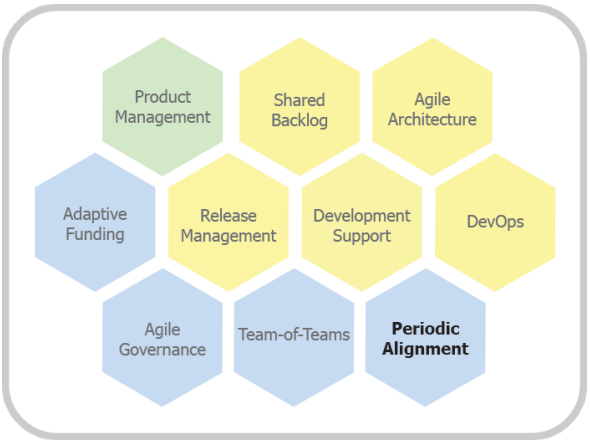
IVAR JACOBSON INTERNATIONAL

Periodic Alignment Essentials

Part of the IJI Agile at Scale Practice Pack



Agile at Scale practices provide a starter kit that describes key common aspects of scaled agile development. Each practice contains cards that provide succinct advice on how to adopt and apply the practice

Practice Overview

Align work priorities and plans of many teams to overall goals using synchronized planning cadences.

Activities – the things we do

- **Schedule Cycles:** Book cycles and related events in the calendar. Cycles are typically longer than team-level timeboxes (e.g. 2 or 3 months rather than 2 or 3 weeks) and the events longer in equal measure.
- **Plan a Cycle:** Agree on a viable plan for the cycle with the delivery teams. This is best achieved as a cross-team event, as it requires alignment of overall objectives with team-level plans.
- **Review a Cycle:** Review the outcomes of a Planning Cycle to adjust plans and continuously improve.

Alphas – the essential elements that we progress

- **Planning Cycle:** A fixed time period focused on building and delivering value that is used to coordinate and align multiple, smaller, team-level timeboxes.

Work Products – the things that we work with

- **Planning Board:** Shows key time-critical checkpoints and milestones that must be achieved for the work to be on track, and shows dependencies that exist between them.
- **Cycle Metrics:** Communicates the effectiveness of each planning cycle.

Patterns - supporting practice guidance

- **Synchronized Cadence:** An effective way to manage work across many interdependent teams is to synchronize the team timebox "heartbeats" within a larger regular cadence cycle. This enables team collaboration and periodic "big-picture" planning and alignment around shared objectives.
- **Two-Pass ("W") Planning:** To Plan a Cycle use a two-pass approach: 1. from shared Objectives to team Plans then 2. Alignment, Adjust plans, shared Commitment.
- **Capacity Allocation:** Allocate capacities to different kinds of work (e.g. new features, architecture enhancements, refactoring, defect fixing, usability improvements etc.) to ensure that each one gets a reasonable level of attention.
- **Shared Resources:** Centralizing scarce resources can help smooth flow and reduce queues and lead-time, provided there is enough capacity for them not to be bottlenecks during demand peeks. Examples of specialist skills that might be centralized include user experience, security experts etc.

Creating winning teams.

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Resources - referenced external sources of information and content

- This practice description uses the OMG Essence standard, with key concepts like Activities, Work Products, Alphas and Patterns being defined by this standard (http://www.omg.org/spec/Essence/).
- **Synchronized Cadence:** See *The Principles of Product Development Flow* by Donald Reinertsen, sections on Cadence (P.177-186) and Synchronization (P.186-191) [Celeritas Publishing 2009].
- **Planning Cycle:** See for example "Principles of the Agile Release Train" on P.303 of *Agile Software Requirements* by Dean Leffingwell [Addison-Wesley 2011].
- **Two-Pass ("W") Planning:** See for example "Multiple Team Release Planning", P.153 of *Scaling Software Agility* by Dean Leffingwell [Addison-Wesley 2007] and "Release Planning" - Ch.16 of *Agile Software Requirements* by Dean Leffingwell [Addison-Wesley 2011].
- **Capacity Allocation:** See for example "Allocating Capacity According to Demand" section in David Andersen's book *Kanban* [Blue Hole Press 2010]
- **Shared Resources:** See principle "F29: The Principle of Resource Centralization: Correctly managed, centralized resources can reduce queues" P.206-208 of *The Principles of Product Development Flow* by Donald Reinertsen [Celeritas Publishing 2009].

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