

Scenarios for Pair-Coaching Exercises

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Downloads available at AgileCoffee.com/paircoaching

Scenario 1 - User story mapping

A team is transitioning from waterfall to agile and you've noticed the backlog has problems. The product roadmap is not constructed to provide end-user value, but instead is based on delivery of components. You decide that a user story mapping workshop is needed to get the product owner back on track.



User story mapping is a technique popularized by Jeff Patton that helps everyone see the big picture to create a common shared understanding across multiple user stories, ensuring the right product is being built.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner are pair-coaching the team that needs training. Try using the Prime pattern or Trainer/Observer pattern with your partner.

Sum of two dominoes	Choose one of these scenarios (or make your own)
<i>example</i>	Scenario 1 - User story mapping
0 - 12	Scenario 2 - Retrospective agenda Scenario 3 - Merging a gnarly branch Scenario 4 - Social / office politics Scenario 5 - Exploratory testing a developer's code
13-16	Scenario 6 - Eliciting good acceptance criteria Scenario 7 - New scrum master joins team Scenario 8 - Submitting a speaking proposal Scenario 9 - Backlog refinement workshop
17-19	Scenario 10 - Release planning Scenario 11 - Growth "homework" Scenario 12 - Help scrum master manage team conflict Scenario 13 - Adopting a new online tool to track work
20-23	Scenario 14 - Architectural design debate Scenario 15 - Team wants to learn TDD Scenario 16 - User story writing workshop Scenario 17 - Getting the coaches aligned
24 +	Scenario 18 - Negotiating with executive leadership Scenario 19 - Design review with a peer Scenario 20 - Co-training a class Scenario 21 - Team resisting change

Scenario 2 - Retrospective agenda

A team is under a lot of pressure to deliver and has repeatedly skipped having retrospectives. The department manager, in the past, has commented that it's a very expensive meeting and that developers should be working instead. The scrum master agrees that the team should hold a retrospective but does not want to create conflict with his supervisor.



Holding retrospectives & relentless improvement of a team is a key tenet of agile.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner are coaching the scrum master on ways to confront the supervisor about the importance of holding a retrospective. Try the Prime and Contrarian patterns.

Scenario 3 - Merging a gnarly branch

Two members of the delivery team (one member is brand new to the organization) meet to conduct an integration activity. The code has undergone significant refactoring since the last check out.



Integration meetings can happen anytime, but daily review is good practice. Two pairs of eyes examine the merges to help ensure the work of all team members remains in sync.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: How would the two of you explain to another team member that her code will not integrate? What is the best way to raise impediments to a scrum master or team member so that they can work to mitigate them? How can the team's or company's culture impact this activity? Useful patterns to try include: Co-Learners, Kohai/Sempai

Scenario 4 - Social / office politics

An organization is moving from waterfall to agile but several middle managers are not on board with the transition to agile. Some feel that they need to see it work before they will agree to be "bought in". Last year a project that was waterfall was forecasted to complete in 10 months, but this year, as the project is transitioning to agile, the new forecast is 20 months. Managers see the move to agile costing them, when in reality the business & IT are working together for the first time ever and they have better clarity on the true scope of the work.



Not everyone will be onboard with the transition to agile. Being aware of people's individual needs is an important skill of the coach.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner must coach the middle managers on the transition to agile. Useful patterns to try include: Contrarian, Kohai/Sempai

Scenario 5 - Exploratory testing a developer's code

A tester visits a developer's workstation to do some exploratory testing on the local environment before checking code into the dev branch. The developer isn't used to this and doesn't initially see the advantage this affords.



Exploratory Testing generally lasts 5-15 minutes. The tester will run a few of the most common (happy path) scenarios and maybe a couple edge cases as well. It's a smoke test that could surface defects earlier than waiting for a full set of tests running on a dev or QA environment.

Fixing a bug soon after the code was written (while the problem solving method is still fresh in the developer's memory) is the easiest, most efficient time to do it.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: One person model the developer working to convince a tester to come spend a few minutes to look over her freshly coded masterpiece and explain the benefit of this activity. Useful patterns to try include: Driver/Navigator, Growth Coach, others?

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Scenario 6 - Eliciting good acceptance criteria

An on-site customer representative or product owner works with a developer to refine requirements and develop acceptance criteria. The development team relies on clear, concise acceptance criteria in times when the PO is not available.



User stories have three critical aspects: Card, Conversation, and Confirmation. By keeping the written requirements brief enough to fit on an index card, a conversation becomes necessary for elaboration. When two people talk, they exchange thoughts, opinions, and feelings which inform the intention of the requirement; still, no matter how much discussion is had, we still have the need for confirmation after the solution is developed. That's where acceptance criteria come in: clearly defining the conditions which must be satisfied for the story to be accepted by the customer.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: One person play the role of a team member approaching a product owner with the next card (user story) from the sprint backlog. How does the conversation go? Is it easy to ask and re-ask for more information without sounding confused? How do you know if the acceptance criteria is good? What patterns would you use? _____,

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Scenario 7 - New scrum master joins team

A company decides to go agile and convert a project manager into a scrum master. You've noticed some "command & control" behaviors being exhibited by this new scrum master. Several of the developers on the team have come to you for advice.



Scrum masters should exhibit a "servant leader" mindset. Transitioning to agile requires a paradigm shift of trust and open communication.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner are coaching the scrum master on how to not be "command & control". Useful patterns to try include: Contrarian, Growth Coach

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Scenario 8 - Submitting a speaking proposal

You and a colleague travel to Atlanta to attend Agile2016. You're inspired by what you've seen/heard, who you've met, *and especially the topic of pair-coaching!* You each decide then and there that you'd like to co-author a submission for next year's Agile2017.



Increase your odds of a successful submission by talking to past presenters. Also check out episode #32 of Ryan Ripley's Agile for Humans podcast: "How to Improve Your Agile Conference Submissions".

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: Increase eachother's self-efficacy by taking turns as Growth Coach. Try the Co-Learners pattern to investigate potential topics.

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Scenario 9 - Backlog refinement workshop

A team is consistently completing less than 50% of the stories every sprint. A closer look indicates that the product owner does not have the stories in the proper state of readiness. Much of the team's time during the sprint is spent getting clarity from the product owner on the stories to be developed. It is decided that more focus needs to be spent in advance during product backlog refinement meetings.



Product backlog refinement meetings should be ongoing meetings between the team & the product owner, and topics should be on future sprint stories (not stories in current sprint).

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner are going to facilitate a backlog refinement meeting with the product owner and entire team. Role play the Driver/Navigator and Growth Coach patterns.

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Scenario 10 - Release planning

A new scrum master & product owner have been asked to create a product development roadmap based on the requirements which were recently put into a backlog. They do not have experience with agile software processes and have come to you for assistance.



A product roadmap is not a commitment, but just a forecast based on what is known at the current time. Items forecast within 3-6 months will have better clarity than those items beyond 6 months.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner will facilitate this release planning meeting and show the scrum master & product owner ways to create the roadmap. Useful patterns to try include: Prime, Growth Coach, ... others?

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Scenario 11 - Growth “homework”

A company that is transitioning to agile decides to convert a project manager into a scrum master. This individual is having difficulty transitioning into this new role and has come to you for advice.



Transitioning from a traditional project manager or line manager role is oftentimes difficult and requires intentional practice of servant leadership and other mindsets.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: One of you will mentor & coach the other (the new scrum master) and hold her/him accountable for doing “homework”. Try the Kohai/Sempai & Growth Coach patterns.

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Scenario 12 - Help scrum master manage team conflict

The product owner blames the business analyst for not capturing his requirements correctly when writing the user stories. The sprint demo never goes well, and stories are often carried over into the following sprints due to missed requirements.



Many product owners get too busy to write all the user stories and have “proxies” to write them on their behalf (usually business analysts can assist with this). PO proxies usually do not work out well, especially if the product owner doesn’t take time to carefully review what was written. PO proxies end up being the bottleneck anyway, since they are not usually empowered to make decisions for the team.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner will mentor & coach the scrum master with the entire development team. Useful patterns to try include: Prime, Growth Coach, Co-Learners. Any other patterns good here?

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Scenario 13 - Adopting a new online tool to track work

An organization decides to transition to CA’s (formerly Rally’s) tool for tracking user stories and team metrics. It is decided that the team should attend a 1 hour webinar to learn how to use the new software.



CA Agile Central and other tools help teams track their work and visualize their progress. Although no tool is necessarily better than sticky notes on the wall, we often need to rely on electronic tools in a large workplace, especially when teams are not co-located.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: Neither of you are familiar with Agile Central but instead have experience with another tool (eg. VersionOne, TFS, Jira, or others). Use Co-Learners or Kohai/Sempai pattern.

Scenario 14 - Architectural design debate

The enterprise software architect is constantly at odds with the product manager & team product owners about the order in which the backlog should be prioritized. Security is an important aspect of the product being developed but there are no capabilities & features in the backlog for this. There is not a good balance between the intentionality of software and emergent set-based design.



Emergent architecture is a fundamental facet of mature agile practices and is related to Evolutionary design. Refer to authors such as Martin Fowler, James Shore and Joshua Kerievsky for examples.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner will play the role of very seasoned technical agile coaches with many years of software development experience. You will provide a workshop to showcase good architectural design. Useful patterns to try include: Trainer/Observer, Driver/Navigator

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Scenario 15 - Team wants to learn TDD

A team wants to try test-driven development and has come to you for advice. You don't have much (if any) experience with TDD, though you know its origins and clearly believe in the benefits it delivers.



Test-driven development is a coding technique in which programmers spend initial time up front writing small unit tests and refactor code as simple as possible in order to reduce the number defects down the road.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner can be team members or coaches. Show the team how they can start using TDD with either the Driver/Navigator or Co-Learners pattern.

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Scenario 16 - User story writing workshop

You've looked at the backlog but instead of seeing user stories with clear acceptance criteria, you see hundreds of tasks. You realize a user story writing workshop is needed for your product owner & business analysts.



Writing effective user stories is difficult and there are many great books which explore this topic in detail. It may be necessary to repeat this workshop every few months as new questions emerge.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner are leading a user story writing workshop to the PO, BA and the team. Use the Trainer/Observer pattern.

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Scenario 17 - Getting the coaches aligned

A new Agile Coach is hired into an organization with great fanfare. Her shelves are full of books and games, she is very active in the local and virtual Agile community, and her informal lean coffee in the lunchroom every Tuesday morning is drawing a vibrant, diverse crowd. A tenured coach (from a job title change two years ago) feels that this new emphasis on “cheerleading” is a waste of time, and may be detrimental.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: One person play the role of the newly hired coach, the other be the tenured sour-puss. Have a conversation about the need for continuous learning and the effects of joy in the workplace. What patterns could you use? _____,

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Scenario 18 - Negotiating with executive leadership

A CIO at a large organization has recently become the product manager of a large program when the organization was acquired by another company. This CIO-turned-product-manager is very “command & control” and blames the software teams for their lack of delivery.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner have been asked to coach the program and will meet with this CIO to not be so bossy. Role play the Prime & Contrarian patterns.

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Scenario 19 - Design review with a peer

A developer and tester get together to do some peer design review (PDR) prior to starting work on a user story.



PDR is an opportunity for the developer to explain (think out loud) their approach to solving the problem. Meanwhile the tester is talking through how he plans to test, which will be manual vs automated, where the tests will be stored, etc. This conversation can open up insights on both ends and generally yields higher quality code with fewer bugs , while also transferring skills between team members.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: Take turns role-playing tester and developer roles. Talk about your experiences writing code or testing. How did you work with other individual team members? What lessons did you learn from other team members? Try the Co-Learners pattern.

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Scenario 20 - Co-training a class

Executives have requested leadership training so they can better empower the organization during its agile transformation.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: You and your partner have been hired as external consultants to train this company’s leadership team. Useful patterns to try include: Trainer/Observer, Kohai/Sempai

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Scenario 21 - Team resisting change

A scrum master is having difficulty working with a legacy mainframe team. Many of these developers have worked for the company for 25+ years and feel that scrum is a waste of time. Besides, they've been doing quite fine all these years without scrum, so why change now?



People have different tolerances to change. Help the team to understand what's in it for them, and use empathetic active listening during your coaching.

PAIR-COACHING DISCUSSION: For this scenario, you and your partner will mentor & coach the scrum master with the entire development team. Role play the Prime & Contrarian patterns.

Use the total SUM of both partners' dominoes to choose a scenarios to use, or make one of your own.

scenario	Prime	Contrarian	Trainer / Observer	Driver / Navigator	Co-Learners	Kohai / Sempai	Growth Coach	SUM of 2 dominoes
1			-	-				
2	-	-						0 - 12
3					-	-		
4	-	-	-					
5				-			-	
6	-							13 - 16
7		-	-					
8					-		-	
9			-	-				
10				-			-	17 - 19
11						-	-	
12	-		-					
13				-	-			
14	-	-	-					20 - 23
15				-	-			
16			-					
17						-	-	
18	-	-						24 +
19					-			
20			-			-		
21	-	-						



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