SCRUM MASTER EDITION

BECOMING A
CATALYST

Using Everyday
Interactions
to Accelerate
Culture Change

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http://www.becomingacatalyst.com
Scrum Master Edition
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Introduction

The Glaring Need

The Scrum Master, often misunderstood and underutilized, is a role filled with great opportunity and promise. Opportunity for the Scrum Master has emerged today because two significant forces are affecting organizations throughout the world. The first is the workforce's lack of energy and motivation and the second is the demand on organizations for increased responsiveness and agility.

Low employee engagement and morale have placed many workforces in a tenuous position. Good, hardworking people are finding alternative places of employment as their tolerance for dysfunctional organizations is evaporating. This is happening for a variety of reasons, but demoralization from poor management and a lack of vision, direction, and purpose are typically cited as the primary causes. Often, the people who remain in these organizations are overworked, unappreciated, undeveloped, uncared for, and in extreme cases stressed to the point of being physically and emotionally unhealthy. They often feel this way in silence, not letting anyone know their true state of despair. Some are just watching the clock and ticking off the days until retirement. Tragically, I have discovered many people working in these conditions and I'm sure you have as well. Perhaps you are one of them.

Companies are also being driven to become more innovative and responsive in today's fast-paced and competitive environment. "Innovate or die" is the phrase often heard. Gone are the days when customers will wait months or years for something new or better. The response to changing market conditions is now measured in hours or days and many organizations are falling behind.

The impact of these two forces has revealed a glaring need. When the force of an unmotivated and disengaged workforce collides with the force of responsive innovation, many organizations attempt to transform using Agile. I have seen firsthand how an Agile transformation can help a disengaged workforce return to a degree of vibrancy and become a little healthier. However, a far too frequent occurrence is that the change initiative becomes just "another thing" mandated by leadership and the organization quickly falls back into old behavior and dysfunction.

Within this bleak picture there is also hope. The future of the workplace will be dramatically different in a generation or two as cutting-edge and forward-thinking organizations experiment with new organizational structures, models, and practices. Until that day arrives, however, we will need to override existing, broken systems with catalysts of positive change.

In other words, **we need you!**

While we need everyone to be influencers in a transformational change journey, this book specifically addresses how Scrum Masters, Agile Coaches, and Agile Project Managers can accelerate culture change. We delve into the uniqueness of their role and how, when combined with the motivation to become a powerful yet subtle force, they can participate in shaping a positive workplace environment. Your company may be at the beginning of a transition to Agile methodologies or maybe it has been at it for a while. Perhaps your company is not even trying to change, but regardless of your situation this book will explain how your organization's circumstances should not deter you from making an impact.

Perhaps you have recently decided to become a Scrum Master, Agile Project Manager, or Agile Coach. You are familiar with the expectations of the role found in the Scrum Guide or through a training class. Maybe you are currently a project manager curious about Agile and how to transition to become a Scrum Master, Agile Project Manager, or Agile Coach. Maybe you have just become a Certified Scrum Master and want to know how to take what you have learned and make a difference in your organization beyond process mechanics. Maybe you have been a Scrum Master for a while and are looking to improve on what has been working. Or maybe you have found that your own energy, morale, and motivation have been diminished and are looking for ways to get out of your rut.

Whatever your current title, motivation, or experience level with Agile or Scrum, throughout this book, you will be called a "Catalyst." We define what it means to be a Catalyst in Chapter 1. Throughout this book, however, whenever you see "Catalyst," know this means you – a Scrum Master, Agile Coach, or Agile Project Manager who is making radical things happen for your teams and organization. To get there, however, you will need to take a little journey.

The Journey

The journey starts with the first two chapters, which <u>prepare you</u> for what's coming.

You must first understand and embrace the need for Catalysts. Chapter 1 will answer your "why" questions and is intended to **motivate you** to embrace your role as an Agile Project Manager or Scrum Master to the fullest. The Scrum Master is in a unique position to instigate change and this chapter shares why Scrum Masters are desperately needed. This chapter also introduces the shift in attitude necessary to become a Catalyst.

Next, you must find your spark by developing a passion for people, for change, and for influencing a vibrant company culture. The people in your organization are reaching out for someone to lead them to a better, more human, and more dynamic workplace. Are you willing to heed the call? Becoming a Catalyst will require energy and action. Perhaps you have been discouraged or disheartened as a Project Manager, so Chapter 2 is intended to **encourage and energize you** to step outside your comfort zone and find your spark again. This chapter begins to paint a picture of the mind-set of a Catalyst.

The next chapter will <u>equip you</u>.

Once you have reignited your spark and developed a passion for improving culture and human dynamics, you can begin to develop the fuel for your journey. Chapter 3 provides specific areas to **mentor and coach you** during your personal growth and development. This chapter suggests eight important traits of a Catalyst to provide fuel and energy for your journey and the means to gauge your progress through your own retrospectives.

The last two chapters will <u>put it into practice</u>.

Once you've regenerated your spark and provided fuel for your journey, it's time for movement and energy. Chapter 4 shows you how to **leverage everyday team activities** and group settings to provide meaningful but subtle impacts. This chapter suggests ways for Catalysts to leverage every conversation and interaction to cultural advantage.

Finally, we focus on you and how to renew your belief that coming to work can be fun. Chapter 5 is intended to **keep you healthy** and provide suggestions for how to design your day to keep the fire of change alive. This chapter

suggests a few habits you can form to sustain yourself over the long and arduous road of transformational change.

How to Use This Book

In each step of your journey, you will encounter roadblocks and chaos, opportunities and frustration, joy and satisfaction – perhaps all in the same day! The hope for this book is that it serves as a guidebook for your everyday life as a Catalyst Scrum Master and that it helps you embrace the uniqueness and opportunities of your role.

This book does not delve too deeply into the mechanics of any specific methodology or approach as there are plenty of references available to learn how to implement a methodology (including the Scrum Guide[1]). Instead, this book focuses on how to use the events, activities, and behaviors of a methodology to accelerate culture change.

The Scrum Guide *does* begin to introduce the opportunities awaiting the Scrum Master. The guide states, "The Scrum Master serves the organization by causing change that increases the productivity of the Scrum Team; and, working with other Scrum Masters to increase the effectiveness of the application of Scrum in the organization." But how do we do this? How do we serve the organization? What does "causing change" mean? How do we increase effectiveness? How can we use the everyday interactions and events from Scrum or any other methodology to begin transforming our organization? And, most importantly, how can we begin to care for each other as humans and become catalysts for creating an environment for healthy and productive work?

Becoming a Catalyst will prompt you to *answer these questions for yourself*. Every organization, every situation, every team, and every person is different; therefore, your responses to these questions will be uniquely yours. Use this book to stimulate ideas for developing your own approach to addressing the needs of the people you work with every day and for challenging the status quo in your organization.

Becoming a Catalyst will *strengthen your voice*. Overcoming resistance will require a certain boldness and bravery. Use this book to encourage yourself to

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[1] Sutherland, Jeff & Schwaber, Ken (July 2013). Scrum Guide https://www.scrum.org/Scrum-Guide

speak up when needed and to encourage those whose voice has been weakened over time to do the same.

Becoming a Catalyst will launch the *start of your journey*. The stories of this journey will be written entirely by you. Use this book as a set of suggestions to design your own adventure. It's time to get started.

If you would like to continue reading, **Becoming a Catalyst: Scrum Master Edition** can be purchased at all major online book sellers or from www.becomingacatalyst.com.