



**Gorilla Logic**

Agile. Unstoppable.

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND AGILE AT SCALE: ACCELERATING BUSINESS IMPACT

*In a digital-first, new-normal world, scaled Agile can  
deliver business value faster.*



Gorilla Logic's first Nearshore Development Center  
Sabana Business Center - San José, Costa Rica



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Why Agile? Top Three Reasons for Adopting Agile	4
Assessing Scaled Agile Frameworks: Which is Best for Your Organization?	5
Large Scale Scrum (LeSS)	6
Scrum@Scale (SaS)	8
Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)	10
Getting Started With Your Agile at Scale Initiative	13
Aligning to Organizational Culture is Key to Success	14
Advice for Leading Change at Scale	15
Measuring the Success of Agile at Scale	15
References	16
Other Resources	16



This whitepaper supports leaders in understanding options for Agile at scale, including three popular scaling frameworks: **Scrum@Scale (SaS), Large Scale Scrum (LeSS), and Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®)**. This resource will help you determine if your organization is ready to embark on a scaled Agile initiative, and if so, which framework and techniques are best suited to your needs, culture, and Agile maturity.

## Executive Summary

Digital transformation advanced more in the first two years after the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic than in the entire 10 years prior. Companies around the world pivoted nearly overnight, deploying technology initiatives to ensure business continuity despite massive and unpredictable disruptions, starting with enabling remote work and learning. Some companies quickly saw competitive opportunities well beyond keeping the lights on, rapidly deploying digitally-enabled ways to engage customers, partners, and other stakeholders with new experiences and sales channels.

Most organizations have discovered that thriving in this digitally-driven new normal requires agility. Similar to the hockey stick growth in adoption of digital transformation, *the rate of adoption of Agile principles and practices within software development teams increased dramatically from 2020 to 2021, from 37% to 86%<sup>1</sup>*. Agile has proven to be such a useful framework for enabling the rapid and consistent delivery of business value that its adoption is spreading to other parts of the organization—most notably Operations and Marketing.\*

Initially intended for small, co-located teams, Agile practices and principles have been adapted to scale, targeting the needs of larger, more intricate software builds and larger, more geographically distributed teams. But the scope of investment, complexity, and resistance to change often inhibit adoption and prevent companies from realizing the full potential of Agile at scale.

Successful Agile transformations may require engaging a coach or team of coaches to lead the transition. Companies must factor in the time and expense required to train team members, transition them to new roles, and mentor and reinforce new ways of working. When supported by external partners, organizations should consider including these teams in planning sessions as well. Team members who once took explicit direction from their managers will find themselves taking more ownership in the overall product or development effort. Changes in work habits and culture don't happen overnight, and require time, patience, and investment to succeed.

\*The Marketing team at Gorilla Logic has fully adopted the Agile mindset, helping them strategically plan and execute work while seamlessly incorporating changing priorities and feedback. They work in month-long sprints and embrace Agile ceremonies like retros, sprint planning, and stand ups. [See how they made the transition to Agile.](#)



## Why Agile? Top Three Reasons for Agile Adoption

According to the 15th State of Agile report, the two chief reasons for adopting Agile are speed and responsiveness to unpredictable and volatile environments. A continued need to align across teams and streamline the software delivery process follow close behind.

### Top 10 Reasons for Adopting Agile



**Source:**  
VERSIONONE 12TH  
ANNUAL STATE OF  
AGILE™ REPORT  
©2018 VERSIONONE INC.  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
#STATEOFAGILE  
STATEOFAGILE.COM

\*Respondents were able to make multiple selections.

## For companies that embrace Agile, the business impact can be significant:



**+20-30 point  
improvement in  
employee engagement**



**+10-30 point  
increase in customer  
satisfaction**



**+30-50 point  
improvement in  
operational efficiency**



**+20-30 point  
improvement in  
financial performance**

**Source:**  
McKinsey & Company, March 20, 2020,  
“Enterprise agility: Buzz or business impact?”



## Assessing Scaled Agile Frameworks: Which is Best for Your Organization?

If you are considering Agile at scale, the best approach to getting started is by learning about the different methods available. Based on Gorilla Logic's own thorough research and extensive experience working with hundreds of clients across industries, we recommend these frameworks for organizations considering a scaled Agile approach, ranging from lower-cost and lighter weight to more robust and demanding:

- **Large Scale Scrum (LeSS)**—a lightweight option for mid-sized projects or companies that want to build on an existing Scrum approach
- **Scrum@Scale (SaS)**—a good option for organizations that require a greater number of teams but don't want to add extra management
- **Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)**—a robust option for organizations committed to full-scale transformation

The ideal framework for your organization depends on your unique technology and business needs today, as well as how you see those needs evolving in the future.



## Large Scale Scrum (LeSS)

Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) is more complex than a simple SoS practice. In LeSS, Scrum is applied to many teams working together on one product. Unlike other, more complex Agile scaling frameworks, the LeSS framework prescribes a minimum number of elements for scaling:



Traditional, large scale software development methodologies consist of multiple component teams working on a single product, but teams working in a LeSS framework are predominantly cross-functional, feature-focused teams. To minimize dependencies, LeSS teams focus on:

- Daily builds
- Continuous integration
- Automated tests
- Inter- and cross-team communication

Independent LeSS teams follow basic Scrum tenants including transparency, empirical process control, iterative development, and self-managing teams.

Like single-team Scrum, LeSS empowers teams and team members to make decisions. Teams and individuals are self-organizing and self-directed. LeSS is a minimalistic framework and, like Scrum, looks easy but takes hard work and dedication to master.

Because LeSS is based on Scrum, the values and principles for single-team Scrum apply. In addition, LeSS provides a minimalistic set of principles, but does not give answers to how best to apply them in a specific context. The LeSS principles provide the basis for making decisions.






Early in the adoption process, LeSS teams often need additional direction and guidance to assist in implementing the new framework. Some common questions teams may have during implementation include:

- How does each team build its part of the product?
- How do teams retain ownership and operate with transparency?
- How do teams give and receive feedback?

To help with adoption, LeSS provides ground rules to guide new and existing teams in a number of areas, including:

- Clarity around Scrum for multiple teams
- Definition of roles for team members and managers
- Management of the product backlog
- Planning of best practices
- Handling a product with eight or more teams (a.k.a., LeSS Huge)

The LeSS framework is based on Shu-Ha-Ri, a Japanese martial arts concept that describes the journey from learning a skill through mastery. It is often used to describe business as well as physical pursuits. For organizations looking to scale, LeSS provides direction at both the single- and multi-team level.

SHU-HA-RI		
 <b>SHU</b>	 <b>HA</b>	 <b>RI</b>
<b>Follow the rules</b>	<b>Break the rules</b>	<b>Create the rules</b>
Needs prescription/ rules—good for companies just starting their scaling journey.	Breaking rules— useful for companies proficient in the basics of LeSS and wanting to branch out.	Mastery, for those who don't need rules —companies who have succeeded in their initial scaling efforts and are ready to fly.

## Large Scale Scrum (LeSS)

### How it works:

LeSS is a lightweight framework based on the Japanese martial arts concept Shu-Ha-Ri, which describes the journey from learning through mastery. LeSS recommends that teams build a method up rather than tailor a prescribed method down.

### May not be best for:

- Organizations that aren't willing to put in the hard work and dedication required to master it. Because LeSS is a minimalistic framework, it may look deceptively easy.
- Organizations that aren't proficient in Lean and Agile practices, as they may need a framework that provides more guidance.

### Best for:

- Teams that are already proficient in Agile, as they may find that LeSS is an optimal solution for providing direction at both the single- and multi-team levels.
- Teams that are already using Scrum and want to scale quickly.



## Scrum@Scale (SaS)

Scrum@Scale is a lightweight organizational framework designed to help organizations harmonize decision-making, effectively prioritize goals, and naturally extend the function of a single Scrum Team to multiple networks of Scrum Teams in order to achieve linear scalability and business agility.

By following the Scrum Guide and implementing networks of Scrum Teams, Scrum@Scale helps organizations address complex problems and deliver higher value products faster. Due to its highly adaptable nature, Scrum@Scale can be used in all types of organizations across all types of industries. However, if an organization is not already using Scrum, several changes to its operating system will be required.

In Scrum@Scale, the product is kept separate from the process, helping organizations customize their transformation strategy as well as implementation. Organizations can use this framework to incrementally prioritize, decompose, and refine strategic change initiatives in the areas deemed most valuable to the business, then move on to others.

There are two main cycles of Scrum@Scale: the **Scrum Master Cycle** and the **Product Owner Cycle**. Each cycle introduces new roles, teams, and events designed to help organizations coordinate the efforts of multiple teams along a single path.

### Scrum Master Cycle (coordinates the Process):

- The **Scrum of Scrums (SoS)** is a new Scrum team of teams that is responsible for delivering a fully integrated set of potentially shippable increments of products each sprint.
- The **Scrum of Scrums Master (SoSM)** removes all impediments that may hinder coordination across SoS teams.
- The **Scaled Daily Scrum (SDS)** is an event similar to the daily Scrum where Scrum Masters from various teams meet to discuss impediments to the sprint goal, team dependencies, and ways to improve.
- The **Executive Action Team (EAT)** supports effective operation of the Scrum Master Cycle, serving as the highest level “Scrum Master.”







When implementing multiple networks of teams in Scrum@Scale, you must first develop a scalable Reference Model—a small set of teams that coordinate to deliver each Sprint. These teams will serve as a healthy, functional model of Scrum for the rest of the organization to eventually replicate as the scaling initiative progresses. To create your Reference Model, start by grouping teams together into a Scrum of Scrums (SoS), which should be composed of two leadership groups:

- **Executive MetaScrum (EMS):** The EMS team is typically run by the Chief Product Owner and is responsible for prioritizing the backlog and eliminating Dark Work. This team is typically composed of key stakeholders, leadership, and Product Owners. During the EMS forum, members express preferences, remove blockages, and define the product vision.
- **Executive Action Team (EAT):** This team sets up and owns the Agile ecosystem. They are responsible for identifying impediments, communicating them back to the teams, and removing obstacles in an expedited manner in order to ensure the highest possible level of productivity across the organization. Members that comprise the EAT often include representatives from HR, Finance, Systems, Legal, and an Executive Sponsor.

Scrum@Scale upholds the concept of Minimum Viable Bureaucracy (MVB), which helps organizations reduce decision latency and keeps development moving as quickly and smoothly as possible. By using the Product Owner driven model of Scrum@Scale, organizations can eliminate useless features, improve linear scalability, and ensure that twice the work gets done in half the time.

## Scrum@Scale (SaS)

### How it works:

In Scrum@Scale, networks of Scrum teams come together to form an ecosystem. The Scrum Master Cycle (supported by the Executive Action Team) and the Product Owner Cycle (supported by the Executive MetaScrum Team) help the organization clearly distinguish the product from the process, effectively transforming overall organizational culture and delivery.

### May not be best for:

- Larger organizations with many management levels, as they may need a more robust framework.
- Organizations that aren't proficient in Lean and Agile practices, as they may need a framework that provides more guidance.

### Best for:

- Teams that are already proficient in Agile, as they may find that SaS is an optimal solution for coordinating across multiple teams and programs.
- Teams that require a greater headcount without adding extra management.



## Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)

The Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®) is the most widely used approach to scaling Agile, with 37% of organizations using it now. SAFe promotes alignment, collaboration, and delivery across greater numbers of Agile teams. Organizations seeking enterprise-wide agility are often drawn to SAFe and its promise to help them achieve the following:



The SAFe methodology contains a well-organized implementation roadmap, which is based on numerous successful implementations. Additionally, SAFe’s four levels of scale—Essential SAFe, Large Solution SAFe, Portfolio SAFe, and Full SAFe—are meant to build off successes and learnings at each level.

Developed by and for Agile practitioners, SAFe promotes agility through continuous focus on core Lean and Agile values: alignment, built-in quality, transparency, and program execution. In SAFe, teams and coordinated trains will ensure they are all focused on primary organizational goals through regular alignment.

### Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®)

#### How it works:

Based on Lean and Agile principles, SAFe® provides proven product development concepts and practices to guide organizations with a well-organized implementation roadmap. SAFe is iterative, so each of the four levels of implementation builds off the success and learnings of the previous level.

#### May not be best for:

- Smaller organizations that don’t require Program, Value Stream, and Portfolio level structures.
- Organizations without experience in Agile methods.
- Organizations that aren’t able to accommodate the additional oversight/staff required for a successful implementation.

#### Best for:

- Large organizations that need to maintain structure at the Program, Value Stream, and Portfolio level.
- Organizations that need to work across teams to coordinate large-scale and complex projects.



## SAFe® Principles

<b>1</b> <b>Take an economic view</b> <p>An understanding of economics drives decisions. Economic variables such as development cost, production cost, delivery lead time, and value directly inform decision-making.</p>	<b>2</b> <b>Apply systems thinking</b> <p>Everyone understands and commits to the common goals of the larger system. The whole is optimized, instead of the parts.</p>	<b>3</b> <b>Assume variability, preserve options</b> <p>Decisions are delayed until the last responsible moment; alternatives are constantly and aggressively explored.</p>
<b>4</b> <b>Build incrementally with fast, integrated learning cycles</b> <p>Cadence-based learning cycles are used to gain knowledge, evaluate alternatives, and inform decision-making.</p>	<b>5</b> <b>Base milestones on objective evaluation of working systems</b> <p>Progress is measured by objective measures, rather than traditional phase-gates.</p>	<b>6</b> <b>Visualize and limit WIP, reduce batch sizes, and manage queue length</b> <p>Small batches of work, controlled Work in Progress (WIP), and small queues ensure fast flow of value and learning.</p>
<b>7</b> <b>Apply cadence, synchronize with cross-domain planning</b> <p>Regular synchronization continually aligns all system builders and ensures all perspectives are understood and resolved.</p>	<b>8</b> <b>Unlock the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers</b> <p>Knowledge workers exhibit curiosity and have fundamentally different motivations. Leaders are responsible for creating an environment in which these workers can thrive.</p>	<b>9</b> <b>Decentralize decision-making</b> <p>Autonomy empowers individuals and enhances motivation. Leaders support decentralized decision-making by equipping teams and individuals with the knowledge and judgement needed to make good decisions.</p>



## Getting Started With Your Agile at Scale Initiative

If you're ready to explore how you might implement Agile at scale in your organization, the next step is to conduct a thorough assessment to determine if your organization has the resources, support, and mindset needed to ensure success. You can start this assessment by exploring how your organization might answer the following questions:

- How does each team build its part of the product now?
- What problems are we hoping to address?
- Is our culture ready to embark on this initiative?
- Have we solicited a third-party assessment?
- Have we considered all of the impacts?
- Are our teams prepared to adopt an Agile mindset?
- Do we have the executive management support we need to successfully implement an Agile initiative?

It's important to evaluate the entire flow of product development, from the time an idea takes root to when it becomes available to your customer or end user.

Development teams work in short iterations and commit to providing working software quickly, but how long does it take to get an idea through each layer of preparation and funding, as well as training and communication? Are you able to minimize waste in each of these areas?

If you focus your efforts on only the development teams developing the software, you will affect only a small portion of your overall product delivery flow. By looking at the entire picture using a scaling framework, you will increase your time to market significantly.

Remember that you cannot scale Agile in a vacuum. Embrace a Lean and Agile mindset in other areas of your organization, such as Product, Architecture, Funding, and Human Resources. Rather than getting blocked while deciding which scaling method to use, the better approach to getting started with your scaled Agile initiative is to simply pick one and start scaling. Try a few practices, commit to a framework, and branch out from there.



## Why Aligning to Organizational Culture is Key to Success

Adopting Agile and scaling Agile frameworks impacts more than just development teams—the work impacts the organization overall. The most significant challenges revolve around change management and organizational culture, including:

- Inconsistent processes and practices across teams
- Organizational culture at odds with Agile values
- General organizational resistance to change
- Lack of skills and experience with Agile methods

It is critical to ensure management has the information they need in order to provide their active support and hands-on involvement in your Agile adoption. Because executives have the greatest authority and influence over their organizations, they must commit themselves to improving quality and productivity across all levels.

Other factors that can facilitate Agile adoption and scaling (and underscore the importance of organizational commitment and alignment) include:

- Making sure that you have experienced internal Agile coaches in place
- Instilling consistent practices and processes across teams
- Implementing a common toolset across teams



## Advice for Leading Change at Scale

Agile at scale requires a significant commitment to change, and change can be challenging, even when it can result in a positive impact on your business. In his book, *Leading Change*, John P. Kotter outlines a process that he recommends every organization go through in order to achieve its goals and make change initiatives work:

- Establish a sense of urgency
- Create a powerful guiding coalition
- Develop the vision and strategy
- Communicate the vision
- Empower employees for broad-based action
- Generate short-term wins
- Consolidate gains and produce more wins
- Anchor new approaches in the culture

## Measuring the Success of Agile at Scale

To assess the performance of your Agile at scale initiative, start by understanding what you are measuring. Whatever the scale of your Agile practice may be, the business goal is to quickly respond to changes and opportunities with high-value, high-quality business solutions. Start thinking about how you'll measure the success of your initiative by using the three measurement domains SAFe prescribes:

- **Outcomes:** Do our solutions meet the needs of our customers and the business?
- **Flow:** How efficient is the organization at delivering value to the customer?
- **Competency:** How proficient is the organization in the practices that enable business agility?

Targeting metrics that map to these domains can help ensure your efforts have maximum impact on business goals, support more informed decision-making, and identify areas that require continued improvement.

*"The single biggest driver of business impact is the strength of an organization's learning culture."*

Josh Bersin - Founder, Bersin by Deloitte, "How to Build a High-Impact Learning Culture"



## References

- <sup>1</sup> <https://digital.ai/catalyst-blog/15th-state-of-agile-report-agile-leads-the-way-through-the-pandemic-and-digital>
- <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Enterprise%20agility%20Buzz%20or%20business%20impact/Enterprise-agility-Buzz-or-business-impact-vF.pdf>
- <http://www.less.works>
- <https://www.scrumatscale.com/scrums-at-scale-guide-online/>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.scaledagile.com/resources/safe-whitepaper/>
- <http://www.scaledagileframework.com>

## Other Resources

- [Lean Portfolio Management \(LPM\) Webinar](#)
- [Agile Implementation: Get Started With the Agile Development Process](#)
- [Conducting Remote Program Increment \(PI\) Planning: Tips, Tricks, and Tools from the Field](#)
- [Gorilla Logic's Agile Development Services](#)
- [Learn More About Nearshoring](#)
- [Tour our Nearshore Development Center](#)

## About Gorilla Logic

Gorilla Logic provides nearshore Agile teams to Fortune 500 and SMB companies, bringing unparalleled expertise in the delivery of full stack web, mobile, and enterprise applications. Since our 2021 acquisition of Modernist Studio, a high-quality design and ideation boutique, Gorilla Logic has expanded its offerings to support clients from the inception of an idea all the way through to the final stages of execution. Our highly collaborative, Agile teams are uniquely qualified to implement complex software initiatives, and are skilled at large Agile implementations as well—we're a Scaled Agile® Silver Partner. With offices in the United States and multiple nearshore development hubs across Latin America, Gorilla Logic helps clients gain competitive advantages to achieve results faster.

**Ready to start your scaled Agile initiative?  
We can help.**

**GET TO KNOW US AT [GORILLALOGIC.COM](https://gorillalogic.com)**

