DISRUPTION
—FACTORY

High Standard Certifications
for Disrupting Professionals

INDEX

Which common pitfalls do most candidates for agile roles face when performing their job? How can we tell that any given candidate has a high probability of running into these pitfalls, or not? What are the most relevant competencies that may prevent this from happening? What should we look at a candidate's profile to increase our confidence that they'll perform successfully?

INTRODUCTION

At Disruption Factory, we dove right into these salient questions to provide a viable solution to a challenge affecting many agile companies in the industry. This solution aims at facilitating their candidate selection process to fill key agile positions. We crafted a one-of-a-kind approach to certifying agile professionals mindsets based on real-world scenarios and a high-standard passing score of 80%.

We're also on a mission to help individuals identify their competencies' gaps and provide them with relevant insights and recommendations to work toward the skills' development.

CAUSES OF AGILE ADOPTION FAILURE

There are three barriers to adopting and scaling Agile practices that emerged from 2009 to 2021 within the top five roadblocks on every of the last 12 State of Agile Reports:

- General organization resistance to change
- Organizational culture at odds with agile values
- Lack of skills/experience with agile methods

Barrier to adopting and scaling Agile practices	Ranked as top 5
General organization resistance to change	12 times in last 12 editions
Organizational culture at odds with agile values	12 times in last 12 editions
Lack of skills/experience with agile methods	11 times in last 12 editions

These three impediments explain themself: the inability to change organizational culture and overcome resistance to change is due to a lack of skills/experience with agile.

Going deeper into the issue, our field observations point out that the resistance to change and cultural gap frequently found in organizational leaders and middle management are many times tolerated by those in charge of challenging them, such as but not restricted to Scrum Masters and Agile Coaches. Instead of fostering a cultural shift and change in the way of working, these roles in charge of promoting organizational transformation agree on a 'comfortable' status-quo due to the lack of mindset to successfully navigate the expected resistance to change Agility may cause.

Despite ironing out rough edges and tensions in the personal or professional relationship with change avoidants, the 'condescending' approach is detrimental to organizational efforts in going down the agile road. From a systemic perspective, we could identify the status-quo-friendly approach as a local optimization to buy some time which will ultimately prove harmful and confusing for teams and the organization at scale. Local optimizations are also frequently established as long-term fixes that become part of the company culture.

WHY TRUST US?

Martin Alaimo, funder & CEO of Disruption Factory, brought over 20 years of agile field experience into the company. Being an expert in agile development since early 2000, he contributed to the agile ecosystem with five books of his authorship, funded two consulting companies, helped enterprises in agile adoption in more than 20 countries, and trained over 6000 individuals. Martin, a frequent keynote speaker in agile conferences, has also achieved most of the top international recognitions in the field, like Certified Scrum Trainer (CST) and Certified Enterprise Coach (CEC) from the Scrum Alliance, positioning him in the top 1% of the certified members.

Martin Alaimo got a U.S. Permanent Residency (a.k.a. Green Card) from the U.S. Government based on his extraordinary abilities and achievements in agile software development.

Knowing how to ride a bike doesn't mean you have learned to ride it. In other words, the amount of knowledge someone holds on a subject matter is no proof of how well that individual will perform at doing it (competence).

Based upon years of experience, our reference framework is the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986) which was first referenced by Martin Alaimo, our founder, in the 2016 Agile Team Facilitator book and since then successfully applied dozens of times in programs of Agile Coaches and Facilitators development, showing unparalleled results.

The Dreyfus model lists different stages that take place during a learning process. A practical application of the Dreyfus model to developing agile professional competencies is as follows.

Novice

This is the first stage of the Dreyfus model. The novice professional accesses non-situational information (referenced as components) and rules for making decisions. For example, the novice agile professional would understand what a user story mapping (component) is, its attributes, and the rules to create one. He would need self-observation or a mentor/trainer giving him feedback on how he applies these rules to progress. At this stage, both components and rules lack situational awareness and are managed as isolated from the environment.

Competence

This is the second stage of the Dreyfus model, where the individual arrives after considerable practice. Due to recurrent observations from himself or an instructor, the practitioner can identify component patterns, referred to as situational components. The competent agile professional then can identify when a component (i.e., a user story mapping) that was created following the rules still needs more evaluation due to a recurrent pattern (i.e., progressive features or transit features) for a certain situation.

Based on this practical experience, a competent agile professional can make decisions beyond the formality of the information or predefined receipts, incorporating situational awareness.

Proficiency

At this stage, the third one in the Dreyfus model, the professional arrives after being exposed to a variety of typical whole situations.

A proficient agile professional evaluates the situations identified in the previous stage integrated as whole situations, considering expected outcomes and long-term goals. Following our example, a proficient agile professional would change how to facilitate the creation of a user story mapping because a certain situation (i.e., progressive feature) would go against a long-term goal (i.e., time-sensitive opportunity or cost-of-delay).

For decision-making, the proficient agile professional uses a memorized principle, referred to as a maxim, to decide the course of action. In this and all the previous stages, the agile professional still needs an analytical approach to decision-making.

Expertise & Mastery

These are, correspondingly, the fourth and fifth stages of the Dreyfus model. The big difference starting on the expertise stage is that the expert individual doesn't need an analytical approach for decision making, using intuition instead as a decision-making approach. In this stage, an expert agile professional would make decisions based on intuition instead of applying an analytical approach. This is how expert agile professionals would go against the expected rules when deciding how to split a user story mapping. They are using their intuition.

The Mastery stage is not an elevated level of mental capacity but, instead, is experienced momentarily by an expert who ceases to pay conscious attention to their performance and apply all that mental energy to produce an outcome. This feels like riding a bike without noticing you're riding a bike. Pilots reach this stage when they stop thinking they are flying a plane and feel like they are flying themself. Then, master agile professionals would stop thinking about creating a user story mapping and start feeling how a product emerges naturally into the digital space.

OUR APPROACH

With this competence-centric model in mind, Disruption Factory goes further up the knowledge bar. It aims to certify agile professionals evaluating candidates' decisions at the competence or proficiency level instead of the knowledge level that belongs to a novice stage.

To do this, the building blocks of all Disruption Factory assessments are what we call Scenarios. Each scenario presents a certain situation to a candidate, who should decide the better course of action based not only on knowledge but also situational awareness and mindset.

THE SCENARIOS

A candidate must demonstrate proficiency in a set of competencies according to each Disruption Factory certification. For each of these competencies, several real-world simulated scenarios will require candidates to decide and apply an action plan. Holding any Disruption Factory credentials will signify the candidate's ability to act according to the competencies described for each certificate.

Scenarios are purposely crafted to make evident an individual's mindset on a particular set of competencies by presenting a group of possible actions the candidate will need to assess and weigh against through their decision-making process and both personal and professional background. Disruption Factory multi-dimensional certification exams evaluate how candidates respond to different situational scenarios with their entire being, not just a specific body of knowledge.

Each scenario presents a "best decision" and a "worst decision," together with other "not so good" decisions based on the highest standards of the industry. In addition, to guarantee a high-level standard, gaining a Disruption Factory credential requires the candidate to achieve a positive outcome in at least 80% of scenarios.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions on the most appropriate outcome can be boosted by the level of knowledge but can't be based merely on knowledge. Candidates willing to take the exams should embody an Agile mindset and at least a competent level in each discipline they want to validate.

A candidate will be presented with a situation (scenario) related to a professional practice. For example, for Agile Facilitators, common situations in scenarios will revolve around facilitating participatory decision-making, fostering collaborative meetings, promoting dialogue, etc. How

any given candidate will enter a certain scenario and choose the most suitable course of action will depend on their current combination of knowledge, mental model, experience, personal history, and emotions, all which have an impact on the individual's decision-making process.

READINESS TO SIT FOR THE EXAM

There are no prerequisites to take the Disruption Factory certification exams.

We recognize that many self-taught professionals obtained competency directly from research and practice. These candidates will typically choose to prepare by themselves. The way they get ready varies depending on personal preferences and experiences. Disruption Factory is not intended to determine the learning path each professional should take.

On the other hand, there is also a large number of professionals that prefer guidance and mentoring. To cover these needs, there are Disruption Factory partner mentors that endorse professionals after guiding them in a variety of ways. They can give a candidate access to take any Disruption Factory exam upon completion of their own preparation process for any specific certification.

ROADMAP

Disruptive Agile Facilitator (DAF) - Oct 2022

The Disruptive Agile Facilitator™ (DAF™) certification is awarded to professionals proving an exceptional facilitation mindset that foster participatory decision making with a purpose in agile teams. When taking the Disruptive Agile Facilitator™ (DAF™) exam you'll go through a series of challenging facilitation scenarios where you'll need to apply your facilitation skills to help a team become self-managed.

Disruptive Agile Coach & Mentor (DAC-M) - Nov 2022

The Disruptive Agile Coach & Mentor™ (DAC-M™) certification is awarded to professionals who demonstrate a proficient level of agility awareness in coaching and mentoring agile teams, enabling them to overcome their limiting beliefs and autopilot practices. When taking the Disruptive Agile Coach & Mentor™ (DAC-M™) exam, you'll face a progression of advanced coaching and mentoring scenarios where you'll need to involve decision-making abilities to help a team become self-managed, cross-functional, and adaptive.

Disruptive Agile Trainer (DAT) - 2023

The Disruptive Agile Trainer™ (DAT™) certificate recognizes professionals with real-life Agile experience and competency in state-of-the-art adult education approaches that, combined, will foster a paradigm shift for their intended audience. When taking the Disruptive Agile Trainer™ (DAT™) exam, you'll be presented with advanced training situations where you'll be challenged to accomplish increased Agile awareness for participants.

Disruptive Change Agent (DCA) - 2023

The Disruptive Change Agent™ (DCA™) certification is awarded to professionals proving systemic analysis abilities and who can design and execute an organizational cultural transformation path to agility. When taking the Disruptive Change Agent™ (DCA™) exam, you'll go through realistic scenarios where you'll need to apply your decision-making abilities to support an organization in evolving its structure and culture towards a healthier work environment.

Disruptive Agile Enterprise Coach (DAEC) - 2023

The Disruptive Agile Enterprise Coach™ (DAEC™) certification is awarded to professionals who show proficiency in coaching leaders and executives on understanding and fostering agility in their organizations.

Only people with all the preceding certifications can take the Disruptive Agile Enterprise Coach™ (DAEC™) exam. When taking the Disruptive Agile Enterprise Coach™ (DAEC™) exam, you'll be presented with executive and leadership coaching scenarios where you'll need to apply your decision-making to help your clients evolve their level of consciousness towards a mental model that is compatible with agility.

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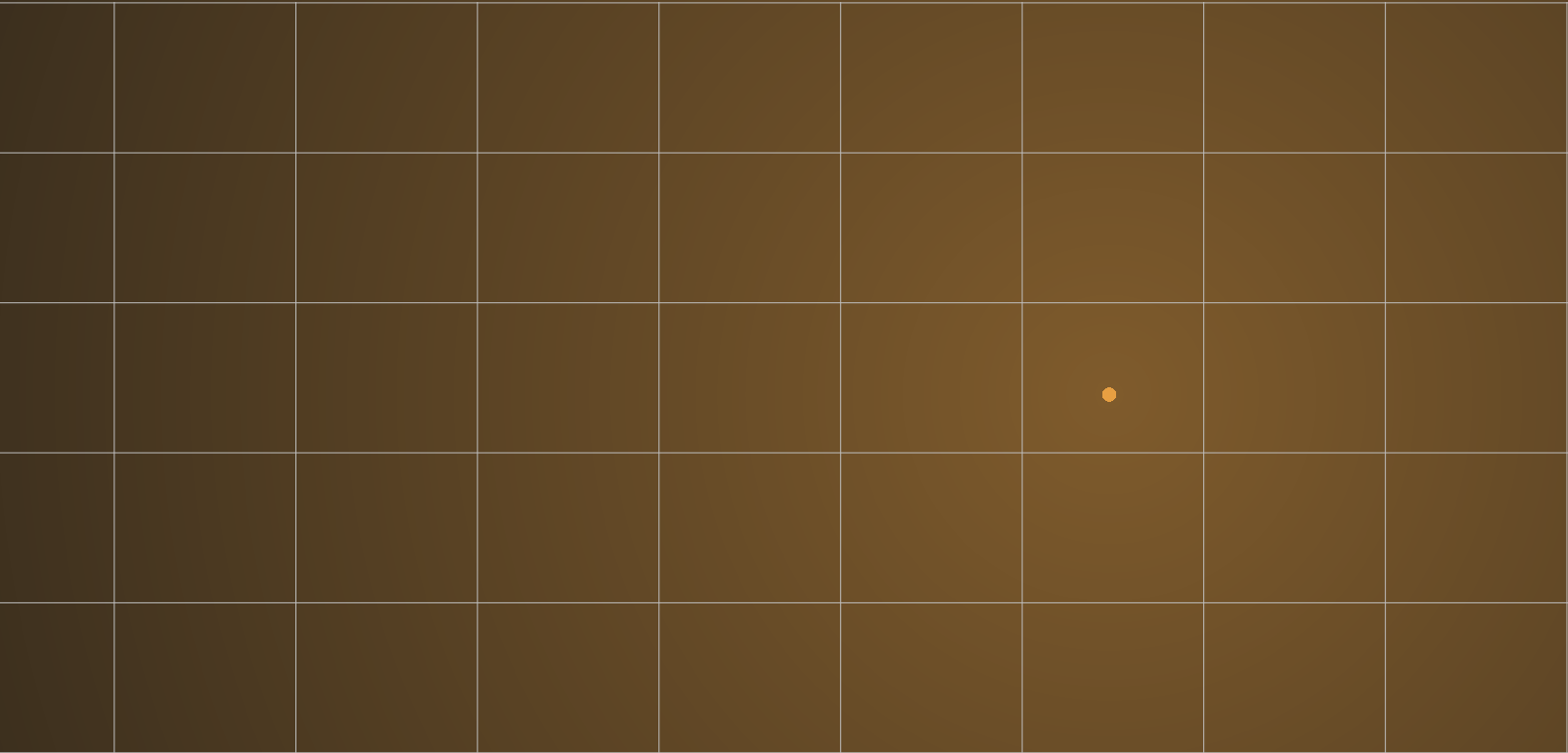
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