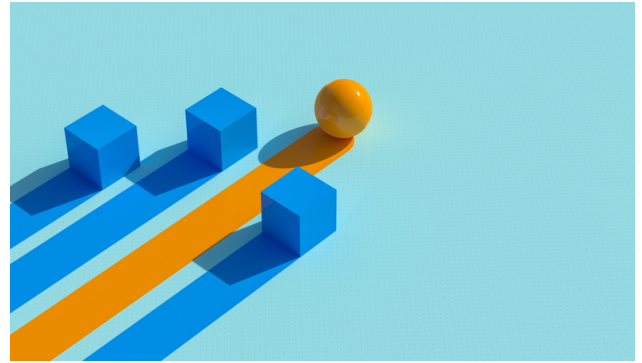


Delivery Improvement Days

Advancing teams from good to great



"The only thing you can do wrong in agile is working the same as you did three months ago." Allan Kelly, author, and founder of Software Strategy.

Today's most effective delivery teams all practice some version of *agile*, but not all teams are as effective as they could be. It is not enough to learn once. The best teams are continually improving through learning. Digital business deserves nothing less, advances in technology and best practice mean only teams which advance remain competitive.

Delivery Improvement Days motivate successful teams to step up to the next level, from good to great. Teams use these improvement days to reinvigorate and reboot stalled initiatives which have not delivered the promised productivity and effectiveness.

Currently three exercise-based days are offered, either individually or as part of a planned package:

- Day 1: Workflow
- Day 2: Goals and Impediments
- Day 3: Product Owners

The days are flexible before and during delivery. Each day has a defined structure with exercises which can be customized in advance to specific client aims. The exercises are designed to promote discussion and reflection on agile and non-agile practices, processes, teamwork and how work can be improved. Attendees are encouraged to question and reflect on their own practices and how they can be improved.

Clients can expect to see improved outcomes in areas such as:

- Workflow: enhancing flow, identifying waste, and increasing value using Lean techniques

- Quality and test efficiency: integrating testing into sprints, reducing test hand-offs and improving quality to reduce rework and enhance predictability
- Deliveries schedules: establishing regular delivery cadence and moving towards continuous delivery
- Working with Product Owners and business stakeholders to improve outcomes
- Managing and reducing dependencies to shrink delays and blockages

Additional benefit can be gained by complementing the days with dedicated mentoring, either at the team level or one-on-one with specialist roles.

Who should attend improvement days?

Improvement Days are best undertaken by whole teams: *teams who learn together improve together*. An exception to this is the Product Owner Day which is specifically aimed at Product Owners and related roles, e.g., Product Managers and Business Analysts.

In particular, managers are encouraged to attend with their teams to achieve a 360 perspective and ensure plans move rapidly into action.

Improvement days overview

Day 1: Workflow

This day aims to improve team workflow and increase value delivery using exercises to promote discussion and reflection on working practices, value delivery, just in time working and limiting work in progress while meeting deadlines.

Scrum Masters & Agile Coaches

These days are designed to reinforce and complement the work of in place Scrum Masters and Agile Coaches. The new perspectives and exercises offered here provide fertile ground for existing mentors to build on. New action options and conversation create impetus for change.

- An iteration-based exercise (*Extended XP Game*) demonstrates the importance of prioritising by value, the effect of deadlines, difficulties with time estimation, the role of probability and how learning by doing reveals opportunities for improvement.
- The benefits of just-in-time production techniques are illustrated and seed discussion on work-in-progress, quality and lead times in the team's own work.
- Teams are challenged to put their learning into action with a *dialogue sheets* exercise where team members decide and commit to improvements.



Throughout the day teams are encouraged to relate the learnings from exercises to their own work, identify impediments and option for change.

Day 2: Goals and impediments

Day-2 aims to ensure the improvements identified in day-1 are delivered while also helping teams to see impediments as work to be done rather than insurmountable obstacles. Teams are encouraged to enumerate their goals explicitly and find new solutions to achieving goals and overcoming difficulties.

- A simple manufacturing exercise encourages teams to see work a flow with bottlenecks and impediments in need to alleviating
- Workflow and mapping exercises highlight workflow and identify where teams need to focus improvement efforts
- Goals and team missions are itemized and prioritised
- Structured problem-solving exercise stimulates teams to find new solutions to meet goals with new processes and practices from the agile toolbox. The day ends with new action plans for improvement.

Day 3: Product Owners

On an Agile team the Product Owner is the most difficult role to fill successfully. Product Owners must face inward when working with the team and outward to understand customers and stakeholders. This day aims to improve Product Owner skills on both sides, particular emphasis is given to improving the understanding of business value in prioritisation and communication through User Stories.



Product Owners, and related roles such as Product Manager and Business Analyst, will normally attend the team-oriented improvement days with their teams then join this dedicated day with peers.

- The Product Owner role is dissected to better understand the strategic and tactical aspects of the role and introduce the Strategic PO/Tactical PO model
- User Stories are analysed and discussed to understand both how to craft a good story and how to use them to maximum effect
- Prioritisation is examined through value: Product Owners learn how to assign value to individual stories, consider bigger objectives and understand how value changes over time

Supplementary improvement days

Additional improvement days are customised to client needs and can cover topics such as estimation and forecasting, delivery planning and road mapping, organizational models, jobs to be done, product strategy and OKRs.

Improvement days are currently only available as in-person activities. Online options are currently being considered, please ask about availability.

How to use these days

A single team might start and end their improvement programme with a single day. In a larger organization two, or even three, teams might share an improvement day. Teams finish each day with an action plan for improvement and new ideas on how to improve further. Companies

with multiple teams would most likely run several improvement days with teams coming together at the end to share planned actions.

A second day, four weeks later, reviews progress on action plans and creates further improvement opportunities thus cementing an improvement culture. To maximise the effectiveness of improvement days one-on-one or team mentoring can be added.

Product Owners play a key role in Agile processes and a special Product Owner day provides the change to hone their skills, identify and resolve problems associated with “what are we building.” Product Owners from multiple teams typically join the same day, as would associated roles such as Product Managers and Business Analysts.

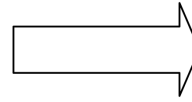
Background

While agile has become the de facto working style for many teams often stall in their change efforts. Improved delivery after initial agile adoption does not translate into continuous improvement. Such teams can be better, more effective, more productive, more focused, more flexible - *what do you want your team to be better at?*

Improvement days aim for *kaikaku* (the lesser-known version of the *kaizen* continuous improvement) sometimes called “kaizen blitz.” By bringing whole teams together, exposing them to new ideas, asking them to reflect and then produce the team action plans teams are re-invigorated.

Segment 1 (3 days)

Improvement day-1 Teams W & X
Improvement day-1 Team Y & Z
Product Owner day



Several weeks gap between segment.
One-on-one follow up calls

Segment 2 (3 days)

Improvement day-2 Team W & X
Improvement day-2 Team Y & Z
Product Owner follow-up day

Example improvement schedule for 4 teams

Designed and delivered by Allan Kelly



All Improvement Days are designed and delivered by Allan Kelly, BSc, MBA, keynote speaker and author of the best-selling book *Succeeding with OKRs in Agile*.

Allan has over 25 years of experience with agile ways of working as a software engineer, product manager and, most recently, as a consultant and coach. He has advised a diverse range of companies on agile methods and enhancing digital work. Past clients include both well know names such as RELX Lexis-Nexis, Schlumberger,

Virgin Atlantic and the Bank of England, and a host of lesser known start-ups and scale-ups.

His earlier books include *The Art of Agile Product Ownership*, *Business Patterns for Software Developers* and *Xanpan: Team centric Agile software development*.

Learn more

To learn more about *Delivery Improvement Days* and how your teams can benefit contact Allan Kelly at Software Strategy: contact@softwarestrategy.co.uk.