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Leaders Go First—Transformation Strategy

All successful agile transformations, whether technology-centric, business-centric, or organizational optimization-centric, seem to have one thing in common.

A singular senior leader or a leadership team realized early on that they needed to lead the effort.

That they needed to go first in training, coaching, acquiring deep understanding, and engaging experts to help them craft effective strategy. That it was their job to lead the effort and that it wasn't a short-term role, but more ongoing as part of their core role and responsibility. They considered themselves on a continuous improvement and explorative journey. They also realized that THEY would have to change before their teams changed as part of the overall change management strategy.

Leaders going first is becoming the default mantra and best strategy for modern organizations going through significant change. Either change in response to competitive pressures or internal change for improved customer responsiveness or current change forces to improve the overall learning and adaptive culture. Or all three at the same time.

However, go-first leaders need help guiding their organizations through these changes. They can't merely pay for it or direct it. They need to engage with the change. They also need a partner with deep, broad, and real-world experience. Someone who can Sherpa them and their organizations through the transition. That's where we come in.

While all change is challenging, we at RGCG focus on agile transformations such as:

- Helping your leaders, both senior level and operational/mid-level, effectively achieve the requisite agile mindset.
- Transitioning to effective understanding and implementation of Agile Methods (Scrum, Kanban).
- Moving to a DevOps approaches and pipeline; focusing on culture as well as tooling.
- Engaging in a Digital Transformation that crosses functional boundaries and reshapes your culture.
- Helping with scaling strategies that are not fixed to one particular framework, but that are customized to the needs of your organization.
- Moving an agile transformation from technology-centric focus to a cross-organizational focus.
- Reorganizing your Value Streams in your portfolio and helping to reduce the organization WIP to increase delivery.



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- Moving from a Project-based to a more Product-centric organization which impacts organizational structure and roles.

Point being—we are not simply agile coaches. Bob and our coaching partners have been in organizational leadership roles, have broad functional experience, and have achieved agile successes in the real-world.

We fully understand management, leadership, business dynamics, organizational dynamics and what it takes to achieve high-performance agility in pressured, real-world situations. The following lists our practice capabilities supporting these areas—

Service Offerings

1. Delivering a **Certified Agile Leadership** (CAL-I) class to a leadership team. This is a 2 or 2 ½ day event (in person or virtual) that often serves to jump-start your Go-First efforts. Key skills and ideas covered in this class include chartering, communication skills, agile culture-shaping, how to lead high-performance teams, and discovering your why behind agility. This class set the tone for your shift to an agile leadership mindset.
2. **Facilitating an Organizational Design Sprint** where the leadership team focuses on three key areas: business vision and priorities, organizational alignment, and execution strategy. It can be a 2-5-day activity, depending on the scope and organizational size, with leaders leaving with a clear vision of go-forward strategic steps.
3. **Development Coaching for individual leaders**. This is usually on a quarterly engagement tempo (1-2-3 sessions a month). It starts with an individual Leadership Circle Profile assessment as the backdrop to gaining insights for each leader. Then, leveraging professional coaching techniques, we'll establish a coaching growth goal. Coaching sessions are usually 60-minutes in length and help structure the leader's development plan and focus.
4. Bob is an **ORSC (organizational relationships systems coaching) trained professional coach**. That means he has the skill and capability to do more systems coaching. In this case, systems are groups or teams within your organization. From 2 – 50 in size. It could be an execution team, a functional team, a leadership team/group, or sub-team. Typical focus points include alignment, M&A activity, aligning to new structure, new leader integration, and team kick-offs / chartering. ORSC tools and techniques permeate all of our team-based coaching.



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5. **Helping setup an Agile Transformation Team** (Scrum@Scale EAT). One of the ways that organizations are discovering to effectively guide an agile / digital transformation is by setting up an ATT or EAT. That being said, effectively identifying, forming, chartering, and aligning an ATT or EAT is no easy feat. This is a coaching activity focused towards achieving a Go-First leadership mindset (eating our own dogfood) posture in developing and executing your transformation initiatives.
6. **Aligning (re-Aligning) a Sr. Leadership Team** – this is focused on the work of Patrick Lencioni and our experience “setting up” and “aligning” a leadership-centric First Team. It also aligns with some of the work from Jason Little and others on how to achieve deep team alignment. This is a coaching activity and can take 1-3 or more days depending on the scope/interest, team dynamics, and the size of the leadership team.
7. **The Leadership Circle assessment** – Bob is certified to deliver both the Leadership Circle Profile (individuals) and the Collective Leadership Assessment (leadership teams). He uses the CLA in private CAL-I classes and the LCP in CAL-II cohorts. That being said, we think there’s no better instrument/tool for agile leaders to fully understand their leadership stance with respect to agile, than the LCP.
8. **Project to Product Oriented Organization** – one of the areas where we have special expertise is focused towards the Product/Product Management-side of your business. Speaking in agile terms, towards Product Ownership as an organizational strength. We can come in and assess your Product space and help form a strategy to evolve from project-centric to a product-centric organization. While also providing tools and techniques to help you prioritize your portfolio and manage your WIP so that you indeed work on less and deliver more.
9. **Creating an Agile PMO** – many consider the notion of Agile + PMO to be a bit of an oxymoron, and it potentially is. You need a deft touch and deep understanding of the agile mindset and approaches to effectively recraft your PMO. This includes effective agile metrics and governance controls that don’t neutralize your results potential. We can come in and assess your PMO then partner to form a strategy to evolve the team structure and approaches.
10. **Helping with creating your Agile and Business Communities of Practice** – finally, one of the best ways to help your organization in your journey is to instill learning, skills, and capabilities from the “inside-out”. The best way we’ve seen to do this is via a Community of Practice pattern. Our coaches can help instantiate various CoP’s within your organization and jump-start them with our own expertise. This is usually via coaching on a quarterly basis until they can effectively stand alone.



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Summary

Our agile coaching specialization is not team-centric. Others can come into your organization and run Agile 101 and basic role trainings. They can provide oodles of team-level coaches. And they can appear to be driving the transformation for you.

In our experience, and the world is full of failure stories supporting it, we've found that this simply doesn't work. It doesn't create sustainable Digital Transformations that stand the test of time or that create dependable continuous improvement.

Why?

Because you and your leaders aren't an engaged part of the transformation. This isn't a sponsorship responsibility, it's a fully engaged, for the long-term, partnership and shared ownership responsibility.

We're in the business of providing Leaders Go First offerings that improve the—

- Resilience
- Pragmatism
- Capabilities
- Balance
- Culture
- And Outcomes / Results.

Of your transformational efforts. If this is what you're looking for, then let's discuss next steps...