

# **Fostering customer-focused collaboration for social media teams of teams**

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## Introduction

In Scrum@Scale, a minimum viable bureaucracy (MVB) allows an organization to speed up, increase creativity and innovation, and immediately improve product quality by focusing attention on customer needs instead of internal processes and barriers.

By operating with small, holistic teams and teams of teams and rooting firmly in Agile values and principles, organizations are proven to make faster decisions and operate with a customer-centric mindset. As Daniel Pink points out in his book "Drive," self-sufficient, self-managed teams experience greater alignment, increased happiness, and deliver stronger customer outcomes.

This case study offers a holistic view of a scaled architecture of an IT and finance focused social media organization charged with providing high-quality content for their customers. This company has approximately 800 employees and employs five teams of 62 bloggers (Figure 1).



**PPI: ~800  
employees**



**~62 company-  
wide blogger**



**5 teams**

Figure 1: Team structure

## The Company's Top Challenges

The problems and derived objectives in the specific context of this company are shown in figure 2.

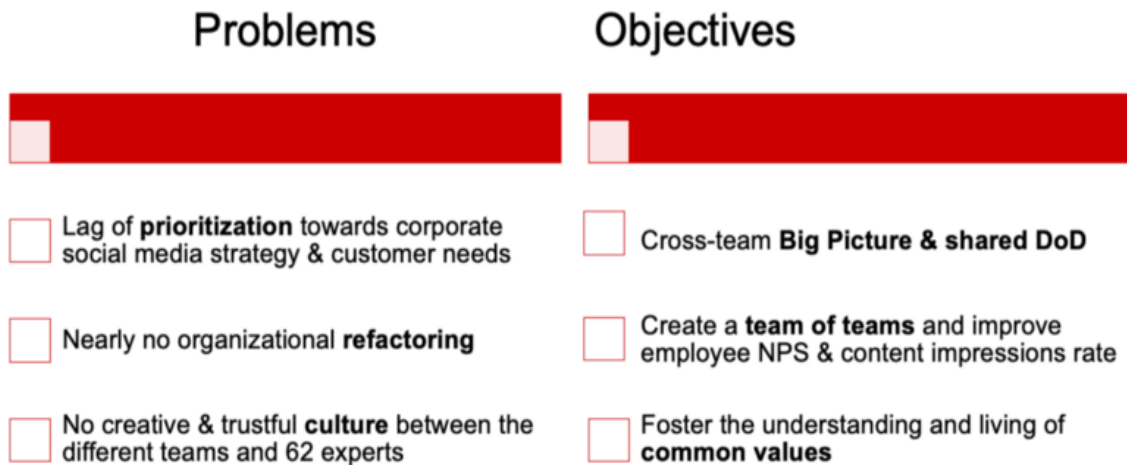


Figure 2: Identified problems and objectives for the new team of 5 teams

Initially, teams were not prioritizing appropriately, which resulted in misalignment. Due to the lack of prioritization, there was insufficient continuous improvement inside the teams and between the teams and nearly no organizational refactoring. Team members were often speaking over each other during meetings, were unable to align to a common strategy, and did not collaborate effectively. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a lack of shared values between the new cross-functional teams resulted in mistrust, and teams did not have the psychological safety necessary to offer up creative, out of the box solutions.

### The Solution

The teams recognized the need to change and turned to the Scrum@Scale framework. First, they outlined major objectives for each challenge. To address the lack of prioritization, the teams hypothesized that creating a shared definition of done (DoD) would enable the organization to think more holistically while fostering a common value around customer-centric awareness. The second objective was to create a team of teams and introduce a product owner cycle that would:

- Enable fast prioritization and decision-making for strategically relevant company-wide publications
- Help create an end-to-end process from a blog topic idea (e.g., customer case studies) to release

Finally, the teams introduced and encouraged the Scrum values of commitment, focus, openness, respect, and courage inside of the team of teams and within internal stakeholder interactions.

## The Application of Scrum@Scale

Christoph created an ordered transformation backlog to focus on the most relevant activities first (Figure 3). The transformation was driven by an Executive Action Team (EAT).



Figure 3: Using some components of Scrum@Scale

The team's primary goal was to: “**Maximize** the social media **experience and customer happiness** for our common PPI Finance IT publications.”

The transformation backlog was comprised of the following five ordered steps:

- Build a **powerful** guiding coalition to foster the social media team of teams — with senior leadership involvement
- Integrate and enable the head of marketing appropriately as **Chief Product Owner**
- Let **volunteers pull** the 50 free places inside the new S@S social media team of 5 teams
- **Establish a process of recurring cross-team kaizen development** via cross-team retrospectives and use the S@S **heatmap** to prioritize appropriately actionable steps
- Inspire the team through creating a strong **Product Goal & shared Product Backlog**

After a two-day kickoff workshop, the team created visualizations for the holistic circles as well as refinement activities (Figure 4). This helped the team to increase transparency by working from a shared set of information and enabled them to inspect and adapt necessary adjustments based on what they learned. The figure shows also an example of the Payment team:

<https://www.ebicsblog.com/>

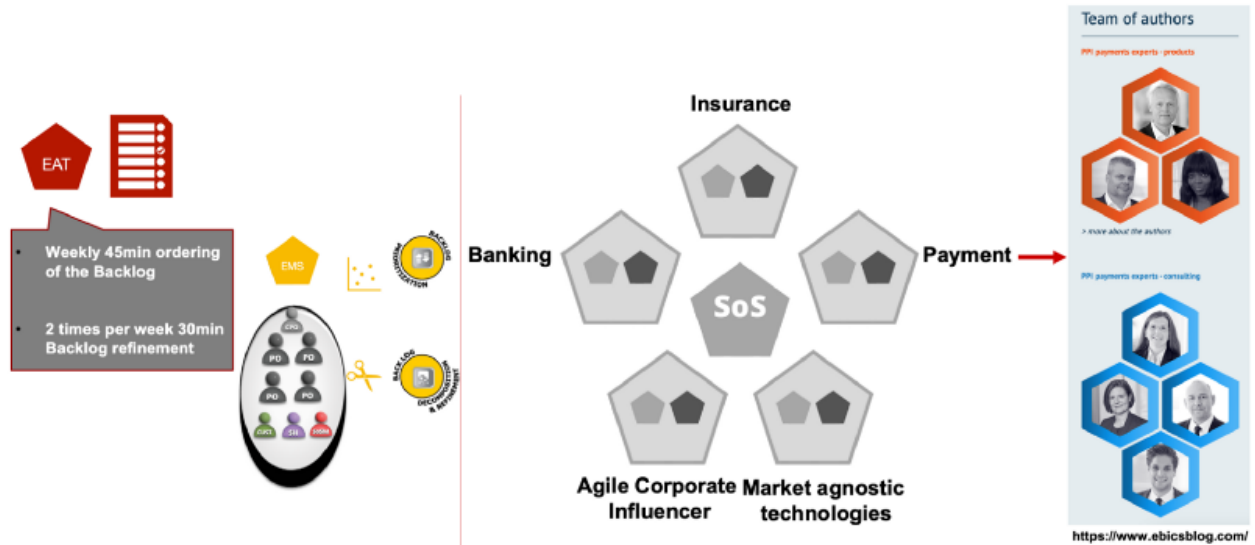


Figure 4: Setup of refinement activities and structure of the seven-person payment blogger team

## The Results

For this company, the results of applying Scrum@Scale were extraordinary. Figure 5 shows the “team of teams” results, which are made up of the Average Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the Scrum@Scale and Scrum team events.



Figure 5: “Team of Teams”-based results

This was the impact of implementing Scrum@Scale:

- The organization was able to foster a **stable** team of teams using the five common **Scrum Values**
- They created greater **transparency** around the level of quality expected for every published blog article by creating a cross-team, **shared Definition of Done**
- **Faster** inspection and adaptation feedback loops as a result of establishing **focused**, three weeks sprints and actively integrating the stakeholders
- The organization **reduced the allowable amount of work in progress for each Sprint, both for teams and overall**, tailoring to the capabilities and capacity of the teams
- Established the **pull principle** to ensure that teams were working on the right stories at the right time based on their capacity and priorities
- Created **cross-functional teams**, increasing collaboration and capability within each team
- Dramatically **reduced lead time** for one blog article from 2021 to end of 2022 — decreased from 39 days to 20 days

Figure 6 shows the social media outcome-based results for the market-agnostic technology social media team. The follower count is six times higher than in April 2021, increasing from 244 to 1432. The impressions/overall views for the content were around 51000 in the last 365 days.

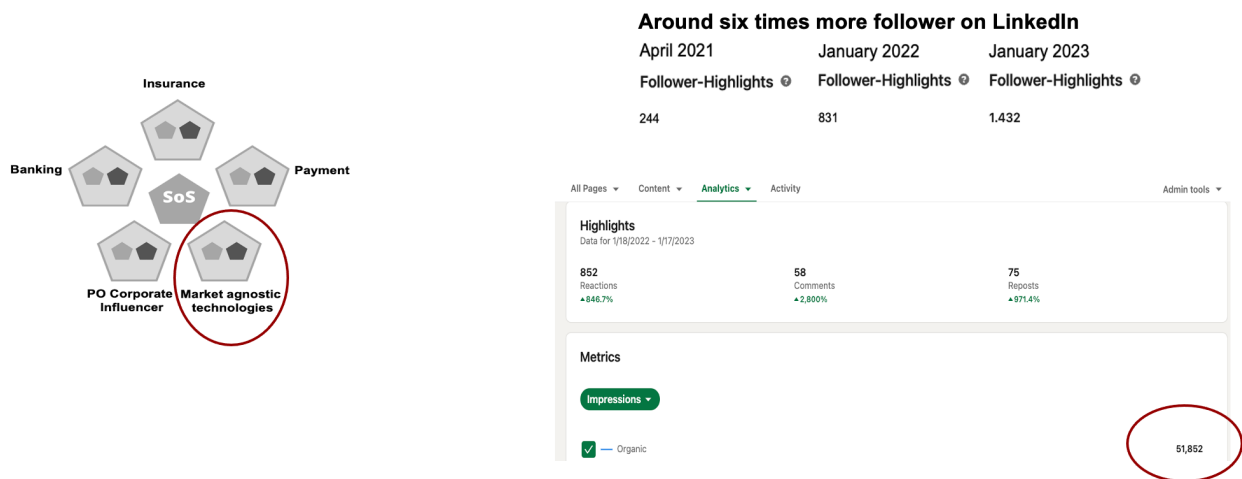


Figure 6: Social media-based reports

**“The collaboration of the team of teams for strategically aligned initiatives as well as the overall customer experience improved significantly.”**

Chief Product Owner



Figure 7: Feedback from the Chief Product Owner

## Lessons Learned

### Organizational

- Gaining a common understanding of the current situation of the 5 blog service teams and the work organization with the heatmap was essential — next time, the goal would be to do this from the beginning, not two months in
- Introduce regular refinement and cross-team retrospectives earlier and at a cadence of two weeks instead of four weeks
- Measure and visualize the cross-team process from the beginning so that future potentials are fast and obvious, and so that **swarming techniques** on barriers can be applied

### Technical

- Use online whiteboards for every team and cross-team event to foster cross-team collaboration
- Facilitate regular brainstorming for the teams around actionable kaizens to foster continuous improvement towards more team of teams' happiness and maximize efficiency and effectiveness towards creating value around our publications for our customers
- Document the used Scrum@Scale components comprehensively in the MS Teams channel Wiki with notes; adapt them collaboratively and regularly based on lessons learned
- Use online ticket tools like 'Jira Align' to visualize, manage and improve the team of teams board and simplify our remote work
- Create/track metrics to foster transparency and enable inspection and adaption of new processes

### Personal

- Be aware of our own responsibility as an Agile leader/facilitator to ALWAYS be a role model for agility, happiness, and customer-centric empiricism
- Take care of the cross-team priorities and foster alignment
- Track and make visible kaizens and key learnings
- From the beginning, foster a common understanding and strategy for the social media team

- Limit work in progress (WIP) in the cross-team end-to-end-process

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