

PANDA STORY SEASON ONE

FOLLOW

THE PATH OF
RAY, HOWARD, AND BRITTA

An Essential Tale of Agile Transformation Strategy



RENÉ SCHRÖDER

Follow ... the path of Ray, Howard, and Britta

An Essential Tale of Agile
Transformation Strategy

René Schröder

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Translation: Julia Schröder

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RegSus Consulting GmbH, Munich

r.schroeder@regsus.de

[PandaStory.blog](#)¹

¹<https://pandastory.blog>

About the Author

René Schröder is a published author and a master Agilist who has been building practical agile strategies for start-ups, scale-ups, and large corporations alike since 2001.

Across industries — including automotive, retail, travel, banking, and pharmaceuticals — René’s expertise ranges from training individual Scrum Masters and Product Owners to coaching entire divisions in their transformative efforts.

His work is renowned for the successful development of tailored agile structures and teams that seamlessly align with a company’s short- and long-term goals, as well as maximize its chances for success. René also provides over 100 training courses for the certification of Scrum Master and Product Owner and over 50 training courses in free formats on agility, Kanban, OKR, Design Thinking, and more.

Beyond his already impressive repertoire, René enjoys sharing his valuable insights and experiences with agility, Scrum, and transformation across team, middle management, and C-suite levels through over 100 publications, conventions, and books, including his bestselling trilogy the “Panda Story”..

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my son Jason and my wife Julia, who inspired me in a special way to write this book.

In memory of Tom

Foreword

This book pulls you right in.

Our story is set in an all-too-realistic multi-national company and all of the advantages and problems of a large established firm. Our heroes, step-by-step, use agile practices to improve speed, quality, even employee morale, and manager effectiveness.

This masterwork by René Schröder is packed with the experience, the application that works, that only a practiced Agilist with decades in the field can provide. Many agile novels appear flat by not showing the likely oppositions and battle-tested workarounds. Panda Story is the authentic master novel, with the depth of a library behind each easy-to-digest and fun-to-read vignette.

Now prepare your memo book and a refreshing beverage. Take this book in sprints, with note taking and practice on your real work. You are in for an entertaining, easy-to-read master class. Thank you, René Schröder, for your experience and well-crafted authorship.

Joe Justice

founder WIKISPEED

operator Agile@Tesla

Preface

Markets have been changing for many years. Customers can compare and buy products from almost any company in the world. Companies that want to reach their customers with the right products are facing new challenges. Many are trying to meet these challenges with transformations in various areas: new forms of cooperation are the goal, both internally and with customers. If this is an agile transformation, it is often Agile Coaches who are to support, for example, Scrum Masters and Product Owners in the company. Which methods and practices make an agile transformation successful, what should the people who accompany it be like, and what makes a good Scrum Master and/or Agile Coach?

The idea for this book was born when I read the book "Panda Mama" by Esther Wojcicki. In her book she describes how a mother enables her child to grow, following the motto: give it space to learn about the world and protect it from danger. This little anecdote made me see agile transformations in a different light. It is just the transformations where no spaces are created, whilst systems are provided, which are less successful or not successful at all. Often Agile Coaches / Scrum Masters do not act as enablers in such environments and instead dogmatically prescribe new methods. With the Panda Story Trilogy, which starts with the part "**Follow ... the path of Ray, Howard, and Britta**", I would like to show how a transformation can work and what happens if it is approached too dogmatically. Transformations succeed through togetherness, through the interaction of different characters, and often it is those who appear to be obstacles who end up promoting the transformation.

This book is aimed at all those who wish to accompany a trans-

formation in a corporate context. Agile Coaches, Scrum Masters, Product Owners and Managers, Project Managers and Executives and many more are invited.

René Schröder

How to read this book

”Follow ... the path of Ray, Howard, and Britta” as the first part of the Panda Story Trilogy opens up a perspective on Scrum Masters and Agile Coaches and their influence on a transformation. We accompany the three protagonists Ray, Howard, and Britta in their common experiences at the company ReG Inc., which has decided to use Scrum as a framework to set up the company in an agile way. Howard acts as Scrum Master at the team level and Britta as Agile Coach at the company level.

In the episodes of **”Follow ... the path of Ray, Howard, and Britta”**, we experience exciting situations in the everyday work of Ray, Howard, and Britta. The protagonists face the challenge of presenting a new version of the SuS Suite at the trade fair, which will take place in a few weeks. Each episode ends with an Agile Clinic, which takes place regularly at ReG Inc. The Agile Clinic is a format in which Ray usually discusses his agile topics with Britta and Howard in order to be able to cope with the challenges in the run up to the trade fair. The Agile Clinic was established at ReG Inc. because Ray in particular, wanted to discuss questions regarding Scrum or agility in general with Britta in passing. The Agile Clinic provides a regular and structured framework for this.

Episode #07

It threatens to escalate



Ray comes back from his office to the team room with the poster for the trade fair. Ken is already working on a User Story for the Sprint again. When he sees Ray, he looks up. Ray walks over to him with the poster in his hand.

Ray: "I thought your idea about the feature from GER-126 was brilliant. Here is the poster for the trade fair; I think I should have shown it to you earlier. I wasn't sure if it would be helpful or unsettling."

Ken: <reads the poster> "The announcements sound great. Marketing did a good job. Did you work on the poster together?"

Ray: "No, unfortunately not. Marketing only showed me the final version."

Ken: "That's a shame. We should discuss this with Howard at the next Sprint Retrospective."

Ray: "I agree, I'm sure we could have taken it in a better direction had we all worked together."

Ken: *<looks thoughtful>* "I'm a little confused. I understand the announcements differently than you do, I think."

Ray: "What makes you think that?"

Ken: "What we're doing in the current Sprint, which is for the trade fair, has nothing to do with the announcements in my eyes."

Ray: *<looks irritated>* "Excuse me? What do you mean?"

Ken: *<points to an announcement>* "For example this item here, which User Story is this in the Sprint?"

Ray: *<reads the announcement>* "The logistics routes are calculated for you fully automatically. This is User Story GER-87, isn't it?"

Ken: *<reads through GER-87>* "The User Story is about route calculation, correct, but here we rely on the front-end team to provide us with the data that the user enters in the front end. And what does fully automated mean?" *<mumbles>* "We in the team are just implementing fast route calculation in this User Story."

Ray: "We discussed that in Sprint Planning, didn't we?"

Ken: "I think without the background knowledge of what is important for the show; we probably missed each other's points. For example, the word fully automated is not in the User Story. We would have to do a lot of work to achieve this, possibly set up some kind of artificial intelligence."

Ray: "That sounds terrible. Silke will tear my head off if she can't present it at the trade fair. I think we need to cancel the Sprint and just work day and night now, put our backs into it. The trade fair

is next week. Ken, thanks for your help, I need to talk to Howard and Britta.”

Ken: ”Wait. I have ...”

Ray disappears before Ken could finish the sentence. He tries to call Howard and Britta but can’t reach either of them. On the way back to his office, he meets Silke who is standing in front of one of the posters for the trade fair and thinking. She notices Ray and speaks to him.

Silke: *<points to the poster>* ”Our new logistics suite will be the breakthrough. Just these new features have been requested a lot according to market research, especially the one with route calculation.”

Ray: ”I hope the features will push the suite forward and strike a chord with the customer.”

Silke: ”They have to and they will! How is the Sprint going? Britta was with me, she said everything is going great.”

Ray: ”I don’t know if Britta said that.”

Silke: ”What do you mean? Is it not going well?” *<looks puzzled>*

Ray: ”I don’t know if we can develop everything that’s on the poster. It’s a lot and the info from Marketing came much too late.”

Silke: ”Britta assured me that the new agile approach will solve these problems, we’ll get more features in less time. That’s why we do agile, that’s why I got Britta and made Howard a Scrum Master. I don’t need another disaster like the last trade fair.” *<looks annoyed>*

Ray: ”I’m not an expert on agile like Britta, but I’m pretty sure the goal of agile isn’t faster and cheaper. Can you just give me a hand?”

Silke: ”I’ll discuss that with Britta. What do you need?”

Ray: *<points to the poster>* ”Which feature on the poster is most important to you?”

Silke: ”All of them, I need all of them!”

Ray: <nods> "What differentiates us the most from our competitor?"

Silke: "That's the job of Marketing and probably yours too. You're the Product Owner, or did I get that wrong too?"

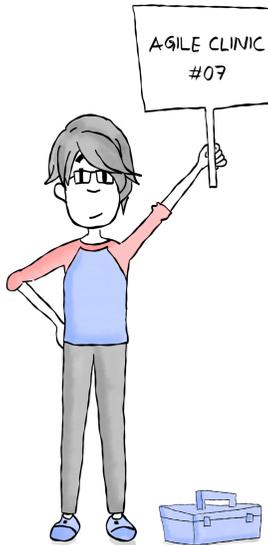
Ray: "You got it right, I maximise the value of the product by prioritising the right features for the customers' needs. I think the feature offering the automatic calculation of routes clearly sets us apart from the competitor and helps the customers the most. What do you think?"

Silke: "It is certainly one of the best features in our new suite, yes. I still need all of them, do you understand?! I have to move on now - make it happen, otherwise Scrum is dead!"

Silke is visibly annoyed by the renewed discussion regarding features, and leaves Ray standing in the hallway without another comment.

Agile Clinic

The purpose of a Product Owner



Ray's tension is growing, Silke can't be dissuaded from wanting all the features for the fair, Ray comes to the Agile Clinic visibly distressed.

Ray: "Guys, I can't take it anymore. Silke is killing me. I don't think I'm a good Product Owner, everything is getting out of hand."

Howard: "I don't see it that way, Ray; you're doing a good job."

Ray: "If I was, we wouldn't have this problem with the show now. I can't deliver what Silke demands."

Britta: "What is the purpose of a Product Owner in your eyes?"

Ray: "I guess it's planning the product so that it's ready for the trade fair, as in our case."

Howard: "That sounds almost right, Ray. Even if the trade fair isn't the most important thing."

Ray: "You have no idea! Of course the trade fair is the most important thing."

Howard: "I remember, in the Scrum Guide¹² it says the Product Owner is the person who maximises the value of the product."

Ray: "Well, but I can't do that unless I know everything that Marketing comes up with and also what Silke wants to present."

Howard: "We need to revise the process, yes."

Ray: "I also read a little in the Scrum Guide. We don't really live by its principles here, starting with our lack of transparency, and I'm not really the Product Owner either."

Howard: "Of course you're the Product Owner."

Ray: "I'm not, at least not according to the Scrum Guide¹³. The Product Owner makes the decisions for the product, not Marketing, like in our case. I only need to fulfil their specifications - which were also non-transparent¹⁴."

Britta: "I can't disagree with you there, the cooperation with Marketing didn't go well. How are we going to do better in the future, Ray? You've been here longer than Howard and I, do you have any ideas about what we could change?"

Ray: "Britta, I'm afraid I don't know. So much would have to change here. But we hardly do anything except change the titles: first I was Project Manager, now I do the same, but my job title is Product Owner."

Britta: "I don't have a solution right now either, but we will find one together. We need to bring everyone to the table, preferably after the fair, and then work out a solution together."

Ray: "I'm counting on you. Silke seems to listen to you. I can't go on like this much longer!"

Ray leaves the Agile Clinic without a solution this time, which still frustrates him a bit. All the same, it feels good to have had the chance to speak his mind and have Britta stand by him. He hopes that a few things will change after the trade fair.

Preview

The preparations for the fair have been very exhausting and grueling for Ray, Howard, and Britta. Besides, neither Silke nor Richard seem to have understood what it means to align a company in an agile way. A circumstance to which Ken fell victim.

In the next part of the Panda Story Trilogy, we will continue to accompany ReG Inc. and experience how the events from the first part are reflected in an overall retrospective and how the company will continue the transformation.

So, look forward to the second part of the Panda Story Trilogy.

Literature and endnotes

1. Product Backlog refinement is the act of adding detail, estimates, and order to items in the Product Backlog. This is an ongoing process in which the Product Owner and the Development Team collaborate on the details of Product Backlog items. During Product Backlog refinement, items are reviewed and revised. The Scrum Team decides how and when refinement is done. Refinement usually consumes no more than 10% of the capacity of the Development Team. However, Product Backlog items can be updated at any time by the Product Owner or at the Product Owner's discretion.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide-2017.html#product-backlog>

2. Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan

see. <https://agilemanifesto.org/>

3. For the case of logging in through social media, we would have the following story and acceptance criteria:

As a user, I can log in through a social media account.

Acceptance criteria:

Can log in through Facebook

Can log in through LinkedIn

Can log in through Twitter

see. <https://www.mountangoatsoftware.com/blog/the-two-ways-to-add-detail-to-user-stories>

4. Having a Definition of Ready means that stories must be immediately actionable. The Team must be able to determine what needs to be done and the amount of work required to complete the User Story or PBI.

The Team must understand the „done” criteria and what tests will be performed to demonstrate that the story is complete. „Ready” stories should be clear, concise, and most importantly, actionable.

see. <https://www.scruminc.com/definition-of-ready/>

5. Product Backlog items have the attributes of a description, order, estimate, and value.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide-2017.html#product-backlog>

6. A good user story should be:

“I” ndependent (of all others)

“N” egotiable (not a specific contract for features)

“V” aluable (or vertical)

“E” stimable (to a good approximation)

“S” mall (so as to fit within an iteration)

“T” estable (in principle, even if there isn’t a test for it yet)

see. <https://www.agilealliance.org/glossary/invest/>

7. Prescribed events are used in Scrum to create regularity and to minimize the need for meetings not defined in Scrum. All events are time-boxed events, such that every event has a maximum duration. Once a Sprint begins, its duration is fixed and cannot be shortened or lengthened. The remaining events may end whenever the purpose of the event is achieved, ensuring an appropriate amount of time is spent without allowing waste in the process.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide-2017.html#scrum-events>

8. The Sprint Goal is the single objective for the Sprint. Although the Sprint Goal is a commitment by the Developers, it provides flexibility in terms of the exact work needed to achieve it. The Sprint Goal also creates coherence and focus, encouraging the Scrum Team to work together rather than on separate initiatives.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#sprint-backlog>

9. How to plan for outcomes

It's easy to get caught up in solution based thinking as you're trying to get work done because it initially feels faster.

But focusing on outcomes, rather than output, helps us avoid future rework because we're already taking problems into account and focusing on what the user should experience, in addition to what the UI or product should do.

see. <https://marisamorby.medium.com/output-vs-outcome-8a82a51c467f>

10. A Sprint could be cancelled if the Sprint Goal becomes obsolete. Only the Product Owner has the authority to cancel the Sprint.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#the-sprint>

11. Sprint Review

The purpose of the Sprint Review is to inspect the outcome of the Sprint and determine future adaptations. The Scrum Team presents the results of their work to key stakeholders and progress toward the Product Goal is discussed.

During the event, the Scrum Team and stakeholders review what was accomplished in the Sprint and what has changed in their environment. Based on this information, attendees collaborate on what to do next. The Product Backlog may also be adjusted to meet new opportunities. The Sprint Review is a working session and the Scrum Team should avoid limiting it to a presentation.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#sprint-review>

12. Product Owner

The Product Owner is accountable for maximizing the value of the product resulting from the work of the Scrum Team. How this is done may vary widely across organizations, Scrum Teams, and individuals.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#product-owner>

13. For Product Owners to succeed, the entire organization must respect their decisions. These decisions are visible in the content and ordering of the Product Backlog, and through the inspectable Increment at the Sprint Review.

The Product Owner is one person, not a committee. The Product Owner may represent the needs of many stakeholders in the Product Backlog. Those wanting to change the Product Backlog can do so by trying to convince the Product Owner.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#product-owner>

14. Transparency

The emergent process and work must be visible to those performing the work as well as those receiving the work. With Scrum, important decisions are based on the perceived state of its three formal artifacts. Artifacts that have low transparency can lead to decisions that diminish value and increase risk.

Transparency enables inspection. Inspection without transparency is misleading and wasteful.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#transparency>

15. Build-measure-learn feedback loop is at the core of the lean start-up model. As displayed in the diagram, a startup team starts with an idea. After identifying the hypotheses to test, the first step is to enter the build phase to build a minimum viable product as quickly as possible. The second phase is the measure phase to

determine whether the product development efforts are leading to the real progress. The final phase is the learn phase, through validated data learning, start-ups decide whether to pivot the original strategy or persevere.

see. <https://medium.com/@mianli666/lean-startup-less-is-more-and-fail-fast-succeed-faster-10f3904d4983>

16. The Scrum Team inspects how the last Sprint went with regards to individuals, interactions, processes, tools, and their Definition of Done. Inspected elements often vary with the domain of work. Assumptions that led them astray are identified and their origins explored. The Scrum Team discusses what went well during the Sprint, what problems it encountered, and how those problems were (or were not) solved.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#sprint-retrospective>

17. The Overall Retrospective is a new meeting in LeSS. Its purpose is to discuss cross-team, organizational and systemic problems within the organization.

see. <https://less.works/less/framework/overall-retrospective>

18. Helping the Scrum Team focus on creating high-value Increments that meet the Definition of Done;

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#scrum-master>

19. The Scrum Master serves the Scrum Team in several ways, including:

Coaching the team members in self-management and cross-functionality;

Helping the Scrum Team focus on creating high-value Increments that meet the Definition of Done;

Causing the removal of impediments to the Scrum Team's progress; and,

Ensuring that all Scrum events take place and are positive, productive, and kept within the timebox.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#scrum-master>

20. The Scrum Master serves the Product Owner in several ways, including:

Helping find techniques for effective Product Goal definition and Product Backlog management;

Helping the Scrum Team understand the need for clear and concise Product Backlog items;

Helping establish empirical product planning for a complex environment; and,

Facilitating stakeholder collaboration as requested or needed.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#scrum-master>

21. The Scrum Master serves the organization in several ways, including:

Leading, training, and coaching the organization in its Scrum adoption;

Planning and advising Scrum implementations within the organization;

Helping employees and stakeholders understand and enact an empirical approach for complex work; and,

Removing barriers between stakeholders and Scrum Teams.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#scrum-master>

22. The purpose of the Sprint Review is to inspect the outcome of the Sprint and determine future adaptations. The Scrum Team presents the results of their work to key stakeholders and progress toward the Product Goal is discussed.

During the event, the Scrum Team and stakeholders review what was accomplished in the Sprint and what has changed in their environment. Based on this information, attendees collaborate on what to do next. The Product Backlog may also be adjusted to meet new opportunities. The Sprint Review is a working session and the Scrum Team should avoid limiting it to a presentation.

The Sprint Review is the second to last event of the Sprint and is timeboxed to a maximum of four hours for a one-month Sprint. For shorter Sprints, the event is usually shorter.

see. <https://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html#sprint-review>

23. What Is A/B Testing?

At its core, A/B testing is exactly what it sounds like: you have two versions of an element (A and B) and a metric that defines success. To determine which version is better, you subject both versions to experimentation simultaneously. In the end, you measure which version was more successful and select that version for real-world use.

see. <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/06/the-ultimate-guide-to-a-b-testing/>