(Scrum) Development Teams in Pandemic Times - Lessons Learned

Ana Roje Ivančić, Ognjen Bajić

Professional Scrum Trainers, DevOps Consultants

Microsoft MVPs for Developer Technologies

Agilist IT
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

PST | Professional Scrum Trainer
Scrum.org

MVP Microsoft® Most Valuable Professional

Agenda

- Challenges in the Times of Pandemic
- What Kind of Team Are You?
- Proven Practices for Distributed Teams
  - Refining User Requirements (Refinement)
  - Using Goals (Product and Sprint Goals)
  - Daily Coordination Practices (Daily Scrum)
  - Improving Your Practices (Retrospectives)

Photo by Sigmund on Unsplash

Speakers: Ana Roje Ivančić and Ognjen Bajić

In Software Development since 1996/1999

Helping teams improve DevOps practices since 2005

Worked as Dev, PM, Test, RM, SM, PO…

Microsoft MVP for Developer Technologies (ALM/DevOps) since 2006/2016

Professional Scrum Trainer (PST) for Scrum.org since 2018

Ana Roje Ivančić, arojeivancic@agilist.hr
Ognjen Bajić, obajic@agilist.hr
Zagreb, Croatia

Agilist IT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

PST Professional Scrum Trainer Scrum.org

MVP Microsoft® Most Valuable Professional

www.agilitistit.com
trainings@agilist.hr

Agilist IT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Challenges in the Times of Pandemic

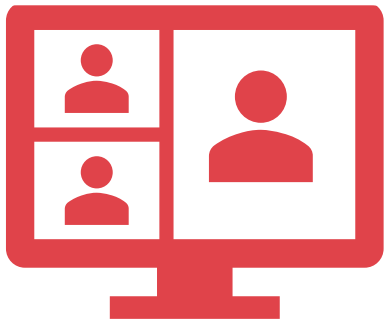
Challenges in the Times of Pandemic

Sudden change in spring 2020

Global mandatory work-from-home policy

The use of online collaboration tools exploded

Comparison of collaboration trends in Microsoft 365 between February 2020 and February 2021



2,5x more Meetings

More time spent in meetings

45% more Chats

Sending 45 % more chats per week

65% more Documents

Increase in the number of people working on Office documents

Source:

1. 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report, Microsoft, March 2021

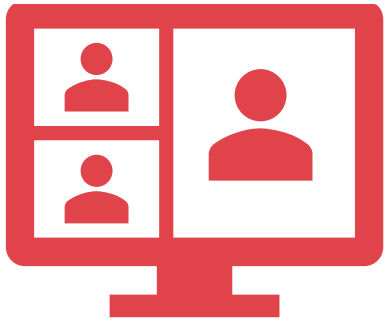
2. The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers, July 2021, Nature Human Behavior

Remote Work Comes at a Price (1/2)

Decrease in synchronous communication

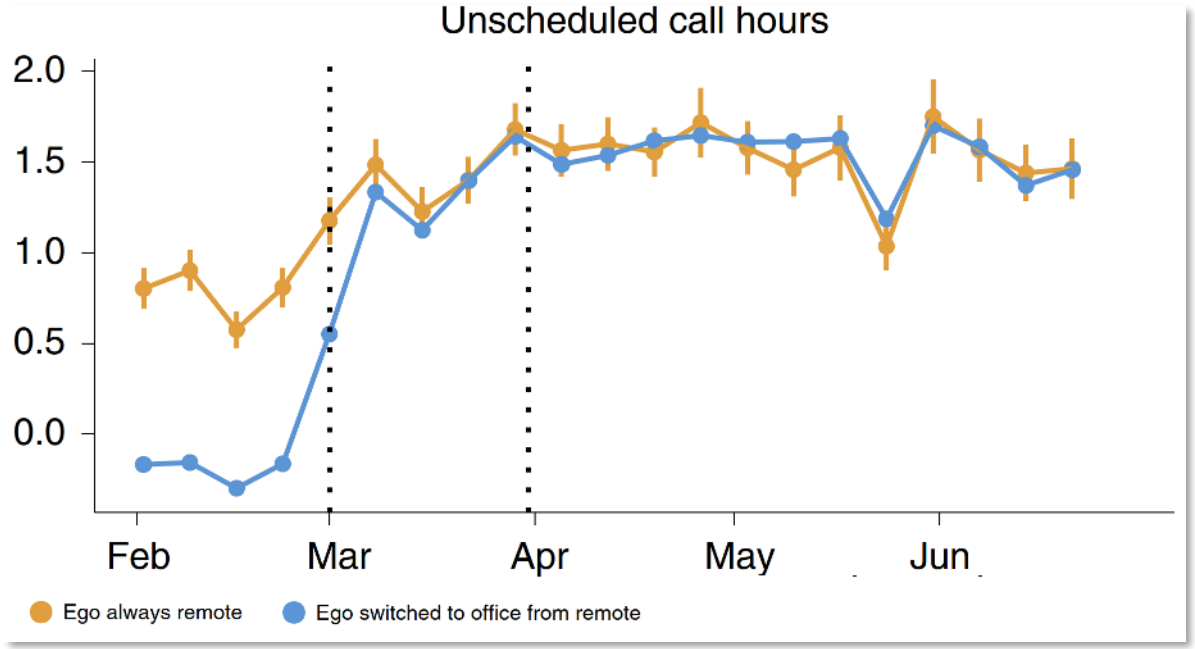
Increase in asynchronous communication

Digital exhaustion



62% calls and meetings **unscheduled or conducted ad hoc**

50% people **respond** to Teams chats within five minutes or less



Replacing the natural collaboration patterns is hard!

Source:

1. 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report, Microsoft, March 2021

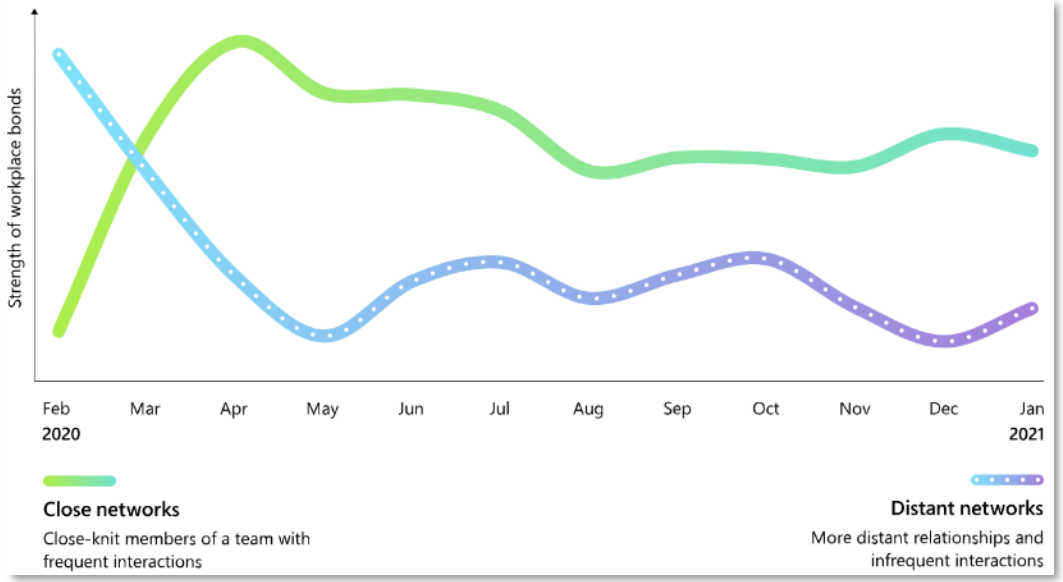
2. The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers, July 2021, Nature Human Behavior

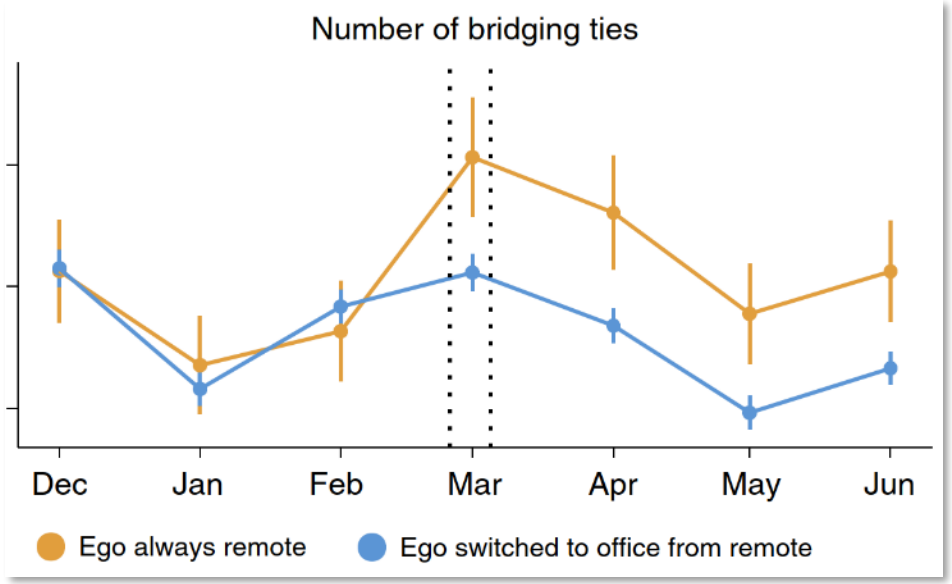
Remote Work Comes at a Price (2/2)

Collaboration networks of workers are more static and siloed

Interactions with our immediate team, or close network, strengthened

Interactions outside of that team, or distant networks, have diminished





Static networks benefit productivity and reduce innovation!

Source:

1. 2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report, Microsoft, March 2021

2. The effects of remote work on collaboration among information workers, July 2021, Nature Human Behavior

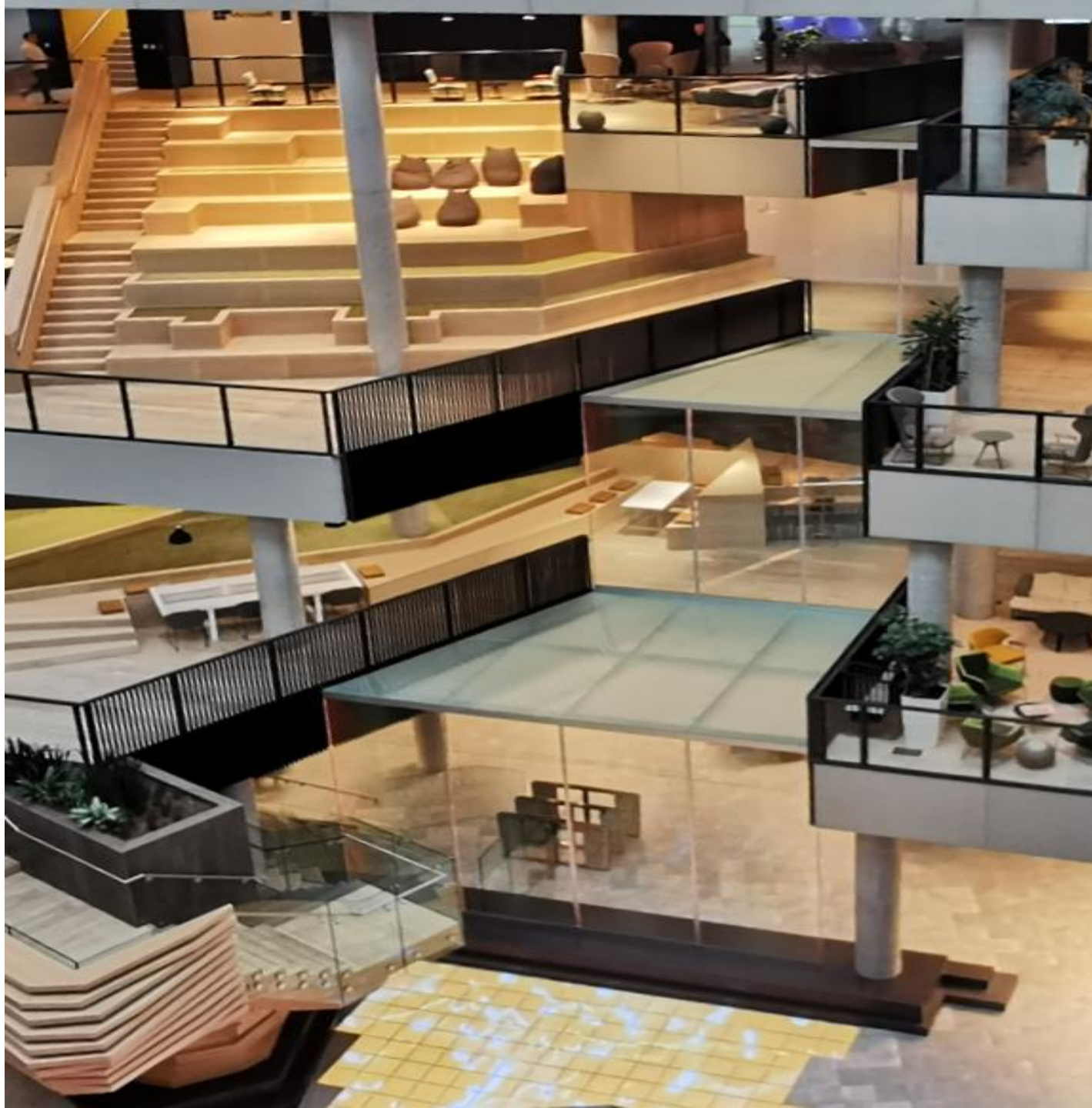
Hybrid workplace to the rescue

A mix of in-person and remote team members could solve the problem

Brings its share of issues:

Must be inclusive for remote workers

Use distributed tools to equally support in-office and remote workers



What Kind of Team Are You?
Setting the Stage

Team: What Are Your Main Characteristics?

You are a team of 10+/- people

You do software development

You use some agile framework (Scrum)

- You do iterative development
- You do incremental development

Accountabilities: How Are They Defined and Distributed?

One or more team members deals with requirements and stakeholders

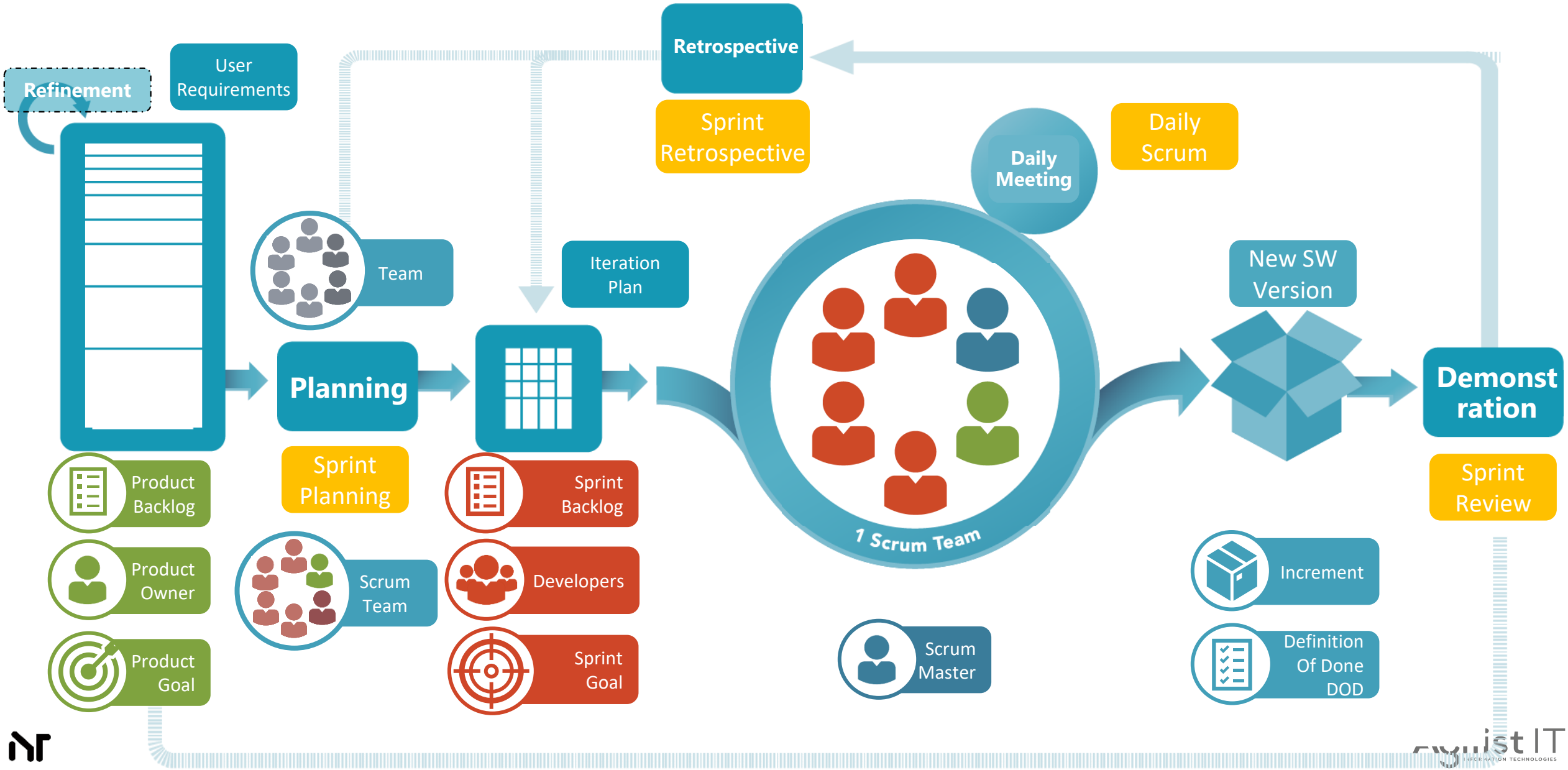
- Project Manager, Team Lead, etc.

Multiple team members develop

- They do analysis, design, modeling, coding, testing, deployment, monitoring, etc.

Ideally, at least one team member safeguards your process

Process: What is Your Development Lifecycle?



Proven Practices for Distributed Teams

Continuously Refine User Requirements

Refining User Requirements

Why?

Clearly define, clarify and decompose user requirements

- Ensure team's (DEV's) understanding of requirements
- Transfer knowledge (between PO and DEVs)
- Minimize the risk of developing the wrong product

Prepare requirements for future iterations

- Prerequisite for short-term and long-term planning

How?

Continuous process: Shared Kanban Board

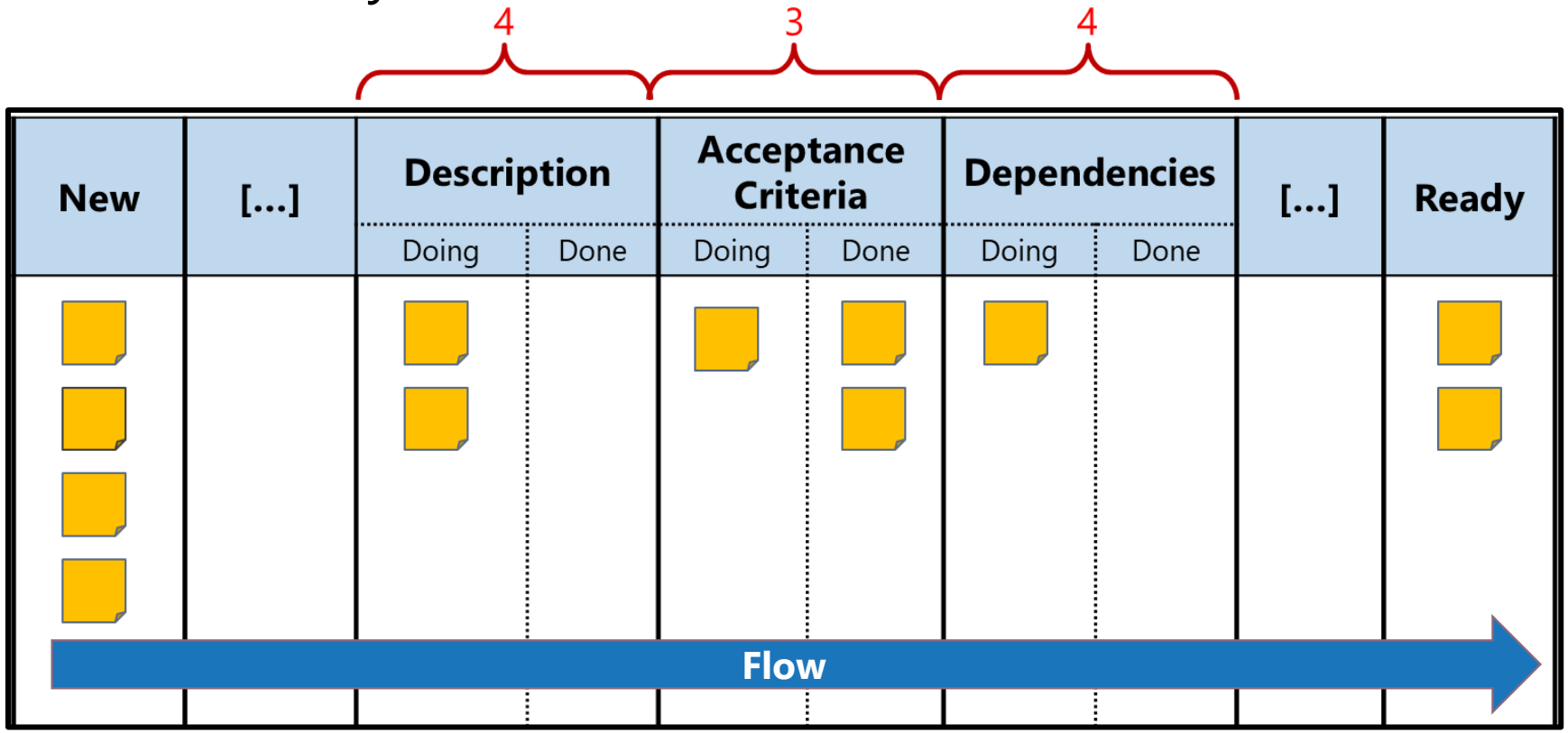
Regular (scheduled) sessions: Meet online for live discussions

- The entire team participates (PO and DEVs)

Refinement Kanban Board

Based on your “Definition of Ready - DOR”

- New
- Interested
- Description
- Acceptance Criteria
- Dependencies
- Size
- Estimate
- Ready



Tips:

- Use Doing/Done and pull principle
- Add Kanban WIP (Work in Progress)
- Be Lean - Stop starting, start finishing! (work from right to left)

Agilist IT
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Use Goals to Facilitate Planning and Steer Decision Making

Using Goals

Why?

Product Development requires constant decision making
Prerequisite for inspection and adaptation (empiricism)

How?

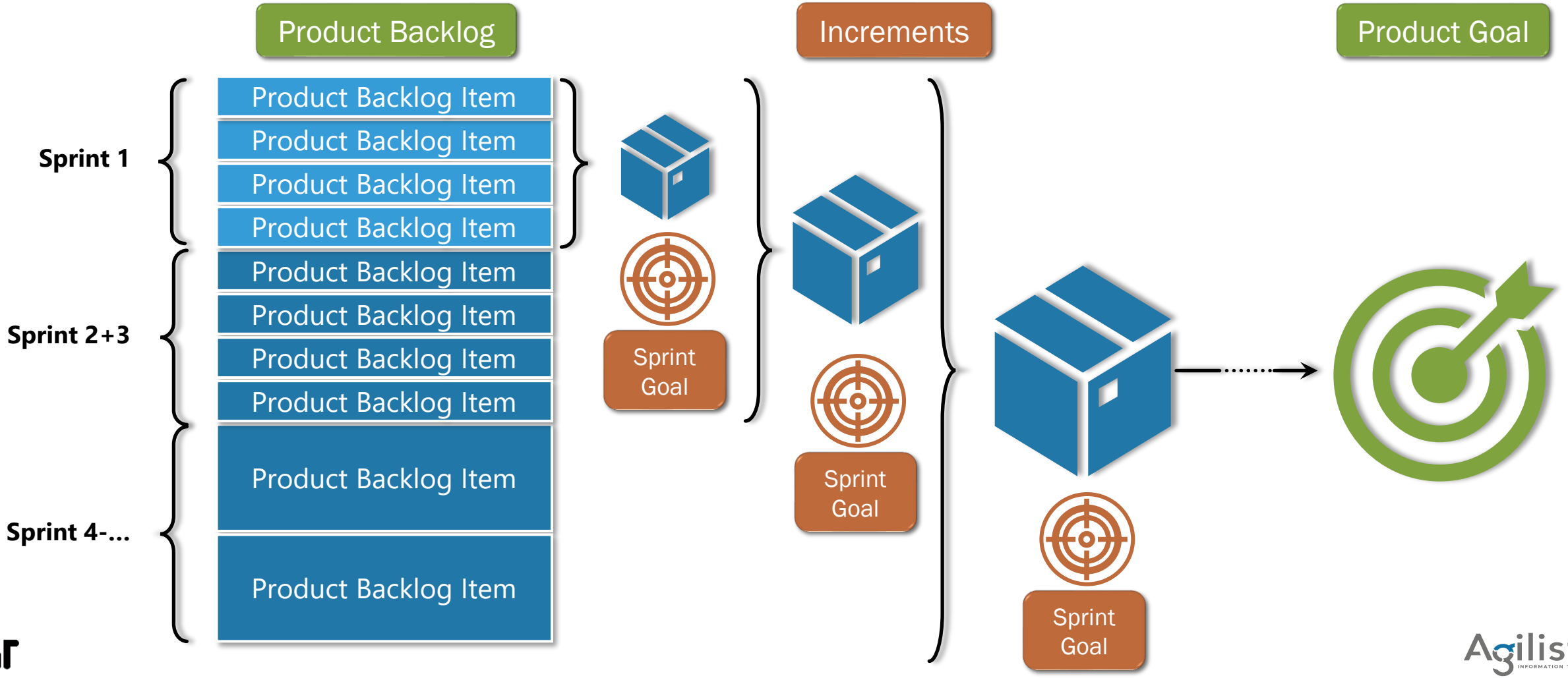
Set and write down goals on different levels (iteration, release, product)
Create goals that provide focus, are measurable and time-bound

Benefits

Facilitate prioritization and planning
Steer decision making (offline, JIT)
Help differentiate between „must have" and „nice to have" requirements
Make progress transparent

Product Goals and Sprint Goals in Scrum

„An Increment is a concrete stepping stone toward the Product Goal."
Scrum Guide 2020



Daily Coordination Practices

Coordinate Daily

Daily Scrum

Why?

Assess progress towards iteration goal
Update the iteration plan

How?

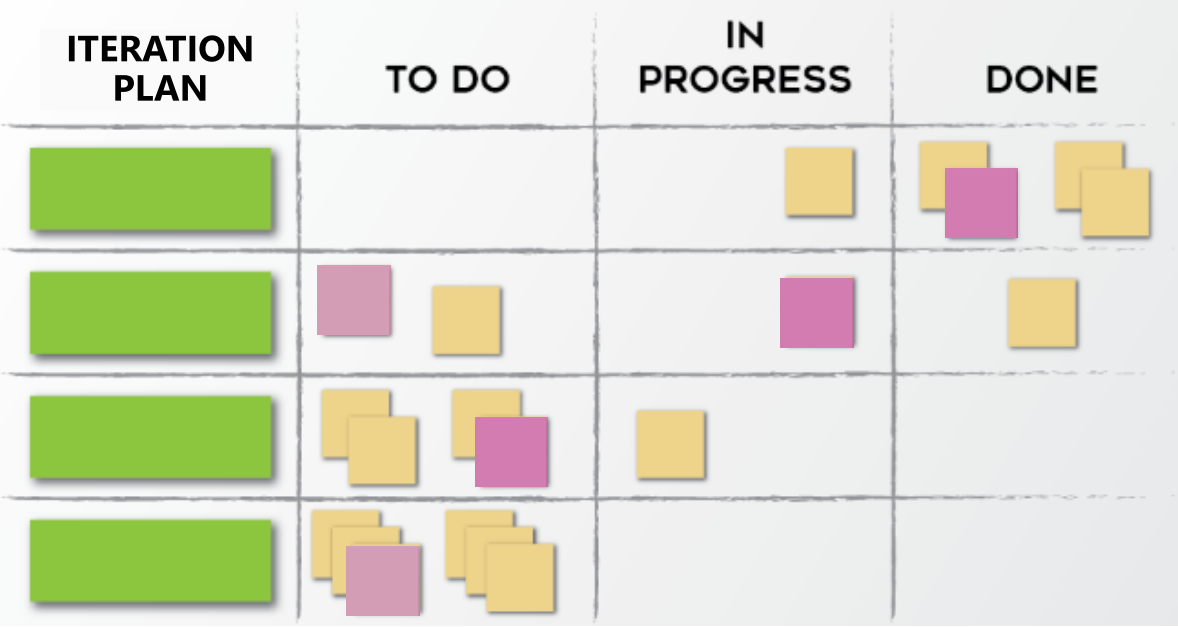
All team members doing the work (DEVs)
Same time (and same “place”) to reduce complexity
Keep it short (up to 15 mins)
Visualize status and progress (taskboards, dashboards, charts, etc.)

Benefits?

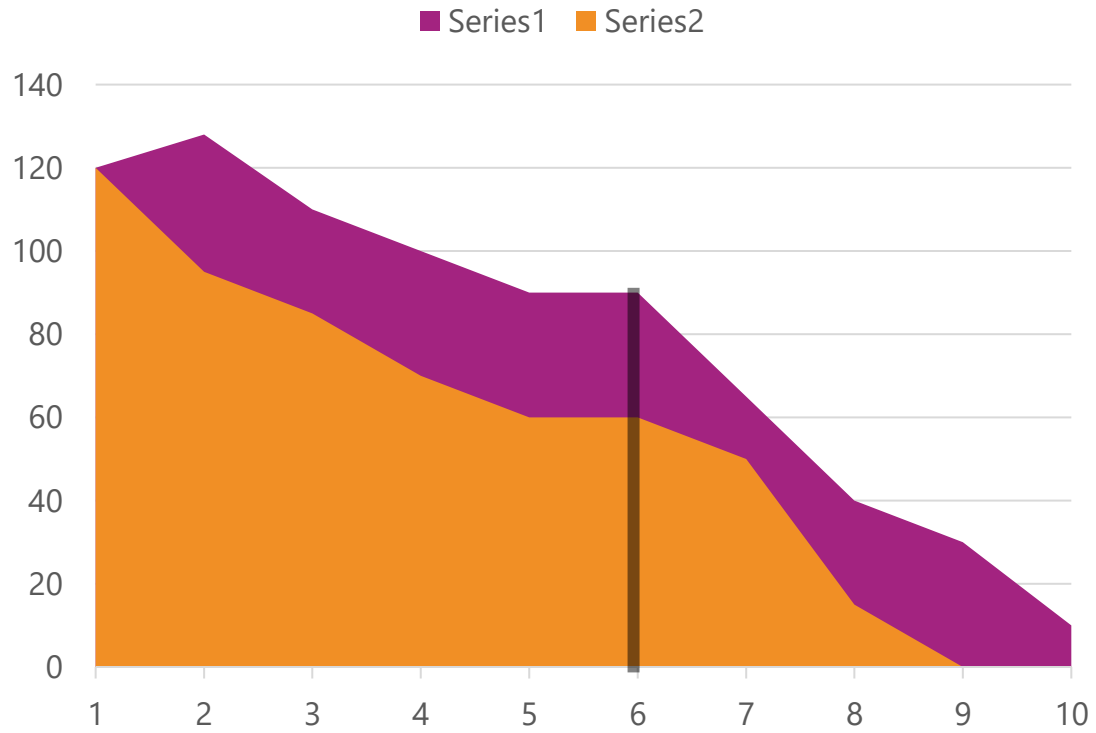
Uncover and address any issues not later than every 24h
Sync with the rest of the team at least once within 24h
Always work based on the updated plan

Visual Tools and Information Radiators

Taskboard with smart filtering and styling rules



Burndown Chart to show progress and remaining work

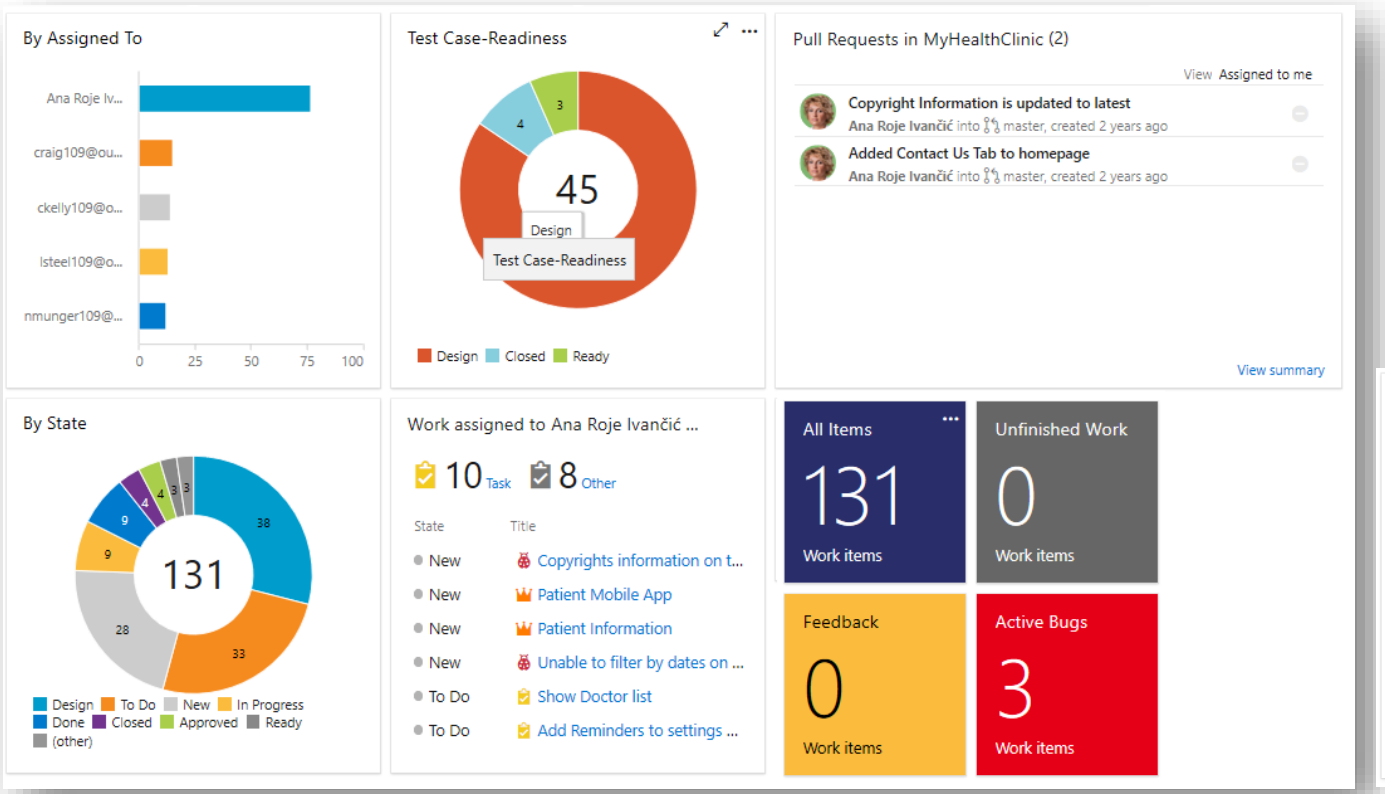


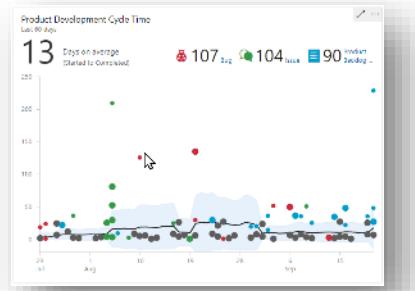
Dashboards in Azure DevOps

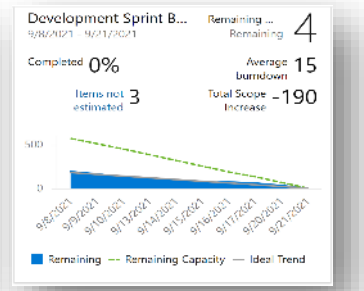
Show different aspects of status and progress in real-time

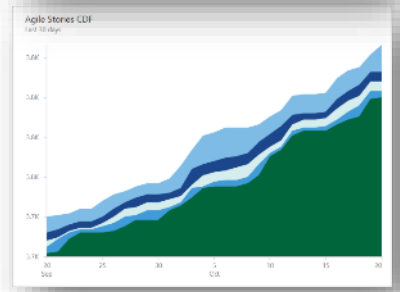
Show Scoreboards that point to irregularities

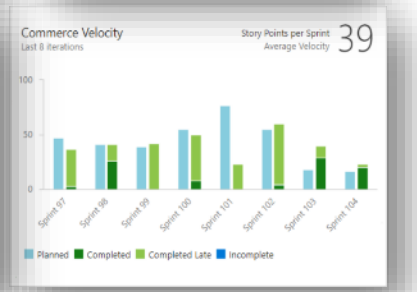
Blocked Items, Bug Count, Requirements without Tests,
Requirements testing progress, etc.

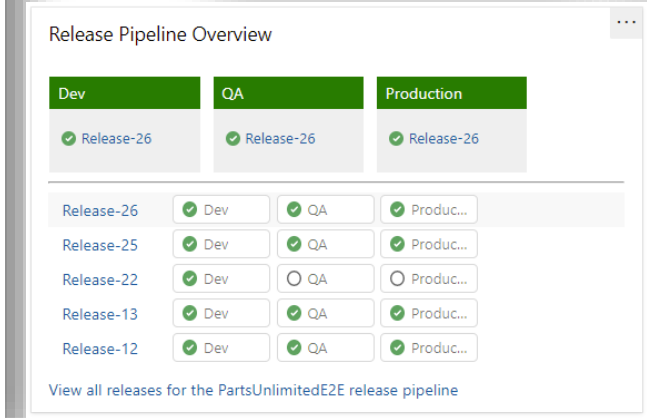




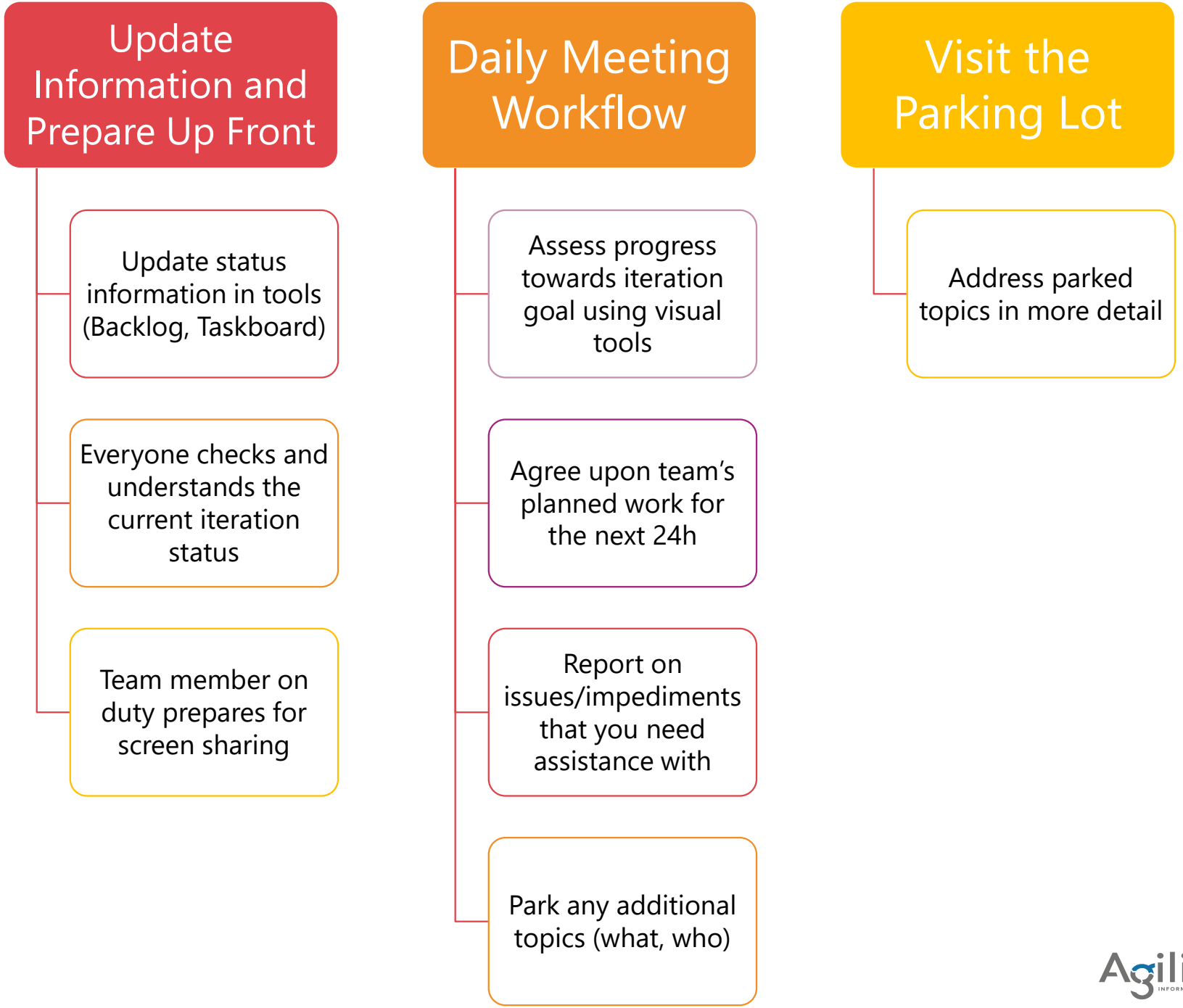








Keep it Short and Efficient



Improving Your Practices (Retrospectives)

Need for Retrospection

Sprint Retrospective

Why

To continuously build your team and improve your process and tools

How

Inspect how you worked in the last iteration with regards to individuals, interactions, processes, and tools
Identify helpful changes to improve team's effectiveness
5-stage format („Agile Retrospectives", Esther Derby and Diana Larsen)
Set the stage, gather data, generate insight, decide what to do, and close

Prerequisites

Ensure psychological safety (trust, openness, respect, etc.)

Benefits

Celebrate success, analyze failures, address impediments
Get used to giving/receiving positive/negative feedback

Example Retrospective Tool (Azure DevOps)

Collect

Submit feedback independently
Jointly discuss

Group

Organize similar items into categories

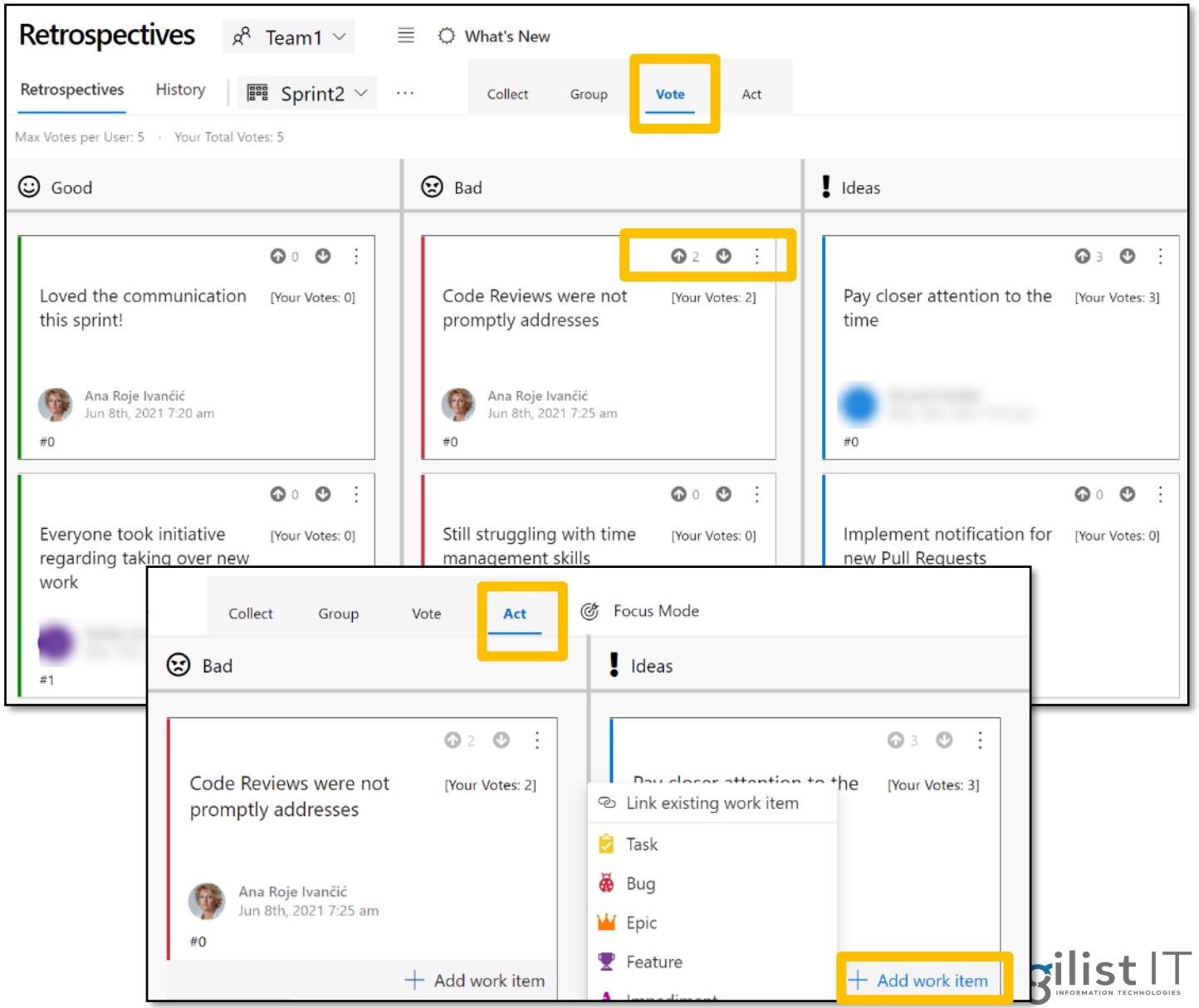
Vote

Prioritize feedback by independently voting on the most important items

Act

Jointly agree upon 1-2 actionable items for the next iteration

Create follow-up action items



Lessons for Post COVID Time

Development Teams in Post Pandemic Time

Fully remote teams will slowly return to the office (at least in a hybrid model)

The industry is building consensus around hybrid models

The hybrid workplace is the future

- Enable it through policies, physical space and technology
- Consider redesigning the office space to accommodate for remote workers

Arrange for regular in-person collaboration

- e.g. Do your Scrum events in the office

Working in offices as a baseline *"enables us to invent, collaborate, and learn together most effectively."*

amazon

"We view working from home part of the time (less than 50%) as standard for most roles – assuming manager and team alignment".

Microsoft

Summary

Hybrid teams are the future

Frequently refine user requirements (Refinement)

Set proper goals (Product and Sprint Goal)

Coordinate daily (Daily Scrum)

Regularly inspect and adapt practices (Retrospectives)

Accommodate for remote team members

Ana Roje Ivančić, arojeivancic@agilist.hr
Ognjen Bajić, obajic@agilist.hr
www.agilitistit.com
trainings@agilist.hr

Get 20% discount for conference attendees
Contact us at trainings@agilist.hr

Agilist IT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

PST Professional Scrum Trainer Scrum.org

MVP Microsoft® Most Valuable Professional

nt konferenca
2021