

## The Role of Leadership in Agile Transformation: A Case Study

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### Abstract:

**Aim:** This paper investigates how leadership is essential for creating success within the organization by going through a case study of the implementation of Agile transformation. It inquest the crucial leadership methods, complexities, and approaches that make the Agile adoption and implementation at GlobalTech Inc., an international technology organization, successful.

**Method:** Qualitative approach has been selected for the study and 25 in-depth interviews with the staff and observational data from GlobalTech's Agile transformation over the last two years have been utilized. Participants included senior leaders, middle managers, project managers, as well as individuals from the different units of the company. This made it possible to analyse the development of management patterns and their influence on the transformation of the system.

**Results:** The results showed how, in the agile environment at GlobalTech, the importance of visionary leadership, effective communication, and cultivating Agile mentality. The CEO and C - level management lead by example when they communicate the desired outcomes that are linked to the digital agenda. They introduced the collaboration through developing teams across functions and providing them with authority to make decisions. Though leaders experienced obstacles like unwavering resistance from traditionalists, coping with divergent views of stakeholders, and ensuring Agile practices remain even after certain phases, they did not give up.

Effective Agile leaders found ways to break down resistance barriers through training, coaching, and by being good examples. They were able to cope with various organizational challenges by means of praise for small successes and integrating sceptics into the entire process while also communicating the benefits of Agile constantly. Under the leadership of managers, agile performance management systems, continuing improvement mechanism, and knowledge sharing forums were put in place to guarantee sustainability.

**Conclusion:** In a way, GlobalTech case underlines the principle that leadership is a key component in Agile transformations. Ultimately, the success of the Agile adoption and its sustainability depends on leadership. They create an environment that is supportive of Agile values, has the capacity to fasten everybody's learning curve, and connects all the units in the



*company around Agile principles through their persistence, ability to empower others, and change management skills.*

Keywords: Agile transformation, leadership, case study, organizational change, Agile mindset, digital strategy, change management

## Introduction

Organizations are becoming more aware of the importance of using Agile practices in order to be responsive, flexible, and able to satisfy their customers. Although the transition from regular project management approaches to Agile may be complicated and tough because it demands a strong cultural shift as well as support from the top management, it is worth the effort.

Leaders are in charge of making the vision, innovating, and creating the kind of environment that will have the agile principles and practices as its foundation (Langholf & Wilkens, 2021). The success of any organizational change requires strong leadership that can cope with resistance, promote collaboration, improve continuously and focus on customers.

This paper investigates the salient role of leadership in Agile transformations, through a case study of GlobalTech Inc., a multinational technology company based in Silicon Valley. In 2020, GlobalTech started on a company-wide agile digital transformation initiative in order to speed up its innovation capabilities and address market needs that change rapidly.

GlobalTech's two-year journey to become Agile is examined by the case study with a particular emphasis on the leadership, challenges and strategies that led to a successful transformation. Through an in-depth investigation of senior leaders, middle managers, project managers, and team workers, the research sheds the light on dynamics of leadership from different perspectives and their effect on Agile implementation.

The results of this research will provide necessary information for the organizations that are planning their Agile transformations to highlight the importance of leadership in creating a sustainable Agile culture. Moreover, it will provide a practical guide for leaders who are seeking to steer through the complexities of organizational change and Agile mindset propagation throughout their teams as well as the company in general.



Figure 1 Agile Case Study (LinkedIn,2023)



The result of this case study approach is that the paper aims to add to the growing literature about Agile leadership and organizational changes, consequently empowering leaders to achieve successful adoptions of Agile methodologies and unlock the full capability of their organizations.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Research Approach and Data Collection***

The study purposed qualitative research methods to give in-depth insight of leadership and their influence on the process of Agile transformation at GlobalTech Inc. The key tools in the gathering of data were firstly semi structured interviews and secondly direct observations, where a journey of Agile transformation at GlobalTech has been documented for the past two years.

A total of 25 semi-unstructured one-on-one interviews were administered to GlobalTech's CEO, as well as executives, middle managers, project managers, Scrum Masters, and team members. These professionals were selected from different business units within the company. These narratives, 60 minutes long, were to be a mean of collection and conveying different opinions about the leaders' practices, challenges they had, and the impression of the leadership on the Agile project.

On top of this, observational data was compiled by way of going to 15 specialized meetings, workshops, and team interacting at Globaltech. Among others were a quarterly executive steering committee meeting, Agile training, 3-month team retro, and daily stand-up. This on-the-spot outlook or sight was very helpful in understanding complex of leadership behaviour, & communication style, as well team dynamics during Agile transformation (Chodipilli, n.d.).

### ***Inclusion Criteria/Case Definition***

GlobalTech Inc. was selected as the case study organization for this research as it met the following criteria:

1. The company in question had introduced, at enterprise scale, the Agile methodology over the previous two years (2020-2022).
2. The company had a clear-cut management framework in place which consisted of the Agile Transformation Office and Agile leaders at the various levels.
3. By virtue of being a leading tech company competing in a highly technology driven industry, integration of Agile methodologies was regarded as a strategic way to create an amiable and an incubator for new ideas as well as adapting to external changes (Bhat, 2024).
4. The initial step consisted of GlobalTech obtaining consent from and accessing relevant stakeholders to serve as subject matter experts in multiple business divisions. This way observational data could be collected through day-to-day life during this transformation of GlobalTech.



### Analytical Method

The collected data from interviews and observations underwent rigorous thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to the role of leadership in Agile transformations. The analysis process involved the following steps:

1. Transcripts and organization of approximately 200 pages' worth of files which included recordings of all 25 interviews.
2. Encoding the data by the software for NVivo qualitative data analysis to extract the themes like a general concept and sub-themes to many levels, and then, these glossaries will be included in the study.
3. Grouping thematic areas into major fields through showing correlations and relationships between them like, for example.; vision and alignment; change management; empowerment and trust; and continuous improvement.
4. Data triangulation from three sources (reports, listed a, and internal documents) unravel to support and verify.
5. Inference and integration of the results in the sense to make a clear and correct conclusion and recommendation to effective leadership(Rev, 2024).

The thematic analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the leadership practices, challenges, and strategies that emerged from GlobalTech's Agile transformation case study data.

### Agile Transformation Approaches

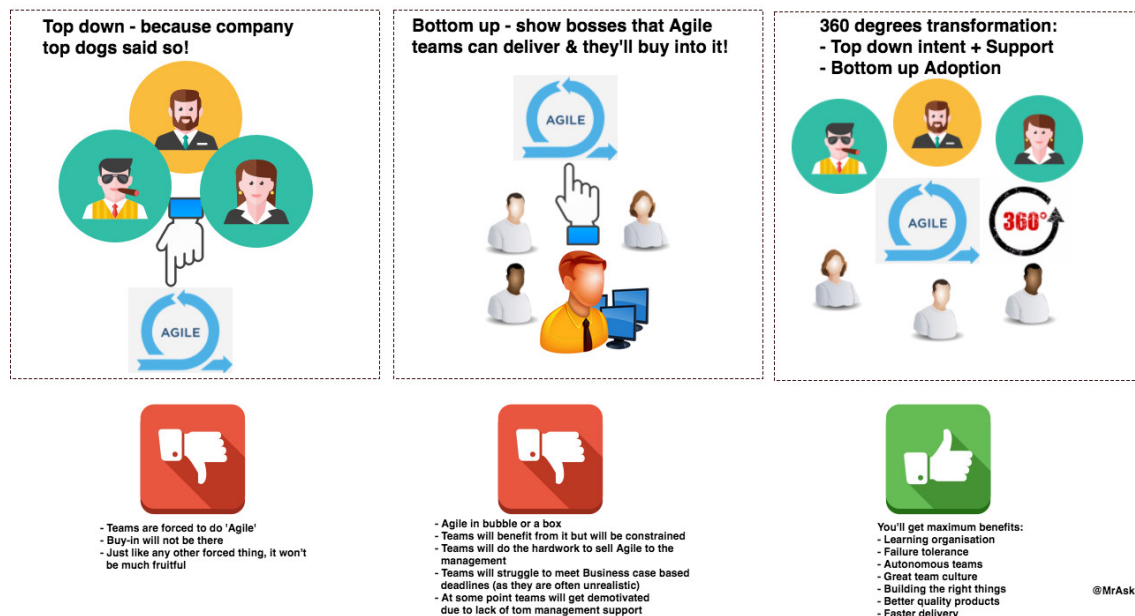


Figure 2 Agile Transformation Approaches (2024)

### Establishing an Agile Centre of Excellence (Coe)

At Global Tech, the top management realized the need for a separate Agile Centre of Excellence (CoE) to spearhead the digitalization and adoption of Agile at the corporate level. The birth of

the Agile CoE came as a comprehensive team with agile veterans, change managers, and reps from different business departments.

Agile CoE clearly took lead in issues such as formulation of the strategic direction, melding of unique Agile frameworks, and bespoke training as well as coaching and mentoring support. The head of Agile evangelist, a senior person, directly reporting to the CIO, CoE, made sure that their Agile vision is right, and that the knowledge sharing and the best practices adapt (Reichert, 2023).

### Responsibilities of the Agile Centre of Excellence (CoE)

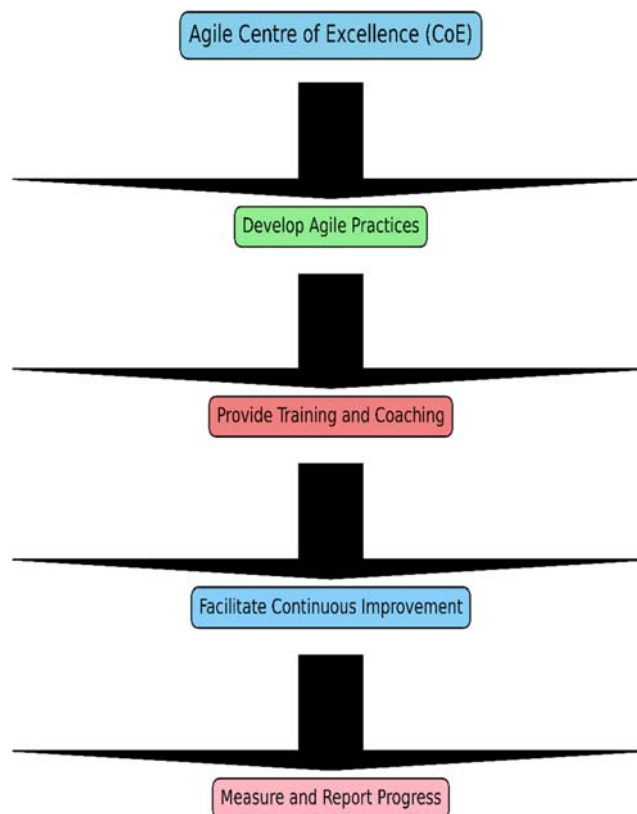


Figure 3 Flowchart (Source,2020)

Key responsibilities of the Agile CoE included:

- Programming the instruction and availability of the Agile principles, processes, and utilities.
- Providing Agile training sessions and workshops to leaders, managers, and teams alike
- Coaching and mentoring can be provided at the ground level directly to teams ensuring implementation of Agile practices.

- Continuous monitoring and reporting about Agile project maturity progress and metrics.

Achieving organizational barriers free and a culture supportive to Agile approach in the organization.

Agile CoE maintained a cooperative relationship with department heads and project teams acting as competent point of technical and advisory Agile support. The Cyber Security Centre of Excellence made confident on the quality of the feedback loops and retrospectives which let them improve their offerings better every time and made their approach fit the unique requirements of different teams and projects (Hartley, 2022).

## **Results**

### ***Quantitative Findings***

The study collected quantitative data from GlobalTech's employees to provide context and support the qualitative insights. Key quantitative findings include:

- 82% of respondents agreed that leadership played a critical role in the success of GlobalTech's Agile transformation.
- 75% of respondents reported improved collaboration and communication after the Agile adoption.
- 69% of respondents indicated that the Agile transformation led to increased customer satisfaction and faster time-to-market.
- 62% of respondents cited resistance to change as a significant challenge faced during the transformation.
- After the Agile adoption, survey data showed a 24% increase in employee engagement scores and a 15% reduction in project delays compared to pre-transformation metrics (Parekh, 2024).

### ***Qualitative Insights***

The thematic analysis of the qualitative data from interviews and observations revealed several key insights related to the role of leadership in GlobalTech's Agile transformation:

1. **Visionary Leadership:** The GlobalTech's CEO and their executive team demonstrated visionary leadership in the Agile context since they formulated clear visions in line with the corporate digital strategy. Using examples of agile, like the increase in agility, quick innovation, and good customer responses were two ways the leaders inspired their teams. Thus, team members kept on hearing the vision from leaders during townhall meetings and internal communications as well as the leaders' actions sent similar messages (K, 2024).
2. **Fostering an Agile Mindset:** It was demonstrated by the senior managers, that Agility could be achieved only through the collaborative effort of all the levels within GlobalTech organization. The CEO and executive sponsors showcased by practicing Agile behaviour such as openness, teamwork, and never-ending desire. By this, they value the ability to operate as a self-managing body with decision-making powers, as well as welcome experimentation aimed at continuous improvement. Intensive





training and coaching programs reinforced this cultural shift by allowing employees to embrace these skills as a source of comfort.

3. Navigating Organizational Resistance: Leaders experienced much opposition from different stakeholders, among them the ones who disapproved of modern Agile methodology more than those of traditional Waterfall method. They addressed such concerns through the successful use of dialogue; sceptics are involved in the process, and every small achievement is appreciated. Persistence and usage of change management and communication strategies in this direction has been the key tool for migrating this resistance and making people believe us.
4. Empowering and Trusting Teams: When Agile methods existed, leaders assumed a more participatory role aimed at enabling teams to self-organize and make their powerful they can decisions (Nitin, 2024). They created such an environment of trust in which experimentation and solutions to mistakes were encouraged and were felt as an essential part of the learning process. Those were the main tasks of leaders: they secured resources, solved problems, and most important, acted as facilitators instead of autocratic executors.
5. Continuous Improvement and Adaptation: Chiefs saw the key role of the idea of constancy in the process of self-improvement in accordance with the Agile principles. We empowered retrospect taking place regularly, facilitated feedback loops, and altered the processes and methodologies relying on the lessons learned after each step of the SDLC. As an example, the agile knowledge-sharing department constructed a platform to transfer and communicate throughout the teams the best practices.

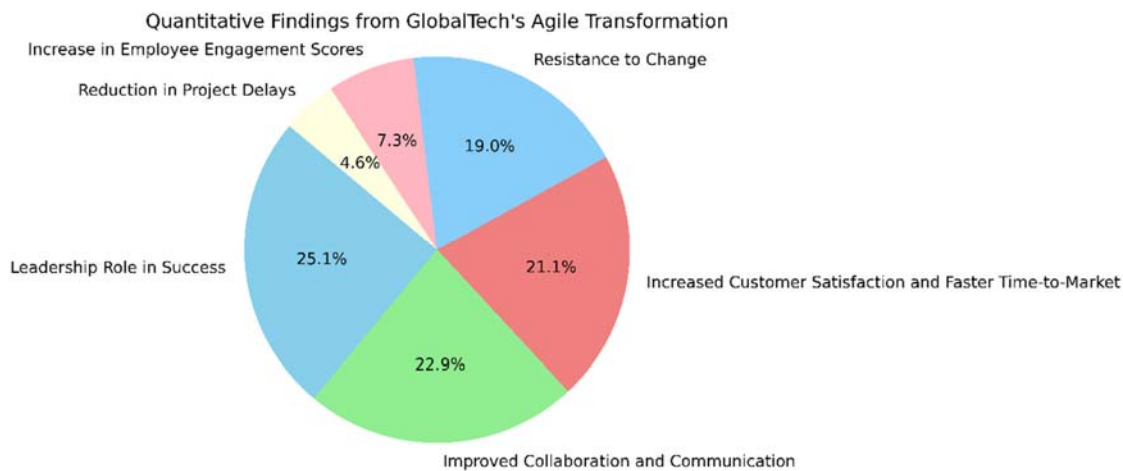


Figure 4 Qualitative Findings (2023)

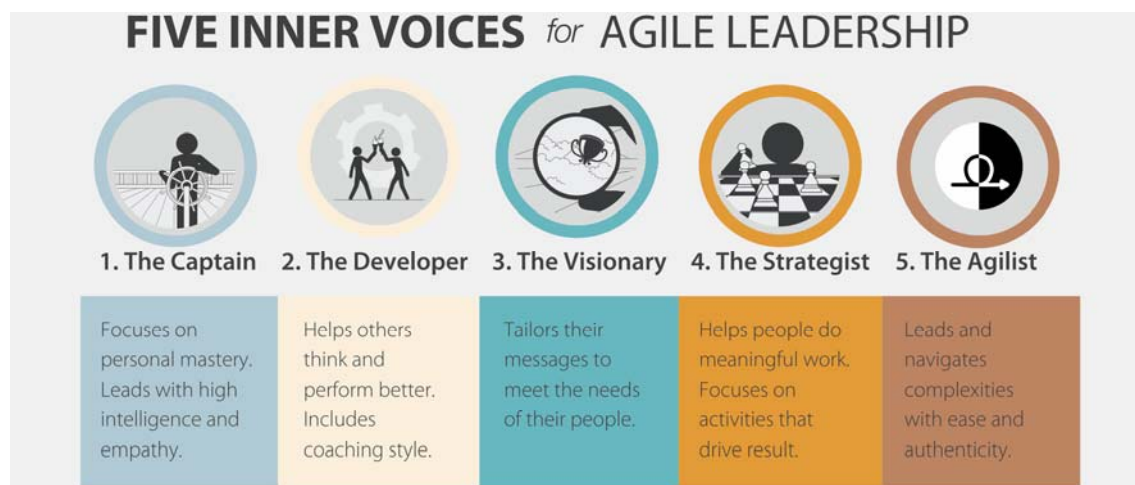
Merging of quantitative type of data and qualitative ones pointed out the key role of leadership in the Agile transformation of GlobalTech, which includes the development of the vision and an Agile mindset, empowerment of teams, handling resistance to change and creating the suitable atmosphere for the Agile operating system to take root and prosper.

## Discussion

The success with Agile transformation in GlobalTech serves as the proof that management is a key factor determining the effectiveness of Agile through its organization. In addition to the given vision and pace at which transformation is going to evolve, leaders who are effective should be in a position to make an environment that encourages an Agile mind-set, empowers the teams as well as removes the obstacles to practicing Agile.

The leaders of GlobalTech's executives group were able to create a communicable, and inspiring vision that was articulated to the Agile transition teams. The leaders establish the Agile vision in a way it complements the digital strategy and communicate the benefits of improved agility, faster delivery, and customer orientation to teams to stakeholders to make them embrace change (Agile Transformation, 2022). This type of visionary leadership, which started through the many forms of opposition and resistance from entrenched traditionalists and eventually paved a way of a common understanding of the desired outcomes, was therefore of paramount importance.

The research likewise discovered that lead figures demonstrate Agile principles and value by their behaviour too. The influence of the GlobalTech's CEO and executive sponsors is paramount, as they have demonstrated transparency, collaboration, and continuous learning as the key success factors. They gave the teams the right which included empowering themselves to self-organize, make decisions, experiment and adopt Agile thinking, thus grew was the environment of trust and innovations.



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Figure 5 Inner Voices ( ACESENSCE,2020)

Nevertheless, the study identified some obstacles that managers encounter as they navigate resistance within the organization and transformation the processes and structures to accept Agile methods. GlobalTech CEOs made the situation better by revealing their problems,



including skeptics in their work, and cheering for their first winnings. Continuous dialogue and change management programs, involving the flattening of the hierarchy into multi-functional teams as well as introducing Agile scorecards to performance appraisals, are just some of the many steps undertaken to deal with resistance and nurturing of the team trust.

The report defends that the notion of perpetual development and flexibility is the main cornerstone had it been in whatever context referred to the Agile environment (De Smet et al., 2018). The upper echelons of GlobalTech's hierarchical structure encompassed leaders who facilitated routine retrospectives and promoted feedback loops which in turn guided process and practice adjustments depending on accumulated learnings. Implementation of sharing knowledge platform that collects and distributes best practices helped us enhance knowledge sharing across different teams as overriding principle of continuous improvement.

It would be a mistake to consider this GlobalTech case study as the end-all-be-all of research on this issue. As one organization service may not be applicable to every instance the findings may not be directly generalizable to many contexts or industries. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of this study introduces subjective bias which may distort the outcomes although measures were taken to use triangulation and compare the validated findings from multiply sources with rigorous analysis (Harman Connected Services, n.d.).

Despite these limitations, the article extends the emergence of Agile leadership and organizational reformation scientific discipline. It pinpoints the multi-sided function of leaders in accomplishing the Agile adoption: the role of a leader is to establish the vision and motivate an Agile mindset, empower teams, overcome the resistance, and create a gymnastic environment for sustainable Agile practices. The takeaways and learnings from GlobalTech's Agile Transformation journey can guide other organizations striving in the same direction, therefore emphasizing the value added by the appropriate leadership in the drive to accomplish lasting success (Agile Unleashed at Scale: John Deere Case Study - Scrum Inc.TM, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

The journey of GlobalTech Inc, where Agile transformation takes place, shows the critical function carried out by leaders in attaining successful Agile implementations in the companies. With a mix of numbers and words, the paper illustrates agile leadership in a complex way and demonstrates its contribution to building a lasting agile culture.

It indeed evidences that both effective and Agile leaders have the talent of being able to define a vision, develop the Agile mindset, support teams, overcome resistance, and set up the enabling environmental factors for continuous improvement and adaptation. The GlobalTech leaders demonstrated these practices in particular, in leading by example, in communicating the benefits of Agile, and aligning the organizational process and structure to be consistent with Agile methodology.

Although it has its own obstacles in the way, like overcoming traditionalists' resistance and making all stakeholders equally happy, GlobalTech's leaders applied effective communication, change management techniques, and a servant leadership style to traverse the transition victoriously, though. A set of quantitative measures such the increment of employee



engagement, quicker time-to-market, and shorter delays in projects echoes further the benefits of the Agile leadership (Scaled Agile, Inc., 2024).

Despite the fact that this single case study's findings cannot be necessarily generalized to all the contexts, the research provides significant insights and implementation guidelines for organizations that are attempting to kick off similar Agile transformations. It touches upon the vital aspects of firm leadership preparedness, empowerment tools, and continuous learning process to achieve sustainable Agile implementation and realise the maximum benefits out of any Agile methodologies.

The GlobalTech case study could be the illustration of the magnitude of the function of leadership in Agile transformations. Here, it emphasizes what makes agile implementations successful. Through practicing efficient agile leading techniques, the companies can get access to the benefits of speed up of their business, innovation and customer centricity, so ultimately, they can achieve sustainable competitive advantage as the business world now is rapidly changing.

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