



Learning Outcomes

Business Agility Foundations Certification

International Certification Alliance

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LICENSING INFORMATION

The work in this document was facilitated by the International Certification Alliance (ICA) and done through the contributions of various experts and practitioners. These learning objectives are intended to help the growing Tomorrow-Ready™ community worldwide.

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the learning outcomes that accredited member organizations must address to offer ICA's Business Agility Foundations certification.

Each learning outcome (LO) follows a particular pattern, described below.

O.O.O Learning Outcome Name

Additional Context, describing why this Learning Outcome is important or what it is intended to impart.

The learning outcome's purpose further describes what is expected to be imparted to the learner (e.g., a key point, framework, model, approach, technique, or skill).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. SETTING THE SCENE FOR BUSINESS AGILITY

1.1 AWARENESS: THE NEED FOR BUSINESS AGILITY

1.1.1 Business Agility: Drivers and Criticality

In today's environment of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA), business agility is more and more critical for success.

Illustrate the core foundational concepts of Business Agility in relevant business contexts.

1.1.2 Business Agility: Values, Principles and Dimensions

Business agility requires an enduring foundation of new values and principles in order to be persistent.

Clarify values and principles and why they are important enablers of building organizational intelligence; Describe the role of these values and principles in cultivating new ways of thinking and working.

1.1.3 Case for Change: Empowering Teams

Self-organizing teams with the right mix of cognitively diverse people who are closest to the customer experience and empowered to make decisions are the new competitive edge. These teams are able to lead innovation and continuously learn how to better create value to delight customers and stakeholders.

Convey that critical success factors include trust, safety, collaboration, cohesion, autonomy, mastery and purpose as well as new levels of individual accountability and responsibility for collective team success and value creation.

1.1.4 Case for Change: Customer Value and Continuous Learning

Success requires the ability not only to understand your customers, but also to solve problems they might not even know they have. Delighting the customer is key in today's hyperconnected world.

Grasp why and how to shift focus from "outputs" to outcomes by eliminating waste, doing less and accelerating innovation. Communicate why creating disruptive outcomes in today's volatile economy requires real-time knowledge generation as well as radical new ways of thinking and working.

1.2 COMPELLING VISION, FOCUS AND CLARITY OF PURPOSE

1.2.1 Compelling Vision and Clarity of Purpose

Aligning teams and organizations around a vision and strong sense of purpose is essential to enable high-performance. It also provides a key source of inspiration, engagement, commitment and organizational cohesion.

Communicate the importance of aligning organizations around a crisp, believable, compelling and inspiring vision and to experience methods for creating such visions and clear purposes.

1.2.2 Focusing on the Big Picture and Emerging Future as an Agile Business

On the journey to business agility, focusing on the big picture and generating a vision of what the future will look like can help an organization plan backwards to identify the steps to make it happen. This includes the new skills and abilities necessary.

Envision the future state of business agility, then learn ways to look backwards from that future to craft a compelling path to attain it including new capabilities, skills, behaviors, practices, that need to be acquired (and why). Participants will also gain an understanding of why and how to use this activity with their teams.

1.2.3 Understanding Customers, Stakeholders, Business and Emerging Markets

Fundamentally, value is subjective to each customer. Therefore, it is imperative that business agilists understand how to identify and empathize with their customers in order to deliver differentiating value and customer experiences.

Explain the values, principles, tools and techniques needed to develop empathy and improve awareness of customer and stakeholder context. Customer Empathy is a vital capability grounded in customer focus. Tools such as persona maps, customer journey maps, empathy maps, customer value propositions, business model canvas can be applied with an emphasis on "the why." Also, participants should identify that everyone in the organization between them and the customer is an internal customer. It is important to focus on business value throughout this chain and cultivate the concept of "we all win together", linking customer value, stakeholder value and business value.

2. ENABLING BUSINESS AGILITY

2.1 NEW WAYS OF THINKING

2.1.1 Developing a Growth Mindset

Adopting a growth mindset (the belief that talents and abilities are not static, but can be developed and improved) is paramount for achieving Business Agility.

Describe the attributes of a growth mindset in contrast to the limitations of a fixed mindset in the Business Agility context. A growth mindset is important as a foundation for developing resilience and thriving in the face of uncertainty. Also, introduce the concept of reframing failure as an opportunity to learn.

2.1.2 Blind Spots, Mental Models, Patterns and Sense Making

Business Agility requires a whole new way of thinking about work and reducing the cost of value. When we recognize our organization as a complex system, many traditional management models no longer serve us, but actually constrain our effectiveness. In the same way, as change agents, it is important to recognize how our own mental models may include blind spots that hold us back.

Recognize that blind spots and mental biases exist and understand the role that our mental models play in shaping our perceptions and beliefs. Change agents need to identify and understand these patterns of behavior in themselves before reframing them to better address our business needs. Participants can apply the skills needed to examine mental models and how individuals 'make meaning' by generating patterns filtered from experiences, beliefs and values. It looks at ways to slow down thinking processes to generate awareness, then form and reinforce new mental models.

2.1.3 Relationship Between Complexity and Business Agility

The ability to recognize and understand complex system dynamics accelerates the change process and the path towards Business Agility.

Provide an overview of the field of complex adaptive systems and complexity theory while providing practical awareness of relevant management models (e.g., systems dynamics [Peter Senge & Jay Forrester], Complex Adaptive Systems [Glenda Eoyang, Ralph Stacey, et al], Cynefin [Dave Snowden], Theory of Constraints [Eli Goldratt]).

2.1.4 Recognizing and Managing Dilemmas, Paradoxes and Polarities

Many of the recurring problems in today's volatile and complex business environments are actually unsolvable. Polarity Management provides a practical approach to effective resolution of dilemmas, paradoxes and polarities to help us identify and manage these unsolvable problems. It stresses the importance of recognizing when situations don't have solutions and uses both/and vs. either/or thinking.

Distinguish polarities (dilemmas, paradigms and paradoxes) from traditional problems and learn to see the relationship between the poles with the goal of optimizing the wins and minimizing the losses. This is done by practicing both/and thinking vs. the more traditional either/or thinking. In addition, cultivating a both/and mindset has deeper benefits with respect to collaboration and relationship-building.

2.2 NEW AND DIFFERENTIATING BEHAVIORS

2.2.1 Ask vs. Tell: High-Performance Questions

High Performance Questions are an effective tool for enabling Business Agility. They motivate fresh thinking and challenge outdated assumptions. A powerful question comes from a place of curiosity, stimulates reflective thinking, invites challenges to assumptions, invites creativity/insight and explores new possibilities.

Define high-performance questions, give examples of the power they have towards enhancing organizational outcomes and discuss techniques for using them as often as possible in day-to-day conversations.

2.2.2 Making Value Visible

Defining and generating value is at the heart of Business Agility. Effective value management requires identification of marginal, negative and non-value value tasks. For optimal success, organizations need practices not only to define value clearly but also to make it visible.

Emphasize that value is only delivered through the completion of a new or improved functional slice of work that is implemented and delivered to a customer for use. Moreover, valuable learning occurs once a product or feature is in the hands of customers who can use it and provide feedback.

2.2.3 Experimenting and Hypothesis Testing

Business Agilists need to demonstrate a bias for action. Results need to be empirically measured to determine actual vs. planned benefits to inform pivot vs. persevere decisions.

Understand why and how to identify small, discrete opportunities, then craft hypotheses in order to frame relevant experiments. This requires comfort with quick action and forgoing traditional practices of upfront design that often create waste, extend cycle time and contribute to "analysis paralysis." Participants will come away understanding why and how rapid experimentation accelerates learning and business agility.

2.2.4 Complex Dynamics of Change, Polarities, Systemic Problems and Disruptive Threats

Agile businesses thrive in changing environments. However, preconceptions about change and fear of loss can lead to significant tension and resistance. Learning how to engage individuals, teams and the organization to embrace and co-create change is critical to an effective transformation and requires courage, resilience and persistence.

Experience the complex dynamics involved when creating sustainable change and the reason why individuals and organizations (as systems) deeply resist it. It is also key to understand lean change practices and why co-creating change is essential. Describe and discuss change frameworks, polarity management frameworks and what makes them effective. Highlight how to reframe disruptive threats as strategic opportunities.

3. IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING BUSINESS AGILITY

3.1 FRAMEWORKS, TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

3.1.1 Lean Systems Thinking

A lean systems perspective creates a direct, quantifiable link between the business goals and change actions.

Learn why a lack of end-to-end systems thinking and a failure to focus on value throughout the organization leads to waste and ineffective outcomes. A Lean Systems Approach enables business agility by focusing on strategic goals, measuring value, defining a practical course of action, exposing and eliminating waste, enabling rapid decisions, learning with quantitative analysis and empirical data and supporting teams to generate and sustain knowledge. The systems perspective of lean focuses on end-to-end value creation and ensures that every improvement action enhances overall business performance instead of isolated gains.

3.1.2 Lean Startup and Canvases

The Lean Startup framework and emerging body of canvases and templates provides a practical framework for rapidly validating innovative ideas for possible new business models or process improvements.

Introduce concepts and applications of the Build – Measure – Learn framework for dealing with uncertainty. Participants will also learn about minimal viable product, thin slices and benefits of "failing fast" to succeed sooner.

3.1.3 Design Thinking Approaches

Understanding why and how to apply design thinking can accelerate organizational effectiveness and business agility.

Apply the concepts of design thinking and focus on new ways of thinking about elements of a product or solution that evolve around the customer: people, technology and business. Design thinking is "a human-centered approach to innovation" that draws from the designer's toolkit to recognize and integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology and the requirements for business success.

3.1.4 Flow-based Values and Systems

"The kanban method is highly conducive to building learning organizations and is best understood through its values: understanding, agreement, respect, leadership, flow, customer focus, transparency, balance and collaboration. This manifests in 4 key practices: 1) visualize the workflow and display progress, 2) lead using a team approach, 3) reduce the batch size of your efforts and limit work-in-progress, and 4) learn and improve continuously."

Provide an understanding of the key values and practices of kanban, along with ideas on why and how to apply these values.

3.1.5 Iterative Framework and Sampling of Practices

Iterative frameworks promote discovery and delivery at frequent intervals, which accelerates learning and value creation.

Understand and use iterative frameworks and how they accelerate learning and discovery.

3.2 BUSINESS AGILITY AS THE NEW NORMAL

3.2.1 Creating Space for Optimal Engagement and Value Creation

Each person involved in an Agile organization works most effectively if the environment encourages a focus on what is really important. People need to feel safe enough to innovate, challenge outdated practices, experiment and take ownership of continuous learning.

Analyze what a business agility environment and learning ecosystem looks like and why it is vital in a VUCA world. Participants devise strategies to create an environment that enables value creation, rapid decision making and optimized execution.

3.2.2 Action Plans and Tools to Accelerate Business Agility

Reflecting on Business Agility capabilities and practices and synthesizing workshop learnings into actionable and practical workbooks, business agility toolkits, action plans and personal development plans. This reinforces the importance of continuous and emergent learning which is vital to sustainable Business Agility.

Reflect on and synthesize key learnings in the unique context of each participant's experience, work structures and challenges. The goal of this is to extend Business Agility mastery and learning beyond the course.

3.2.3 Continually Reinventing

Business Agility is a journey, not a destination. It requires ongoing and continual reinvention.

Identify and explain ways in which the participants can make the ongoing application of business agility part of the habitual way of working in their organizations.

3.2.4 Measures of Success

Being able to pivot quickly is essential to creating value. Having the right leading indicators and a value-based approach to metrics are incredibly useful in this pursuit.

Communicate the importance of learning agility and how empirical data and relevant, actionable metrics support real learning. Learners should also understand limitations of lagging indicators and excessive metrics that do not drive the right behaviors. Setting adaptive and continuously improving measures of success based on leading indicators and "metrics that matter" is an important foundational business agility activity.

SPECIAL THANKS

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