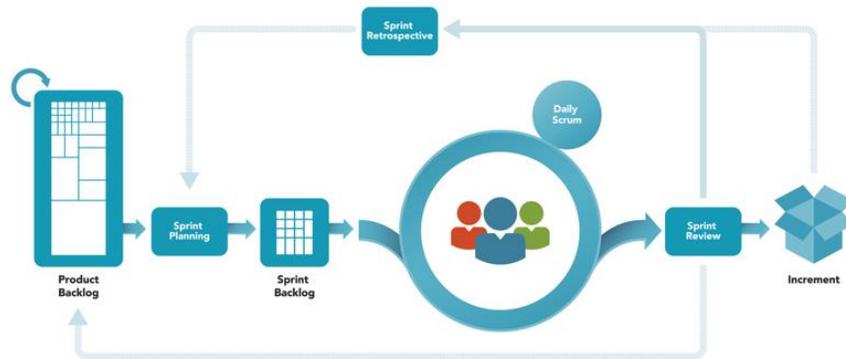
On these complex programs Scrum enables Increased focus on the *few* elements that are important to learn/validate *now*.

While many Scrum Teams focus on Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum, for us at Gillette the Sprint Review has been by far the most important event. We see how when we’re disciplined about having an effective Sprint Review it helps us converge the program and when we’re not, things go downhill very quickly. Sprint Reviews have also been the main interface for exposing the organization to the

Empiricism and the culture that Scrum introduces – driving a lot of enthusiasm all the way to the executive team as well as some of the tensions (see below).

Sprints Approach Hardpoints

Roles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product Ownership – Identify (Not necessarily PO) Developers - Identified Scrum Master – at a minimum, Identify coaching contact Stakeholders – clearly identified
Artifacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product Backlog – Clear, Ordered, Evolving Sprint Backlog Increment – Useful and Valuable
Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sprint – Fixed Length, up to 30 days long Sprint Planning Daily Scrum – Continuously inspect & Adapt throughout Sprint. Meeting is one optional way to do it. Sprint Review - Must happen, SHOULD be informal and open/transparent with minimal overhead. Sprint Retrospective



Values / Culture

Strive towards the Scrum spirit/values in order to support Empiricism, even if not following the full Scrum rules.



Answers to some questions raised during the live session

Q: Did the transition from Waterfall to Scrum begin with upper management buy-in?

A: The scaled Scrum program started with buy-in from senior leadership, not all the way up to the executive team. The executive team bought in organically along the way once they started to participate in the Sprint Reviews and help steer the program. After about half a year they actually asked to discuss the bigger picture around Scrum and how to use it moving forward.

Q: What is the difference between Nexus and SAFe?

A: The short answer is that Nexus is very light-weight, mainly using Scrum with a few additions. SAFe is more comprehensive and includes several competencies that transcend the “Team of Teams” level. SAFe introduces elements like the “Program Increment” and “Program Increment Planning”. We’re actually in the process of leveraging some of the elements of SAFe as part of the Gillette Scaled Scrum approach. But our main “North Star” for scaling is Nexus. A full comparison of the approaches is beyond the scope of this essay – and on Yuval’s queue to do some work on... feel free to reach out to remind him to write/talk about that...

Q: How did Gillette overcome the challenge of shifting the mindset from a traditional to more agile approach? Can you call out some big wins?

A: A key factor was just the reality of the program that required learning quickly, where waterfall simply wouldn’t work.

Q: Would you say innovation is embedded in your scrum teams?

A: YES.

Q: How can product management work with physical products?

A: Interesting question. Why wouldn’t Product Management work with physical products?

Q: Which change brought the biggest value?

A: Having a short Sprint after which there’s a Sprint Review of a useful Increment of the holistic proposition and an open courageous discussion about where to go next towards the Product Goal.

How many teams did you initially launch in the first wave of transition to scaled agile?

Answer me quickly please

How were you able to convince the VP level to take the time necessary to drive the transformation?

Scrum On

We've learned that Scrum, used pragmatically and thoughtfully can be extremely helpful when building commercial/technical CPG products even if no software/IT is involved. Implementing Scrum has pointed a very powerful spotlight to some tensions and conflicts that will need to be addressed to fully unlock Scrum's potential. And in this way Scrum has done what it's meant to do – make reality transparent so that open and courageous inspection and adaptation can take place – not just at the team level – but across the organization.

As we undertake this journey we are happy to connect to other organizations using Scrum outside of its comfort zone.



David Ingram heads R&D for P&Gs Grooming Chemistry and Gillette Male teams. He's the senior Scrum champion in Gillette and also acts as a Product Owner and Stakeholder. His background is in Chemical Engineering, Innovation, Process and package Development, R&D. Before moving to Gillette HQ in Boston he headed the Brussels Innovation Center. Reach David at ingram.dw.2@pg.com.

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AgileSparks – Challenging Agile’s Comfort Zone

AgileSparks is a global yet boutique agile consulting firm. We’re proud to have Boston as our American HQ. We have a strong local team – Yuval Yeret (PST/SPCT/PKT), Ray Angelone (SPCT) and Ruslan Bershtein (BizDev, SPC).

We work with both classic IT/Technology organizations as well as companies like Gillette which are trying to achieve agility outside of Agile/Scrum’s comfort zone – whether it’s marketing teams, hardware design/development or other types of complex work. The main reason both of these types of clients work with us is the combination of being pragmatic yet principals-first – helping them achieve agility without dogma.

We help these organizations achieve business agility using various approaches such as Professional Scrum, Scaled Agile Framework, Kanban. We are a Scrum.org PTN and a ScaledAgile Gold SPCT Partner. We provide in-house training and consulting. Some of our classes are offered as public open-enrollment classes.

Check out our services at www.agilesparks.com.