

Table of Contents

[Table of Contents](#)

[Why Launch a Team?](#)

[Purpose](#)

[Background](#)

[Facilitator Crib-Sheet](#)

[Pre-Work](#)

[Pre-Work Checklist](#)

[Interviews](#)

[Activity Facilitation Guide](#)

[Opening](#)

[Check-in](#)

[Confirm/Review Purpose](#)

[Review Agenda](#)

[Working Agreements](#)

[Parking Lot](#)

[Backpack \(Optional\)](#)

[About Me](#)

[Explain & Explore](#)

[Constellations](#)

[Market of Skills](#)

[About the Team](#)

[3.5 for Visions](#)

[Values/Alliance](#)

[Working Agreements](#)

[Fist of Five](#)

[Process](#)

[Ball Point Game](#)

[Product](#)

[Story Map](#)

[Stakeholder Map](#)

[What Else](#)

[Backpack](#)

[Closing](#)

[Report Out](#)

[Parking Lot](#)

[Action Items](#)

[Facilitator Retrospective](#)

Why Launch a Team?

Purpose

To intentionally take steps that equip a team in becoming a high-performing agile team.

Background

Teams tend to move through several phases that many described as: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. While teams will, over time, find their on way to move close to the Performing stage, this can take years in my experience. Intentionally launching a team, on the other hand, equips them to help navigate complex social and technical systems with more ease and resiliency. To put it another way, launching a team will help them accelerate through these phases faster and better.

In my own experience with teams, I've been able to watch teams that were not launched running alongside of the teams that I launched. The results with 3 months are measurable and observable by even those who may not be paying attention. In one example, a team had been coached for 8 months straight. I joined and launched a brand new team within the same reporting structure. By the 3rd month they were assessed higher than the one that had been coached solid for 8 months. Another case, one team got the launch, and the other did not. The team that launched found ways of working together that yielded a 10 fold improvement to their cycle time. The other team found few marginal improvements.

Facilitator Crib-Sheet

- Stay neutral
- Focus on process and environment
- Debrief nearly every activity
- Mix solo, pair, and group work
- Take breaks every 45 mins to 1.5 hours.
- Get feedback on the meeting's progress
- Have backup activities
- Record everything with photos every day
- If you need to offer experience, ask permission, say, "As a..."

Pre-Work

Pre-Work Checklist

1. Get facilities
2. Create a purpose that resonates
3. Sponsor interview
4. Team interviews
5. Product Pre-Work (As Needed)
6. Plan Agenda
7. Gather Supplies

Interviews

About You

- Tell me about your experience with “Agile” so far?
- What about before?
- What are the best things about how you work now that you would like to keep?
- What are the things about how you work now that you’d like to change?
- What does agile mean to you?
- What would working with your ideal team look like?
- What are you looking for in a Scrum Master?
- What are you looking for in a PO?
- What are you looking for in a team?

The Meeting

- What do you want from this meeting?
- What topics do you want us to work through?
- Who do you think should be there?
- Who shouldn’t be there?
- What things can I provide to make the time in the meeting enjoyable?
- What things do you not want to have happen in the meeting?
- What else do you want to tell me before we do this?

Activity Facilitation Guide

Opening

Check-in

Purpose: Get people present and ready in the room

Size: Any

Materials: None

Timing: 5-10 mins

Process: Introduce the question, ask everyone to go around and answer it.

- What animal are you?
- You are a personal weather system, what is today's forecast for you?
- One word to describe yourself coming into this meeting?
- One word that describes what you need in this meeting?

Confirm/Review Purpose

Purpose: Clarify the purpose and collect feedback

Size: Any

Materials: None

Timing: 2-5 mins

Process: "Welcome everyone. Today we are here < Read purpose >. Everything we do in our time together is leading up to seeing this purpose achieved. If we think we are off-track, or the agenda isn't serving this purpose, or anything else, bring it up and we'll adjust"

Welcome everyone to the room and show the purpose to them while reading it aloud. Frame it as the mission we are here to achieve in our time together. Mention that at any point we can and should question if we are working towards that purpose or not, and adjust.

Review Agenda

Purpose: Clarify the agenda and collect feedback

Size: Any

Materials: None

Timing: 2-5 mins

Process: "Here I have an agenda that I've prepared that I believe will allow us to get to our purpose."

Show the agenda to the group, and walk through it. Briefly explain how the items will work towards the purpose.

Mention when breaks will be, when the start and end times will be. Mention the cadence you have for shorter breaks (45 mins to 1.5 hours).

See if there are any questions or adjustments.

Working Agreements

Purpose: Establish the agreements the room will hold to have a successful launch

Size: Any

Materials: Easel Post it, Sharpie

Timing: 5-15 mins

Process: “Let’s take a little time and pick some agreements that we will all keep that will ensure our time together is as good as it can be. These agreements are for everyone, and not for me to police you on. I may bring these up a few times in the beginning to show how that might look, but I’ll leave the rest to you all.”

Establish some ground rules for the meeting. I typically will seed the document with two things: *ELMO* (Enough, lets move on) - We’ve gotten all we’ll get out of a discussion, time to move on. *Low-Tech* - Be adults with technology. If you’re on your phone or laptop, its disrespectful and you’re not paying attention. If you need to deal with something, step out, or wait for the break.

Ask the group if they would like to keep them, then open up by asking what other rules would they like to have. You may need to give some examples to get going. I mention that many groups value agreements around listening, speaking, and interrupting. Work to get a few of these, then see if you can call ELMO!

Parking Lot

Purpose: Create a place for side-topics to live

Size: Any

Materials: Easel Post it, Sharpie

Timing: 5 mins

Process: “Inevitably, we’ll talk about something and wind up off topic from our purpose. When that happens, we want to put that topic here in the Parking Lot. At the end of this, I will go over each topic and make sure we get time to cover it again.”

Backpack (Optional)

[Backpack](#)

About Me

Explain & Explore

Purpose: Share personal truth and find common ground with others

Size: Any

Materials: Index Cards, Sharpies

Timing: 20-30 mins

Process: Give out an index card or two and sharpie to everyone.

“Take a few minutes, and think about something that is deeply true about you. Something true about who you are. Not something like, ‘I have a family.’”

Ask everyone to stand up, and exchange cards with different people around 5 times. Then ask them to pair off.

“I want you to look at the truth you have in your hand. Read it to yourself. Find out how this truth is also true for you, even just a little. Share what that truth and what you’ve found with your pair.”

Constellations

Purpose: Allow individuals to both share their truths and see others’

Size: Limited by room size

Materials: Index cards, sharpies, a bag/box, and a non-moving object

Timing: 20-40 mins

Set-up: Place the non-moving object in the center of the room with nothing in between it and people.

Process: Have everyone stand up, and circle around the central object.

“This central object is like a black hole or magnet. I’m going to say a statement. The more true the statement is, the more the gravity pulls you towards it. The less true it is, the more it repels you. Move closer or further away as appropriate. When you’re done moving, stand there. When you’re done moving, look at where everyone else is. Anything surprising?”

Read the list of easy statements, allowing them to move. Remind them to look at everyone else. Move to the list of controversial statements.

“It’s your turn now, take a sharpie and index cards. Write a statement you’d like to see the group react to. Fold your index cards up, and place them in the box.”

Read through a few, check-in to see if they want to continue.

Statements (Easy):

- I like working alone

- I thrive when I'm around other people
- I am happiest in nature
- I like debates
- I do not like uncomfortable silence

Statements (Harder):

- I enjoy public speaking
- I avoid conflict with people with more seniority than me
- I enjoy public recognition
- I think agile is going to work for us

Market of Skills

Purpose: Share skills and interests across the team

Size: Teams

Materials: Sharpies, Post-Its, Easel Post its

Timing: 35-55 min

Process: "Everyone has things they bring to the table, and things that they want also. So we're going to build a market for just that."

Give each individual/pair/group an easel post it and sharpie. Ask them to create a market stall on their easel post it. They need to pay attention to the things they are selling, which are the things they are good at or can offer to others. They also need to have a place to list and talk about the things they are buying. The things they'd be interested in acquiring from others. Tell them that when they're done they'll present their market stall to the group, so ham it up.

After everyone has designed their market stall, place them on the walls. Have the individuals go to their appropriate market stall, and the others have sharpies and stickies. Listen to the pitch by the market owner. Have people put stickies to buy what they are selling, and offer to sell what they are buying.

Notes: The core elements of this activity has a wide range of applications. Within this moment it can be used to de-risk a project and establish a stronger sense of a cross-functional team. Encourage outside-of-work elements to come in!

About the Team

3.5 for Visions

Purpose: Quickly establish a vision for the team that they have created.

Size: Best with even numbers

Materials: Index cards, sharpies

Timing: 15-25 min

Process: Give cards and sharpies.

“Every team needs a vision, an identity, a dream of who they want to be. Write one or two sentences that captures that vision of this team.”

Collect all of the cards. Ask the group to pair off. Mix and re-distribute the cards, 1 per person.

“Each pair has two cards, and is going to go through the process of choosing the best one. Here’s how to do it. As a pair, you have 7 points or votes. You will split those points or votes across the two cards. So, for example, when you’re done one card will have a 5 and another would have a 2. You cannot split the points into fractions. No 3.5s. There will always be a winner”

Collect the winners separate from the losers. Re-distribute the winners to pairs. Repeat until you have only 1 winning card.

If the numbers are odd, you may need to shuffle a card that lost back in.

Values/Alliance

Purpose: Develop a set of core values to guide the team in their daily interactions

Size: Team

Materials: Sharpies, Post its (Optional), Easel Post-It

Timing: 10-15 mins

Process: “Every team needs a set of values or attributes or qualities that guide their every day actions. We are going to try and create 3-5 of them. I want you all to think of the values that would help this team live up to its vision. If you have an idea for one, call it out.”

As they call them out, ask them for an example, “What would X look like?” Afterwards, ask the team, if they have other examples, and then confirm, “Would we like to keep this value?” You may want to roman-vote this, depending on how the interactions are.

Continue until you have at least 3-5 and the group is done.

Working Agreements

Purpose: Create the rules that the team will follow day-to-day

Size: Team

Materials: Sharpies, Post its, Easel Post-It

Timing: 15-20 mins

Set-Up: Split the easel post it into 3 areas. Give them the names: Conflict, Collaboration, Communication. Hang the easel post-it.

Process: “We have a vision of who we aspire to be, and the values that we will guide us. Now we want to create the rules that actually get us there. I have created 3 areas to start with.

Conflict: When we have different opinions or a debate or a difficult decision. What rules will we

follow to get us through that moment? Collaboration: What rules will we follow that bring out the best in working together? Communication: How do we best share information and talk?”

Ask them to write a potential working agreement, bring it up front, read it to everyone, and ask if it fits. Continue this process for the time box or until the group runs out of energy. Pay attention to vague rules, and ask for examples.

Fist of Five

Purpose: Gain consensus and identify areas where more support is needed

Size: Any

Materials: None

Timing: 5-10 mins

Process: Ask the group rate things on a scale of 1 to 5 using their fingers. 5 is Love and support it. 1 is dislike and cannot support it. 3 is concerns and will support.

Countdown from 3 and have everyone show their hands.

If there is a 2 or 1, **stop**. Work carefully to identify and remove all the concerns they have. You may need to do this anonymously.

Process

Ball Point Game

Purpose: Experience the core pieces of iterative (Scrum) development

Size: 5-20

Materials: 2x Easel Post it, Sharpie, Gross of balls, 2x boxes

Timing: 25-35 min

Set-Up: Have an open space for this. Place the box of balls, and the empty box side-by-side. Have the group stand and gather.

The goal of the game is to move as many balls through the team back to the empty box as possible. This will take place over 5 rounds. Each round will be 2 minutes long, and there will be 1 minute in-between each round to figure out how you might get a higher score the next time.

Show the rules.

Give them 1 minute to get ready then begin the first round.

Record the score.

Repeat for 4 more rounds

Debrief

Rules:

- The ball must begin and end in the same place
- The ball must pass through every person
- You cannot pass to the person next to you
- The ball must travel through the air

Notes:

You can ask for estimates to highlight planning. Similar tweaks can be made to highlight other aspects of Scrum. The rules are short and specific. The teams will need to work within them, but there is a lot of room for very creative improvements. Have a good understanding of the rules to help arbitrate.

Product

Story Map

Purpose: Collaboratively build a product roadmap

Size: 5-15

Materials: Painters Tape, Sharpies, lots of stickies, index cards

Timing: 2-6 hours

Process:

1. Personas - Break into pairs. Give sharpies and index cards. Tell each pair to think of anyone and everyone who would interact with our product. Give them a name. Write 1-2 sentences about them. Identify the problem they have. Share, Group, Vote on the most important ones.
2. Outcomes - Pairs. Give Sharpies and Index Cards. Look at the important personas. What is the best possible outcome that they could have, and what would be the outcome for the company? What are the outcomes we have to avoid at all costs? Share, group, and vote on the most important ones
3. Put the users and outcomes on a wall. Ask them to create the activities they will go through in our product that gets them to those outcomes. One per sticky, place the stickies in the right sequence.
4. Break those activities down smaller, what are the smaller steps within that activities. Place stickies for those smaller steps
5. Identify alternatives to those steps and activities
6. Identify releases by choosing the smallest subset of steps that accomplish the outcomes. Future releases add more value to that.

Notes: You may need to do some pre-work with product people ahead of this to enable this activity to succeed. Also, read [Jeff Patton's User Story Mapping book](#). These notes are the barest essentials of the process.

Stakeholder Map

Purpose: Understand and strategize around engaging external stakeholders

Size: 5-15

Materials: Painters Tape, Sharpies, stickies,

Timing: 35-45 minutes

Process: Distribute stickies and sharpies.

“We may be a team that is capable of building this product, but we’re in a company full of people who have various interest and influence over nearly every aspect of that. We want to figure out who they are and how we will work with them best to ensure success.”

Ask them to begin to come up with everyone with any interest or influence in us. One per sticky.

Have them place the stickies along 2 axes: Influence and Interest.

The resulting quadrants will inform the strategies the team will need for each group.

Update working agreements or expectations appropriately

Quadrants:

Low Interest/High Influence - Meet Needs

High Interest/High Influence - Key Player

High Interest/Low Influence - Show Consideration

Low Interest/Low Influence - Least Important

What Else

Backpack

Purpose: Get a shared understanding of what is needed for success

Size: Team

Materials: Easel Post-it, Post its, Sharpies

Timing: 15-35 minutes

Set-Up: Draw a backpack on an easel post-it

Process: “We are going on a journey together. At the end of that journey is seeing our vision and challenge accomplished. What do we need in our backpack to make this journey succeed?”

Give sharpies and stickies. Ask them to write down anything they think needs to be in the backpack to see us succeed.

At the end go through each one, clarifying what it is, and ask: “Do we have this already, or do we need to go buy it for our journey?” Things we have, move aside. Things we need to buy, convert into an action item or risk.

Closing

Report Out

Purpose: Allow people to share insights from the day with one another

Size: Team

Materials: None

Timing: 15-25 minutes

Process: A number of things can be done for this, anything from Mind Maps, Journey Lines, etc. For a quick and simple version ask a question for everyone to answer:

- Share something that you got out of day
- What is an insight you've gained
- Something you're thankful for after today

Parking Lot

Purpose: Address issues that aren't related to the purpose of the team meeting

Size: Any

Materials: Easel Post it, stickies, sharpies

Timing: 15-25 minutes

Process: For each issue within the parking lot, ask if the topic is still relevant to address or not. For the topics they say they'd like to continue with, convert them into action items for the group will own.

Action Items

Purpose: Solidify follow-up actions that need to be taken after a meeting and gain commitment to them

Size: Any

Materials: Easel Post it, stickies, sharpies

Timing: 15-25 minutes

Process: Draw a chart on an easel post it with the columns: Who, What, How, and When. For each column put a sticky note. After a row is complete, re-affirm that the individuals and group understand their responsibilities to one another for those actions.

Facilitator Retrospective

Purpose: Gain feedback on how the meeting is going

Size: Any

Materials: Easel Post it, stickies, sharpies

Timing: 5-15 minutes

Process: Put an easel post it up on the exits of the room with 3 columns: +, -, and Delta.

Introduce by saying, "Your feedback is important to me and how I facilitate this liftoff for you. I have 3 columns here, for things that went well, put them in the plus column, things that didn't, place them in the minus column, and things you'd like changed, in the delta column." I also add, "If you put nothing, I'll go home thinking I couldn't do any better and will come back with more of the same. So if you'd like it to be better, throw some stickies up there."