Approaching Agility: Stop Facilitating the World's Most Bori...

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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All right, we are going to go ahead and get started. I feel like we're gonna have a few more people trickling in. But I wanted to introduce myself and introduce our speaker for today. So hi, my name is Molly and I am with the staff at Scrum Alliance. Thank you so much for joining us for the webinar, "Stop Facilitating the World's Most Boring Meetings". This is the third webinar in our Approaching Agility Webinars for Aspiring Changemakers series, which aims to introduce agile topics and techniques to anybody who is curious about Agile and Scrum. In today's webinar, we're going to be exploring what most meetings look like in today's world of work and common mistakes that we can all learn to avoid as the meeting facilitators and even as meeting participants and hosts. Hopefully, you're going to walk away today with a toolbox of valuable techniques that can be used right away as a meeting facilitator to improve your meetings. So just a few things before we get started. All of the webinar participants will be in listen only mode throughout the webinar. If you have any questions either for Vibhu or a member of staff, please drop those questions into the chat or the Q&A. We'll be monitoring those throughout the webinar.

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Please, if you have questions specifically for Vibhu, please put them in the Q&A box, we will be doing a Q&A session at the end of this webinar.

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This webinar will be recorded and we will be sending the recording out to all of you afterwards, as well as posting it on our Resource Library. So don't worry, you'll have access to the webinar recording the webinar slides and some additional content after this. And so without further ado, I'm really excited to introduce Vibhu Srinivasan. Take it away Vibhu.

08:37

Thank you. Can I share my screen?

09:59

Welcome and let's talk about an interesting topic. This is something that most of us can relate to and stuff that you can use right away in your work immediately, right. So, again, a little bit about me. My name is Vibhu. I have been an agile practitioner since 1998. In fact, that's only thing I know I have been in the Agile world, mostly from starting from extreme programming, Scrum Kanban and I come from a technology side. But today, and I'm also scrambling Certified Scrum trainer. I'm super passionate about teaching. So I've been teaching Scrum and Agile for the Scrum Alliance for the last 12 years. I've done around five 600 workshops over the time. I'm also founder of a company called Agilist.co where we teach a lot of this stuff. And

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I work at Accenture in the cloud space. So I am kind of a cloud solution architect. So a lot of the things you see here is, is something that I use every day. So hopefully you find meaning in what you see today. This is my family. It's an agile family. So you meet my wife, who's a pharmacist, my son and daughter. So we do Agile at home. It's very short, my pets, my audio and Zuri. So a little bit about me, right? So

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what else right? So I think, for that introduction, I want to maybe a little bit around what we do. So there's a lot of beliefs around agile, right? We call them orthodoxies things that we think should work only in a certain way. And our belief stops us from doing things in a certain way. So our goal of Agile is to kind of unlock and unpack those orthodoxies in people so that we can actually create teams that are, you know, high potential teams, right. So, that's a bit of what we do in the fitness world. Okay, so let's come back to the topic of meetings. And when when we think about meetings, the I started by saying, you know, a bad meeting, right? So, top two reasons for bad meetings is the first one is an ineffective somebody, a facilitator who's not really prepared, so they show up, and they are not ready to facilitate the session. And that's like, one of the top two reasons why meetings are really bad, from, you know, from, from really bad to bad, right? And the second one is, they're having a very unclear purpose and unclear outcome. So people start the meeting ended up with another meeting. So you're just stuck there. Right? So those are kind of the top two things. But gatherings have been a big part of human culture, right? So for so many years, you may have seen back in the day, even people get together, and they talk about, you know, color the gathering gets get together and talk, because humans like to work together. So that concept of working together, you know, when we started in like working, I mean, we now call that as a meeting, but I see meeting as a gathering space. Now. Why do we gather? No, sometimes we gather to reach consensus, you know, for whatever reason, we want to meet as a team. And we want to, you know, share ideas. Sometimes we gather, because we want to share some information back, right? So and we want to give something back to a lot of people, sometimes we may do something on we

need some clarity or guidance on something. So maybe it's a design that I prepared. And I want to call a bunch of people and ask them how is this design and get some more ideas into that, or it just sometimes an informal get together. So lately, especially in the post COVID era, there's a lot of meetings about mindfulness, and just meeting your team. Because back in the day, we used to all work in offices. So we used to see each other a lot. But nowadays, with us working from home, it's a lot more important that we actually meet our team and our leaders want to know what our team is doing. So gatherings or meetings have taken a whole new meaning. Right? So my goal of this session is to help think through how can we get better as facilitators and improve the life of so many people. Because, you know, we can make everybody's life more joyful and fun, if the facilitator does a good job at preparing for meeting so. So that's the context of the today's session is from a facilitators angle. So we do a good job in running these meetings. Okay.

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So when we think of gatherings, you know, and you can totally relate to these kinds of meetings, right. So on one side, you have these one on one meetings. So maybe you have a meeting with the manager, maybe you're meeting your team member, maybe there's a new joining who has come into your company and you want to talk to them about how the norms of the company are. So one on one meetings are, you know, kind of nice, because you can connect with people, whether on teams or zoom or whatever you can put your video on, you're a lot more direct because there's only two people in the conversation. Now, second kind of meeting is a smaller group of people. This is something you can relate to right When you have a group of people, and let's say, you know, those group of people, so for example, family members, close friends, you may notice that there's a certain amount of like free behavior in those calls, people are a lot less reserved, and you're kind of open to conversation, we don't mind putting the video on because we know these people, right. So it's a lot more easier to work with those kind of meetings. But smaller groups sometimes also has like people that we don't know, right. So even it could be one person that we don't know, or it's a client call, and you, you know that you're going into a call with a customer there, then maybe there are six people, but one among them as a customer. So all of a sudden, the behavior that comes the group behavior that we do as humans tends to be a lot more formal. And we need to think about how to manage that session. And how do you engage these people as we go along? So that's the sector kind of the smaller group, but the people that we kind of want some of some of them we don't know, right? Then you have these large groups, and anything more than an eight people meeting I consider as a mob, right? Generally, you know, three, eight plus is a big group. It's tough to manage these things. But it's mostly informational only like today, right? We have many people in the call, but it's mostly for learning purposes, or sharing ideas purposes. So large group meetings. So as a facilitator, think about when you start thinking about meetings and gatherings, you may want to think about what which one are you doing, because depending on the type of meeting that you're facilitating, the way you may engage with the people will completely differ in depending on the kind of gathering that you're gonna facilitate. And then you have kind of different types of meeting, right, so we have, like this one time meeting. So for example, like today I'm presenting, although it's repeated a webinar, I am presenting today, once you know, and then so it's a one time meeting, you know, or maybe it's a meeting with somebody, it's one time meeting. And then you have these recurring meetings. So in most Scrum teams, they'll do something called as a daily scrum, just by name, it happens every day. So you gather around something, and you talk about, so those are kind of generally the two types of meetings, one time and recurring. And you probably are going to be less, you know, worried recurring meetings, you know, these people, you're going to show up. So it's

going to be easier to facilitate these things. But sometimes it's one time meetings, like a business discussion, you're trying to win a deal, you got to be a lot more prepared for these one time meetings, because it is your one shot to get this thing done well. So you know, think about as a facilitator, how you want to prepare for these things. Okay. So the other thing I want to point out is, there's a study about the productive hours in the US before COVID. So this is the actual number of hours that we are really productive at work. And take a second and think about in your mind what this number could be. It's, it's an example. So if you think about, let's say, seven, eight hours of productive work, that's not true. It's like a less than five, it's actually 2.4 hours is the actual number of productive hours for a typical US based company in the IT industry based on a couple of studies before COVID. So that doesn't mean we don't work. But we have a lot of meetings, we need to go to lunch, we got to have the you know, water cooler talk. And so we have a lot of these other things going on. And then there are distractions, right, so multiple projects we're working on. So that is before COVID, two and a half hours of collaboration time, they actually productive time entered the keyboard time. And now imagine what has happened after COVID. Right. So I'm only guessing that that number of hours has come down. And I and I don't know if you feel like that. But many times people feel like when am I going to do the work because my day just goes by so fast. So you end up spending a lot of personal time in the evenings eating into all of that your own time. So it can be important that you be think about how to give this make this better. And what's what can we do as facilitators so that we actually create space for people to do well. And that's your time and you're done with them. So I'm going to go into kind of what how much you can personalize right. So when you have small meetings, so on something on this side, you can be a lot more personalized, because this is people we know or even if it's a small group of people we know, by as large, something like a small group here, you can still personalize these meetings and make sure it's taking care of individual needs. But for larger groups of eight or more people, you got to generally follow like a certain pattern. Maybe you're gonna think about how to break them into groups, maybe you're gonna do team rooms, so you're gonna replicate this small group as much as possible. Think of scaling these small groups. In order if you need personalization, the only way to do that is to break into small breakout rooms and do activities with and things like that. So so as you plan your next meeting facilitation, think about how much personalization do you need for getting the goals of this meeting done. And then accordingly, you got to design the experience, which we're going to go into in a few minutes.

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Okay. So when you think of a meeting, there's a couple of different roles. So most of these roles we're all probably familiar with. The first role is somebody who is the host of the meaning stakeholder, right? So if I were to give an example, let's pick an example. So we have a company, there is a chief architect, and the chief architect wants to his, they have created some design. And they want to bring a couple of these leads in order to get some input about their design. So that's typically the host, or the person who wants something done. So that's kind of one roll, when you think about a meeting, and that could be a single person, sometimes it that could be a group of people as well. So the host could be maybe three people who want to meet a bunch of people, right. So that's the one group. On the other side, you have, this meeting is about the facilitator, which is often the one person facilitator is someone who is there to help other people succeed, they do not necessarily have a specific opinion one way or another. And they are experienced in running these events and meetings and make sure other people are doing a good job and whatever they do. Right. So that's the facilitator role. So generally, the recommendation is when you wear the facilitation cat hat. Now, you know, you're the facilitator, the, the suggestion is to think that your opinions now doesn't really matter.

Because in this meeting, you're simply facilitating so even though you may not agree with whatever is being spoken there, it's really not about you. It's about the host and the topics of the stakeholders and the participants. So third group down here is the people who are visiting, right people who are coming to your session coming to the session that you're facilitating the hosts are there, and these are the people who often get stuck, right? So when people join, they often many times these days, especially participants come to these meetings, because there are so many of them, they just, it's just another one for the day. So we really need to think about how do you want to make sure that these participants actually get value from this meeting? And they don't feel like, you know, something? Like, it could have been an email situation, right? So many times, you might go to a meeting and think like, oh, that that could have been done in an email, or why not just chat about it, you know, so. So you want to make sure that the participants are something that we think about so. So I'm going to go a little bit into how those things do like how we plan about each of these people. And how do you how do you go about. So we spoke about three roads facilitator, participant and the host. But there is a book called collaboration explained, and it's by Jean Tabata, it's one of my most favorite books. And in that book, Jean explains a topic, when I was to work with a call, this is the other role, it's called as an observer. So just like a participant in meetings, we want to possibly also want to think about the observers. And the difference between the participant and observers or participants can, as the name says, participate, you know, they can talk, but as observers generally remain silent, so this could be, for example, in this meeting, maybe the architect has invited some other architect in training. Or maybe there's a VP or somebody in the company in a strong leader who wants to know, but he's not interested in to give opinions, but they want to be there. So as a facilitator, you want to think about these different roles, and be clear about who's the host? Who are the hosts? Who are the participants. And the third one is, who are the observers that we would like to, we would like to, you know, be part of this event or meeting, right. So with that introduction, let's go into a little bit into how does the meeting look like? So generally, when we think about a meeting, what are some things and how do they look, right?

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So when you think of a meeting, it's a container, right? So here is a container that we need to collaborate with. And so we want to gather a bunch of people into this container so that the facilitator can kind of facilitate collaboration so that their most creative potential is unleashed, right? So think of a meeting as that container. And when you think of a container like that, the the lifecycle of a meeting, there are things that can happen before. Sorry, I'll go back to the slides. So there are things that can happen before. There are things that can happen during the meeting. And then there are things that happen after the meeting, right? So so we want to think about all of these three experiences. And this concept was kind of introduced by the Agile Coaching Institute, which kind of brought about this agile facilitation and how it looks like. So what we're going to look at today is it in But what do I, as a facilitator, do before meeting starts? How do I manage with that? What do I do during the meeting? What are some different kinds of things that can happen during the meeting? And then what can happen after the meeting? And how do we deal with that. So those are the three things we're going to look at, in for the next few minutes. So so this is kind of the overall flow, right? So our job as a facilitator is to design and create an experience for everyone to collaborate safely, right, we want to create a safe space where people come in and feel like their views are heard off. So if you have been on meetings, many times, many people remain silent. Now, silence is a very powerful form of just like talking, silence is a very powerful form of communication. But sometimes we're silent. Because we're listening. Sometimes we are silent, because we feel that our opinions don't matter. You know, sometimes we are silent, because, you know, because we just like, you

know, are indifferent about this, right. So we've been here so long, that we are like, I don't know, I just don't I just, I'm a prisoner, I don't need to be here, they just invited me, therefore your sign. And so the safety factor is really important when you set up meetings. And if you have a meeting where somebody feels unsafe, or there is something that's said about what's happening, whether it is verbal, or nonverbal cues that can happen, then then that there's no more than safe space. So the number one thing that facilitated thinks about is, am I creating that safe space for everyone in the meeting to collaborate safely, right? And in general, before, during after, right, so before, we want to think about two things, we want to start by saying, Do does the host understand the problem statement? And do they can they tell me what outcomes they want to see when this meeting is over? Okay, so we're gonna get into a little details of that in a minute. So that's kind of what you do before, you know, before the event starts. So now, after the event starts, you may be the main role of a facilitator is to facilitate collaboration, and, and manage all the dysfunctions that happened, you know, people may leave the meeting, somebody may switch off the video, someone may come late into meetings. So there's a lot of these dysfunctions happen. So you're facilitating collaboration, you're also managing all the dysfunctions, and you're making sure that things technology is a big deal today. So when you expect something is going to happen, some something else happens. So you're kind of doing management of all of that. And after the meeting, you follow up really quick with action items, and say, here's what happened in this meeting. And here are some couple of action items that we came up with. And then it's a great practice to do a retrospective with the stakeholders right away and say, How did this with all of these people who you just spent an hour or two with these people? So what do we need to do? How did I do as a facilitator? Did this meeting go? Well, so you always close with a retrospective. So think of these as like the before state, the during state and the after state of some of the key things a facilitator needs to think about when they are planning a meeting. So let's jump a little bit into the before part here.

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So what do we do in the before part? So problem statement? So when you think of a problem statement, if you cannot describe it, so this is the host, and the facilitator, let's say they set up a meeting, and they talk about, can you help me describe what is the problems problem you're trying to solve? And, and a good way to write a problem statement, as explained, there's a format called How might be, so how might be comes from the design thinking experience. And it is popularized by the Stanford design school. So how might be brings kind of empathy into play. And there are lots of you can read a theater on the Stanford d school on how might we, and why it's a good technique to write problem statements. So So but the goal is, you spend a couple of hours sometimes with the stakeholders, or the hosts to come up with a problem statement, when designing a, let's say, one, one and a half hour session with a bunch of people. So here is an example of how might we statement, how might we create a new one differentiated experience for our basketball fans of our team so that they can interact with each other during the game on in the on game data? Real time, right? So you may work with the stakeholders, iterate on some statement like this a couple of times, and then you probably want to get an agreement on is this the right problem statement or right problem we want to solve? Is this the right purpose for this meeting, right. So so that's step number one. So assume that the you and the host agreed on? That looks good, and let's move to step two. And all of this is happening. Remember before the meeting. Step two, is, okay, I got we got the problem statement. But I used to, like one of my colleagues, Bono. So she has kind of when I, whenever I've worked with her, she would often say something like, what does success look like at the end of the meeting? And I really would like that statement, because it makes people think

about, think about how what does success look like, and it goes back and forth, one of them will say one of them will say B, you write down all those ideas, and then you've come up with two or three things, that if we do these three things, success is achieved. Right? So in this case, for example, the person says, we have many new ideas, if we generate a lot of ideas, so that we can come up with what makes a differentiated experience for fans, that success for me, right. And then someone else says, well, not just ideas, but I also want to make sure that those ideas are prioritized in some way, right. So we want to talk about those two things. And so when you do something like this, you don't want to end up with like 20 different outcomes, because then nothing is going to get done in that meeting, you want to focus on not more than three to four outcomes for a typical meeting of let's say, one hour or whatever, right, 45 minute meeting. And so that's it's two parts, the first and second, the problem statement, and the outcome. Generally, when I run these sessions, for teams or customers, this part itself often takes a lot of time, this may take a couple of meetings, this may itself take people disagreeing or agreeing on that. But once you get this part, right, the rest of the apart is execution. Now, this is where people do mistakes, and most of the meetings, they don't agree on one and two, and yet they go and do the meeting. And now people show up and you have no idea why this meeting is going or not going. So my recommendation is kind of have like a go no, go check. So if you cannot define the problem statement, or the purpose, and if you cannot agree on a few outcomes for the meeting, then stop the meeting, don't even invite those people and you know, make them suffer there. So what we want to do is, go to the next step. So the next step would be something like send an invite, okay, send an invite to people and say, why do you why do we want you here, right, maybe it's an exciting invite that goes along. So I'll give you an example of that. So a couple of years ago, I was doing some work with an insurance company. And the the group folks in the company can have the release date skipped by six months. So the CEO of the company got really concerned. And he wanted to meet all of those 120 people on a certain day, because he wanted, he wanted this release done, because they had lot of legal ramifications of not making this release. So the way we planned that meeting was we sent an invite from the CEO, it was a video message that went to all the employees inviting them for a session, you know, in their main office at, like 11am that day. And we said it's 11 to four, we really want your opinions, because we have to make this release, guys. So I'm seeking your help. So please come over, right. So so it was more of a video that went out to all these 120 or so participants. And then on the day people came in, they didn't expect it, it was it was feeling like there's some kind of a party going on. So we had balloons outside, we had like a band playing music outside, you know, when they walked in, we had some drinks set up like, you know, a non alcoholic drink setup for them, right. So when they came in, they all sat in a table. So the whole day felt like a celebration, right. And so they really enjoyed that they actually got to do something fun, have some lunch, but then the CEO and the team worked together, and then he left. But then by the end of the day, they actually figured out a way to make the release, right? So if we bring people with a purpose, with the third thing is some kind of an inviting message that goes from whoever is the main host. So people feel they're wanted, you know, many times we have people in these meetings, who feel they're just prisoners there. They're just there because they've been called. So you want to make sure that you send some kind of, you know, some kind of a message that says, Why do you need these people there, right, so, so assuming we do these three things, then maybe an invite goes along, and people show up. And all that happens. Let's go further. And we'll talk a little bit about what happens during the meeting. Right? Number one mistake I see for meetings today. And I highly recommend considering this is nowadays people are doing back to back meetings. So you may be going from one to two to three and sometimes one 145. So there's so many meetings happening. So when you plan a meeting, think about blocking their time for one hour, but ending the meeting 15 minutes before right so that's the first thing to think about is like how do I stop the meeting before it starts. And the second thing is, as a facilitator, you need to be there

before time. So even though and give yourself some space so maybe you have 15 minutes of free time before the your next call starts because if you if you're not ready yourself doesn't Number one reason that meetings don't go well is the opening then becomes really bad. Right? So, so in that book collaboration explain Jean Tabaka, she kind of explains what what do you need to do in these meetings. So this is a kind of a set of rules that we often talk about. So generally, if you think about meetings, you could have a backlog like this on the wall, it's very nice for people to see, oh, these are the six steps, these are the six steps we're going to do. So it's kind of helpful to see what we're going to do. So we're going to start with the welcome. And then maybe we go into some ground rules. Ground rules are really helpful, because we're gonna give an example in the next one what a ground rule is, then maybe you'll have something called as a parking lot. I'm going to give an example of that. You may set up some action item, how do how do we capture action items, maybe there's a board that you have set up virtual board that people can add action items, can you clearly have printed the problem statement and outcome on a big virtual sticky note on a tool. So when people show up, you start the opening by doing some of these activities. And I really like to move these sticky notes one at a time, so that people can see what's left to do. Because the most frustrating thing about a meeting is not knowing when it's gonna end, you're like, you're hoping that the time goes by. But by moving things on the wall like this visually, the people get more something achieved every two minutes, three minutes, and they really feel happy about it. So opening is probably if you think of a one hour meeting, opening is probably not more than five minutes or so where you kind of open with it, and you close on the other side with something called clearing the parking lot. So I'll tell you a minute what it is, you will process the action items. Then after that you're gonna do a retro on the meeting, if you have the time, I always appreciate and then do appreciations thanking people, you know, who made a difference, and then close and you can have more things here. But generally, you know, at least these items are just a framework for any meeting. Now what goes in between the meeting is what the changes, because you generally have an opening and a closing. And then you have something that's in between, right, that changes a lot. So let's see a little bit of an example of what I mean by these artifacts, ground rules and parking lot and those kind of things. So here is kind of a visual wall from another team, another board I had last week for something right? So it may look like that. Right. So problem statement is on the wall, the outcomes are on the wall. When I say wall, I mean a virtual wall, right? Something that's, that's visible, a tool, a virtual whiteboard. And then the working environment is really, it comes from agile teams. But I think the concept of a working agreement or ground rule comes from agile teams. But I highly encourage it for any kind of meetings. So opening up with, for example, in this case, it says we will have one conversation only, Hey, guys, make sure that there are no other devices, take care of yourself. And we'll start an end time. And then after you read the working agreement, you're gonna give others a chance to add to it saying what else is missing? Do you think anything else has to be added to this, and then people will do a thumbs up or a thumbs down. So you can use the zoom feature of a thumbs up or a thumbs down, or a team's feature or literally people doing thumbs up like that. Now the reason for you to do a thumbs up like that is if they don't agree, they could also do a thumbs down, you know, and then it gives you a chance to listen to why they are not agreeing to something the same time, if they do a behavior in the meeting that let's say they put on their phone, or they are now talking a lot because they violated the one conversation rule, you can then call them out and they are not going to feel bad you call them out because you had told in the beginning of the meeting that you're going to do so right. So working agreements are a really important aspect of of most meetings, I highly encourage you to try that in every meeting. And then you have some kind of a wall, which is empty in the beginning action items that will say what, who and by when. And then people are just talking and they can put these sticky notes on their own. You don't have to write and scribe for them. But essentially, at the end of the meeting, when you close the action

items, you're going to come and ask like who is going to do this review design? Oh Mark, you're going to do that? Awesome, you know, look at look, look at some other option who's gonna do that Mike, and then by when so generally, you captured these action items in the closing. And then the last thing I wanted to show was this concept of a parking lot. So a parking lot is for people who we often call them tangent Tom's, so we have all these people in meetings. And what they do is every time you have to say something, they have a completely separate topic that they'll bring in, and all of a sudden you're like, Oh, this is not supposed to be that meeting, you're going off topic here. But then when people go off topic, oftentimes we don't know how to stop them. And therefore especially if it's a person of power, somebody who's a leader and directors, whatever right senior person in the company, you just will not even stop them. So all of a sudden the meeting has taken a whole new agenda that you didn't expect it to do, right. So a parking lot is something you Create up literally like a space like this and say our parking lot. And then you will teach them a technique called is a yellow card. So a yellow card in soccer is basically you're saying that says that's a kind of a warning, right? Don't do that. So you could just have a yellow card sign. And every time somebody does something, maybe you yellow card them, they have one more minute for closing the conversation. And if they finish an hour, and it's still going on, you can just put the topic on the parking lot and move on. This way you're keeping the focus on the meeting, and not just you know, going on and on. So, so think about these basics, the problem statement outcomes, working implement action items, and a parking lot, as with the yellow car technique, talk to everybody in the meeting. So they know how to so this will kick off your meeting. And you kind of achieve a lot of this in the first few minutes. And then you go into the meeting itself. Okay, so moving on here. So, so a big part of this now is that now that you have thinking about meetings, a big part of a meeting is designing the experience. Because if we give people who come to our meetings and amazing experience, they are going to go back and talk about how cool this meeting was. Otherwise, they're gonna go back and talk about how bad this facilitator was. And, and this person was like the worst facilitator, they probably did this and that, so you want to be in the other side. So a lot of the times our goal is to create an unbelievable experience for people like the party thing I spoke about at that insurance company, right? Something that they don't expect to happen. So how can we do that? How can we design some experiences, right? So I want you to do this concept of different modes of thinking. So one of the ways you design experiences, these are the things you do in between. So this is what you do, in this session right in between, you're going to be doing a bunch of experiences or activities with the participants. And to design the activities, you want to think about kind of we have kind of two sides of thinking, you know, so out of the box, we use both of them. One is for imagination, one is for logic, and one is for kind of one can be used for brainstorming. And the other one is kind of linear thinking where you want to solve a problem, right? You want to get to something so you want sometimes in meetings, it feels like you will start with a divergent activity, you may do a couple of one more convergent activity, then you may do some divergent activity, right? But why as you get better and better, you're gonna get lots of ideas of how do you mix and match these divergent and convergent thinking that we all have, so that we can get something done in the meeting. So for example, right? Let's say we are a family and we are going on a long hike this weekend. And gently after a long hike, the question comes, where do you want to eat lunch? You know, so it's, at least in my family, it's a big problem. Where Where do you want to eat lunch, and everybody has got five opinions. So you want to make sure that before you go on the hike itself, we kind of do a little bit of divergent convergent thinking here. So we picked the space. So how do we do that is you could use a technique. In this case, it comes from the design thinking school, it's called the Krazy, eight. So Krazy eight is coming of age awesome, right? Eight crazy ideas about where it could be to lunch, for example, we could do Mexican, Italian, maybe we can just cook at home, you could carry subway, right, so people will come up with all these ideas. And you can't do any more each person can do maximum of eight, but you don't want to go more

than eight. And you will do this in a very short, like a three minute time box. And so it's quick, you know, it's called crazy a when you do that, and you may end up with something like this, right? So, so here is kind of a divergent brainstorming happen. And maybe in this case, they only came up with six ideas or five ideas, they couldn't come up with eight ideas. So the team says, Hey, we could the family says hey, we could either eat Indian, Italian, Mexican pizza or Chinese. Imagine this one more called like an eat at home, right? So we take that. We take that. And then we say, well, now what we do with this information is we go and we prioritize it right, we kind of need to know who wants to do which one more. So generally, there is a trick. So this is a technique called thought voting. Sorry, I know why it's moving like this dark voting. So silent vote is what we call it. So you take the number of options. So here you have four or five options. And this just take a square root of the number of options. And then let's say you give each person two votes, then everybody in the family votes. And once you vote, you can can either vote on the same topic, or you can vote on multiple topics, you can abstain from voting, but you can do let's say any more than two. And then you see from this pattern that the this family overall prefers either Italian or Mexican for this weekend, you know, lunch after the hike. But now the the discussion comes, Well, let's start it out because these are good, but I want to say expensive, affordable, more votes less votes. That's my prioritization, prioritization matrix. And then when you do like that, but expensive. So Italian, maybe the restaurant near our house is expensive. So it's got more words, but it's expensive Indian near our house is like less words, but it's kind of expensive. But the most affordable one for us is this is the end of the month, we're kind of running short on cash. So let's do affordable, and then this Mexican restaurant near our houses, you know, really affordable. And so we'll do more votes and affordable this kind of, and you can change these parameters based on whatever that is the intent that you're trying to do. In my case, I picked affordable, expensive, you may pick like high value, low value, high cost, low cost, various things you can do for the prioritization matrix, right. So what we showed is a way to get a bunch of ideas using Krazy, eight, Id eight, and then from there, you're gonna do like some kind of a dark voting, then you go from there and you build like, prioritization matrix. So you can, you can get the

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kind of an option to one so you can do something, otherwise, we're stuck. And somebody in the family will say we do pizza, and they stop eating pizza, although he didn't want to do it. Okay, so that's the convergent divergent idea, and how do you engage with that? So what else can we do? Right, creative ideas for meetings, and I want to present a few short ones. I know, we may be running out of time soon. And then we can take questions at that point. So what else can we do in these meetings? And how do we make it more creative for people? So the first one is, there is something called the code protocols. So, later on, I will send the link in the in the write up where this code protocols can be found. But a code protocols is. So there is a protocol called the check in protocol, check in you know, and there is a protocol called the check out protocol. So for some meetings, especially these days, you may start, like because we are coming from so many things, right? People may have had something in the morning, or maybe there is some emergency at home. So we don't really know what is the emotional state of this person, when they show up in a meeting. So oftentimes, when you start a meeting, you may start by saying, Hey, guys, welcome to this meeting. Let's do check in today. Because you know, and then you check in some sounds something like this, right? This morning, I had, I know I had this presentation today. So I've been preparing a lot. I got up a bit early, but I'm here fully present and check in. So check everybody, we'll go around the room, we can quick check in all they're telling you is their state of mind. So once you know the state of mind, you as a facilitator, know, oh, this person has had a rough day, let me make sure that I take care of

them otherwise. And so that's kind of a check in protocol. And then similarly, there are many, like, I think there's 12 such protocols, but you can, as you master more and more of those, you can bring any of them as you do your sessions and in between those sessions. And a checkout protocol is a way to say hey, I'm going to check out because I have to go do something else, you know, and the day. So let's check in and check out protocols. And then the other thing you can do is in in Scrum teams, there is a in Scrum, there are four events and one of the event is called a retrospective. Retrospective is a short feedback loop. It happens at the end of every sprint in Scrum, but with retrospectives one of the common complaints that comes is it gets really boring guys every week, every two weeks we are meeting as the same thing they're using. And over time, we lose the fondness of the retrospective. So one of the things that good facilitators do is they think back fun in every retrospective. And you know, you're a good facilitator, and people show up to a retrospective expecting some magic to happen. So for example, you could be using this kind of a digital board. So this is a style of retrospective called as a sail boat. It's, it's something that you can use. And you can set up this wall, people will come and talk about it. You talk about what is the goal of this sprint, you know, what made us feel good, what helped us forward, but what you're looking for is what held us back, you know, when people put a bunch of sticky notes on what held us back so that we could not we could not make progress. So I use this and not in various sessions, whether it is agile or not. But this is something people can relate to, they can put sticky notes. So one of the ways good thing about putting sticky notes first before talking is that it helps both the you know the person who's in kind of in the one who talks a lot and the one who is silent, you know, they both can participate and put the sticky notes and then you can talk otherwise, the one who's kind of the talking person will take it over and then other people will not be able to contribute. So when you do these kind of sessions, make sure you put put ideas on the wall and then talk so a sailboat is a good quick way for you to design on a on a white whiteboard, digital whiteboard, and then bring people to do a retrospective and you could do many other ones like you can actually go on a walk. There's so many other ways to do fun retrospectives. In fact, there's a site called Fun retrospectives, which you should probably Look it up. Okay. So sometimes you may want to do something called the Lean Coffee, my goal is to give you a couple of different ideas. So Lean Coffee is a really quick way for in 20 minutes you want to get get a team together and have them talk about whatever they want to talk about that day, right. So you may have a general theme, and a Lean Coffee has an agenda. So look up Lean Coffee, and you know the details of that. So people will then say, well, let's put all the topics we want to talk about in this next 20 minutes. And then once you do that, everybody dot votes, these topics, and you pick the top three topics, or top four topics, and then you're going to go one by one, you're going to talk it, then you should come and share. So you won't be able to get through all the topics, you're going to timebox Lean Coffee session for around seven minutes. At the end of the seven minutes, one topic gets done. And then you ask, Hey, do we need to pull another topic or not so so it's kind of one by one you go. But what it does is if you want to continue, everybody's gonna do a thumbs up. But even if one person does a thumbs on the site, this topic is done. And sometimes it's very frustrating. Like I would have put my favorite topic here. Nobody voted for the topic. And it makes me really sad. But I have no choice because the team has decided to talk about something else more important for them on that day. So Lean Coffee, you can do this once in a while, you know, in Agile or other meetings as a quick way to do like,

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topics that the team cares about people care about. And everything is time boxed to seven minutes. So look it up, it's probably a fun thing for you to learn how to facilitate a Lean Coffee. Right. Next one is this in Amazon, they don't use PowerPoint. Right. So there's something about

the Amazon narrative format, sorry, there's some text issues there. I was trying to finish something. So and narrative. So when you go into these meetings, in Amazon, you will see the first few minutes and many of their meetings are really silent. In fact, the first 15 minutes, they're really silent. And you're like what is going on versus in typical meeting, you're gonna start by, you're gonna start by talking introductions and all of that in Amazon, who is the host, they have to come back with a one, two or a six page narrative. And there's a format to that. So this already writes like, what is the solution they're proposing? What research have they done, there's an end, there's an FAQ section. So people get the first 15 minutes to read everything. Once they're all in the same space. Then the facilitator says Welcome to the meeting. Now that you have read what we're supposed to do in the meeting, let's talk about the options. I love this format, I run it in many of my sessions, because people don't come prepared. And oftentimes people are talking without listening. So by giving them something to read for 15 minutes, which the host is prepared really well, like reading packet, this makes everybody in the same space. Now I can contribute, I know how to do so. So try the the narrative format, when you can, one or two more and then stop. The next one is called work the work pattern, right? So many times when you go to a meeting, and people say, Well, we went to this meeting, and we created five more meetings from this meeting. And so you just have meeting after meeting after meeting and no work actually gets done. So this was start to be my one of my colleagues a few years ago. And what work the work is you blocked two hours or one hour, two hours for your team. And then everybody comes in the room and says, here's the work we need to get done right now. So everybody puts a sticky note on the wall. And then you sit together in those two hours. And you actually help each other for those two hours. And whatever is the most important thing the team has to get done. It's kind of fun, because you're trying to learn somebody else's work. And it's actually actual work getting done. You're not just sitting and talking in a meeting format, you're just doing work. And so every day I we do this to our blog, where we reserve the time for the team to do work the work. So in Scrum teams, we call them core hours, these are protected time reserved for the team to do their work. Okay. Okay, so, lastly, you know, what are some tools we need, you know, so typically, we'll need a lot of different tools, I've just put some of the ones I've been using, this is probably just a lot more. So collaboration tools, something like Slack teams, Confluence is really good, you know. And then there's a tool called Mentimeter. If you're running quizzes and stuff like that. Mentimeter is a good to video perspective, you can use again, teams zoom, like how we're using today, sorry. And now nowadays, you can also do it in like the virtual world, like the Metta World. So sometimes we do meetings using our Oculus headsets, look up all space we are all we are that's kind of a space for you to go to meetings have avatars go online, it's so much fun to do once in a while team meetings using all space, including we do customer meetings and all space which is so much fun. Then this is a must have for virtual for virtual events. You do need some kind of a whiteboard, and the ones I use, like there's many more but the ones I like Nero mural and lucid spark and you can use whatever is your favorite tool, but you need to have this kind of Mattoon, in order to do some of these facilitation, otherwise you you learn to use Google Docs, which is fine too, or Microsoft Word, any of these tools will work. But some whitespace like this is really powerful to use. And lastly, you need some project management tools and JIRA, Azure DevOps, as many of them, you know, in that space. So these are kind of the common tools that I use for facilitation. So again, my goal today was to introduce you the framework, talk about the before, during after give you some access to some of the techniques, talk about the different personas, who are there, how to manage them, talk about the person who's like the facilitator, and the observer and the participle and give you some tools and techniques. So that's kind of where I want to end this talk today, and pick up any questions that you may have. So I want to pause and look for any questions. Thank you.

55:49

All right. Thank you, Vibhu for such a wonderful presentation. Today,

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we have been collecting some questions in the Q&A portion. So I'm just going to start throwing them at you. And we'll try and get through as many as we can in the last few minutes of this webinar. So with so much working from home and remote meetings, how is it like how effective is it without video or with like, you know, the nonverbal communication things that often happen in in person meetings? How can we, you know, get those things in our meetings that are virtual, and to make them more effective and interactive? They feel like talking to a laptop screen with no direct eye contact is does that impact the understanding within meetings?

56:31

Yeah, that's a great question. Right? So yes, right. So I am like, first of all, I'm a visual person. So for me, if I don't see the person, I don't know what to say, you know, so when they suddenly put out a video of, I don't know what to do. But at the same time, studies have shown post COVID, that pew ad, we have never looked at ourselves for eight hours in a day before in our life, imagine sitting in front of a mirror, looking at yourself for eight hours in a day. And so there is a study that's been going on that people are actually getting more depressed, now sitting eight hours looking at their own image. So there are a number of reasons where we may be putting video off, right. But at the same time, I encourage teams to as much as possible, at least once or twice a day, whatever format of video on so in my case, I always put video on, and whether the other person puts video on or not people know that they boost calls always a video on. So sometimes I we cannot get you know, used to that, you know, but I think without the video literally not know what the other person is doing. But maybe there's something going on in their home, right? Maybe that someone's sick, maybe there's some cleaner behind them. So I think just being aware of what's happening around them. But asking them sometimes also helps, and then finding out why they're not doing it, as well. So that's all I would say for that.

57:47

So then another question asked, Can the host and the facilitator be the same person, this is something they often encounter where they have to host and facilitate at the same time?

57:56

I would say follow like a two people meeting, for example that I spoke about, yeah, usually the same person. But for large, like if you really want to get an outcome done in a meeting, I always like as a leader, like sometimes I in my role I have like I've asked for meetings, but then I gently asked for like a facilitator because that removes me from talking people get confused. Are you talking as a host or a steak? Are you talking as a facilitator? I'm confused, you know, so I would encourage, if possible to keep them separate. But for small meetings, sure. I mean, you can get away with that, you know, so but for larger events, when you need something done, I

would highly encourage you to separate in Scrum. That's why there's a rule. It's called the scrum master. You know, the role of a scrum master is to be the facilitator, not the host. And so that's why it's important to have that scrum master role can solve the problem for you.

58:49

Awesome, we also had a few people ask, you know, we've all done it. We've all been in meetings where we've squirreled away we've gotten distracted from the main topics, the main tasks, the outcomes, how would you recommend being able to bring meetings back on track to really focus on the intended outcome and the intended discussion?

59:09

How do you stop on track means how do you bring it back? Is what you're saying,

59:13

you know, how do you bring a meeting back back to the topic at hand, when it gets

59:18

so I discussed discuss this concept of a parking lot. The parking lot is something that you can actually put show the yellow car, you know, like, or a drink, whatever is yellow next to you, you know, and then people will say, Oh, yellow card, I got a yellow card. Okay, I know what I'm supposed to do. Right? That's, if you teach them what you don't want to do is like, what you don't want to do it is like do it without telling them right? Suddenly, you don't want to show somebody yellow card, they get angry. But I think if you teach them before, they're quite okay with that, you know, the other thing is, is just, you know, asking the people bringing, you know, bringing back the topic and saying, Hey guys, let's show let's go back to a problem statement. Let's go back to outcomes. Are we actually following the outcome? So the other thing to do is to kind of point out back to the outcome. So people say, Oh, you're not following our outcome. But it's unfair as a facilitator, if you don't do it, you didn't do justice to the people. We just led them to something happen. And I feel it's like, Oh, my God, what are you doing? You should have done that. Right. So I feel it's important to do that.

1:00:20

So you actually answered quite a few at that one answer. So thank you for that. How do you encourage dissenting opinions to foster more diverse input and healthy discussion? Oftentimes, group thinks limits our progress and potential.

1:00:37

Yeah, so group is limited. 100% agree with that. Also, you know, sometimes there are studies

that, you know, that's why the idea of let's talk after we put the ideas out, right, so, so we think about the, the, you know, the sticky note idea, and agile, if you have people put all the ideas upfront, you know, then you are getting people starts out on the wall, then you talk about it, right? So versus otherwise, you start by saying who has an idea, of course, the person who was the strongest in the team always has an idea. And once they speak, others don't speak for whatever reason, right? So we want to avoid such behaviors, where we people feel empowered to kind of put their idea out, you know, and so it's really important for leaders to be silent, you know, and it's very tempting to keep talking, you know, but I would encourage the facilitator to have the conversation with the leader of the group and say, Is it okay for you to be quiet? You know, and sometimes, of course, I'll be quiet, you know, what do you think I'll be quiet, right? But you want to have the conversation before and not after. So before the event starts find out who's the leader in the group and have a conversation with them, that, you know, these are the kinds of things I'll be doing, and they're quite okay with that.

1:01:48

So someone brought up an example, their scrum master for an 11 member DevOps team, which, you know, can be a challenge when you have such a large group. So you had mentioned, you know, you can break into smaller groups. But sometimes the takeaways are lost with like, when you go back to the larger team, any other suggestions for being a better facilitator for a large team or a large meeting?

1:02:13

Yeah, so So you're saying your breakout rooms may not work, because when you come back, everybody has to be connected back in the same topic. I don't have any immediate idea I can think of, you know, I think visual facilitation helps a lot, you know. So, think of like, if you're talking a lot as a facilitator, today, I'm not kind of I'm in the kind of talk mode, therefore, you know, but generally, when I facilitate, you should not be talking at all right, you're doing activities and setting up the boards and getting people together. So by creating a visual board, even though they're working in two teams, maybe they're putting all the information in one view, you know, so by putting in one view, everybody is seeing what's being put, and then they come back and they update, right? They come back and say, Here is my update, and one of them gives an update. So that way, you know the keep the view the same. So the two teams could see the same view, and then have them come and give an update. That's what I would say. But I wouldn't encourage 11 People talking in a call, right? Because now you have no idea. How can lead when people talk in a garden, it's impossible. Like three of them will talk other eight will remain silent. So it's really important to make sure everybody's voices heard.

1:03:22

So I think we have time for one more question. I'm looking at what we have. Um, so especially when you have a recurring meeting with the same group of people, do you need to set up the kind of the agreements and the outcomes for each individual meeting? Or is that something that should be applicable for the entire series? How do you set up those agreements when it comes to recurring meetings?

1:03:50

Great question. So I Yeah, obviously, you don't want to spend every every recurring meeting going through the agreement, but I generally keep it on the board, I will point to them, like a list already prepared. So people know the same group of people coming, they know what it is going to be. But you certainly want to, you don't want to go through the whole list each meeting, but you want to have it on a board or wall somewhere and remind people of the working environment every now and then right here, and then people get used to it. And then it's part of your it's called the team working agreement. So which is about how the team wants to work together. Right. So that is always on their mind. But I wouldn't actually do it for every recurring meeting, but at least keep it there pointed to it. And that's good enough.

1:04:34

Awesome. All right. So I think we're going to wrap this up now. Thank you so much for your time to vote and all your knowledge we really appreciate you sharing it with us. Just a reminder to everybody in attendance today. We will be getting this recording posted in our resource library as well as the slide deck and some extended notes. That booboo has very generously pulled together for us. So Though you can expect an email from us in the next kind of week or so with a follow up, that'll give you a link to that resource library post as well as a link to claim the SEU for attending this webinar. So we'll get all of that to you. Please, if you could, we would really appreciate it if you filled out the survey in that email as well to let us know how this webinar was and how we can continue improving this webinar series for you moving forward. So yeah, thank you again for joining us today. We really appreciate you taking the time and we will see you at our next approaching agility webinar. Thanks, guys.