

Agile Manager Behaviors: What to Look For and Develop

by David Spann, Senior Consultant,
Cutter Consortium

Imagine being asked to write a job announcement for one of the management/lead positions on your agile team. You understand that this person needs to have familiarity with the specific technology and with the preferred agile methodology, but you are struggling with defining the behavioral characteristics of this “right” person. What types of behaviors would make one person a success and the other one an out-and-out failure? This *Executive Report* defines the eight preferred behaviors of an agile manager and helps you, your organization, and your team use those behaviors to search for and develop people for that role.

Cutter Business Technology Council



Rob Austin



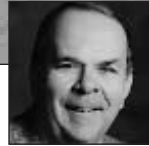
Tom DeMarco



Christine Davis



Lynne Ellyn



Jim Highsmith



Tim Lister



Ken Orr



Lou Mazzucchelli



Ed Yourdon



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AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT ADVISORY SERVICE

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About a year ago, Cutter Senior Consultant Alistair Cockburn and I were discussing what makes up a successful project when he asked about my personal experience in project management and what I thought were the important precursors to success.

My answer came quickly: I replied that all I needed was a clear objective that rallies at least four other people together and just enough funding (which generally comes from an executive sponsor) in order to begin proving our case. With those ingredients in place, in my career I have delivered major construction projects years in advance of their schedule; assisted in the establishment of a nationally award-winning recycling project in rural Idaho, USA, created a startup organization from scratch that grew to a US \$20 million operation

in less than five years; and helped establish agile practices in dozens of companies and organizations. Basically, I said the key is gathering the right group of people with a passion for a singular, agreed upon purpose. Alistair, with a coy smile, said, “I disagree — I think it has to do with the person who leads each of those projects.” That stopped me in my tracks and made me think about the implications.

While I did not readily agree (it’s always hard to see what others see about yourself), I had to admit that my experience as an executive coach and organizational development consultant suggests that people who focus on their strengths are typically more successful. In fact, most of my coaching is aimed at helping leaders become better at what they do by opening their eyes to what others

see and experience (especially when those experiences have significant impacts). The discussion with Alistair rekindled my interest in defining successful leadership behaviors and, more specifically, those things done by successful leaders in an agile environment.

Imagine a human resources (HR) director or CTO asking you for help in writing a job announcement for one of the management/lead positions on your agile team. You understand that this person needs to have familiarity with the specific technology and with the methodology but are struggling with getting the “right” person. How should this person act? What should he or she do (and not do)? What types of behaviors would make one person a success and the other one an out-and-out failure — even if both understood the

technology and had worked on a team previously using your preferred methodology? The intent of this *Executive Report* is to help you, your organization, and your team better define the behaviors of those who successfully manage/lead agile initiatives.

Let's assume that, in general, companies want to hire the best employees to manage highly complex and uncertain initiatives (for example, in high-tech, drug development, R&D areas) but often don't have the information necessary to do so. There is an implied assumption in most of the agile methodologies that anyone can do this work if they just understand and apply the principles and practices. But that's like telling someone to work smarter not harder without helping them understand what it takes to be smarter.

An overly controlling and highly structured project manager who demurs to authority not only will be unsuccessful but also will rebel against most agile practices. This rebellion is not because the manager cannot understand the practices, but more likely because he or she cannot behave, nor wants to behave, appropriately within that type of environment. If these assumptions are true, we need something more than another

treatise on best practices, techniques, and/or methodologies. We also need some help in selecting and developing the best behaviors for an agile environment.

One of the best examples I have for this was when the top-most technology executive at a company where I consulted passed out one of the leading books on agile and then, within a couple of weeks, declared that everyone would now begin acting as the book required — everyone would now be “agile.” The organizational response was predictably chaotic, full of hearsay and finger-pointing, and, by the time I was called, the executive had moved on to other new initiatives. Eventually, we got the right people in the room; discussed the organizational and leadership expectations for an agile implementation; and began focusing on the rigor, discipline, and managerial behaviors we would need to instill. Regardless of the methodology, I have found agile requires a focus on both the best practices/strategies within agile and the best leadership behaviors to support them.

The assumptions/beliefs that come from that experience and that underlie this report on agile manager behaviors include the following:

- Leadership behaviors are key to a highly effective agile manager/leader (that is, those individuals who manage/lead in uncertain and complex circumstances).
- These leadership behaviors are distinct and can be identified; they can be used to select for and to develop agile managers/leaders.
- These highly effective practices are reflected in how well a team works together, throughout the organization, and with stakeholders; this collaboration has business value to all of these stakeholders.

The process of discovering distinct and definable managerial/leadership behaviors associated with successful agile initiatives involved several areas of analysis. In order to determine what these behaviors might be, I correlated 22 behaviors identified by the Management Research Group (MRG [8], see more on this below) with the following:

- Principles of agile management thought leaders
- Behavioral expectations found in the agile Declaration of Interdependence (DOI) [4]
- Competencies of the International Association

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of Facilitators' (IAF) Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF) program [6]

- Results of an MRG Leadership Effectiveness Analysis (LEA) Role Expectations survey regarding a fictitious agile manager role

The results from each of these steps were consolidated into a single group of eight distinct and definable managerial/leader behaviors that should be expected of successful agile managers. Those behaviors include: innovative, strategic, excitement, tactical, communication, delegation, production, and consensual. This report defines these eight behaviors, offers specific actions that might be used to measure a person's ability within each behavior, and presents a job announcement that might attract the type of person your organization needs in such a role. Finally, I offer a few tips on using those behaviors as well as my Leadership 360 approach to develop future agile managers within your organization.

The second phase of this research will take place over the next year and will test the assumptions made in this report by getting 60-80 participants who are identified as excellent agile managers/leaders to complete a questionnaire online.

But, as a colleague once said to me, "that's getting the fish before the fishbowl." Before we can discuss the process of translating

principles into behavioral definitions, we need to identify the source of these behavioral definitions and the research process used to come up with them.

THE FISHBOWL: MANAGEMENT RESEARCH GROUP

The journey begins in Portland, Maine, USA, with the Management Research Group. MRG is an independent research firm I use to help leaders get statistical information about what might help them be more successful. I use this firm for the collection and analysis of the personal data I employ in my executive coaching role. In the case of this *Executive Report*, I use the MRG Role Expectations survey to assist in the analysis of appropriate agile manager behaviors and MRG's LEA approach during the discussion on developing agile managers from within. Both of these tools measure and relate to the same set of 22 behaviors defining leaders within the context of their work.

The data-gathering approach for both tools depends upon an online, normatively designed survey. The Role Expectations survey is normally taken by several people within the same firm who have and/or will have some expectation for the specified role. In this case, I asked 12 people from North America to participate as if they were all in the same firm. These expert practitioners, executives, and consultants answered the survey questionnaire, MRG consolidated the

results, and I correlated those results with the findings from the other sources used in this *Executive Report*.

The database upon which the results of the Role Expectations survey are compared includes 200,000 other cases, while the database upon which the LEA data is analyzed includes 400,000 other cases. This large number of independent cases helps ensure the research results and development recommendations have a substantial basis upon which to be compared and that an outside and respected organization is helping to significantly reduce my personal bias.

22 POSSIBLE MANAGER/LEADER BEHAVIORS

Before we get into the comparison and evaluative stage of this report, you may be interested in better understanding each of the 22 behaviors MRG uses and upon which data was collected and analyzed for this report. The 22 behaviors are grouped into six categories: creating a vision; developing followership; implementing the vision; following through; achieving results; and team playing [8].

As you look through the descriptions below try to imagine answering the following question: If I were looking for a person to fill the role of an "agile manager," where on the continuum would I want that person to perform? For example, under the behavior set entitled

“conservative,” if you thought the role required someone who respects tradition, relies on past practices, and reinforces the status quo, you would mark one of the boxes to the right side of the scale. If, on the other hand, you thought the agile manager role required someone who was less concerned with acting cautiously you’d mark one of the boxes on the left side of the scale.

Even though we wouldn’t normally ask you to do this (we’d have you take a very statistically structured questionnaire online), use the information presented below and see how you define the role of “agile manager” based on the following behavioral definitions.

Creating a Vision

1. Conservative — studying problems in light of past practices to ensure predictability, reinforce the status quo, and minimize risk. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less focused on what has worked in the past; does not rely on precedents; less concern for acting cautiously					Respect tradition; relies on past practices; builds on knowledge gained through experience					

2. Innovative — feeling comfortable in fast-changing environments; being willing to take risks and to consider new and untested approaches. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less attracted to exploring new ideas or approaches; leaves well enough alone; avoids unnecessary risk taking					Welcomes new ideas and perspectives; comfortable with change; willing to take risks; experimental attitude					

3. Technical — acquiring and maintaining in-depth knowledge in your field or area of focus; using your expertise and specialized knowledge to study issues in depth and draw conclusions. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefers the role of generalist; less concerned with acquiring and utilizing specific technical expertise					Emphasizes in-depth knowledge; stays up to date in your field; bases decisions on specific technical expertise					

4. Self — emphasizing the importance of making decisions independently; looking to yourself as the prime vehicle for decision making. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influenced by others; less likely to make decisions entirely on your own; may be team-minded					See yourself as source of decisions; highly independent thinker; want to do things on your own					

5. Strategic — taking a long-range, broad approach to problem solving and decision making through objective analysis, thinking ahead, and planning. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focuses on the present; trusts instincts rather than analyzing decisions; may take a highly focused or short-term view					Takes an analytical approach; plans ahead; thinks through the implications of decisions; projects into the future					

Developing Followership

6. Persuasive — building commitment by convincing others and winning them over to your point of view. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
May not see a need to sell your ideas; may use language to describe rather than convince					Uses language effectively to convince others; works to sell ideas and win people over					

7. Outgoing — acting in an extroverted, friendly, and informal manner; showing a capacity to quickly establish free and easy interpersonal relationships. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More difficult to get to know; more inner-directed; interpersonal style more role-dependent					Very friendly; meets people easily; adopts an informal and easy manner					

8. Excitement — operating with a good deal of energy, intensity, and emotional expression; having a capacity for keeping others enthusiastic and involved. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Displays less emotional energy; more understated and subdued

Lively and dynamic; creates enthusiasm; displays emotions easily

9. Restraint — maintaining a low-key, understated, and quiet interpersonal demeanor by working to control your emotional expression. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Does not restrain emotions; acts spontaneously, as if emotions are right at the end of fingertips

Working to keep your feelings under control; trying to stay calm and reserved

Implementing the Vision

10. Structuring — adopting a systematic and organized approach; preferring to work in a precise, methodical manner; developing and utilizing guidelines and procedures. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Flexible; may be disorganized; does not prefer structured, systematic approaches

Organized, precise, and methodical; sets guidelines; works well with systems and procedures

11. Tactical — emphasizing the production of immediate results by focusing on short-range, hands-on, practical strategies. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Stays more removed from day-to-day activities; places less importance on reacting quickly to opportunities

A hands-on doer; acts quickly; likes to be in the center of the action; pragmatic business

12. Communication — stating clearly what you want and expect from others; clearly expressing your thoughts and ideas; maintaining a precise and constant flow of information. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Provides less information; works on a "need to know" basis

Explicit about expectations; keeps everyone informed; expresses ideas clearly

13. Delegation — enlisting the talents of others to help meet objectives by giving them important activities and sufficient autonomy to exercise their own judgment. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Retains responsibility and authority; preferring to do things yourself

Will allow others to help reach objectives; gives the freedom to make mistakes; helps others develop

Following Through

14. Control — adopting an approach in which you take nothing for granted, set deadlines for certain actions, and are persistent in monitoring the progress of activities to ensure that they are completed on schedule. The scale

extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Less likely to engage in followup activities; allows others to follow through on their own

Persistent; stays with goals; monitors tasks very closely

15. Feedback — letting others know in a straightforward manner what you think of them, how well they have performed, and if they have met your needs and expectations. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Provides little feedback to others; not letting others know what you really think; less direct

Lets people know how they are doing; gives feedback that is frank and direct

Achieving Results

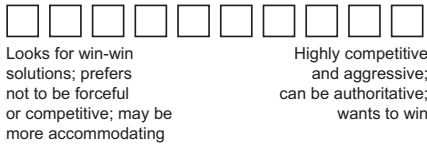
16. Management focus — seeking to exert influence by being in positions of authority, taking charge, and leading and directing the efforts of others. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

Less emphasis on taking charge and directing others; may prefer being an individual contributor

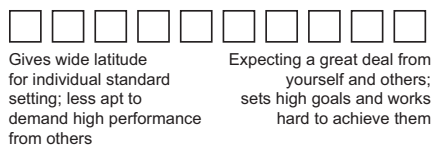
Willing to take command; enjoys managing people, being influential, accomplishing results through others

17. Dominant — pushing vigorously to achieve results through an approach that is forceful, assertive, and competitive. The scale extends

between the following two ends of the spectrum:

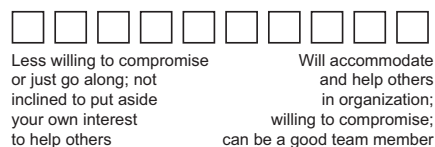


18. Production — adopting a strong orientation toward achievement; holding high expectations for yourself and others; pushing yourself and others to achieve at high levels. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:



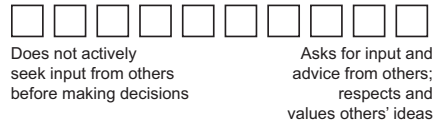
Team Playing

19. Cooperation — accommodating the needs and interests of others by being willing to defer performance on your own objectives in order to assist colleagues with theirs. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:

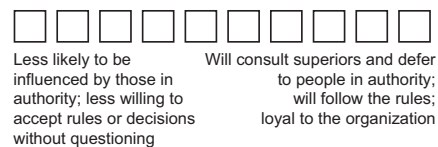


20. Consensual — valuing the ideas and opinions of others and collecting their input as part of your decision-making process. The scale extends

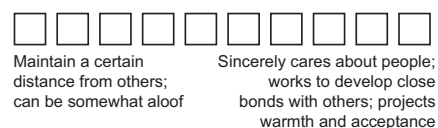
between the following two ends of the spectrum:



21. Authority — showing loyalty to the organization; respecting the ideas and opinions of people in authority and using them as resources for information, direction, and decisions. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:



22. Empathy — demonstrating an active concern for people and their needs by forming close and supportive relationships with others. The scale extends between the following two ends of the spectrum:



Before you see the correlation of these behaviors with the other expectations in this report, consider listing the top five to eight behaviors you would want to select against in finding or developing agile managers (in other words, which five to eight of the above behaviors best describe

your view of what an agile manager is like?).

CORRELATING BEHAVIOR SETS WITH AGILE THOUGHT LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS

Taking the above 22 behaviors into consideration, I translated each of the principles defined by Sanjiv Augustine, Cutter Senior Consultants Alistair Cockburn and Doug DeCarlo, Cutter Fellow Jim Highsmith, Alexander Laufer, Ken Schwaber, and Jennifer Stapleton into what seems like appropriate MRG behaviors. The process I used was simple: I reread the text surrounding each leader's principles and looked for the MRG behavior definition that seemed to most appropriately define that intent. I realize this approach is anything but scientific, but I trusted, like in many agile projects, that something good would emerge.

For each author, I list the book or magazine reference from which the principles were defined as well as an introductory statement by the author if I thought it helped make the case for better defining the agile management behaviors. I then present the author's principles and the MRG behavior to which I believe the principle corresponds.

Sanjiv Augustine

Managing Agile Projects [1]

The agile manager role is one that fills a void on agile projects, because most agile methodologies do not clearly

define a role for project managers. The role of the agile manager is to lead the delivery of business value by establishing APM [agile project management] principles and practices and by embodying APM values.

Augustine's agile project management principles are as follows:

- **Agile managers identify themselves as change agents** — constantly challenge the way things are; take advantage of opportunities for change; understand that people are the key to change and work actively to gain trust before they introduce change. Corresponds to the MRG behavior defined as: *innovative*.
- **Agile managers are courageous individuals** — use courage to trust others to complete work without interference; rely on people when the stakes are high and time is money; constantly challenge the status quo. Corresponds to: *delegation*.
- **Agile managers believe in people** — believe in the people with whom they work; release some control for greater order and value; delegate for greater efficiency; network with customers; inspire and motivate team members. Corresponds to: *control* (low).
- **Agile managers are values-driven** — maintain high moral and ethical standards. Rather

than being driven solely by financial gain, recognition, or even power, they need to be true to their values.

Corresponds to: *self*.

- **Agile managers are lifelong learners** — enjoy learning; stay committed to analyzing the effects of their own and others' actions; explore and experiment to improve continuously. Corresponds to: *technical*.
- **Agile managers have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty** — act decisively with incomplete information (are able to respond appropriately to high levels of fear and anxiety). Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- **Agile managers are visionaries** — look beyond the past and present to discern and develop a vision for the future; believe in their vision strong enough to influence others to share it and act toward fulfilling it. Corresponds to: *persuasive*.

Alistair Cockburn

Crystal Clear: A Human-Powered Methodology for Small Teams [2]

By describing Crystal Clear as a set of properties, I hope to reach into the feeling of the project. Most methodology descriptions miss the critical feeling that separates a successful team from an unsuccessful one. The Crystal Clear team measures its condition by the team's mood and the communication patterns as much as by the rate of delivery.

Crystal Clear properties are as follows:

- **Frequent delivery** — deliver running, tested code to real users every few months; sponsors get critical (and iterative) feedback; users get their discoveries fed back into development; developers keep their focus, breaking deadlocks of indecision; team gets to debug its processes and gets a morale boost through accomplishments. Corresponds to: *structuring*.
- **Reflective improvement** — get together (regularly) to compare notes, reflect, discuss the group's working habit, and discover what speeds you up, what slows you down, and what you might be able to improve. Corresponds to: *consensual*.
- **Osmotic communication** — information flows into the background hearing of members of the team, so that they pick up relevant information as though by osmosis; questions and answers flow naturally and with surprisingly little disturbance among the team. Corresponds to: *communication*.
- **Personal safety** — being able to speak when something is bothering you, without fear of reprisal; willingness to give someone else power over oneself, **without** accompanying risk of personal damage; active listener; inquisitive; interested

in learning what is not understood. Corresponds to: *empathy*.

- **Focus** — knowing what to work on, and then having time and peace of mind to work on it; people are not taken away from their task to work on other, incompatible things. Corresponds to: *tactical*.
- **Easy access to expert users** — deploy and test the frequent deliveries; rapid feedback on the quality of the finished product and design decisions; ability to update requirements. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- **Technical environment with automated tests, configuration management, and frequent integration** — the best teams combine all three into continuous integration with test. They catch integration-level errors within minutes. Corresponds to: *production*.

Doug DeCarlo

“Leading and Managing Extreme Projects” [3]

Below are DeCarlo’s four accelerators for leading extreme projects:

- **Make change your friend** — accept what is and move on from there; make it easy for new ideas to surface; make continuous adjustments along the way; admit when something is not working and take corrective action; be willing

to start over at any time. Corresponds to: *innovative*.

- **Build on people’s desire to make a difference** — connect people’s effort to a higher cause/purpose; create and recognize small wins; provide people an opportunity to make things better; recognize that people want to be proud of their work; remove barriers that prevent people from doing quality work. Corresponds to: *delegation*.
- **Create ownership for results** — give people freedom to determine how to do their job and influence the overall project; recognize that people prefer to be involved with change than to be changed; give people an opportunity to voice their opinion even if others make the final decision; provide guidelines so that people can do what they believe is right; involve people in group brainstorming and decision making; understand who owns what decision. Corresponds to: *structuring* (low).
- **Keep it simple; less is more** — less project scope, hierarchy, process; less reporting, rigor, people; fewer forms, no unnecessary documentation; do the least amount of work necessary; meet minimum requirements now and build something more elaborate later. Corresponds to: *tactical*.

Jim Highsmith

Agile Project Management [5]

As Dee Hock (1999) so eloquently puts it, ‘In the Chaordic Age, success will depend less on rote and more on reason; less on the authority of the few and more on the judgment of the many; less on compulsion and more on motivation; less on external control for people and more on internal discipline.

Six principles, derived from the core values of the Agile Manifesto, guide APM. Without these guiding principles, even seemingly agile practices — iterative delivery, for example — are often used in the wrong way, or even worse, used such that teams consider themselves agile when they aren’t. The six principles are divided into two categories, one product and customer related and the other management related.

Highsmith’s six core values of agile project management are:

- **Deliver customer value** — involve customers and stakeholders in dialogue about both requirements and expectations; focus on innovation and adaptability rather than efficiency and optimization; concentrate on delivery rather than compliance activities. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- **Employ iterative, feature-based delivery** — “if you want to innovate, you have to iterate!”; build a partial version and then expand that version

through successive short time periods of development followed by reviews and adaptations; force tough decisions in the development cycle; reduce risk through progressively focused iterations. Corresponds to: *structuring*.

- **Champion technical excellence** — discipline to consistently deliver customer value; balance planning with doing and learning; steer interactions to decisions; provide technical knowledge to balance excellence with search for perfection; balance velocity and need for more features with need for adaptable process. “The project manager doesn’t have to a technical guru, but he has to know enough to recognize and converse with one.” Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- **Encourage exploration** — articulate goals that inspire people; depend on your ability to influence; encourage experimentation; learn from mistakes; regroup and forge ahead; ensure the right people get to work together; provide sufficient time to think and innovate. Corresponds to: *persuasive*.
- **Build adaptive (self-organizing, self-disciplined) teams** — get the right people involved; articulate the vision, boundaries, and team roles; encourage interaction and information flow between teams; facilitate participatory

decision making; insist on accountability; steer, don’t control. Corresponds to: *consensual*.

- **Simplify** — develop a simple set of rules/expectations for managing the “collaborative game”; allow each team autonomy to act according to its needs and the organization within which it interacts; provide barely sufficient methodology for the downstream user to consume appropriately. Corresponds to: *structuring*.

Alexander Laufer

Simultaneous Management: Managing Projects in a Dynamic Environment [7]

While Alex Laufer may be new to some in the agile environment, he is well known for managing complex projects in uncertain situations. The simultaneous management principles are as follows:

- **Systematic and integrative planning** — at each phase, prepare all functional plans simultaneously and inter-dependently. Corresponds to: *structuring*.
- **Timely decisions adjusted to uncertainty** — plan for multiple time horizons and selectively accelerate implementation to obtain fast feedback for further planning. Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- **Isolation and absorption** — isolate tasks plagued by very

high uncertainty and loosen connections between uncertain tasks; group tasks within projects according to uncertainty. Corresponds to: *tactical*.

- **Inward and outward leadership** — manage decision making; scan and influence the external environment; keep the momentum; and be ready to intervene swiftly. Corresponds to: *self* and *outgoing*.
- **Teamwork** — develop mutual accountability for project results and foster collaboration and enthusiasm by engaging team minds and souls. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- **Overlapping of phases** — to accelerate project speed, overlap project phases. Corresponds to: *tactical*.
- **Simple procedures** — develop standard and ad hoc procedures, which are simple, easily implemented, and allow a degree of flexibility. Corresponds to: *structuring*.
- **Intensive communication** — design and promote an extensive communication system, **including extensive face-to-face communication and modern information technology**. Corresponds to: *communication*.
- **Systematic monitoring** — monitor project performance as well as the changes in the critical planning assumptions. Corresponds to: *control*.

Ken Schwaber

Agile Project Management with Scrum [9]

ScrumMaster responsibilities are as follows:

- **Remove the barriers** between development and the product owner so that the product owner directly drives development. Corresponds to: *consensual*.
- **Teach the product owner** how to maximize ROI and meet his or her objectives through Scrum. Corresponds to: *delegation*.
- **Improve the lives** of the development team by facilitating creativity and empowerment. Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- **Improve the productivity** of the development team in any way possible. Corresponds to: *production*.
- **Improve the engineering practices and tools** so that each increment of functionality is potentially shippable. Corresponds to: *technical*.
- **Keep information** about the team's progress up to date and visible to all parties. Corresponds to: *communication*.

Jennifer Stapleton

DSDM: Dynamic Systems Development Method [10]

In 1994, information systems professionals from large and small organizations in a wide variety of industries came

together with consultants and project managers from some of the largest companies in the IT industry to form a not-for-profit Consortium. This Consortium is dedicated to understanding the best practice in application development and codifying it in a way that can be widely taught and implemented.

DSDM is about people, not tools. It is about truly understanding the needs of the business and delivering solutions that work — and delivering them as quickly and as cheaply as possible. The foundations of DSDM are contained in the following nine principles.

The DSDM principles are as follows:

- **Active user involvement is imperative** — engage user knowledge at all times; shorten the communication lines between customers and suppliers of IT systems; reduce false assumptions about what is needed or wanted. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- **Teams must be empowered to make decisions** — give clear guidelines about limits and constraints; allow team to make decisions within those bounds; communicate decisions to other stakeholders as appropriate. Corresponds to: *delegation*.
- **Focus on frequent delivery of products** — ensure activities are meeting initial expectations; ensure initial expectations are still valid;

ensure business value is being created iteratively and incrementally; if not, ensure the project is reassessed sooner rather than later. Corresponds to: *production*.

- **Fitness for business purpose is the essential criterion for acceptance of deliverables** — build the right product before you build it right; look forward to the system in use instead of checking backward for consistency to plan; focus on maximizing the business benefit at all times. Corresponds to: *tactical*.
- **Iterative and incremental development is necessary to converge on an accurate business solution** — accept that rework is going to happen; using an iterative process allows developers to progress more rapidly toward the production of a system that meets the needs of the business. Corresponds to: *structuring*.
- **All changes during development are reversible** — accept that the wrong path is sometimes taken; the point is to recognize it sooner rather than later and correct the mistake. Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- **Requirements are baselined at a high level** — keep focused on the purpose of the initiative by asking the customers/end users to identify what they will be “able to do” differently; allow more detailed requirements to be discovered

throughout the development process. Corresponds to: *structuring*.

- **Testing is integrated throughout the lifecycle** — ensure developers test the technical aspects, the users test functional suitability incrementally, and integration testing is performed as soon as there is something to integrate. Corresponds to: *technical*.
- **A collaborative and cooperative approach between all stakeholders is essential** — focus on inclusivity whenever possible; conduct stakeholder analysis and ensure the needs of each are understood and

communication channels are open to each; develop working agreements within the development team and between the development team and external stakeholders. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.

Thought Leader Summary

While I understand that my application of MRG behaviors to each of these author's principles without confirming my decision is a chancy operation, I did it to both highlight their opinions and to see if there might be some correlation among their approaches. Table 1 shows the result of the comparison by illustrating which of the MRG behaviors were correlated

with the agile thought leader's list of principles. (Note: not all of the MRG behaviors are listed because not all of them correlated with at least one of the principles.)

Based on this very loose association, the top five agile manager behaviors (those with four or more "votes") are: innovative, delegation, tactical, cooperation, and structuring. The last one, structuring, probably came up often because of its relationship to the behavior set's potential upsides: striving to create consistency for everyone involved. In an agile environment, however, this would mean consistency in terms of how people are treated and

Table 1 — Correlation Between MRG Behaviors and Author Principles

	Augustine	Cockburn	DeCarlo	Highsmith	Laufer	Schwaber	Stapleton
MRG Behavior							
Innovative	+		+	+	+	+	+
Delegation	+		+			+	+
Tactical		+	+		+		+
Cooperation		+		+	+		+
Structuring		+		+	+		+
Structuring (low)			+				
Communication		+			+	+	
Control					+		
Consensual		+		+		+	
Persuasive	+			+			
Self	+				+		
Outgoing					+		
Empathy		+					
Control (low)	+						
Technical	+					+	+
Production		+				+	+

how they interact more than it would be about something like “heavy” planning documentation.

CORRELATING BEHAVIOR SETS WITH DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE

I also chose to compare the 22 MRG leadership behaviors with the Declaration of Interdependence because it was created by a consortium of agile thought leaders, including: David Anderson, Augustine, Christopher Avery, Cockburn, Mike Cohn, DeCarlo, Donna Fitzgerald, Highsmith, Ole Jepsen, Lowell Lindstrom, Todd Little, Kent McDonald, Pollyanna Pixton, Preston Smith, and Robert Wysocki.

In early 2004, Cockburn introduced the results of the group’s consideration as follows:

Echoing the Agile Manifesto meeting in 2001, a group of ... [project managers] worked together to set up the rules for a modern paradigm for project management. Not coining a new sexy name, but working out six rules of operation, the group wrote what it called the ‘Declaration of Interdependence’ for modern product and project management.¹

The DOI principles [4] and the corresponding MRG behaviors are listed below:

- We **increase ROI** by making continuous flow of value

our focus. Corresponds to: *production*.

- We **deliver reliable results** by engaging customers in frequent interactions and shared ownership. Corresponds to: *consensual*.
- We **expect uncertainty** and manage for it through iterations, anticipation, and adaptation. Corresponds to: *innovative*.
- We **unleash creativity and innovation** by recognizing that individuals are the ultimate source of value, and creating an environment where they can make a difference. Corresponds to: *delegation*.
- We **boost performance** through group accountability for results and shared responsibility for team effectiveness. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- We **improve effectiveness and reliability** through situational-specific strategies, processes, and practices. Corresponds to: *tactical*.

CORRELATING BEHAVIOR SETS WITH IAF PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR COMPETENCIES

During the late 1990s, the Dynamic Systems Development Methodology Consortium (better known as the DSDM Consortium) defined the need for professional facilitators on rapid application development teams. The intent

was to ensure workshops/meetings were designed to meet the intended purpose, engage the opinions of everyone, and ensure collaborative decisions were made effectively and efficiently. In order to ensure this level of service was provided, the DSDM Consortium and its associated Facilitator Accreditation Service developed a Certified Professional Facilitator certificate and assessment process. By 2001, the management of this process was transferred to the IAF, which holds assessment events around the world for professional facilitators in many different industries.

Fast forward to 2004, when Jim Highsmith invited me to work with an agile team that wanted additional training in agile practices. When we sat down to determine what the team really needed, one of the lead managers said, “We want to be more like Jim — we want you to teach us to be him.” While Jim suggested they might rethink that request, what it really came down to was the need for these managers to facilitate release planning, iteration planning, and other work meetings that needed to be focused, productive, and collaborative. So I designed a course I am still offering entitled “Developing the Facilitative Manager” that translates the IAF competencies into useable skills for managers/leaders in agile work environments. Since that meeting in 2004, I have

¹From personal correspondence.

found that most participants say it is the best managerial training they've ever received because it helps them understand how to create and guide a safe environment in which tough decisions and tradeoffs can be made.

For these reasons, I thought it might be interesting to include the IAF's Certified Professional Facilitator competencies in this analysis [6]. As in the previous sections, the CPF competencies are followed by the MRG behavior that seems to best fit.

IAF-CPF competencies are as follows:

- **Create collaborative client relationships** — develop working partnerships; design and customize applications to meet client needs; manage multi-session events effectively. Corresponds to: *cooperation*.
- **Plan appropriate group processes** — select clear methods and processes; prepare time and space to support group process. Corresponds to: *structuring*.
- **Create and sustain a participatory environment** — demonstrate effective participatory and interpersonal communication skills; honor and recognize diversity, ensuring inclusiveness; manage group conflict; evoke group creativity. Corresponds to: *consensual*.
- **Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes** — guide

the group with clear methods and processes; facilitate group self-awareness about its task; guide the group to consensus and desired outcomes. Corresponds to: *tactical*.

- **Build and maintain professional knowledge** — maintain a base of knowledge; know a range of facilitation methods; maintain professional standing. Corresponds to: *technical*.
- **Model positive professional attitude** — practice self-assessment and self-awareness; act with integrity; trust group potential and model neutrality. Corresponds to: *empathy*.

MRG BEHAVIORS AND THE ROLE EXPECTATIONS SURVEY

I chose to use the MRG's Role Expectations questionnaire to better define the agile manager's role for several reasons:

- I have used this instrument before and found it very rigorous and dependable.
- I plan on using a correlated MRG questionnaire called the LEA 360 during the second phase of this project.
- I could lessen my personal bias on the results.

For this part of my research into leadership behaviors, selecting the individuals to take the survey was the first step. The group included: Joe Thomas (manager, DTE Energy); Niel Nickolaisen (CIO, Headwaters); Eric Olafson (CEO,

Tomax); Paul Young (senior VP, MDS Sciex); Scott Lemon (agile futurist and practitioner); Richard Freyberg (retired Charles Schwab IT); Michal Patten (former senior VP, Howard Schultz Auditing); Highsmith; Cockburn; Augustine; Michele Sliger (Rally Software); Christine Moore (Arthur Maxwell); and myself.

E-mails crafted for the specific individual, but including the same assumptions, needs, and request for participation, were then sent. In the e-mail, I described the subject of my research: finding, hiring, and developing the right people for management/leadership positions in an agile environment. I asked each to participate in this research project by taking an online survey (approximately 30-45 minutes) regarding the role expectations/behaviors of agile project managers/leaders. I explained that the intent was to create an agreement about the most important behaviors of agile project managers/leaders.

The results of the survey, including the individual's personal scores, the consolidated scores of the entire group, and the group's consolidated score with the spread/range of responses for each behavior, were sent to each participant (see Figures 1-3).

Figure 1 is an example of an individual's results (the one presented here is mine). Figure 2 consolidates the opinions of all

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

LEA Role Expectations

Facilitator Printout

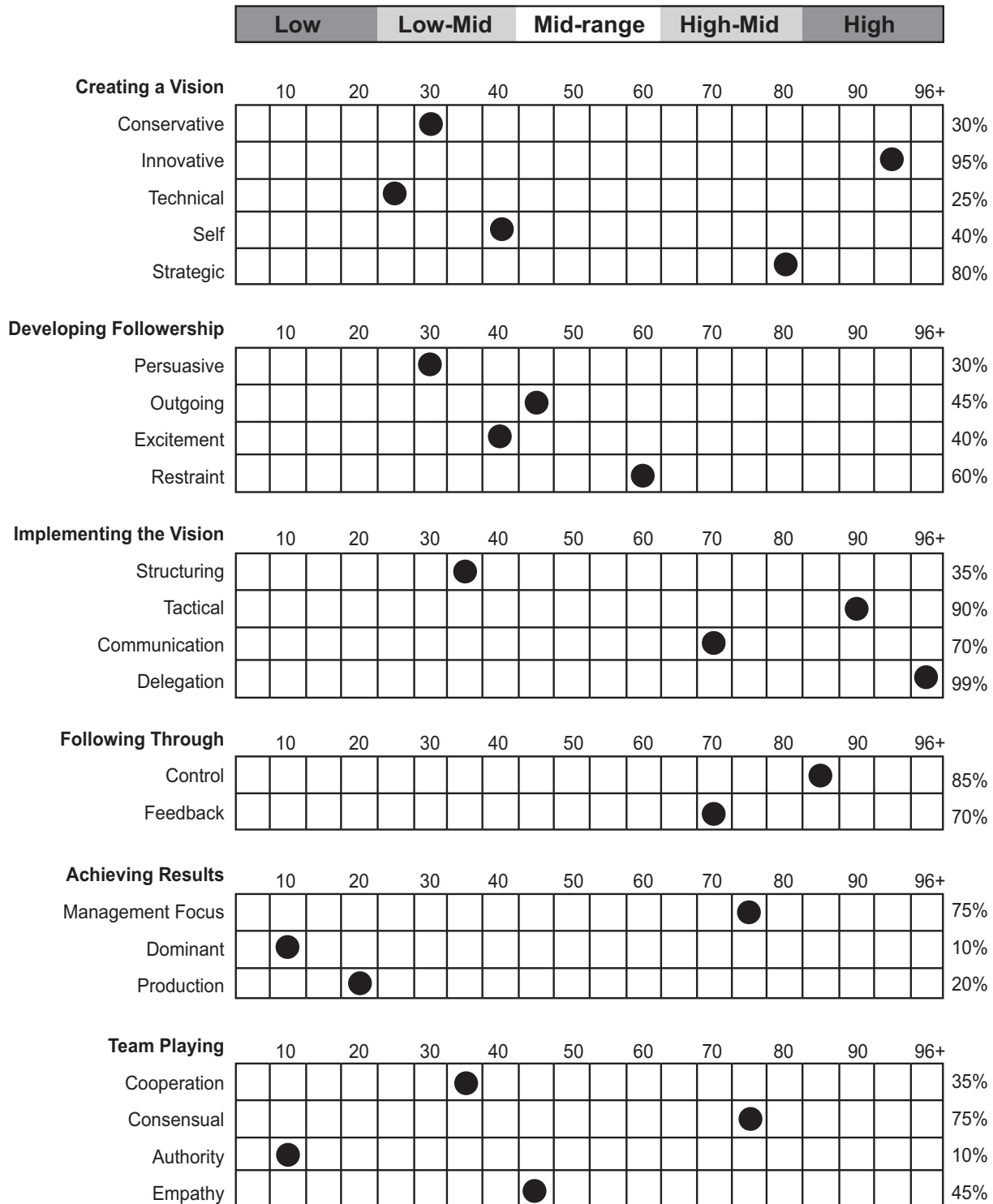


Figure 1 — LEA Role Expectations facilitator printout (results for David Spann). (Source: MRG.)

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

LEA Role Expectations

Facilitator Printout

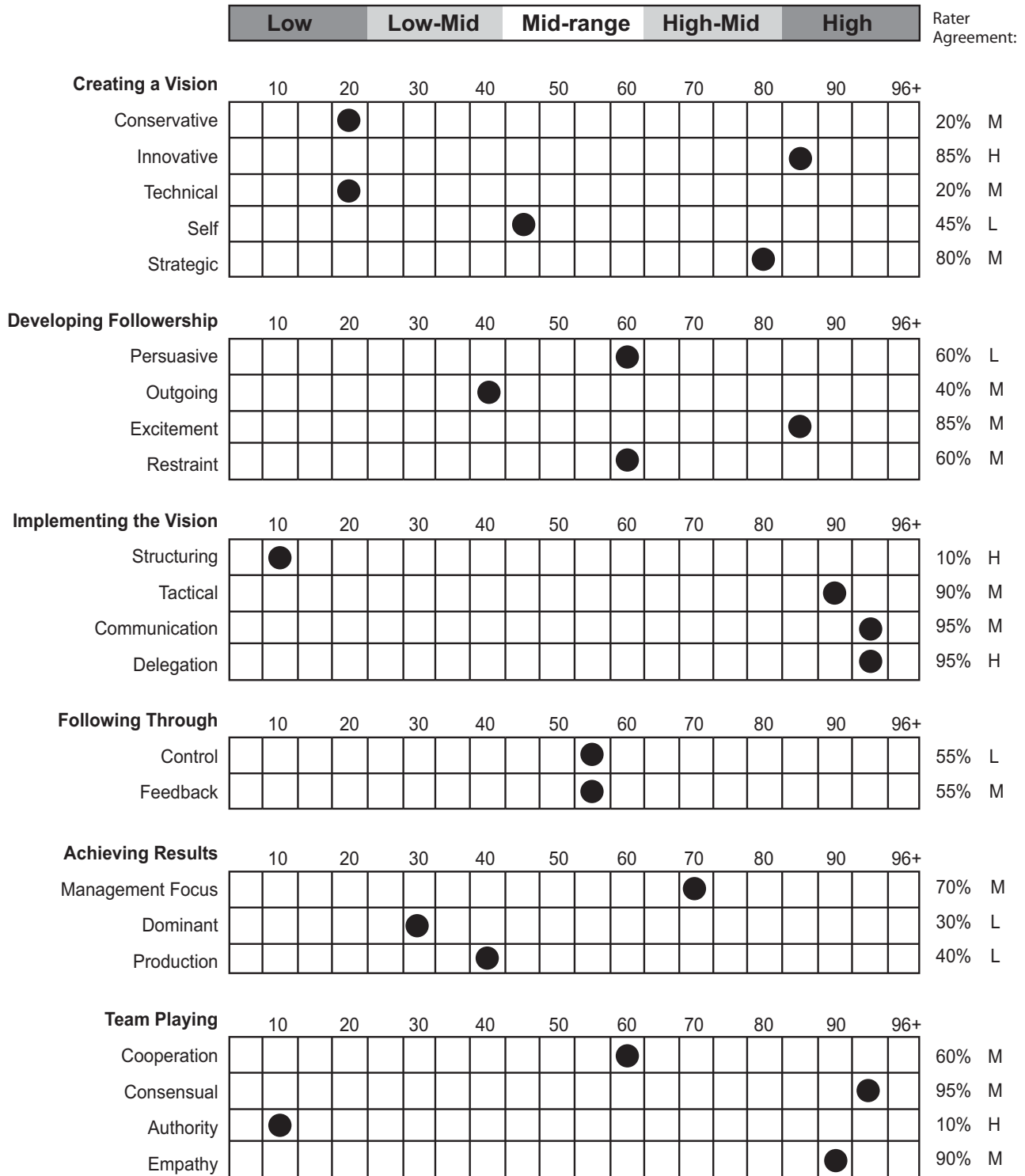


Figure 2 — LEA Role Expectations group report results (median profile). (Source: MRG.)

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

LEA Role Expectations

Facilitator Printout

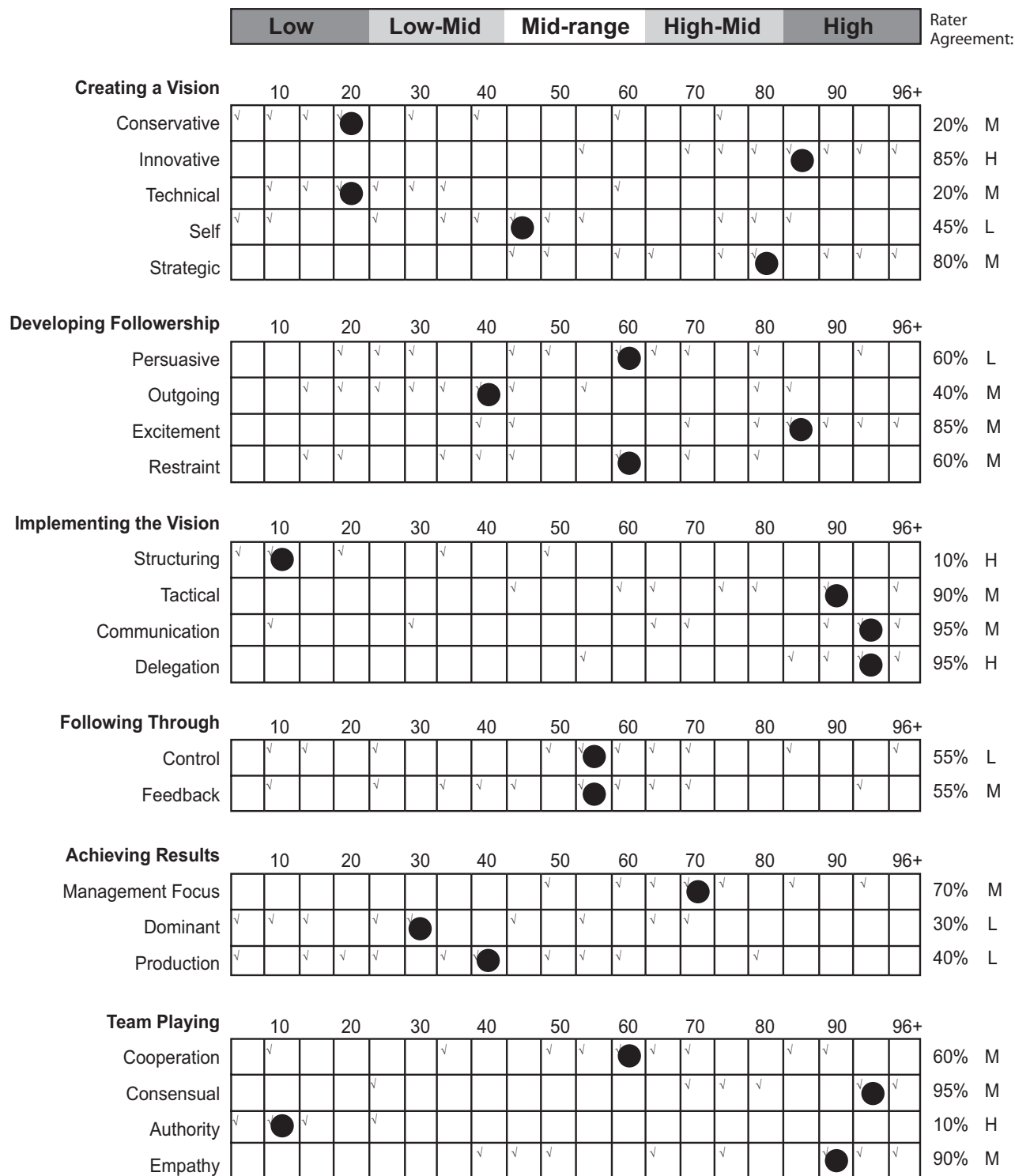


Figure 3 — LEA Role Expectations group report results (median/frequency). (Source: MRG.)

13 participants. The components of this report include:

1. A list of the 22 MRG behaviors down the left side of the page.
2. A scale from 0-100, which is like looking at a normal distribution curve: those that fall on the 50 indicate that 50% of the database (more than 240,000 other respondents) are above and 50% are below; anything that ranks above 75% is in the upper quartile of leaders who took this survey.
3. A percentage on the right side, which simply restates in numeric form what the scale indicates.
4. To the right of that percentage is a rater agreement scale with H (for high), M (for medium), or L (for low):
 - If the scores of three-quarters or more of a group of observers fall within a range of 25 percentage points, the rater agreement is high for that set.
 - If the scores of half to three-quarters of a group of observers fall within a range of 25 percentage points, the rater agreement is medium for that set.
 - If the scores of less than half of the observers fall within a range of 25 percentage points, the rater agreement is low for that set.

Figure 3 shows the group report in terms of median, frequency, and distribution. In it you'll find virtually the same information as in the previous role expectations group report, but in this one you also get the spread of responses (**indicated by checkmarks**). For example: the behavior set defined as innovative has a high rater agreement, the average score among all 13 participants is an 85%, and our votes were spread from 55 to 96+.

Results

Behaviors that scored above 75% on the normative scale and ranked high or medium in terms of rater agreement were deemed to be the important behaviors because this indicates that the participants generally agreed about the score and because it puts the score in the top quartile of managers/leaders measured in the other 400,000 cases MRG has in its database. Given this reasoning, the Role Expectations survey indicates the following behaviors are expected of agile managers:

- **Delegation** — 95% on the normative scale and high rater agreement
- **Innovative** — 85% on the normative scale and high rater agreement
- **Communication** — 95% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement

- **Consensual** — 95% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement
- **Tactical** — 90% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement
- **Empathy** — 90% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement
- **Excitement** — 85% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement
- **Strategic** — 80% on the normative scale and medium rater agreement

Likewise, and maybe just as important, are those traits these experts ranked in the lower quartile, especially those at or below 15% on the normative scale with a high rater agreement. This means that our group of experts strongly agreed that the agile manager role also depends on behaviors found on the lower end of this scale.

- **Authority** — 10% on the normative scale and high rater agreement
- **Structuring** — 10% on the normative scale and high rater agreement

CONSOLIDATED FINDINGS

It's now time to consider all of these findings together to determine the most important behaviors. Table 2 lists the behaviors that were identified in the previous analysis and indicates with which resource they correlate

(for example, thought leaders, DOI, IAF, or Role Expectations survey). In the table, only those behaviors that were identified by at least one source are shown.

Behaviors Expected from Each Source

This section identifies which behaviors made it into the final definition of an agile manager and why. In general, I gave more weight to the Declaration of Interdependence and the Role Expectations survey because those two resources represent some form of agreement between a set of “experts” in the field of agile management. Likewise, I automatically included the behaviors identified by all three agile resources (that is, thought leaders, DOI, and Role Expectations).

While I will discuss all of the 13 behaviors included in Table 2, these first eight have been selected as the ones that best define an agile manager:

- 1. Innovative** — innovative had both a high rater agreement in the Role Expectations survey and was identified in each of the agile resources (but not by the IAF-CPF competencies).
- 2. Strategic** — this one made it into the final group because of the Role Expectations results; many of the thought leaders also talk about the need for alignment between projects and corporate strategy, and most discuss feedback loops that enhance an organization’s strategic advantage. Likewise, this behavior helps balance the

upside liabilities of those who score high in excitement.

- 3. Excitement** — this is probably one of the behaviors that needs to be, but is not normally considered, in agile management discussions because it relates not only to the emotional level of the leader, but it also goes to that person’s ability to keep others enthusiastic and involved. This behavior type and strategic are the two behaviors chosen entirely from the results of the Role Expectations survey and my understanding of what the thought leaders are implying but may not have explicitly stated in the principles.
- 4. Tactical** — this is the only behavior selected by all four

Table 2 — MRG Behaviors and Their Resource Correlations

MRG Behaviors	Thought Leaders	Declaration of Interdependence	IAF Certified Professional Facilitator	Role Expectations Survey
Innovative	+	+		+
Technical			+	
Strategic				+
Excitement				+
Structuring	+		+	(very low)
Tactical	+	+	+	+
Communication				+
Delegation	+	+		+
Production		+		
Cooperation	+	+	+	
Consensual		+	+	+
Authority				(very low)
Empathy			+	+

resource areas, so it is automatically included in the final selection of behaviors.

5. **Communication** — like strategic above, this behavior was explicitly identified only by the Role Expectations group. While it is a foundational expectation in most of the authors' texts and specifically identified in two, it did not register in the process used in this report. Likewise, every one of the agile methodologies I know depends upon a rich level of communication, so this behavior made it into the final group.
6. **Delegation** — like innovative above, delegation was chosen by each of the agile resources, so it should be in the final selection of behaviors.
7. **Production** — only one person in the Role Expectations survey rated this behavior above a 75%, and most rated it below 40%. On the other hand, I'd say that the first line in the DOI — “We *increase ROI* by making continuous flow of value our focus” — is very definitely about production, which is why it made it into the final list of desired behaviors.
8. **Consensual** — the final list of behaviors includes consensual because it was identified in both the DOI and the Role Expectations survey. Likewise this behavior is expected in each of the methodologies but was not explicitly stated in enough of the thought leaders'

resources to be defined in this process. This behavior also tends to separate out those who rely on more traditional management practices from those who depend on emergent-like results.

The rest of the behaviors listed in the table that did not make it to the final list are:

- **Technical** — while having an understanding of the technical environment will be important, being an expert in the field (which is what is measured by this MRG behavior type) is not important for this role; the reason it shows up in the IAF column is because that certification is all about people being experts in the facilitator role.
- **Structuring** — while this behavior needs to be evident on someone's part to ensure the “beat” of an agile project is reliable and consistent, most people who score high in this behavior would be used to lots of ceremony and procedural steps, most often correlated with waterfall methodologies. However, I've also found that leaders who have no or very little “structuring” end up causing chaos when it comes to organizational leadership (compared to project leadership).
- **Authority** — this behavior on the high end can actually be read as “deference to authority,” which is antithetical to agile methodologies, and any organization that wants this as

a leading behavior should probably reconsider using agile.

- **Cooperation** — cooperation is expected in each of the agile methodologies and is defined in the DOI. It was not included in the final list of behaviors only because it is covered by the combination of innovative, delegation, and consensual, so is included by proxy.
- **Empathy** — even though it made it into the list defined in the Role Expectations survey at the 90% point on the normative scale, experience and MRG's recommendations suggest that a mid-range on this behavior is actually better for conflict resolution situations (too much empathy and the person may not be able to help the group come to some form of consensus). For that reason, I won't be adding it into the final list of traits; however, if someone ranks lower than 50% on the normative scale, this trait could be used to question the candidate's ability to be an agile manager. Likewise, those who score low in empathy will likely tend to score low in consensual and delegation (both of which made the list).

High-Side Liabilities

When we expect a behavior to be strong (that is, the scores are 75% and above), we should also expect a corresponding and associated downside or liability. For example, someone with a very

high “production” score might be seen as “unsympathetic to people,” or if someone is seen as extremely high in “consensual,” he or she might be so indecisive that things are not completed as expected. In other words, managers who understand the impact of their behaviors also look for moderating or coping behaviors to limit the potential liabilities that come with their strong behaviors.

So agile managers and the firms that hire and support them should consider both the preferred behaviors and the moderating behaviors of a person in that position. Table 3 depicts this relationship with the eight preferred agile manager behaviors on the left side, the liabilities that may come with each behavior in the middle, and the moderating behavior in the right-hand column. For example, the liabilities of a high score in innovative are typically moderated or balanced with a high score in tactical, which means this person is both interested in new ideas and seeing those ideas come to fruition.

My experience shows that most people who are chosen into the management role focus on getting the work accomplished, completing the plan, invigorating their team (sometimes to the point of letting their emotions get away from them), and producing something on time and within budget. They would probably score high on tactical, production, excitement, and possibly on strategic. Likewise, because they are used to being directive and in charge, they would probably score low on consensual, communication, and delegation. If these individuals are going to succeed in an agile environment, my experience shows they will need to focus on moderating their high-score liabilities.

As you will note, the eight preferred behaviors act as both the leading indicators of a successful agile manager and as moderators of potential high-side liabilities for each other. This means an individual interested in meeting the agile manager role expectations can focus on developing and moderating these eight behaviors.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS FOR SELECTED AGILE MANAGER BEHAVIORS

Imagine yourself as a casting agent for an upcoming movie production. Your job is to find the best actors for each part and assure the director that these actors can and will work well together. What combination of experience and behavioral characteristics do you look for? What makes one actor better than another? These are the same questions most organizational hiring agents face when they try to hire and develop people. In both cases, the casting and hiring agent are looking for evidence that the individual will likely perform well within his or her role.

This section is designed, therefore, to help define the measures one might use to judge whether an individual will feel comfortable in the role of an agile manager and/or which of the behaviors need to be further developed/moderated. These measures can, likewise, be used to create a job

Table 3 — Moderating Behavioral Liabilities

Preferred Behavior	High-Side Liability	Moderating Behavior
Innovative	Constantly reinvents the wheel	Tactical
Excitement	Impulsive; burns people out	Strategic
Tactical	Becomes overextended	Delegation
Communication	Not enough time focused on doing	Tactical
Delegation	Abdicates personal responsibility	Tactical
Production	Unreasonably demanding	Consensual
Consensual	Passive or overly permissive	Production
Strategic	Excludes others from planning	Consensual

announcement and/or to set up a personal development plan (described more fully later in this report). Each of the eight agile manager behaviors are followed by a narrative description of the expectations and specific actions generally enacted. The definitions (repeated from earlier in this report) and recommended measures in this section are provided by MRG.

Innovative

This behavior means the individual feels comfortable in fast-changing environments and is willing to take risks and to consider new and untested approaches.

Success is measured by:

- Focusing on developing business value over delivering a predefined plan
- Setting up work processes so that innovative ideas can be included incrementally
- Engaging others in discovering and trying new ways of doing things
- Using an iterative, incremental, and concurrent approach to developing solutions

Strategic

This behavior expects that the individual takes a long-range, broad approach to problem solving and decision making through objective analysis, thinking ahead, and planning.

Success is measured by:

- Analyzing the future impact that a decision made today is likely to have on the initiative, team, organization, and other stakeholders
- Integrating the activities and expectations of various interdependent departments
- Anticipating challenges, risks, and opportunities without being paralyzed by analysis

Excitement

This behavior means the individual operates with a good deal of energy, intensity, and emotional expression and has a capacity for keeping others enthusiastic and involved.

Success is measured by:

- Helping people feel good about themselves and their work
- Displaying a high level of energy, intensity, and enthusiasm
- Moving others to be emotionally expressive as well

Tactical

This behavior emphasizes the individual's ability to produce immediate results by focusing on short-range, hands-on, practical strategies.

Success is measured by:

- Doing the most important work first

- Planning just enough to go forward and adjusting that plan according to the results
- Adapting to and being flexible in a variety of constantly changing situations
- Getting things done relatively quickly
- Sticking to the basics without "overengineering" the outcome

Communication

This behavior means the individual states clearly what is wanted and expected from others; clearly expresses thoughts and ideas; and maintains a precise and constant flow of information.

Success is measured by:

- Keeping others sufficiently and consistently informed
- Defining and stating clear expectations
- Articulating ideas, thoughts, and views in a compelling and understandable way

Delegation

This behavior means enlisting the talents of others to help meet objectives by giving them important activities and sufficient autonomy to exercise their own judgment.

Success is measured by:

- Having confidence in the abilities of others

- Giving others the freedom to make mistakes
- Gaining satisfaction from seeing others grow and develop
- Believing the wisdom of the group is greater than that of any one individual (including self)
- Establishing group accountability for results and shared responsibility for team effectiveness

Production

This behavior means the individual adopts a strong orientation toward achievement; holds high expectations for self and others; and pushes self and others to achieve at high levels.

Success is measured by:

- Delivering incremental business value throughout an initiative
- Engaging the customer/client/end user in defining outcomes and testing results iteratively throughout an initiative
- Measuring and reflecting upon the team's behavior and performance throughout an initiative
- Setting higher goals for self than for the team

Consensual

This behavior means the individual values the ideas and opinions of others and collects their input as part of the decision-making process.

Success is measured by:

- Creating an environment where individuals enjoy collaborating
- Seeking out the ideas and opinions of others
- Developing collaborative decision-making processes
- Establishing and refining working agreements
- Increasing the number and effectiveness of communication channels
- Focusing on ways to establish and improve trust within the team and organization

Ancillary Behaviors to Consider: Structuring, Authority, and Empathy

There are three other behaviors that were defined by those taking the Role Expectations survey that were not chosen for the final eight but may give additional insight into selecting and developing successful agile managers: structuring, authority, and empathy.

In the case of structuring, a candidate showing strong tendencies in this area may be substituting procedures for leadership, may be too focused on details, and may unintentionally discourage new ideas from surfacing. Likewise, those showing strong tendencies for authority behaviors may be too deferential to the organizational hierarchy that they cannot, nor will they allow others, to make independent decisions. My experience shows that an individual

showing strong traits in either of these behaviors will have a very hard time adjusting to an agile-like environment and should be coached accordingly.

In the case of empathy, those taking the Role Expectations survey suggested that an agile manager should score in the mid-range or high end of this behavioral continuum. Based on my experience and MRG's recommendations, people who need to help resolve conflicts need to be more than less empathetic, but people with too much empathy may not be able to help the group come to some form of consensus — they will allow the situation to muddle along, seeing both sides, without helping the group find a reasonable solution. For that reason, I did not add empathy into the final behavior list. On the other hand, my experience says that a person who displays very little to no empathetic behaviors will also have a very hard time adjusting to an agile-like environment.

SEARCHING FOR AN AGILE MANAGER

Assuming the eight selected behaviors above define a successful agile manager, how might an HR director or other hiring manager (like the casting agent) better define the expectations for the agile manager role? In other words, how might the preferred behaviors be translated into something that is both compelling and descriptive enough to entice

those who are best suited to the position?

Imagine you work for a company called Agile Werks, you are currently searching for agile managers, and you are trying to create a job announcement. When writing your job description, you may be tempted to include multiple technical expectations (for example, ScrumMaster, DSDM certification, Java developer). While those may be important to the organizational environment and may be a baseline upon which you need to judge applicants, my coaching experience says the manager's ability to behave appropriately will be what makes or breaks your agile experience.

So, given all the above expectations and behavioral definitions, let's consider what a job announcement with each of the eight behavioral expectations might look like for Agile Werks.

Sample Job Announcement

Agile Werks is searching for just the right people to lead our productively creative development process. We have positions in each of the major North American cities and in most of the capitals around the world. If you want to join this highly unique business environment, please provide your future colleagues with evidence of the following:

- Manages a [name your preferred agile methodology] initiative and keeps current on

new trends in other agile practices and technology solutions.

- Creates and takes new ideas easily to delivery/deployment [innovative/productive].
- Ensures cross-organizational and multiple stakeholder consensus [consensual].
- Communicates with multiple learning styles, that is, written, visual, and spoken [communication].
- Achieves results when others seem incapable of doing so [excitement].
- Applies an integrated process of planning and development strategies to ensure incremental results are delivered [strategic].
- Develops appropriate working agreements to ensure tough decisions, issue escalation, and change/enhancement requests are managed well [tactical].
- Facilitates meetings and workshops efficiently and effectively [delegation].

DEVELOPING NEW AGILE MANAGERS

Like the process of searching for an external agile manager, developing someone within an organization will require interest and initiative on the parts of both the employee and the organization. And, more importantly, it will require the person to either already possess the expected behavior traits for that role and/or

have a dedicated focus on achieving a few compensating skills. For example, there are several of my clients who are *not* naturally very consensual, but they have practiced and learned the art of facilitating, in which the facilitator acts more as a neutral third party. Through that experience, they have learned about the wisdom of the group and thereby can appreciate and practice more behaviors found in the consensual behavior set. Likewise, I have had some clients who want to make everything “perfect” before demonstrating something to a client, but by practicing many of the short, iterative, timebox-like practices, they've found that it is not only more productive but more fun to do things “just good enough to go forward.”

The organizational role in developing a new agile manager is to set expectations and provide the needed resources. For instance, some organizations have set up an agile manager roundtable for executives, managers, and other stakeholders to identify training opportunities, emerging issues, and cross-functional opportunities. In other cases, the organization has chosen to put a “stake in the ground” and require everyone to go through a common form of training, followed by workshops on change management and the establishment of a design team to help the organization meet its ongoing and emerging issues.

Regardless of the approach an organization takes to implementing an agile methodology, the development of new agile managers will require an iterative process of training, practice, feedback, and more practice, training, and feedback. In fact, it is the repetitive process of doing and reflecting that makes most of the agile methods so innovative and productive and is the same technique that will help managers, if they aspire to it, be better agile managers.

Over the years, I have disagreed with people who say “a leopard cannot change its spots so why should I” (generally pointing figuratively at someone else in a derogatory manner). My retort has always been, if you were in their shoes, would you alter your behavior to save your job/career/marriage? In almost all cases, the answer is “Yes, but that’s different, I would understand why it is important to change, and I would step up and make things better — I don’t believe they have the same tenacity.” In virtually every case, the person who needed to make behavioral changes only did so when the change was in their best self-interest. And, further, that change was only sustained if the expected behavior correlated with their belief system or, in rare cases, if their belief system changed.

So if you want to develop new agile managers from within, I would start with those folks

whose “spots” (that is, behaviors) are more closely aligned with the preferred behaviors defined above. And the best way to find those individuals is to get feedback from the person’s past and present supervisor(s), peers, and direct reports. You might simply interview them, have them fill out a pencil and paper survey like the one you did earlier in this report, and/or, you might ask them to do a statistically valid Leadership 360 review (discussed in detail later) to compare your internal candidate against the expected agile manager behaviors. (Note: when people answer hard copy questionnaires, they tend to answer in extremes or in the middle of a scale, and it is never “normed” against a sizeable database like the one MRG uses.)

If you are using a normatively derived database, my suggestion is that you begin by looking for those who score in the top 75% of each of the eight behaviors defined in this report. These are the people who, with a little practice and training, should be able to fill the role most easily. For example, if you are interested in cutting-edge development and finding new solutions, your candidate should fit into the top 75% of innovative (with at least a medium level of “rater agreement”).

If you are relying on interviews with current and past supervisors, peers, and direct reports, make sure to focus on gaining proof that the candidate has shown

evidence of the expected behaviors (you might consider translating the statements found in the job announcement above into questions to gain that evidence).

Likewise, you should definitely include questions about the structuring, authority, and empathy behaviors, because, as stated previously, if the candidate has too high a score on structuring or authority and/or too low a score on empathy, these could be tell-tale signs that the person is not right for an agile manager role even if other things seem to be in place.

Once you understand the candidate’s ability in each of the preferred agile manager behaviors, you will want to set up a development plan that helps fill the gaps for that individual. If the individual has no leadership experience, you will probably want him or her to shadow someone who does or provide that person with a mentor to help him or her through the first few projects. If the individual has management experience, you may simply need to set up a development plan to focus his or her efforts on improving the agile methodology within your organization. The typical development plan I use includes no more than four major goals, the most important objectives that need to be accomplished for each goal, and a select few people chosen for feedback on each goal (and the time for feedback).

The goal statements are typically focused on the major behaviors expected in the role (such as the eight agile manager behaviors identified in this report) and other organizational imperatives like safety and ethics. The objectives or action statements are specific things that the individual will be doing about that goal. Be as specific as possible without being verbose; telling someone to “work smarter not harder” is not specific. The process of gaining feedback or reflection and those who are going to give it is also important; the real proof of any behavioral change is what others see us doing, not what we think — they think — we’re doing.

For example, the following development (or action) plan was put together by one of my client’s, his development team, and immediate stakeholders.

Action Plan

Goal 1: Become more consensual in our operations.

- **Objective 1** — use **Fist-o-Five** decision tool even when the marketing director is in the room
- **Objective 2** — engage tech writer in timebox planning events
- **Objective 3** — incorporate product manager in discussions with the business analysts
- **Retrospective** — ask the development team, marketing, tech writer, and product manager

for feedback at the end of each of the next three iterations

Goal 2: Become more conversant in “Fit” (Framework for Integrated Testing) as a testing protocol.

- **Objective 1** — take the upcoming course on Fit
- **Objective 2** — debrief team on what I learned
- **Objective 3** — create a rollout plan if appropriate
- **Retrospective** — ensure the quality assurance folks are involved in the debrief; rollout and get their opinions before starting

Goal 3: Be seen by superiors as more strategic.

- **Objective 1** — meet with supervisor to better understand corporate business case
- **Objective 2** — integrate the business case into next time-box plan
- **Objective 3** — chart story points based on business value accomplished
- **Retrospective** — ask the team and supervisor for input on tracking process; check for any unintended consequences; and adjust at the end of the next three timeboxes

Leadership 360

The best way to gain insights into our own behaviors is to ask others what they see. Imagine, if you will,

that your life as you know it is being projected on a large movie screen. Now, imagine a group of people, knowing this is your view on the world, comes into your “theater” and starts watching your film. How long will it be before someone thinks and/or says, “You’ve got to be kidding — that’s not what I see at all, no wonder we disagree on that point/subject/philosophy.” This is the objective of my Leadership 360 approach: gaining insights into how we behave from the vantage points of those who see us enact those behaviors.

Those who go through this, typically experience great insights, some emotional pain (especially when they understand how their behaviors impact others), and a great sense of respect from those who are providing the feedback. In fact, it is the added sense of respect and honor that seems to surprise my clients the most. It is as if the observers feel like they are the ones getting the feedback instead of giving it (and, in a very interesting way, both feelings are accurate).

In my practice, I begin the Leadership 360 approach with a statement of dedication on the part of the candidate (without this step, the leopard is less likely to change its spots). This statement of intent is followed by a rigorous, normative-based questionnaire taken by the candidate’s supervisor, peers, and direct reports. The report gained from this questionnaire looks something like the one

from the Role Expectations survey described above but is focused on the person instead of the role. The report then allows me and the candidate to either identify some things the candidate may need to do and/or go in search of additional feedback.

For example, imagine I am in the role of an agile manager and I answered MRG's normative questionnaire. The results were fine, correlating mostly with the expectations found in the eight preferred behaviors with one potential outlier: the behavior defined as consensual is low, and the one entitled control is high. While the upside may be the team finishes its timeboxed iteration on time, the downside could be that I am pushing toward a deadline instead of an outcome. My next step would be to ask my team members for their feedback

on my behavior and its impact on them personally and/or on our mutual performance goals. It might all be fine, and/or I may need to improve on some specific practices.

During our iterative retrospectives, I could use Highsmith's team self-assessment graph in Figure 4 and the eight behaviors described in this report to better define those areas where my behavior could be improved.

The final step is to develop an action or development plan with the appropriate goals, objectives, and feedback channels defined.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report was to consider whether there were a few behavioral traits that defined the roles of successful agile man-

agers. If there were, and they could be defined, then organizations might be able to use them to help search more effectively for people to fill their agile managerial positions and help individual managers/leaders become more agile inside the firm.

After correlating the MRG behaviors with principles from agile thought leaders, the Declaration of Interdependence, and IAF's Certified Professional Facilitator assessment, and then comparing those with the behaviors suggested in the Role Expectations survey, the eight behaviors isolated for successful agile managers were identified as: innovative, strategic, excitement, tactical, communication, delegation, production, and consensual. These eight behaviors provide me, and hopefully other agile coaches, with a benchmark upon which

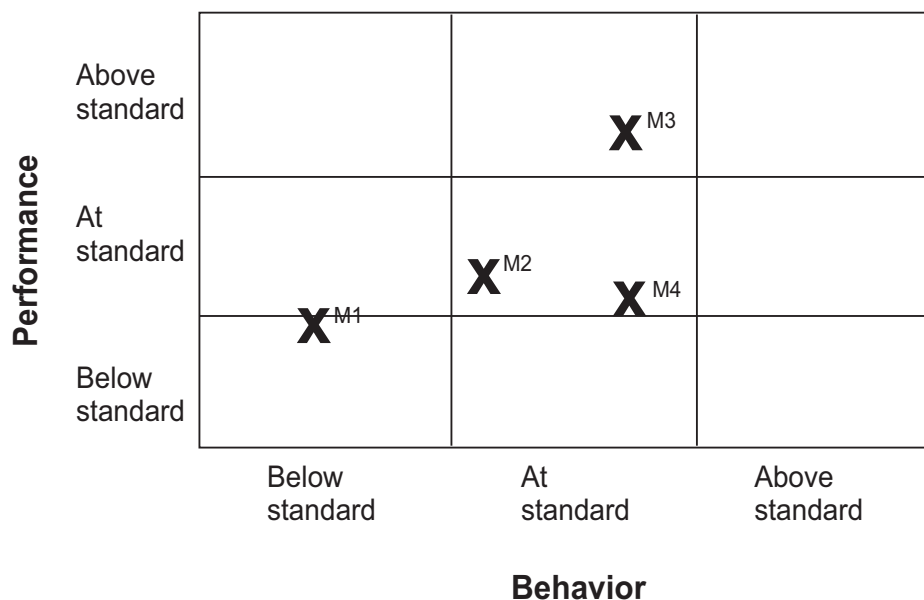


Figure 4 — Self-assessment graph. (Source: [5].)

to help all agile manager clients understand the expectations in their job and develop behaviors in those areas where improvement could really make a difference for an agile working environment.

The second phase of this research will take place during the upcoming year and will test the assumptions made in this report. It will require at least 60 people, identified as excellent agile managers/leaders to complete MRG's Leadership Effective Analysis (sometimes known as the LEA 360) questionnaire online. This will require the individual, his or her "supervisor," a few "peers," and a few "direct reports" to do the same. So, if someone you know fits that picture, and is interested in being a part of this cutting edge study, please consider sending them my way.

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Mr. Spann's consulting approach helps teams, executives, and organizations focus on desired business results while simultane-

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