

agile

TODAY

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE
ENTERPRISE INNOVATOR
Volume #21 . April 2019

Discover the
3 things
that drive you
with *Ali Walker*

Mark Dodgson & David Gann
reveal the
character trait
most leaders
are missing



The Work & Play Edition

MARTY CAGAN SHARES THE BOOKS THAT INSPIRE HIM

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ANNA CREWS



Last year, we surveyed over 300 Agile community members in our annual Appetite for Agile survey. We were interested to find that, for over half of respondents, their organisation's struggle to shift its mindset was perceived as the biggest obstacle to change.

For this reason, we decided to theme this year's **Agile Australia Conference** around the 'Agile Mindset' – join us at Hilton Sydney on **25-26 June 2019** to discuss what it is, why it matters, and how we can adopt a mindset for change.

Helping you take a step towards sparking a mindset change, this edition prompts us to reconsider two states we often see as separate: work and play. Within these pages, we're delighted to have several writers providing insight into topics they'll further expand upon in their AgileAus19 keynote addresses. Check out **Ali Walker's** thoughts on the three forces driving humans ([page 5](#)), **Mark Dodgson** on the character trait most leaders are missing ([page 7](#)), and **Marty Cagan** on the books that inspire him ([page 14](#)).

Keen to introduce a playful attitude into your own work life? Head to [page 10](#) and discover how to bring out your inner child! On [page 18](#), we tap into the psyche of the athlete for lessons on merging play and work. Plus, flip to [page 15](#) for Anna Fiofilova's look into the mindset of people managers.

In addition to AgileAus19, we're gearing up for a busy few months as we prepare to take Agile Australia events across the country. **Hands-on workshops** led by some of the Conference's most challenging thinkers will be held in **Sydney** (24 June), **Melbourne** (28 June), **Brisbane** (1 July) and **Auckland** (1 July). Visit agileaustralia.com.au for all the details you'll need.

As always, happy reading! Feel free to drop me a line at the email below with any suggestions for future *AgileTODAY* articles.

ANNA CREWS Editor, *AgileTODAY*
editor@agiletoday.com.au

Love the magazine? Want something different covered? Please let us know!

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COVER IMAGE
Kayt Edwards
at AgileAus18



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The 3 Things that Drive You

DR ALI WALKER

Dr. Ali Walker is a lecturer and researcher in leadership at the Centre for Social Impact (UNSW, Sydney). Ali will offer her insights on mindset and leadership at AgileAus19. She'll also be hosting a workshop, "How to read and lead the room", in Sydney on 24 June.

There are three forces that drive every person's life, regardless of our age, sex, race, and occupation. According to psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung, our lives are controlled by three forces:

- Individuation: our desire for self-discovery;
- Synchronicity: fate or external timing (things that are 'meant to be'); and
- Homeostasis: our mind and body's endless quest for balance.

1. INDIVIDUATION (Scanning for Self-Discovery)

Individuation is the full realisation and wholeness of the Self: the discovery of who we fundamentally are. We are always scanning our environments to discover people, experiences and objects that are a match with our deepest truth. This means that life is an ongoing experiment of self-discovery: we spend our time looking for things that give us a sense of self. This is why we become attached to other people and things – because we have found ourselves in them. The wisdom of individuation is the realisation that we already have everything we are looking for contained within us.


2. SYNCHRONICITY (Using Fate to Co-Create with the Universe)

Jung defined the concept of synchronicity as "a meaningful coincidence." Synchronicity is the unfolding of fate, where we attract particular life experiences in order to support our life purpose. Examples of synchronicity are coincidences that cannot be dismissed: where your partner leaves you and you lose your job on the same day; where you

think of someone or speak about someone and they contact you shortly after. We need to see symbolic events as signposts on our life's journey.

3. HOMEOSTASIS (Balancing our Drives and Desires)

If we push too hard from a place of fear, there will be an over-compensation in another area of our lives. Jung also said that we all seek balance or equilibrium in our mental and emotional lives. This balance is a bit like our 'inner metabolism'. This means that if we go too far in one direction, for example, working too hard, we will compensate by being extremely lazy in another area of our lives (for example: not exercising to find balance).

If we are seeking to be healthier and happier, we need to review all of the areas of our lives where we are pushing too hard. Unless we become gentler in those areas, we will continue to engage in behaviour that doesn't make any sense on the surface. We do this because it makes perfect sense to our inner drive for balance. 

A photograph of an ANZ exhibition booth at AgileAus19. In the foreground, a man in a yellow ANZ polo shirt and a woman in a white shirt are smiling and talking. The man is holding a smartphone. In the background, another woman in a blue blazer is holding a folder. The booth has a blue wall with the text 'ASSURANCE CENTRE OF EXPERTISE' and 'AUSTRALIA DIVISION THROUGH GREAT OPERATIONAL RISK IS FASTER TO RESPOND TO OUR CUSTOMERS' NEEDS. There are also some sticky notes on the wall.

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Most leaders are missing this crucial character trait

MARK DODGSON AND DAVID GANN

This article was originally published by the World Economic Forum on 14 February 2019. View the original publication [here](#).



Source: Imperial College London

Many of the world's most famous entrepreneurs are not known for their grace. Our culture associates a certain type of 'robust' personality with business success: whether it's the catchphrases of TV shows like *The Apprentice* ("you're fired"), *Dragon's Den* ("I'm out") and *Mad Money* ("bulls make money; bears make money; hogs get slaughtered"); or the titles of business biographies (*The Titan*, *The Patriarch*, *Make Trouble*, *The Power Broker*); the role of grace in business leadership is treated as a lower order trait.

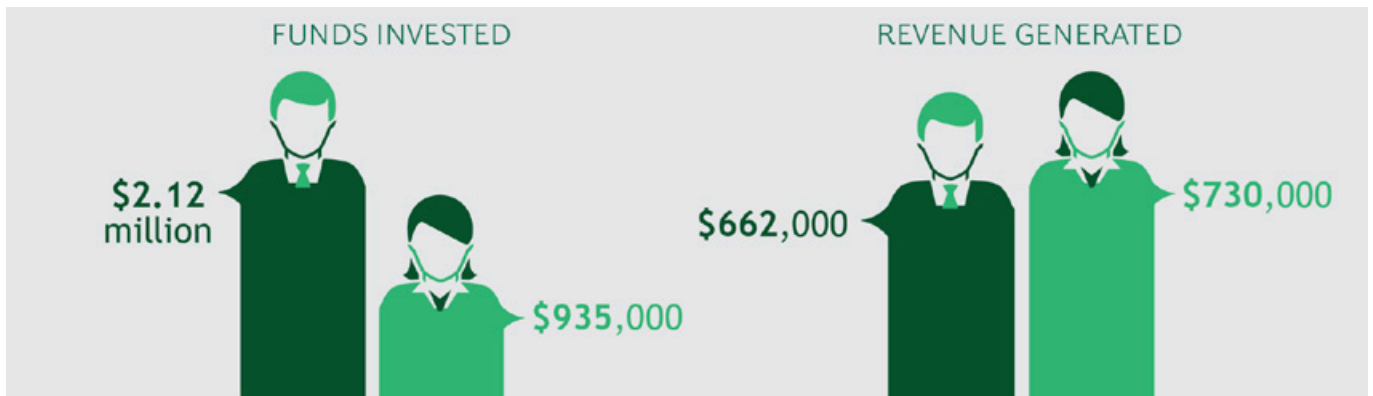
Yet grace is a crucial ingredient of leadership today. Grace is the understanding that leaders don't achieve great things on their own; they need others to work with, who they trust and respect. Leaders build empathy and loyalty with their colleagues, stakeholders, customers and audiences, through personal generosity and warmth. Graceful leaders lack hubris, recognise their shortcomings and are quick to give credit to others.

Hubris – believing your own PR – is found in all fields. Jonas Salk failed to give appropriate credit to his team for the discovery of the polio vaccine. The list of disgraced business leaders, brought down by a belief in their unfailing omniscience, continues to grow. Hubris is present in many of today's political leaders.

But as we found in our book, *The Playful Entrepreneur*, there are also leaders capable of displaying great amounts of grace. In today's business environment, where collaboration across professions and organisations is crucial, and where creativity and intuition are important resources to be nurtured, there is significant value in leaders who are graceful.

We found female leaders more easily recognise that competition is not always a zero-sum game. Several women we spoke to were dismissive of the 'nature is red in tooth and claw' view of the world, and ridiculed a testosterone-driven approach to management.

"Grace is the understanding that leaders don't achieve great things on their own"



Startups Founded or Cofounded by Women Garner Less in Investments but Generate More Revenue

Sources: MassChallenge; BGC analysis

Note: Of the 350 companies included in the analysis, 258 were founded by men, and 92 were founded or cofounded by women.

Stephanie Shirley is a software pioneer who created a hugely successful company comprised initially entirely of women, fighting exceptional personal and business difficulties in so doing. As an indication of the challenges she faced, when she began her firm, women couldn't open bank accounts without the permission of their husbands. Finding businesses did not reply to her under her name, she changed it with immediate effect to 'Steve'. By wholeheartedly supporting and trusting her employees, she accumulated great wealth and, as one of the UK's leading philanthropists, has dedicated her life and indefatigable energy to giving it away.

Grace is also found in the ambitions of two young Silicon Valley science entrepreneurs, Elizabeth Iorns and Jenna Tregarthen, who are strongly motivated by personal concerns in building their businesses. Iorns created a company that brokers the use of scientific equipment and she strongly believes in the need to provide career opportunities for young scientists.

Tregarthen formed a company that helps aid the recovery of thousands of young people suffering from eating disorders. Both have reason to be pleased with their achievements, but any acknowledgement of success is modestly attributed to others, and their focus lies in describing the continuing challenges ahead.

Being graceful does not imply any lack of ambition and personal fortitude. It is hard to imagine a more resolute and determined person than Carla del Ponte. When

she was Switzerland's Attorney General, and in the face of fierce opposition, she changed Swiss banking laws to prevent the laundering of criminal proceeds. In the process of doing so, the mafia murdered her close Italian colleague and counterpart and she received death threats.

Del Ponte then led the international tribunals prosecuting war crimes in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, facing direct opposition from those countries in which the crimes occurred, and indifference and occasional hostility from supposed supporters.

Yet amongst her achievements she succeeded in getting the first ever head of state to answer charges before an international tribunal. Her grace lies in serving the interests of justice, in the belief that when something is right, it gives you the strength of character to confront extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Our studies also found numerous examples of graceful male leaders, displaying great empathy and generosity

For some, grace comes naturally, for others it needs to be cultivated, but it is an essential ingredient for leaders in a complex and uncertain world.



of spirit. They include, for example, Sir Ove Arup, the founder of the international design company, Arup; Gerard Fairtlough, who played a crucial role in establishing the UK biotechnology industry; and Lord Norman Fowler, the politician who has campaigned so determinedly to combat AIDS.

The great American author, Marilynne Robinson, wrote in *Lila*: “Grace is not so poor a thing that it cannot present itself in any number of ways.” And the leaders we researched, male and female, displayed grace that

was manifested in many different ways. For some, grace comes naturally, for others it needs to be cultivated, but it is an essential ingredient for leaders in a complex and uncertain world.

At a time when combativeness and vicious disagreements are poisoning our social fabric, there would be much value if all our leaders, and especially high-profile leaders in politics and business, displayed considerably more grace. [👉](#)



Mark Dodgson is the Professor of Innovation Studies at the University of Queensland. David Gann is the Vice President at Imperial College London. Together, they co-authored *The Playful Entrepreneur* (Yale University Press, 2018).

Mark will explore the importance of play in creating exciting and purposeful work in his keynote address at AgileAus19 (25-26 June, Hilton Sydney).

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**THE FUTURE
FAVOURS THE**

BOLD

Play hard, work smarter!

In March, AgileTODAY headed along to #play14 Sydney. The event was part of the broader #play14 movement: “an international gathering of like-minded people who share the common idea that playing is the best way to learn and understand”. Over two and a half days, we played games and created our own in an effort to unleash our ‘inner child’ and spark creativity.

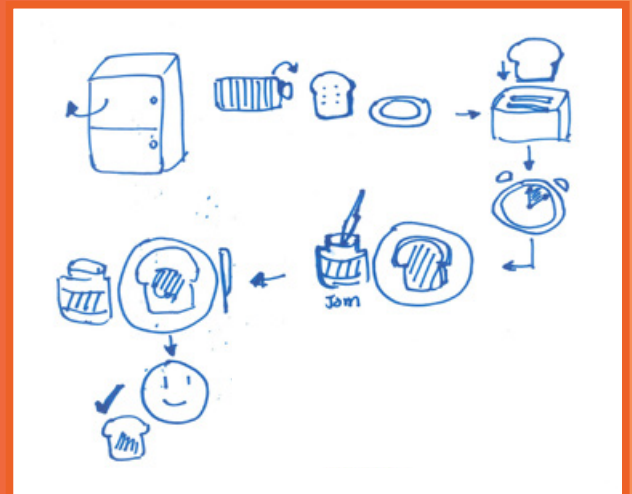
Playing as an adult is no easy feat: it’s difficult to eliminate your inner critic, overcome your fear of judgement and simply let loose! However, as #play14 co-organiser Hanna Karlsson explains on the next page, play is becoming increasingly important. It helps develop our facilitation skills, increases our responsiveness to change, and boosts our capacity to come up with new ideas.

This was the first time #play14 had come to Australian shores, and we thank Hanna and the rest of the #play14 team – Hayley Bell, Ralph Warta, Catherine Hyams and Cédric Pontet – for warmly welcoming us into this highly enjoyable event!

We’re keen to learn more about the importance of play from Hanna and other speakers like Mark Dodgson at the upcoming AgileAus19 Conference. Game on!

LET’S TOAST TO PLAY

In a game facilitated by Sol Pandiella-McLeod (Senior UX Consultant, DiUS), #play14 delegates drew the steps they take when making toast. Interestingly, the average person is said to include 5-7 steps in this drawing exercise. The game highlights the diverse mental models that exist within organisations – everyone brings a different set of biases and approaches to the same task.



#play14 attendees



The benefits of play

HANNA KARLSSON

Hear Hanna (Founder, theWorkshopper) delve further into the importance of play when she presents at AgileAus19.

While the benefits of play have been recognised in fields such as psychology and neuroscience, a resistance still remains. Play is often seen as a frivolous activity, less valuable than 'productive time'. However, play enables us to improve learning, create psychological safety, increase engagement, and, maybe most importantly, it can allow us to embrace ambiguity and creativity.

Somewhat ironically, we've created a world that makes adaptability and creativity harder, as well as more important. We are hardly optimised to deal with adaptation and creativity. Thus, in these times of increasing speed of change and the importance of adaptability, play is crucial! As kids, we didn't hesitate to throw ourselves into any activity that looked like a bit of fun. Yet, when we grow up, we seem to lose that ability. We develop filters that make it a challenge to be silly and let our guard down.

In some ways, these filters are great: they stop us from wasting the energy that'd be expended by imagining all possible options at all times. Other filters are there to make sure we behave appropriately, adhere to social rules, and avoid rejection. Unfortunately, these filters also make it harder for us to come up with novel ideas. And, even if we do think up these ideas, we are prone

to keep things just like they are. We need to feel safe, happy and engaged in order to have enough energy and courage to be creative and open to change.

Making a concerted effort to engage in play – both through initiatives like #play14 and in everyday life – lets us temporarily suspend our fixation with productivity and appearing 'proper'. Play pumps you up with good 'brain juices', stimulating neurotransmitters linked to well-being and pro-social behaviour. It releases dopamine (increasing focus and learning capabilities) oxytocin (building trust and collaboration) and endorphins that move you into a relaxed, creative mode. It's a brain cocktail that even beats the best Mojito!

In unlocking these parts of our brain, play becomes a key ingredient in organisational health – boosting our ability to come up with novel ideas. Play also helps us get comfortable with ambiguity: it creates an environment where we don't know what comes next but where it is safe to fail.

Ultimately, play encourages us to challenge the filters we've constructed and deliberately work around them – and you'll have a laugh in the process!

AgileAus19 speakers include:



Nish Mahanty
Head of Development,
irexchange



Erin McManus
Engineering Manager,
Spotify



Jody Weir
Head of Agility,
THE ICONIC



Pete Young
Head of Digital Planning &
Enablement, Australia Post

The importance of a playful mindset:

#play14 attendees explore the nexus between play and work

Dara Simkin (Director, ProjectPlay.Work)

Whether we like it or not, rapid advancements in technology like automation and AI will be eliminating jobs by the millions in the next five to ten years. Our only defence against irrelevancy is being more human.

To be human is to challenge assumptions, push past the possible and constantly ask the question ‘What if?’ Through this curiosity and exploration, we create a rich world of possibilities and opportunities.

Adopting a playful mindset is the foundation of any great idea. The science of play shows that when we play we’re more optimistic, open-minded, adaptable, empathetic and creative. Our soft skills are now undoubtedly our hard skills. In an ever-changing world of technology where uncertainty is a constant, play is no longer just an ‘option’ – it’s a necessity to keep your organisation and your people relevant for the future of work.



Chris Morgan (Software Team Lead, ResMed)

Learning by doing is far more powerful than just reading about a subject, as we store memories through the emotions we attach to experiences. Games allow you to distill into minutes experiences that would otherwise take you months or years to collect on the job.

By taking a team away from their usual context and area of expertise, problems associated with ego and historical momentum (‘this is how it’s done’) diminish. Games create a far more receptive learning environment.



Frederic Ducros (Chief Transformation Officer, AirAsia Group)

Games get us into a happy, productive state conducive to change. They give us lessons we can then hear and benefit from, thanks to the state we’re in.

Amanda Clarke (Agile Coach, Commonwealth Bank)

I see two benefits in using play regularly at work:

1. Results are often dictated as much by our 'state' as by our knowledge, experience or capability. Sports psychologists and executive coaches help their clients to know what states are most useful in different situations and how to access them quickly for this reason. Play can often help whole groups of people access useful states quickly. Think about the states useful in designing and adopting change: curiosity, openness, focus, and more. Games can be used to access these states quickly and together so teams can learn, change and deliver better outcomes.
2. Some games contain lessons as well as helping to create useful states. Lessons learned in a state that enhances curiosity and energy have been demonstrated to be more powerful and have longer term benefits than being lectured to or reading about a topic.



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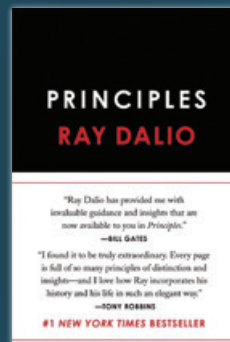


Between the lines with Marty Cagan

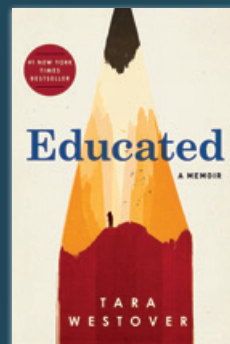
Marty Cagan is the founder of the Silicon Valley Product Group and the author of *INSPIRED: How To Create Products Customers Love*. We're thrilled that Marty will be venturing Down Under to speak at AgileAus19. Get to know Marty a little better by discovering the books that make him tick!



A book that changed the way you think about work:
There are many in this category. One of the most impactful and inspiring to me was **Leaders Eat Last** by Simon Sinek.



A book you always find yourself recommending to others:
Principles: Life and Work, by Ray Dalio. In fact, I liked the book so much I wrote an article about it (check out the AgileTODAY blog to read Marty's thoughts!)



A book you didn't expect to enjoy, but did:
The book **Educated** by Tara Westover came highly recommended to me, but was far outside my normal genres, so it took a while for me to get to it, but it turned out to be one of the most compelling and thought provoking books I have ever read.



A book that helped you become a better writer:
I learned a great deal from Stephen King's **On Writing, A Memoir of the Craft**. It's also a memoir so he intertwines the lessons on writing with his origin story.



The Manager's Mindset: What is it like to be a people manager?

BY ANNA FIOFILOVA

“In 2025, it is my dream that people, when asked why they joined a company, will no longer say ‘Because I heard they were so Agile’; they would say “Because I heard the managers were awesome” – Nigel Dalton

In the Agile community, we often shy away from the word ‘manager’, and instead focus more on ‘coaching’, ‘mentoring’ or ‘leading’. However, I’ve found that having a good manager is more important than anything else. We still see people leaving awesome workplaces simply because their managers haven’t paid much attention to them or, even worse, have prevented them from developing their careers. In small and large organisations alike, we need to be more Agile in our HR departments and place a greater focus on people management.

I recently conducted some research in my company to get an insight into the mindset of people managers. I had a suspicion that people management duties were often treated as secondary to ‘main roles’ like Delivery or Tech leadership. My research involved anonymous surveys of 50 people managers with direct reports, plus a few face-to-face interviews.

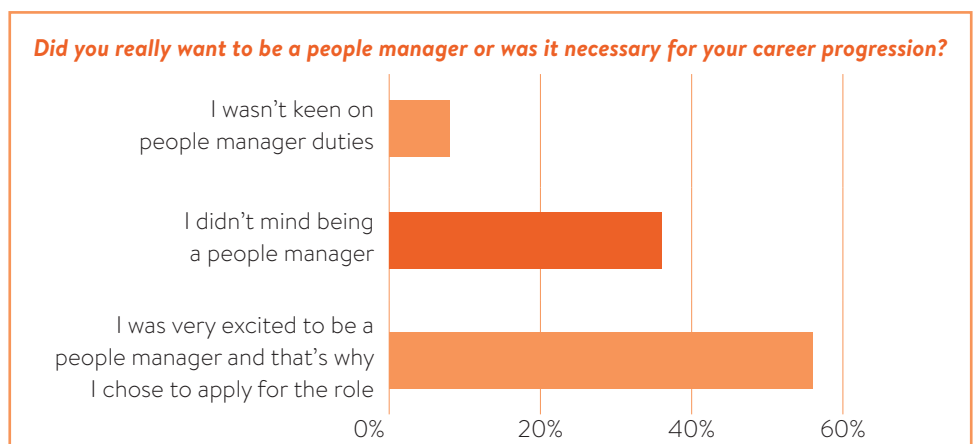
Below, some select findings from my survey offer an insight into what’s involved in being a people manager, and what policies, practices or processes might add more value to the role.

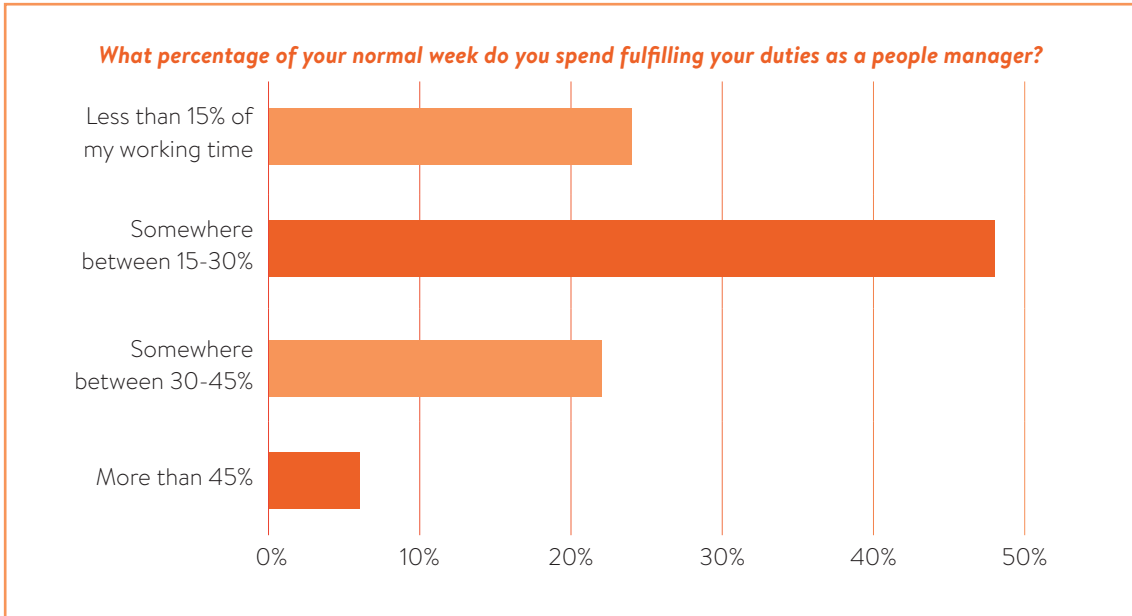
THE ROLE OF THE PEOPLE MANAGER

Firstly, I was interested in whether people genuinely wanted to be a people manager, or whether they just viewed it as a necessary step to progress in their careers. My findings were generally positive.

I then asked, “Do you feel you have too few or too many direct reports?” 74% of respondents had just enough direct reports, 18% felt they had too many, and 8% wanted more direct reports.

I was curious as to what percentage of a normal week respondents spent in fulfilling their duties as a people manager. In the graph on the next page, respondents provided an average figure for the year.



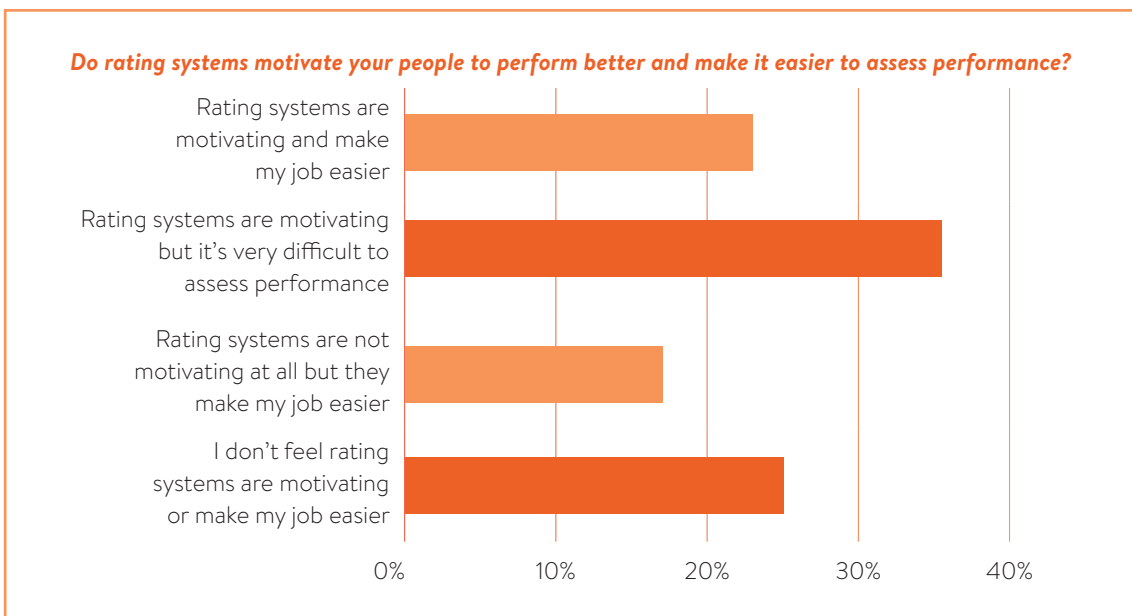


When asked in a follow-up question what they'd seek to improve in the people management space, many respondents wanted more time to spend with their reports. "The most challenging part about people management is how much time it consumes," one manager noted. As another respondent explained: "when you have a direct report who is under-performing, it can drain a lot of your time and energy to ensure that person is heading in the right direction."

Despite time constraints, all respondents reported having at least one meaningful, 1-on-1 conversation per month with each person they managed. It was suggested that "provid[ing] people managers with time out of their day jobs" to dedicate to these duties could greatly benefit both people managers and their reports.

THE USEFULNESS OF PERFORMANCE REVIEW SYSTEMS

As part of my survey, I also asked people managers whether they believed that current performance rating systems motivated their people to perform better and made it easier to assess performance. Over 60% of responding managers found that rating systems did not work for them.



Rating systems and meeting formal review commitments can “take more time than they provide value,” one respondent commented. Implementing “something more closely aligned to regular feedback and an OKR (or similar) setting approach” could ensure reports gain truly meaningful feedback. Similarly, another manager wanted “to [experiment] with OKRs more and really drive out metrics around the real delivery of value.”

We must remember that inconsistencies are inherent in performance frameworks. While managers may be able to identify the best performers in their own teams, it’s difficult to use this data to pinpoint the company’s ‘top’ performers – particularly in large organisations. The concept of ‘performance’ is almost impossible to universally define: it’s largely based on managers’ biases. Organisations need to ensure control networks are in place to prevent these biases from affecting teams and interfering with fair, balanced management.

In any case, people managers agreed it was crucial to have informal conversations about reports’ progress outside of formal performance frameworks. It’s essential not to shy away from “having a tough conversation with someone you manage”: be it around an HR issue, salary, or underperformance. We need to feel like we can candidly share our perceived wins and losses with managers, and that they’re there to advise us along the way.

MANAGING FOR GROWTH

People management provides an opportunity for mutual personal growth: managers foster their teams and, in turn, the role presents growth opportunities for managers. As one manager put it: “Meaningfully helping people grow in their career is the most challenging and rewarding aspect of [the role].”

Helping facilitate growth, the majority of people managers I surveyed gathered and distributed feedback on the people they manage from their peers at least once or twice per year. Managers also made conscious efforts to improve their own management styles, with 89% regularly seeking direct or indirect feedback on their performance as a manager. However, there can always be more room for recognition of whether you’re doing your management job ‘right’.

The manager’s ‘conflict of interest’ is important to raise here. Managers must encourage growth outside their business units, even if it means their reports might move onwards or upwards to other teams. In any organisation, it’s crucial to ensure managers can freely make recommendations to their reports without the worry of compromising their delivery goals.

Increased training opportunities were welcomed by people managers, especially in “dealing with difficult employees and people with personality or mental health issues.” Although, as another respondent pointed out, it’s “really tricky to give generic advice on specific scenarios.” In these cases, HR can help to “provide one-on-one support to managers to help them manage a tricky people or performance situation.” Other proposed initiatives included establishing a mentoring scheme or an organisation-wide guild for people managers. 🏠

Anna Fiofilova is a Senior Software Engineer at REA Group. Catch Anna during AgileAus19 as she presents as part of the lightning talks – where she and other presenters will share quickfire, 5 minute talks on a smorgasbord of topics.



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Reflections from AgileAus Athletes

Sport creates a stage where the individual's role on the team is magnified – and where bouncing back from failure is essential. As Sam Walker writes in *The Captain Class*:

Unlike the business world, where innovative new products can be developed in secret, sports does not allow teams to hide their techniques. They can hone them in practice, but they must display them during matches in full view of their opponents, who can keep rewinding the tape until they find vulnerabilities... In this constricted, pressurised environment, the outcome can be determined by a fraction of a second or a gap no wider than an inch. One small mistake made by a single person can overwhelm an hour of otherwise flawless play.

This got us wondering what practical tips we can take from the athlete's mindset to help us succeed in our work lives. We tapped into the thoughts of some AgileAus community members to find out!

Six World Class Tips for Success

Former Olympic handballer and AgileAus19 speaker Sandy Mamoli has previously shared her “Six World Class Tips” on how the Olympics can make you a better person in your work life.



1. PICK YOUR TEAM WISELY

Don't be afraid to start out as the worst player on the best team that will still accept you. As in sports, being around people who are better than you helps normalise high performance and holds you to a higher standard. Carefully choose to join the best companies and teams that'll accept you.



Sandy Mamoli in action as an Olympic handballer

2. KNOW WHEN TO GO

Never feel bad about leaving a job or a team, especially if you feel you're the best player or have exhausted your opportunities for learning. After all, no one in sports would feel guilty about this!

3. COLLABORATION IS KEY

(Even though it's hard!)

You don't need to be friends to succeed together. Sporting teams are 100% chosen by merit: you're grouped with people you may not like or relate to, but you have to learn to play with them as they're the best at what they do. As long as you establish safety and trust, collaboration is possible.

4. BE GOOD AT FEEDBACK

We've probably all seen how a player who refuses to pass or a co-worker who hoards information can be ruinous to a team. Being 'good' at feedback means knowing how to give and receive advice, and whose advice to listen to. Your team should be an environment where there are no 'undiscussables', so a single player's behaviour doesn't impact the team.

5. NEVER STOP LEARNING

The pace and strategy of sports is constantly evolving as players learn to approach their game in more innovative ways. This pattern of continuous learning should be adopted in your professional life, too. When learning, focus entirely on what's happening in that moment – freeing your mind from the pressures of achieving 'outcomes' or 'progress'.

6. BE DELIBERATE ABOUT YOUR CAREER

As in sports, when you feel a mix of fear and excitement, you know you're heading in a productive direction! Set up a safety net so you can afford to take risks in your career and so you don't find yourself stuck somewhere you aren't learning.



A flashback to Sandy Mamoli in handball mode!

Lessons about failure from the girl who came last

Some readers may have caught Elise Aplin at AgileAus18, where she delivered the talk “Lessons about failure from the girl who came last”. Elise, a former competitive distance runner, had a great deal to teach us about failure based on her sporting experiences.

Elise drew upon an anecdote about running in state championships of the 3000 metre steeplechase. Initially positioned at the front of the pack but then falling to last place, Elise – incredibly fatigued – still had to navigate the obstacles on the track and complete the race.

Even sharing this experience with crowds revealed a lot to Elise about how we approach the concept of failure. It’s considered awkward and taboo to talk with people about things they’re not good at or have struggled with. In some senses, we’re comfortable with dialogue around failure in the workplace: mature teams can accept that things might not go right the first time around and that iteration is necessary. However, while we’re comfortable discussing failure on a team level, it’s important to address accountability around failure on an individual level as well.



Elise Aplin at AgileAus17



Elise Aplin speaks on lessons learned from sport at AgileAus18

Three weeks after coming last in the state steeplechase contest, Elise competed in the Australian championships. In this short space of time, there was no time to make physical changes. The only thing Elise could change was her mental approach.

It worked: Elise moved from last place to fifth. She credited this with operating in a high-performing environment, where she and her coaches could have transparent, honest conversations after the disappointment of the state championship. Elise explained that athletes must have defined goals, yet they must also accept that they may not reach them. This creates a framework for individual accountability, wherein athletes must communicate honestly with their coaching staff to achieve growth.

The key isn’t just to talk about failure, Elise told us, but to discuss what you’ve learned from it and what you think the next steps for progression should be. In the workplace, this can take the form of a ‘failure wall’ or ‘failure log’, allowing you to chronicle everything you tried that didn’t necessarily work. Openly discussing your personal failure does everyone a service—letting others know what you’ve unsuccessfully trialled allows them to grow from the experience as much as you!

Conclusion

Although many obvious points of comparison exist between the fields, we mustn't be too hasty in drawing parallels between sporting and corporate performance. The athlete's mindset is uniquely predicated on a culture that values 'winning' above all else – an outcome we must be cautious not to overemphasise in our workplaces.

Despite this, the above comments from Sandy and Elise offer tangible lessons that can translate neatly into our work lives. If you're keen to further explore how adopting an 'athlete's mindset' can help you at work, come along and hear Richmond Football Club's Mindfulness Coach, Emma Murray, when she speaks at AgileAus19. 📍



Emma Murray, Richmond Football Club's Mindfulness Coach, will delve into the concept of mindset at AgileAus19



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* * *

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