Servant Leadership Behaviors that Positively Influence On-Time Delivery of Committed Work by Agile Teams in a Scaled Agile Framework

Rob Barclay
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Servant Leadership Behaviors that Positively Influence On-Time Delivery of Committed Work by Agile Teams in a Scaled Agile Framework

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A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri–St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Business Administration with an Emphasis in Leadership

December 2020

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Dinesh Mirchandani, Ph.D.
James Campbell, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This research found strong evidence that leaders who use Servant Leadership Behaviors (SLBs) positively influence on-time delivery of committed work by scrum teams in a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe). In organizations using a Scaled Agile Framework to manage large programs, Agile teams plan work called “stories” within an iteration, which can range from one to four weeks. The stories are ultimately intended to deliver functionality to the end-user and have enough information within them for business and technical people to understand the intent, develop, test, and demonstrate a vertical slice of system functionality.

Our research used Servant Leadership theory to uncover SLBs that positively influence the delivery of committed work by scrum teams in a Scaled Agile Framework. Using a qualitative case study research method, we collected data through semi-structured interviews with SAFe industry consultants who have an average of at least 18 years of industry consulting experience, are Scaled Agile Program Consultants (SPCs) certified, have helped organizational SAFe transformations, and have coached leaders to use Servant Leadership behaviors to facilitate the on-time delivery of user stories. We found “Values People” to be the most important SLB. The SLB “Provides Leadership” was found to be the least important Servant Leadership Behavior for SAFe Agile teams.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, SAFe, Agile, Servant Leadership Behaviors, Scaled Agile, project management
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Chapter 1. Introduction

To accelerate value delivery to the customer, large organizations have begun shifting from traditional project management to an Agile project management environment. Organizations must "create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service" (Deming, 1985, p. 10), and Agile methodologies have appealed to top managers due to the failure rates from traditional project management methodologies (Hass, 2007). The CHAOS reports by Standish Group have identified that failure is higher in traditional project management compared to Agile project management (Hastie & Wojewoda, 2015). Studies have revealed that Agile methods offer benefits including higher satisfaction, a feeling of effectiveness, increased quality and transparency, increased autonomy and happiness, and earlier detection of defects (Laanti et al., 2011, p. 276). Additional studies have indicated that Agile at scale (Scaled Agile) gets business results with better engagement, faster time-to-market, increases in productivity, and reductions of defects (Leffingwell, 2018).

As larger organizations begin adopting Agile, their needs and abilities to manage Agile projects at scale increase. Many large organizations have large, complex projects that generally have interdependent Agile teams. Managing interdependent Agile teams became challenging, and there was little literature, guidance, and no established processes to help Agile teams manage this problem (Dingsøyr & Moe, 2013). Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) was created as a process for large programs to use Agile at scale, giving them a framework that entails a lean mindset, supports the Agile manifesto, and supports a set of Lean-Agile principles (Leffingwell, 2018). The transition from traditional project management methodology to SAFe is a culture change (Laanti et al., 2011). These frameworks are essential for Agile projects to succeed and must be supported by leadership through behaviors. While
“implementing tools represents at most 20 percent of the effort in Lean transformations, Mann (2009) explains that the majority of work goes into “changing leaders’ practices and behaviors, and ultimately their mindset” (p. 15).

Literature suggests that a different approach to leadership behaviors is needed in SAFe compared to traditional project management. Deming (1985) mentions that changing is not easy for everyone and that management must realize there is change needed at all levels to accomplish a transformation.

Agile project management methods emerged in the 1990s, and the industry has become increasingly aware of and interested in them (Laanti et al., 2011). The Agile Manifesto (2001) was created, and the Agile Software Development Alliance emerged, creating a purpose of “uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it” (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001, p. 2). They created a set of values and Agile principles. According to the Agile Manifesto, self-organizing teams create the best architectures, requirements, and designs by integrating business stakeholders and developers, who work together throughout the project to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software, frequently while welcoming changing requirements throughout the process (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001). It’s done by “building projects around motivated individuals by giving them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done” (Fowler & Highsmith, 2001, p. 4).

Douglas McGregor presented Theory X and Theory Y in the 1950s as two theoretical views of workers. Theory X tended to be a pessimistic view of how workers behaved, and that they needed to be controlled and managed, whereas Theory Y had a positive view where creative workers were valued and free to create, rather than be controlled and told what to do.
Theory Y assumes that “supervisors have complete confidence and trust in subordinates” (Carson, 2005).

The term Servant Leadership manifested in Robert Greenleaf’s writings, and is “a concept that is attracting a broader audience throughout all kinds of organizations today” (Laub, 1999, p. 2). Robert Greenleaf coined the term “Servant Leadership” in 1970 in his essay, “The Servant as Leader.” His idea of Servant Leadership is that the leader is seen as servant first, which can transcend them to greatness. Servant leadership is discussed in the literature for Scaled Agile Framework (Leffingwell, 2018) as behaviors that should be modeled by Agile roles that are deemed leaders to a team, project, or program.

**Agile Release Trains (ARTs)**

In a Scaled Agile Framework, Agile Release Trains (ARTs) are created around the flow of value for continuous delivery, which includes continuous exploration, continuous integration, and continuous deployment to release on demand (implementation of technology to production). ARTs consist of teams of people working cross-functionally (software, hardware, firmware, etc.). This allows for the ability to conduct requirements definition, build, test, and deploy value incrementally, and demonstrate the working software and/or hardware within a Program Increment (PI). The cross-functional teams break the functional silos that may develop within organizations. An ART consists of 5-12 Agile teams, where they may choose their Agile practices based on scrum, Extreme Programming (XP), and Kanban. In Table 1 the Agile method and their associated common practices are listed (Jyothi & Rao, 2012; Nathan-Regis & Balaji, 2012).
Table 1

Agile Method and Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agile Method</th>
<th>Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Programming (XP)</td>
<td>The planning process, small releases, metaphor, test-driven development, story prioritization, collective ownership, pair programming, forty-hour work week, on-site customer, refactoring, simple design, and continuous integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrum</td>
<td>Capture requirements as a product backlog, thirty-day Sprint with no changes during a Sprint, Scrum meeting, self-organizing teams, and Sprint planning meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanban</td>
<td>Contains a series of states that define the workflow, progress of items tracked by visualizing all the work, teams agree on specific work-in-process (WIP) limits for each state and change them when necessary, flow is measured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table demonstrates the Agile Methods along with the practices those methods utilize (Jyothi & Rao, 2012; Leffingwell, 2018; Nathan-Regis & Balaji, 2012)

An ART may have 50 – 125+ people that are synchronized on a PI. The ARTs are aligned to a common vision. The ART contains a set of features that are owned and written by Product Managers who understand the portfolio and work with the customers and business owners to establish a backlog. A backlog is a list of features, or a change in existing features, bug fixes, or other requirements and/or activities a team may deliver to achieve a specific outcome. A Feature is something that can be delivered to a stakeholder to satisfy a need (Leffingwell, 2018).

There are several key program roles within the ART that are determined essential in SAFe. Each role has a key description. Table 2 shows the “Critical Roles” that are defined in the SAFe literature (Leffingwell, 2018).
Table 2

SAFe Critical Roles and Behaviors in the ART (Leffingwell, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ART Roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release Train Engineer (RTE)</td>
<td>• A Servant Leader and coach for the ART who facilitates program-level execution, ART events and processes, and assists the teams in delivering value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicates with stakeholders to remove or assist in removal of impediments, assists with risk and dependency management, and continuous improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Manager (PM)</td>
<td>• Has content authority for the Program backlog (features) and is responsible for what gets built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understands portfolio work, customer needs and validates solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Manages and prioritizes the flow of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participates in demos and Inspect and Adapt workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Builds an effective Product Management / Product owner team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Architect / Engineer</td>
<td>• Individual or team that defines overall architecture of the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Works abstractly above the teams and components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Defines Nonfunctional Requirements (NFRs), major system elements, subsystems, and interfaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Owner</td>
<td>• Key stakeholder of the ART.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Has ultimate responsibility for the business outcomes of the train.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>• Ultimate buyers of the solution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table from Leffingwell (2018) has been recreated from Scaled Agile Framework, and describes the roles considered critical in an ART, and the behaviors that should be exhibited by the critical roles.

Agile Teams

Agile teams are cross-functional groups of 5-11 people who have the responsibility to define, build, test and deploy some elements of a solution in a short iteration timebox known
as an iteration (Leffingwell, 2018). They typically include software developers, testers, engineers, and other functional team members that may be required to complete a project functionality. Optimally, an Agile team would be collocated for the best possible communication to take place.

In an Agile project, an iteration is defined as a fixed length of time from one to four weeks (normally two weeks), and each iteration is the same length of time, running back to back. Within one iteration, an Agile team defines, builds, integrates, and tests the stories from their team’s backlog. Afterward, the Agile team will have a meeting called a retrospective, where they examine what they did well, what they want to continue doing, and what they want to improve. An Agile team’s backlog contains user stories that originate from the ART’s program level backlog of features, along with stories that arise locally from the team’s local context called user stories.

**Table 3**

*SAFe Agile Team Roles (Leffingwell, 2018)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agile Team Roles</th>
<th>Role Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scrum Master (SM)</strong></td>
<td>• A Servant Leader and coach for the Agile Team that exhibits lean-Agile leadership and communicates with management and outside stakeholders to protect the team from uncontrolled expansion of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supports the estimation process for user stories, guiding the team in establishing normalized estimates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Educates the team in scrum, Extreme Programming (XP), Kanban, and SAFe to ensure the Agile processes are being followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Helps remove impediments and foster an environment for high-performing team dynamics, continuous flow, and relentless improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supports the team rules and facilitates the team’s progress toward team goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supports the product owner in their efforts to manage the backlog.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and guide the team.
- Coordinates with other teams in the Scrum of Scrums (SoS) meeting, passing information from that meeting back to the team for needed integrations.
- Facilitates preparation and readiness for ART events.

**Product Owner (PO)**
- Responsible for defining stories and prioritizing the team’s backlog to streamline the execution of program priorities while ensuring that the integrity of the features remain.
- Works with ART and Scrum Team stakeholders to build, edit and maintain the team backlog consisting mostly of user stories.
- Conducts quality control by accepting stories as done, including validation that the story meets acceptance criteria and has appropriate, persistent acceptance tests, and complies with the Definition of Done (DoD).
- Maintains significant relationships and responsibilities outside the local team, working with product management.
- Serves as the customer proxy, and works with other Pos.

**Development Team**
- Dedicated professionals who can develop, test, and deploy a story, feature, or component.
- Typically includes software developers and testers, engineers, and other dedicated specialists required to complete a vertical slice of functionality.
- Collaborate with the PO to create and refine user stories and acceptance criteria.
- Participate in PI Planning and creating Iteration plans and Team PI objectives.
- Work with the PO to confirm code and acceptance tests reflect desired functionality.

*Note. This table from Leffingwell (2018) has been recreated from Scaled Agile Framework, and is a product of three separate role descriptions*

**Program Increment (PI)**

A Program Increment (PI) is an 8-12 week-long timebox in which an ART delivers incremental value by presenting working, tested software systems, that typically consist of four development iterations, followed by one Innovation and Planning (IP) Iteration. A PI is to an ART as an iteration is to a scrum team. It is timeboxed to build and validate a full system, demonstrate value, and get fast feedback.
Program Increment (PI) Planning

The Program Increment Planning is normally a two-day event that occurs at the end of each Program Increment. If possible, everyone will attend in person, though distributed planning (virtual) can occur if there is facilitation at each location and if the teams are experienced. It is a significant planning event that requires a lot of preparation by communicating and coordinating across multiple Agile teams, leadership, and the critical roles identified above.

Throughout the two days of PI Planning, each Agile Team within the ART will decompose features (owned by Product Managers) into stories (owned by Product Owners).

Figure 1

Content Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Manager</th>
<th>Product Owner</th>
<th>Agile Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drives the PI and product</td>
<td>Owns Team Backlog(s)</td>
<td>Builds Quality-In, evolves Agile architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owns Program Backlog</td>
<td>Defines Features, PIs, and Releases</td>
<td>Owns estimates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defines Iterations and Stories</td>
<td>Owns Vision, Roadmap, pricing, licensing, ROI</td>
<td>Evolves the Continuous Delivery Pipeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes to Vision, Roadmap, ROI</td>
<td>Accepts Iteration increments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborates on Enablers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Build the right thing…* …Build the right way

*Note.* This figure is copied from the Scaled Agile Framework website and quickly describes ART roles and their primary responsibilities throughout PI Planning.

The Agile Teams will then collaborate to discuss dependencies, risks, and how to deliver
features incrementally via user stories. In some cases, an Agile Team may be solely responsible for delivering a Feature, so they can create user stories without dependencies on other teams. In other cases, they will need to coordinate with other Agile Teams to create user stories and understand the dependencies and timing, and gain commitments from other teams to accomplish the delivery of a user story to complete features. Dependency planning and gaining commitments is a critical planning event during PI Planning.

The first day of PI Planning normally begins with presentations from leadership that create a shared understanding of the business situation, the boundaries the teams should plan within, and a vision. A question/answer session can occur during or after to clarify objectives. Objectives are described as business summaries of what each team intends to deliver in the upcoming PI. Typically, objectives are mapped to features at the ART, but not always. The first day ends with a draft plan review, where teams present key planning outputs which include draft objectives, risks, and dependencies. Management concludes the first day with a management review and problem-solving event to address challenges that may have been presented by the teams such as scope, people constraints, and dependencies. The second day kicks off with the managers describing adjustments and/or changes needed to the plan. The teams continue planning to make appropriate adjustments for dependencies, risk, and management requests and/or information. They then take actions on identified risks and perform a confidence vote, where all team members vote on their level of confidence in their plan to meet the PI objectives. Afterward, they may rework their plan until a high confidence level is achieved. Finally, the Release Train Engineer (RTE) and leadership perform a retrospective to determine how to improve PI Planning in the future.
Servant Leadership Behaviors

The Servant Leadership Behaviors (SLBs) needed in an Agile environment are different than those of traditional projects (Laanti et al., 2011). Agile “team members, empowered with more discretionary and decision-making powers, are not confined to a specialized role” (Nerur et al., 2005, p. 75). This allows them to respond to emerging business priorities quickly without the need for bureaucratic processes found in traditional project management. Agile teams should consist of cross-functional experts so that if a need arises, the team can quickly communicate and come to a decision with an understanding from a variety of perspectives. The comparison between traditional and agile methodologies in Table 4 suggests there are differences in the leadership styles, and reflects differences in how teams are formed and interact.

Table 4

Comparison of Traditional and Agile Methodologies (Nerur et al., 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Agile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fundamental Assumptions</strong></td>
<td>Systems are fully specific able, predictable, and can be built through meticulous and extensive planning</td>
<td>High quality, adaptive software can be developed by small teams using the principles of continuous design improvement and testing based on rapid feedback and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>Process Centric</td>
<td>People Centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management Style</strong></td>
<td>Command-and-Control</td>
<td>Leadership-and-Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Management</strong></td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Tacit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Assignment</strong></td>
<td>Individual-favors specialization</td>
<td>Self-organizing teams-encourages role interchangeability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer’s Role</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Cycle</td>
<td>Guided by tasks or activities</td>
<td>Guided by product features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Model</td>
<td>Life cycle model (Waterfall, Spiral, or some variation)</td>
<td>The evolutionary-delivery model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired Organizational Forms/Structure</td>
<td>Mechanistic (bureaucratic with high formalization)</td>
<td>Organic (flexible and participative encouraging cooperative social action)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>No restriction</td>
<td>Favors object-oriented technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table is reproduced from the original table by Nerur et al. (2005) and describes the differences between Agile and Traditional project management methodologies.

In SAFe, Leffingwell (2018) describes the transition needed from traditional project management to Agile transformation. He describes a set of Servant Leadership behaviors that are typically employed in traditional organizations, and where the leadership behaviors need to move to help the teams move forward in an Agile environment. He applies his knowledge of leadership behaviors by describing Servant Leadership, and how it helps enable teams.

**Table 5**

*From Traditional Manager to Servant Leader (Leffingwell, 2018)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From “Traditional Manager”</th>
<th>To “Servant Leader”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating team activities and</td>
<td>Coaching the teams to collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contributions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving toward specific outcomes</td>
<td>Being invested in the program’s overall performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the answer</td>
<td>Asking the teams for the answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>Letting the teams self-organize and hit their stride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixing problems</td>
<td>Helping others fix them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This table is reproduced from the original table created by Leffingwell (2018) that describes the transformation of behaviors from a traditional manager to a Servant Leader.
Servant Leadership

The Scaled Agile Framework literature references Servant Leadership characteristics of effective leadership in SAFe by indicating behaviors that support SAFe (Leffingwell, 2018). He describes eight behaviors and relates them to the context of SAFe language in Table 6.

“Servant leadership is a philosophy that implies having a comprehensive view of the quality of people, work and community spirit” (Leffingwell, 2018, p. 289).

Table 6

Servant Leadership Behaviors in the Context of SAFe (Leffingwell, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>...in the context of SAFe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listen and support teams in problem identification and decision-making</strong></td>
<td>- As a good facilitator, encourage everyone to express their opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Is attentive to hesitant behavior and body language during Daily Stand-up meetings, retrospectives, planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Helps the team identify positive and negative changes during retrospectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Create an environment of mutual influence</strong></td>
<td>- Facilitates PI Planning and shared team ceremonies for all ART team members and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Openly asks for opinions and input, and carefully considers the response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand and empathize with others</strong></td>
<td>- Shares in celebrating every successful demo, feels bad about iteration failures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage and support the personal development of each individual and the development of teams</strong></td>
<td>- Encourages team learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fosters collaborative practices: side-by-side programming, Continuous Integration, collective code ownership, short design sessions, specification workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Encourages rotation in technical areas of concern: functionality, components/layers, role aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Facilitates team-decision-making rather than making decisions for the team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Coach people with powerful questions (Persuades) rather than use authority | • Asks questions that encourage the team to look at decisions from new perspectives.  
• Articulates facts, helps the team see things they may have overlooked, helps them rethink. |
|---|---|
| Think beyond day-to-day activities; apply systems thinking | • Sets long-term operating goals for the team: Agile practices to master, new skills to acquire.  
• Examines what is missing to make the environment better for everyone, prioritizes improvement activities and makes them happen. |
| Support the teams’ commitments | • Facilitates ad hoc meetings (design discussions, story reviews with the PO, coding and unit testing approaches, critical bug-fix strategies).  
• Helps the team find access to external sources of information: subject matter experts shared resources (architects, UX designers, tech writers).  
• Helps clarify and articulate rationale behind scope commitments.  
• Helps team members prepare for Iteration Review and System Demo.  
• Helps the team find techniques to be more collaborative. |
| Be open and appreciate openness in others | • Shows appreciation for team members who raise serious issues, even when delivery is jeopardized.  
• Encourages and facilitates open communication among team members with external colleagues.  
• Encourages healthy conflict during team meetings.  
• Gives open, honest opinions. |

*Note.* This table is reproduced from Leffingwell’s (2018) SLBs as it is used in the context of SAFe

These behaviors described in the context of SAFe serve to assist leaders that can enable teams in an Agile environment at scale.

The SLBs identified by Charles Laub (1999) in Table 7 have been theoretically proven
by Laub (1999). Laub used his theoretical work to formulate the Servant Organization Leadership Assessment tool, which is utilized to evaluate Servant Leadership in organizations.

Table 7:

Servant Leadership Behaviors (Laub, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant Leadership Behaviors</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values People</td>
<td>By trusting &amp; believing in people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By serving others’ needs before his or her own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By receptive, non-judgmental listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops People</td>
<td>By providing opportunities for learning and growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By modeling appropriate behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By building up others through encouragement and affirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds Community</td>
<td>By building strong personal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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Note. This table is reproduced from Laub’s (1999) Servant Leadership Behaviors and the characteristics associated with each behavior

The Scaled Agile Framework literature calls out Servant Leadership behaviors as being part of a lean-agile mindset where leaders should transition from directing and managing to servant leadership, where the leaders should focus on providing support that is needed by Agile teams (Leffingwell, 2018). The literature suggests several behaviors that should be undertaken by
leadership. This study investigates the following question:

What Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence the on-time delivery of committed work by Agile teams in a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe)?

Agile teams commit to work every iteration. The dependent nature of the committed work by other Agile teams is a risk if teams cannot complete their committed work. It can delay the project and/or program schedules, ultimately delaying the delivery to the customer. The Servant Leadership behaviors exhibited by leadership and management may reduce this risk by allowing teams to focus on the work while removing impediments.

Using a qualitative research methodology employing a semi-structured interview technique, we interviewed 12 SAFe and Agile Consultants who are credentialed experts in SAFe and Agile methodologies. These experts have consulted and overseen many different industries and have a combined average of over 18 years of project management experience, and over 11 years of consulting in organizations using Scaled Agile Methodology. The SAFe consultants interviewed have, at a minimum, a Scaled Agile Framework Program Consultant (SPC) certification, which enables them to consult programs and organizations in SAFe. They have overseen SAFe implementations and have coached Agile teams, Agile leaders, managers, and executives. Using interpretive research and inductive reasoning, we found Servant Leadership Behaviors (SLBs) that have positively impacted Agile teams’ ability to complete committed work on time. Additionally, we found SLBs that are more impactful than others using a ranking system, from 1-6. The participants have observed SLBs that have enabled Agile teams to deliver committed work on time.

Chapter 2. Review of the Relevant Literature

The servant leadership research threads are informed by 3 broad streams of literature;
leadership behavior, Theory X, Y and Z, and servant leadership. The research threads related to leadership that we used in this study frame the connection between the behaviors of the leaders in SAFe and the on-time delivery of committed work by Agile teams.

Leadership

When discussing Servant Leadership, we must first establish what leadership is, and then describe what Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence the delivery of on-time committed work by Agile teams in SAFe. Effective leadership is critical for SAFe. “Leadership is one of the most comprehensively researched social influence processes in the behavioral sciences” (Parris & Peachey, 2013, p. 377). Leadership is necessary to guide or direct an organization. Servant leadership is based on the theory of serving others, and “that the role of organizations is to create people who can build a better tomorrow resonates with scholars and practitioners who are responding to the growing perceptions that corporate leaders have become selfish and who are seeking a viable leadership theory to help resolve the challenges of the twenty-first century” (Parris & Peachey, 2013, p. 378). A leader “is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives” (Winston & Patterson, 2006, p. 7). This definition of leadership has many components that allude to Servant Leadership behaviors. Research conducted by Winston and Patterson (2006) found over 90 attributes of leadership, while many of them have overlapping themes related to Servant Leadership. Research by Bass and Riggio (2006) suggest that leadership may occur at any level in an organization, and by any individual.
Leaders in organizations typically have authority, and in Servant Leadership, one must be mindful when connecting Servant Leadership with authority.

**Authority**

Authority is different than leadership. “Authority is the defining feature of hierarchy. ‘The boss’ can restrict the subordinate’s actions, overturn his decision, and even fire him (unless the boss’s boss objects, in which case ‘the boss’ may be fired)” (Baker et al., 1999, p. 2). “The word formal suggests this form of authority is related to or involving some formal structure or associated with an official status for the project manager. Formal authority is metered out from someone who has it to give” (Browdy, 2009, p. 32). “Formal authority resides at the top” (Baker et al., 1999, p. 2). When someone at the top gives authority to someone else, it’s called informal authority, whereas someone higher up in the hierarchy can retract that delegated informal authority (Baker et al., 1999). Arendt (1958) explains:

Since authority always demands obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion where force is used, authority itself has failed! Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation (Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance). (p. 1)

Authority is said to have origins in history tracing back to Plato, where he was considering introducing authority when handling public affairs. “He was seeking an alternative to the common Greek way of handling domestic affairs, which was persuasion” (Arendt, 1958, p. 2). After Socrates’ death, Plato understood that coercion is stronger than persuasion, and threats
should exist to have authority. To establish authority, Plato would have to show a clear inequality, where a relationship exists when one person is under the ‘command’ of another.

“The patient became subject to the physician’s authority when he fell ill” (Arendt, 1958, p. 11), which describes how positional power conceptualized.

**Theory X and Theory Y**

Scaled Agile Framework encourages leaders to embrace Servant Leadership behaviors to enable adoption and success of Agile development. A leader in an organization should model the behaviors he wants people and teams to emulate. “By modeling the right behaviors, leaders can transform organizational cultures from the pathological (negative, power-oriented) and bureaucratic (negative, rule-oriented) patterns of the past to the generative (positive, performance-oriented) culture that is required for the Lean-Agile mindset to flourish, and create an environment of mutual trust and respect” (Leffingwell, 2020).

A study found that Agile methodologies improve employee satisfaction (Papadopoulos, 2015). For people and teams utilizing SAFe, this can be linked to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which has five sets of goals described as basic needs: physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). “Maslow was of the view that needs provide the driving force, and motivating behavior and suggested that worker disaffection with work was not due to something intrinsic to workers, but due to poor job design, managerial behavior and limited opportunities for job satisfaction” (Dartey-Baah, 2009, p. 3). Maslow’s (1954) need hierarchy theory, “suggests that, as individuals develop, they work their way up a hierarchy based on the fulfillment of a series of prioritized needs, including physiological, safety and security, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization” (Steers et al, 2004, p. 4). Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y concepts were “influenced by
Maslow’s (1954) need satisfaction model of motivation” (Dartey-Baah, 2009, p. 3). Managers who choose an authoritarian style of management utilize the theory X approach, which is a management style applying autocratic leadership behavior, where the manager or leader establishes regulations, processes, and controls to manage people and teams. They install autocratic controls based on three assumptions:

1. The average employee dislikes work and will avoid it, if possible.
2. Because of this dislike, people must be directed, controlled, threatened, and coerced with the threat of punishment for them to achieve organizational objectives.
3. The average employee prefers to be directed and will avoid responsibilities if possible, has little ambition, and wants security above all.

In contrast, Theory Y is a more hands-off approach and is linked to the leadership styles promoted in SAFe. Theory Y is the integration of the individual performing the work along with organizational goals, and the assumption that the employees may enjoy work depending upon leadership behaviors exhibited by leaders. “People will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed” (McGregor, 1960, p. 2). People are imaginative, can create organizational solutions, and develop cooperative relationships with leaders and managers when enabled, which is promoted in Agile methodologies and SAFe.

**Theory Z**

Valuing People, Building Community, and Sharing Leadership are characteristics of Servant Leadership behaviors. These Servant Leadership characteristics are found throughout Theory Z. It expands beyond theory X and theory Y with the claim that employee turnover could be reduced, commitment could be increased, morale and job satisfaction could be improved, and drastic increases in productivity could occur if the Western culture learned
from their Japanese counterparts (Ouchi & Cuchi, 1981). Theory Z makes assumptions about workers which include their desire to build happy relationships with their coworkers and have a need to be supported by the company. Another assumption is that the employees can be fully trusted to do their jobs to the utmost of their ability, and that leadership needs to have a high level of confidence in their employees due to their participative management style of allowing workers to participate in company decisions. The result is the employees develop strong relationships with coworkers, and desire support from the organization in terms of work-life balance, where family, culture, and tradition are just as important at work, which is shown to produce greater employee satisfaction (Papadopoulos, 2015). These are concepts advocated by SAFe and support the Agile teams’ ability to deliver their committed work on time.

**Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership characteristics in the SAFe and Agile literature are promoted as behaviors that should be exhibited by leaders to enable Agile transformations and enable Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. Robert Greenleaf (1904-1990) is said to be the father of Servant Leadership theory, and essentially launched the literature and theoretical framework for Servant Leadership. Greenleaf worked at AT&T for 38 years and retired as a Vice-President for Management Research. He began his next career as a researcher and teacher (Spears, 2010). In 1964, he founded the Center for Applied Ethics, which eventually became The Greenleaf Center for Servant leadership. He was a writer, speaker, business consultant, and spoke at universities and churches (Laub, 1999).

Servant leadership is said to have its roots in the book by Herman Hesse “Journey to the East” (Hesse, 1956). This book describes a conversation between the author and Leo where they exchange thoughts, and it describes the law of service “He who wishes to live long
must serve, but he who wishes to rule does not live long” (Hesse, 1956, p. 14). This motivated Greenleaf (1977) to study leadership:

The servant-leader is servant first-as Leo was portrayed. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive…” leadership that begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first [emphasis added]. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead (p. 6).

Servant Leadership was formulated through Robert Greenleaf’s paper, The Servant as Leader, where he conceptualizes “the great leader is seen as a servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (Greenleaf, 1973, p. 2). Greenleaf explains that in Hesse’s book, the servant, named Leo, was taking a mythical journey, and once Leo had left the group, the journey turned to chaos and was eventually abandoned. They could not make the trip without Leo, the servant. He eventually finds out that Leo was not a servant, but was head of an Order, and was considered a great and noble leader.

Servant leadership is expanding in different cultures, as The Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant leadership has opened international offices in nine countries, and his writings have been translated into many different languages (Frick, 2009). Organizations globally are adopting servant leadership, and it's becoming more prevalent in industries (Welch, 2016).

The literature suggests that Servant Leadership concepts are rooted in Judeo-Christian theology (Laub, 1999; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 1996),
whereas Christian teachings on servanthood are rooted within the life of Jesus Christ (Laub, 1999). “The concept of Servant Leadership echoes the messages of Mother Theresa, Moses, Harriet Tubman, Lao-tzu, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Confucius, and many other religious, historic and current leaders” (Parris & Peachey, 2013, p. 379). “Western religions, particularly Christianity, emphasize the behaviors of the leader. Eastern religions, such as Confucianism and Taoism, place more emphasis on the inward journey of the leader, such as living the moral life, developing a collectivist set of ethical values, and building character” (Ebener & O’Connell, 2010, p 317).

Servant leadership is when a leader assumes the position of a servant in relationship to the worker (Russell & Stone, 2002):

As long as power dominates our thinking about leadership, we cannot move toward a higher standard of leadership. We must place service at the core; for even though power will always be associated with leadership, it has only one legitimate use: service. (p. 1)

Servant leadership is different than command-and-control leadership styles which led to theory X, where “command-and-control leaders focus on the acquisition and deployment of positional power for their own benefit. Servant leaders are more likely to rely on referent power than legitimate authority” (Ebener & O’Connell, 2010, p. 319). Command-and-control leaders are more likely to lean on authority to accomplish organizational goals rather than leadership. “Globalization, new technologies, and changes in how companies create value and interact with customers have sharply reduced the efficacy of a purely directive, top-down model of leadership” (Groysberg & Slind, 2012, p. 1). As a result, command-and-control leadership styles seem to be less viable as organizations mature and evolve (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).
Servant leadership is also different from transformational leadership, where “transformational leader’s focus is directed toward the organization, and his or her behavior builds follower commitment toward organizational objectives, while the Servant Leader’s focus is on the followers, and the achievement of organizational objectives is a subordinate outcome” (Stone et al., 2004, p. 1).

**Servant Leadership Characteristics**

Literature regarding Servant Leadership reveals many distinguishable characteristics. Some of the attributes include (Russell, 2001):

- Vision
- Credibility
- Trust
- Service
- Modeling
- Pioneering
- Appreciation of others
- Empowerment

Spears identified “Ten Characteristics of a Servant Leader” (Spears, 1995). These would grow into the foundation of the Servant Organization Leadership Assessment (SOLA) model. The ten characteristics (Spears, 1995) are:

1. **Listening** – Listening receptively to what someone says and what is not said, and reflecting are essential to growth and well-being of Servant Leadership
2. **Empathy** – People need acceptance, and a leader who empathizes with others with good intentions without rejection are successful Servant Leaders
3. **Healing** – Mending relationships and helping others overcome emotional hurting
4. **Awareness** – Self-awareness and general awareness strengthens a servant-leader and helps one understand issues in ethics, power, and values
5. **Persuasion** – The reliance on persuasion instead of positional authority regarding decision making in organizations is a key aspect of Servant Leadership, where they seek to convince others rather than force compliance. The Servant Leader is effectively building consensus.
6. **Conceptualization** – Traditional leaders desire to accomplish short-term goals, where the Servant Leaders stretch beyond into providing vision by looking beyond day-to-day
realities.

7. **Foresight** – Ability to understand lessons from the past, realities of the present and the “likely consequence of a decision for the future”

8. **Stewardship** – Playing a significant role in the organization for a greater good than oneself, serving the needs of others, and use of openness and persuasion

9. **Commitment to the Growth of People** – Recognizing the need to develop people, offering opportunities for growth. The Servant Leader nurtures the personal and professional development of employees and colleagues and take personal interest in ideas from everyone and encourage involvement in decision making

10. **Building Community** – Servant leaders seek to identify a way to build community, which may have been lost as organizations are large institutions. This awareness causes the Servant Leader to find ways of building a community among those who work within an institution

Leaders and managers have adopted Servant Leadership in their workplaces and organizations. “An increasing number of organizations have adopted Servant Leadership as part of their corporate philosophy, or as a foundation for their mission statement” (Spears, 1996, p. 34). With this growing and increasing understanding and adoption of Servant Leadership, the definition and measurement tools were created. As a result, the ten characteristics of Servant Leadership were inputs into Laub’s Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment model (Laub, 1999, 2005). The Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment (SOLA) was created as a tool to define Servant Leadership, understand the characteristics of Servant Leadership, and determine if the characteristics within organizations can be assessed with an instrument (Laub, 2005). Using a Delphi survey, he was able to determine the characteristics of Servant Leadership, which led to a definition and an instrument that can be used to assess it. “The SOLA has shown itself to be highly reliable with strong construct and face validity. It has been used in multiple research projects as well as for organizational diagnosis and consulting” (Laub, 2005, p. 159). The SOLA defines Servant Leadership as “an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader” (Laub, 2005, p. 169).
Servant Leadership Characteristics (Laub, 1999)

Servant-leadership is ...

an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant-leadership promotes the valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led, and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization, and those served by the organization.

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<th>The Servant-Leader ...</th>
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<td><strong>Values People</strong></td>
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<td>By trusting &amp; believing in people</td>
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<td>By serving others’ needs before his or her own</td>
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<tr>
<td>By receptive, non-judgmental listening</td>
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<td><strong>Develops People</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>By providing opportunities for learning and growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>By modeling appropriate behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>By building up others through encouragement and affirmation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Builds Community</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>By building strong personal relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>By working collaboratively with others</td>
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<td>By valuing the differences of others</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Displays Authenticity</strong></td>
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The Servant Organization is ...

an organization in which the characteristics of servant-leadership are displayed through the organizational culture, and are valued and practiced by the leadership and workforce.

Note. This figure was copied from Laub’s (1999) Servant Leadership Behaviors and their associated characteristic.

Servant Leadership Values

Laub’s (1999) research validates the idea of values as the foundation of Servant Leadership. “The study of leadership ethics falls into two broad categories: the conduct of the leader, which examines leader behaviors, and the character of the leader, which explores the virtues and disposition of the leader” (Ebener & O’Connell, 2010, p. 318). Values are an important aspect to determine what actions a leader will take based on their beliefs or values. Values are the foundation of decision making and resolving conflicts (Kouzes & Posner, 2011;
Malphurs, 2004; Russell, 2001). Russell (2001) hypothesized that Servant Leaders possess different personal values than non-Servant Leaders, which are tied to attributes of leadership (Stone et al., 2004).

A leader’s values affect decision making and result in characteristics or attitudes that affect behavior (Malphurs, 2004; Russell, 2001). By modeling Servant Leadership behaviors, leaders perform acts of Servant Leadership. This voluntary nature of service implies that Servant Leadership is more about ‘being a servant’ than just merely ‘doing acts of service’, thus reflecting the leader’s character (Jaworski, 1998; Sendjaya et al., 2008). The literature suggests Servant Leadership is finding opportunities to serve others whenever there’s an established need, and ensuring that need is met regardless of mood. (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003; Foster, 2012; Marshall, 2003; Sendjaya et al., 2008). These categories can be linked to Northouse’s suggestion that leadership behaviors and traits are important aspects to understanding leadership (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010; Northouse, 2018).

Chapter 3. Method

Purpose

The theoretical foundations provided by leadership, authority, theory x, theory y, theory z, and Servant Leadership create an opportunity to uncover servant leadership behaviors that lead to the successful delivery of committed work on time by Agile teams in SAFe. As illustrated below, the evolution of leadership research from authority to theories x, y, and z to the SOLA has influenced SAFe leadership behaviors. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to determine successful servant leadership behaviors in organizations that have adopted Scaled Agile Framework and Agile Project Management methodologies in programs.
and projects that positively impacts the ability for Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. We did that by examining the published literature on Scaled Agile Framework and interviewing Agile consultants. We found strong evidence that Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence the on-time delivery of committed work by Agile teams.

**Research Question**

The study utilizes a qualitative case study approach to examine the research question:

What Servant Leadership Behaviors positively influence the on-time delivery of committed work by Agile teams in a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe)?

**Research Methodology**

Our case study examines real-world situations where Servant Leadership has been utilized and/or observed to help Agile teams deliver committed work on time. In this study, we used inductive reasoning, which is a bottoms-up approach, and data collection activities start for a particular topic of research (Myers, 2013). Patterns emerged and phenomena became apparent which supports the theoretical concepts of Servant Leadership behaviors that enable Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. Our philosophical approach is interpretive research. We do this because we speak the same language as the people being studied (Myers, 2013), and we can contextually interpret the discussion in the interviews.

We conducted interviews to gather the data needed to collect and interpret the phenomena related to Servant Leadership behaviors that enabled Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. The data sources were participants who are SAFe or Agile consultants and have observed Servant Leadership behaviors enabling Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. A semi-structured interview process was used where there were pre-
formulated questions, but we did not strictly adhere to them. New questions often emerged during the conversation which enabled us to pursue new lines of inquiry. This allowed the participants to talk freely and give information they considered relevant and important. We conducted interviews until we reached data saturation where no new insights were being discovered in the interviews (Myers, 2013).

The interview process generated a large volume of data. The data was recorded on an audio device and transcribed into Microsoft Word documents which were analyzed thoroughly for meaningful results. We organized our data using the interview questions as guides and examined the data for patterns. The quotes used by the participants are indicated in this study to show evidence that using SLBs enable Agile teams to deliver committed work on time.

Our research question asks “what” leadership behaviors, and “how” that influences the delivery of committed work by Agile teams, whereas the word “positively” is indicative of the “how”. “How and why questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of a case study…as the preferred research method” (Yin, 2017, p. 28). We are focusing on the behaviors that were observed in organizations to see how those leadership behaviors lead Agile teams to deliver their committed work on time.

The case study’s findings contribute to the existing theoretical contributions related to Servant Leadership theory by showing evidence of positive leadership behaviors that enable Agile teams to deliver committed work within a planned iteration, thereby lessening dependency issues in programs utilizing SAFe. This serves to continue closing the gap between rigor and relevance by giving leaders and managers (programs, projects, and/or people) a set of Servant Leadership behaviors that can be inherited and utilized to enable teams to be more successful. Relevant research is research that relevant to business
professionals, and can be implemented (Myers, 2013).

“One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (Yin, 2017, p. 118). We conducted interviews until we reached data saturation, whereas “no new insights are being discovered in the interviews” (Myers, 2013, p. 123). The participants were asked questions that tied Scaled Agile Framework and theoretically proven SLBs. After they responded to the interview question, they were asked if they believed the SLB, as asked, was an effective Servant Leadership behavior that enabled teams to complete committed work on time using a Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). All participants chose strongly agree, or agree, for every SLB. This indicated that all participants agreed that Laub’s Servant Leadership behaviors are effective at enabling teams to deliver committed work on time. The observations in response to the interview questions were all deemed by the participants as having positively impacted Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time.

We interviewed 12 SAFe consultants who hold, at a minimum, the certification of Scaled Agile Program Consultants (SPC), using semi-structured interview techniques, allowing us to ask questions outside of the script when necessary to help inform the study. We used qualifying demographic questions to substantiate the credentials of the participant, which gave credit to the qualitative case study results. We had unique access to SPC SAFe consultants with at least 8 years’ experience in project management, who are SPC certified (in good standing) and have experience consulting industries and/or organizations.

The interview questions were developed by finding the intersection of the eight Servant Leadership behaviors described by Leffingwell (2018) in SAFe and the six Servant Leadership characteristics in Laub’s (1999) Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment
Leffingwell (2018) describes a set of Servant Leadership behaviors that Agile leaders should exhibit when transforming and/or executing SAFe. Laub’s (1999) SOLA is utilized as a tool to assess the types of Servant Leadership behaviors that are positively impacting the ability for scrum teams to deliver their committed work. We found commonalities in the SAFe behaviors and theoretically proven Servant Leadership characteristics, and developed informing interview questions that elicited observed leadership behaviors by SPCs that were utilized in organizations and had positively impacted teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time.

**Demographic Qualification Questions**

The first set of questions are demographic, describing the respondent’s qualifications to ensure we interviewed experts with the proper credentials and experience to inform this study. Each question goes deeper into the qualifications, letting us understand the level of expertise. We included questions that highlighted the participant’s level of expertise and ability to inform the study so that their observations are relevant. There were eight demographic questions:

- Industry
- Title
- Years of Project Management Experience
- Year they began using Agile
- Certifications
- Years as a consultant
- Number of industries consulted
Informing Questions

Qualitative research is “the best way for research in business and management to become both rigorous and relevant at the same time” (Myers, 2013, p. 13). Our case study examined real situations where Servant Leadership may have been utilized and/or observed to help organizations’ Agile teams to deliver committed work. “To do a good qualitative study, qualitative researchers need to engage actively with people in real organizations” (Myers, 2013, p. 13).

We used inductive reasoning, which is a bottoms-up approach where a “researcher starts ‘bottom(s)-up’ and begins by collecting data about the topic” (Myers, 2013, p. 23), where patterns emerged and phenomena are presented to support theoretical concepts of leadership behaviors. According to Myers (2013), there are four research methods: action research, case study research, ethnography, and grounded theory. We utilized case study research, where we collected “empirical evidence to convince other researchers of the applicability (or inapplicability)” (Myers, 2013, p. 74) that Servant Leadership behaviors positively affect Agile team delivery of committed work.

The interview questions developed linkages between the SAFe Servant Leadership behaviors and the servant-leader definitions provided in the SOLA. We did this by matching up the SOLA definitions and examples to the SAFe Servant Leadership Behaviors. Laub (1999) published a dissertation which defined a set of Servant Leadership characteristics using the Delphi method, which is a tool that may be used to reach consensus of a group of experts where the answer is not immediately available or known (Guglielmino & Guglielmino, 1977; Laub, 1999). It involved sending out a thorough survey to a group of people, where the results
were used to formulate the SLBs. Experts were chosen based upon having written on Servant Leadership or having taught the subject at the university level (Laub, 2005). The result was a formulation of the SOLA, where “Servant Leadership is defined as an understanding and good practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader” (Laub, 2005, p. 158) and provides a useful lens to look at organizations through Servant Leadership understanding and behavior.

Given the “Behaviors in the context of SAFe” in Table 6, we were able to discern relationships, which are in Appendix D, and are how we created the interview questions. The tables in Appendix D have 4 columns. The first column describes Servant Leadership behaviors as defined by Leffingwell (2018). The second column is the SAFe Servant Leadership behavior actions that leaders take (Leffingwell, 2018). The third column is the Servant Leader attributes (Laub, 1999). The fourth column is the characteristics of those attributes (Laub, 1999). There are two rows at the bottom of each table. The first row explains the relationship of Servant Leadership behaviors in SAFe and the Servant Leader characteristics. The second row is the applicable interview question.

**The Interview Process**

The interviews were semi-structured, where pre-formulated questions were asked, but with no strict adherence to them. The participants were asked a question; however, a response may have elicited further probing, or new questions developed throughout the conversation. This type of interview gave us flexibility in allowing the participant to speak freely and tell us everything they may consider relevant to the topic. This allowed us to collect rich content (Yin, 2017). We were mindful of the time for the researcher and participant, as to keep it approximately one hour while ensuring not to disrupt the process. The participants' personal
identifying information (PII) has been anonymized.

**Participant Selection**

We utilized the network of practicing Agile professionals to determine who we could contact for interviews. We also tapped the University of Missouri in St. Louis’ (UMSL) Doctor of Business Administration’s cohort of 2020 for professional contacts that have the necessary credentials and experience. After receiving contact information via emails, we reached out and utilized e-mail to initiate contact with the participants. The contacts who were interested replied and negotiated a time and date that would work for both interviewers and participant, either face to face or using virtual meeting tools, such as Zoom or WebEx.

**Protection of the Participants**

The University of Missouri in St. Louis’ Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the protocol for research involving human subjects. The interview began with a human consent form disclosure, followed by demographic questions and informing questions. Each participant’s data was recorded and obfuscated to help ensure confidentiality and freedom in responses. Names were excluded from transcriptions and remain protected on an encrypted device. Coding was established in the table of participants to remove personally identifiable information (PII). Any data that could be traced to the informing participant has been removed.

**Data Collection**

For each informing question, the participants provided the situation they observed, the context in which the leadership behaviors were applied, and how it impacted Agile teams to complete committed work on time. In our final question, we asked them to rank the six Servant Leadership behaviors listed in Laub’s (1999) Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment
from most important to least important. This allowed time for the participant to think through the responses they gave using contextual information and order the Servant Leadership behaviors from one through six. All information was recorded and transcribed.

We contacted and set up interviews with only those individuals we deemed to be experienced SPCs who could inform positive SLBs. The number of industries/organizations is helpful because it shows how many organizations they have helped with either Agile transformations, Agile implementations, or Agile maturity.

The years practicing project management indicates their expertise and knowledge of the project management industry using traditional, Agile, or both. The years of consulting experience and the number of clients may be unique to everyone. The number of clients may differ for each consultant, as there are many factors that may keep a consultant engaged longer with one client than other clients.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research using interviews produces a large volume of data given the transcripts of the interviews. We used coding to transform the data into useful and meaningful results to understand the Servant Leadership behaviors that help Agile teams deliver committed work. “Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Myers, 2013, p. 167).

According to Myers (2013), “there are six fundamental tasks associated with coding” (Myers, 2013, p. 167) which are summarized:

1. **Sampling** – identifies texts to be analyzed, and unit of analysis
2. **Identifying themes** – inducing themes from the text, or derived from literature
3. **Building codebooks** – organizing lists of codes and definitions
4. **Marking texts** – assigning codes to units of text

5. **Constructing models** – identifies how they are connected

6. **Testing models** – testing the model on different data

**Instruments**

The participants agreed to meet at a specific time, date, and location. We sent a calendar invite for the meeting, and if necessary, a hyperlink for the virtual call. After introductions were established, the interviews would commence, beginning with the human consent form.

A voice recorder was used to record the interview. At the beginning of the interview after the informed consent, we indicated that the recording was starting, and pushed the record button. We conducted a quick microphone test that was recorded, played back, and deleted. We checked to ensure the audio was loud and interpretable. Once successful, the interview began. The recorder was utilized for both in-person and virtual conversations. We asked the interview questions listed in Appendix E.

NVivo 12 Pro was utilized to help encode the data and organize the interview results. Data was captured and inserted into the tool. Afterward, coding began to emerge, and the tool helped keep the coding organized.

EndNote X8 was utilized for applicable literature references. The references that were applicable to the literature were saved and imported into the tool. This enabled us to keep track of all relevant research and accurately annotate the references throughout the research project.

More than half of the interviews had to be completed using virtual technology due to limitations of both researcher and participant’s ability to travel to mutual locations.
Ethical Considerations

This research is interpretive because we are attempting to understand how positive leadership behaviors impact Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work from the perspective of experienced practitioners. Our interviews provided insight into the phenomena.

We used the Myers (2013) five ethical principles while performing the research:

1. The Golden Rule – do unto others as you would have them do unto you
2. Honesty – be honest about the data and findings
3. Plagiarism – do not deliberately copy someone else’s work
4. Informed Consent – participants give their consent to participate with the option to terminate the interview at any time
5. Permission to Publish – obtain permission from participants that we may publish the study

We carefully recorded the interviews, then transcribed them. We were able to interpret meaningful information that informed the study. We attributed sources of information for our research accurately and refrained from any practice that would cause discomfort or injury to the research participants.

Chapter 4. Results

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we described the purpose of the study and the relevant literature. We then described the research methodology, the approach and structure of the research, and the data samples utilized.

We discuss the results of the qualitative case study research based on the interviews conducted with SAFe consultants, who are deemed experienced experts, and the impact of
Servant Leadership behaviors (SLBs) on Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time. We begin by discussing the participant sample, who were asked semi-structured interview questions. We describe the research methodology and the detailed results of the study.

We found strong evidence that Servant Leadership behaviors contribute to on-time delivery, which may result in project success. As leaders in programs using SAFe with credentials in traditional and Agile project management, we have a vested interest in this research. Based on the analysis of the transcripts, all the participants agreed that leaders who exhibit the SLBs positively impact Agile Teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time.

Description of the Research Base

Using the authors’ extensive professional network, the participants were selected based on their credentials and experience in SAFe and Agile methodologies, their significant experience as consultants, and their experience in coaching, mentoring, and guiding organizations in SAFe. Table 8 below shows the participants’ titles, project management experience, certifications, consulting experience, and the number of organizations (if any) they have engaged as a consultant.

Table 8

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Years of Project Mgmt.</th>
<th>Year began using Agile</th>
<th># of Certifications</th>
<th>Years of Consulting Experience</th>
<th># of Industries / Organizations Consulted for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing Partner</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants did not have access to the questions before the interview, nor the structure of our questions, and therefore, were not influenced by the groupings of Scaled Agile Framework behaviors to the Servant Leadership characteristics. To protect the research participants, we reviewed the informed consent, and read highlights of the informed consent.
After the interview was completed, we emailed a copy of the human subjects’ consent form as a courtesy in case they elected to withdraw from the study. The informed consent was acknowledged by each participant, and they willingly participated in the study. None of the participants withdrew from the study or showed signs of discomfort during the interview. We ensured the participants that none of their personally identifiable information would be produced in the study.

**Presentation of the Data and Results**

We structured the interview questions by relating Scaled Agile Framework’s behaviors (Leffingwell, 2018) and theoretically proven Servant Leadership characteristics (Laub, 1999). The results were observations by experts of Servant Leadership behaviors observed in organizations that enabled Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. We asked the participants to rank the Servant Leadership behaviors from most important to least important from 1 to 6 using the Servant Leadership characteristics from the servant organizational leadership assessment (Laub, 1999):

**Table 9**

*Servant Leadership Behaviors and Characteristics (Laub, 1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant Leadership Behaviors</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Values People                | • By trusting & believing in people  
                            | • By serving others’ needs before his or her own  
                            | • By receptive, non-judgmental listening |
| Develops People              | • By providing opportunities for learning and growth  
                            | • By modeling appropriate behavior  
                            | • By building up others through encouragement and affirmation |
Builds Community
- By building strong personal relationships
- By working collaboratively with others
- By valuing the differences of others

Displays Authenticity
- By being open and accountable to others
- By a willingness to learn from others
- By maintaining integrity and trust

Provides Leadership
- By envisioning the future
- By taking initiative
- By clarifying goals

Shares Leadership
- By facilitating a shared vision
- By sharing power and releasing control
- By sharing status and promoting others

Note. This table is a reproduction of the SLBs and their characteristics from Laub (1999)

Table 10

Servant Leadership Behavior Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank Order Placement Results</th>
<th>Servant Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Values People</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Displays Authenticity</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Develops People</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shares Leadership</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Builds Community</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Provides Leadership</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. This table represents the SLB rank order placement based on the average score, and shows what SLBs are most important to the participants.

After the participants rank-ordered the most important Servant Leadership Behaviors that enabled Agile teams to complete committed work on time, we assigned values of 1 to 6 in rank order placement for each participant. The most important Servant Leadership behavior
was assigned a value of 1, through the least important, which was assigned a value of 6. All results were tallied and then averaged. We were able to discern the most important SLBs from ones that are not as important based on the average score and listed them in Table 7. “Values People” was identified as the most important of the SLBs, where “Providing Leadership” was identified as not as important as the others.

All participants rank-ordered results had “Values People” in the top three most important SLBs and was the number one selection in four of the 12 participants’ responses. “Provides Leadership” mostly showed up in the bottom two of the most important SLBs and was listed as number 6 by three of the participants.

Table 11 provides the connection of SAFe literature of SLBs with the SOLA SLBs, and the summary of evidence found. It has four columns linking the collected data of SLBs that positively influence teams to deliver committed work on time. The four columns are based on peer-reviewed literature from Laub (1999) and Leffingwell (2018). In the first column, the SLBs are listed as defined by Laub (1999). The second column is the SLB key points describing the SLBs’ meaning. The third column is the SLBs in the context of SAFe. The fourth column is the supporting evidence is presented in the SLB that positively influences teams to deliver committed work on time is summarized.

The rows indicate the alignment of each theoretical concept found in literature and are supported by evidence in this study.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant Leadership (Laub, 1999)</th>
<th>SLB Key Points</th>
<th>In the context of SAFe</th>
<th>SLBs that positively influence Agile teams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Servant Leadership Behaviors to SAFe with Summary Evidence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviors (SLBs) (Laub, 1999)</th>
<th>(Leffingwell, 2018)</th>
<th>to deliver committed work on time (summarized evidence from interviews)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Values People** | • Trusting and believing in people  
• Serving others’ needs before his or her own  
• Receptive, non-judgmental listening | • Supports the teams’ Commitments  
• Listens and supports team members in decision identification | 1. Protects teams from organizational burdens  
2. Allows teams to focus on the work |
| **Displays Authenticity** | • Being open and accountable to others  
• A willingness to learn from others  
• Maintaining integrity and trust | • Understands and empathizes with others | 3. Recognizes that other people and teams may have better solutions than your own |
| **Develops People** | • Providing opportunities for learning and growth  
• Modeling appropriate behavior  
• Building up others through encouragement and affirmation | • Encourages and supports the personal development of each individual  
• Creates an environment of mutual influence | 4. Ensures training is available to everyone to support the organizational goal |
| **Shares Leadership** | • Facilitating a shared vision  
• Sharing power and releasing control  
• Sharing status and promoting others | • Persuades rather than uses authority | 5. Tells the team what is expected rather than how to do something |
| **Builds Community** | • Building strong personal relationships  
• Working collaboratively with others  
• Valuing the differences of others | • Is open and appreciates openness | 6. Verbally expressing the desire for candid feedback, and thanking people and teams for providing it |
| **Provides Leadership** | • Envisioning the future  
• Taking initiative  
• Clarifying goals | • Thinks beyond day-to-day activities; applies systems thinking | 7. Aligns stakeholders on a common vision, and expresses that to people and teams |
Findings on Servant Leadership Behaviors

In the context of Servant Leadership characteristics, none of the participants required an elaboration of what is meant by the definitions provided in Laub’s (1999) model. All interview questions, as constructed in this study, were understood by all participants, and they were able to recall specific examples of Servant Leadership behaviors that positively influenced Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. They did not require additional details for the Servant Leadership characteristics listed beside the Servant Leadership behavior when it was displayed, and they were able to rank them from most important to least important.

The participants were asked questions that tied Scaled Agile Framework and theoretically proven SLBs. After they responded to the interview question, they were asked if they believed the SLB, as asked, was an effective Servant Leadership behavior that enabled teams to complete committed work on time using a Likert scale of whether they strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. All participants chose strongly agree, or agree, for every SLB. This indicates that all participants agreed that Laub’s Servant Leadership behaviors are effective at enabling teams to deliver committed work on time.

The intent of this paper is not on change theory, though it is important to highlight the varying experiences of the participants. Each participant had responses based on their positions as consultants hired into organizations where they were transforming to SAFe, or where the organization had internal struggles and needed additional outside help.

In this next section, we use the evidence uncovered in the interviews to support the connection between Laub’s SLBs in the context that Leffingwell highlighted to support the
servant leadership behaviors that enable teams to complete committed work on time. The results presented below examine each SLB one at a time.

**Values People**

“Values People” has characteristics such as trusting and believing in people, serving others’ needs before his or her own, and being receptive and nonjudgmental and listening (Laub, 1999). Overall, Values People was the number one most important SLB according to study participants.

Trustingly and believing in people ties to Theory Y (McGregor, 1960) concepts, which is a management perspective that creative workers need to be free to create, rather than be controlled and told what to do. Creative work can also be considered knowledge work. During one of the interviews, we discovered a correlation between creative work and knowledge work and discovered why it is important to differentiate the criticality of trusting and believing in people in an Agile environment. A managing partner with 20 years of consulting industry leadership stated:

> What we are focusing on is knowledge work, and systems that are focused on knowledge work are inherently different than production systems. A lot of the practices that we have in organizations are really modeled on labor-management.

This recognition may have been the spark that initiated Agile frameworks, methodologies, and Servant Leadership behaviors. The managing partner stated:

> Knowledge work, which is more of a human activity in terms of creativity, imagination, and determination often has a social element to it. What you’re
trying to do is make a decision or create/design something that inherently takes collaboration across an enterprise.

In Agile teams, the need for collaboration and learning is essential to accomplish the creative nature of their work, ultimately delivering value to a customer. The teams’ ability to make decisions without management intervention helps the organization deliver value faster. Distributed decision-making increases the throughput of work. The managing partner noted:

All business transformations are driven by the need to address increased complexity in the operating environment…and all of them need to take on characters to develop ‘business agility’, becoming a learning organization, and being an organization that demonstrates high transparency and distributed decision-making. It is a proper one for dealing with a complex world. You go from the neo-classical organizational structure more suited for the Industrial Age to an Agile organization. Distributed leadership is the rule, not the exception, and that’s what you’re aspiring to.

Leading knowledge workers is different from management. Managing knowledge workers has connotations of command and control style of leadership. Servant leadership behaviors have elements of trust, which enables teams to create value by having delegated decision-making authority, and autonomy to create through knowledge and collaboration.

Serving others’ needs before their own can have connotations that there may be a conflict with organizational goals and desires of the Agile teams. It is important to frame this
response with the assumption that the organizational and Agile teams’ goal alignment is already in place, and there is no disagreement. It is important to note that if there was a disagreement between organizational goals and that of the Agile teams, the leadership would work to resolve the issue(s). It is critical for leadership to ensure the organizational and Agile teams’ priorities are aligned, which is a part of the SLB “Provides Leadership”. A managing partner with 20 years of consulting industry leadership stated:

If I am in a leadership position and I feel that there is a priority, and the teams have different priorities, and I allow that, it becomes a dysfunctional situation. Getting to the root cause of the misalignment, and ensuring we uncover the root cause so we can get back in alignment on the priority is essential.

When leadership helps teams by putting the teams’ needs before their own, it enables teams to deliver value to the customer effectively by completing their committed work on time.

In one interview, an observation that was deemed effective was an interaction between a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) coach and a Program Manager, where the participant believed the leader put the teams’ needs before their own which equipped the program and teams to deliver their committed work on time. It could reasonably be assumed that the organization supported the transformation, and this was aligned to the expected behavior of the program manager. When the senior manager of consulting with 12 years of consulting experience spoke to the program manager, the program manager said:

I’m not interested in being a Program Manager. I want to equip the release train to deliver against their commitments and not push them in directions that would be contrary to delivering.
In another interview, there was an observation where a senior executive in an organization had a limited budget but kept the teams oriented on the organizational goals rather than the budgetary constraints, which enabled them to deliver user stories on time. A North America Portfolio Lead Agile consultant with over 20 years of consulting experience stated:

(The senior executive) gave the teams air cover and seemingly de-prioritized how she would be individually viewed by leadership regarding project constraints. It maximized the team's ability to deliver, they felt like they had the autonomy to take ownership themselves.

Both interactions showed evidence that the leaders valued people by supporting the team commitments and serving the teams' needs before their own. This eventually enabled the Agile teams to complete their committed work on time.

When transforming an organization from traditional project management to Scaled Agile Framework, coaching and mentoring occurs at all levels of leadership and teams, which includes SLBs for executives and managers. This involves listening instead of telling, where two-way communication is taking place, and perspectives are taken into consideration. A managing partner with 20 years of consulting industry leadership said:

Hearing what people are saying and making sure that I create a dynamic conversation where there's an exchange of information, you can work directly together regardless of the roles and authority that you have.

When an organization gets to a point where they are more mature at institutionalizing SLBs, sometimes it requires continuous coaching and mentoring for leaders and teams. Leaders make assumptions that they need to make decisions for the teams, and a SAFe
transformation installs SLBs that enable teams to make their own decisions. Once the teams begin practicing the processes and techniques that Agile teaches, they begin making their own decisions. The leaders and Agile teams’ practice communicating, listening, and making collaborative decisions.

Once the team adopts (SLBs), then they do not need leadership intervention and decision making, because they’ve established a different type of peer relationship. So, the Servant Leader is looking to create a protocol that encourages people to speak. Also, the Servant Leader is looking for protocols that encourage the Servant Leader to speak as a facilitator and give positive reinforcement.

In a specific instance, there was an observation by the North America Portfolio Lead with over 20 years of consulting experience. He witnessed a leader observing Agile teams, and the leader noticed the Agile teams’ hesitancy to speak up during a Program Increment planning event. The leader perceived the teams had unresolved issues through their body language:

- Every single person showed a 3 (relating to their confidence in their plan on a scale of 1-5), but their faces didn't look like the 3s they were showing. One of the senior leaders…noticed this and asked a few people to verbalize what led them to all be very confident. He asked if they had any concerns about this particular component.

This resulted in intensified conversations and debates that brought out the teams’ discomfort with the current plan. The leaders were able to elicit good conversation which highlighted
additional concerns the teams had, and a new plan was developed. All Agile teams were
comfortable with the new plan and had high confidence that they could deliver their committed
work on time. By Valuing People, leaders listen and trust their teams, and ensure they are
focused on the work which leads to delivery of on-time committed work.

**Displays Authenticity**

“Displays Authenticity” has characteristics such as being open and accountable to
others, a willingness to learn from others, and maintain integrity and trust (Laub, 1999).
Learning from failure and making decisions to improve is a way to elicit the SLB ‘Displays
Authenticity’. The word “failure” suggests connotations that may be negative. Perhaps a team
set out to accomplish a goal but did not achieve success as it was defined. As one participant
stated, “Failure is a harsh word sometimes, but learning…” may result in stories getting done
on time. The managing partner stated:

- Failure is an interesting word…when a team fully understands what that goal
  is, and it fails to meet the expected result, it can probably be thought of as
  failure. But where ambiguity exists, and the expected result is not fully
  known…that is learning, and not failure.

If a team were to show a pattern of failing, there may be other elements of leadership that
need to be addressed. A senior manager of consulting witnessed a team that was unable to
deliver their commitments to each iteration. The team leadership knew that they had to be
open and accountable to the team and each other, while maintaining their integrity and trust,
and showed a willingness to learn and improve.

The teams were having difficulty making things small enough to deliver
committed work in a sprint, so they were rolling things over or, or traveling work, and there was recognition that was a problem. So, we had to bring in people that were outside the team to help them find an alternative pattern, which led to learning and getting committed work done on time.

Being in a leadership position and Displaying Authenticity by being vulnerable is an important Servant Leadership behavior that enables teams to deliver their committed work on time.

**Develops People**

“Develops People” has characteristics of providing opportunities for learning and growth, modeling appropriate behavior, and building up others through encouragement and affirmation (Laub, 1999). Providing opportunities for learning and growth may mean to give one a challenging assignment where they will learn new skills, and/or grow within a role where they had no experience before. Organizations understand that continuous training and development is needed due to the inherent nature of change and disruption. The managing partner stated:

> In the world of IT, successful organizations understand there's a lot of technical and systems knowledge that is required to progress, and since this knowledge tends to change quickly, the fact that you went to college is not going to be sufficient to propel you for the next 10 years…and that’s why good leaders in organizations encourage their people to get training

Leaders should model the behavior they want their teams to embody. As leaders, being present to support the team and explain why training and development are important may establish successful outcomes. In this observation, a Scaled Agile Coach with over 10
years of consulting experience had taught SAFe to an organization’s leadership team, and the leadership understood the training, and why it was important for their organization. They provided the teams with an opportunity to train and develop by sending them to SAFe training and were there to talk about why it was important.

We did a SAFe for team’s class…for the entire ART. Their leadership was there at the beginning of the class…to explain why this (training) was important, and why it was important that everybody listen to the training and pay attention. We were able to have the leadership kick off the class, because they'd (the leadership) gone through leading SAFe, understood the content and the importance, and they were able to echo it from their own words which reinforced why it was important for the teams to learn and to take the whole thing seriously, and led the teams to plan and complete their committed work on time.

The leadership provided opportunities for learning, encouraged, and supported the development of each individual knowing that the teams would be more successful as a result. They were modeling the behaviors that they wanted their teams to exhibit by taking the training beforehand and showing up to the training even when the teams were there. This encouraged the teams to plan and complete their committed work on time.

**Shares Leadership**

“Shares Leadership” has characteristics of facilitating a shared vision, sharing power, and releasing control, sharing status, and promoting others (Laub, 1999). Sharing power and releasing control means that a leader is no longer using authority to accomplish an
organizational goal, and potentially releases control by allowing the teams to work autonomously. According to Laub (1999), Shares Leadership is done through sharing power, where one uses persuasion to influence others instead of coercion. Leaders do not rely on their positional authority to achieve organizational outcomes. There are considerations for leaders with positional authority. When it comes to sharing leadership, a managing partner with 20 years of consulting industry leadership said:

I think it has to do with power in your organization. If you're having a conversation between a person who's got lots of organizational power or authority, you have to be very careful how you speak because to those who don't have organizational power...you make it very difficult for them to say no.

In cases of Agile leadership, there is an instance where sharing leadership produces valuable results, and the Agile teams were able to deliver their commitments on time, as a result. A senior manager of consulting with 12 years of consulting experience said:

The product manager told us what they wanted to accomplish, what good looks like and allow the team to make decisions and demonstrate what they came up with...the Agile teams were able to write their own user stories that met his needs...and had creative solutions that he never expected. This allowed the teams to complete the user stories on time and exceeded the product manager's expectations.

By relinquishing the authority, and letting the team develop their own solutions, the team achieved results that surpassed the leader's expectations. In addition, they were able to complete their committed work on time.
Another characteristic of sharing leadership is to persuade rather than use authority. A participant observed and utilized persuasion through a workshop that was conducted to help highlight significant data that helped the leadership to conclusively make decisions. An Agile coach with over 15 years of project management experience saw evidence of persuasion that enabled Agile teams to deliver their committed work:

The VP needed to get the business on board, and the product owners working with the team to get a strong backlog so that Agile teams could deliver. She had no authority over the business partner and employed persuasion to convince the product owners to work with the teams, build out the backlog, which helped the Agile teams deliver committed work on time.

Persuasion, when used effectively, can help convince others to invest time to ensure teams deliver their committed work on time, and with quality results.

**Builds Community**

“Builds Community” has characteristics of building strong personal relationships, working collaboratively with others, and valuing the differences of others (Laub, 1999). Building relationships, and enhancing relationships, can begin with a candid approach. Encouraging candor to have open and honest discussions is essential in Building Community if done properly, and the conditions are correct. A managing partner stated:

You need to create the conditions so that candor can take place, and that’s not always possible. Sometimes it can be construed as kill the messenger, or someone has to be blamed…A person with positional authority needs to take the first step to provide the vulnerability…and create the conditions necessary
for people to speak honestly.

Being honest without establishing trust prior to the discussion may have the opposite effect of Building Community. Therefore, it is important for a Servant Leader to be aware of the environment and take steps to provide a comfortable atmosphere of honesty.

A leader may ask for the teams to be open, honest, and transparent in their communication so that the leadership can help instead of punishing the teams if something starts going awry. A senior manager of consulting observed:

The (client’s) leadership was focused on “Tell me what's really happening”… they wanted clear, transparent communication when something was not right, and they were more interested in what was keeping things from being successful. That built relationships by giving Agile teams confidence that if things went wrong, leadership could help fix it as opposed to being punished for things going wrong. And that helped them to complete stories on time.

Being a leader who is candid and wants to know about the issues, one that lends help and works with the teams through trying times, ultimately builds personal relationships. The leader is then working collaboratively with the teams, seeking candid information through collaboration and enhancing those relationships in doing so, and resulting in on-time delivery of committed work.

Creating the environment of trust and allowing honesty and transparency to occur is a communication that needs to occur from a leader with organizational authority to a team that has little to no organizational authority. Creating an atmosphere where candid conversations can take place can help teams deliver their
committed work on time. In a specific case, a North America Portfolio Lead Agile consultant said:

One of the business leaders who were responsible for the scoping decisions, gaining alignment, and approval from senior business leadership...stood up in the middle of a large planning event and reminded the teams that he and other leadership members needed honest answers, and not their politically correct answers. He asked if they could deliver committed work within the timeframe because he perceived the teams were overcapacity. I felt like it was a seminal moment in transitioning not only this individual leader but the relationship that he had with a lot of the people and teams...I feel it very much built personal relationships and enabled Agile teams to deliver committed work on time.

**Provides Leadership**

“Provides Leadership” has characteristics of envisioning the future, taking initiative, and clarifying goals (Laub, 1999). Finding time for leadership to meet and come up with a vision and goals is an important aspect of helping a team understand what they should do to achieve those goals. A North America Portfolio Lead Agile consultant with over 20 years of consulting experience stated:

We gathered leaders from the business of the technology organizations that were involved and ran through a two-day vision workshop...We got them to come to an agreement on what this vision would be and that ended up creating the north star that allowed teams to expedite their completion of user stories.
By providing leadership, the teams were able to complete their committed work on time. The consultants were able to facilitate a workshop where an agreed-upon vision united the teams in understanding what work they needed to accomplish to support the organization. The North America portfolio consultant noted:

Because they were working on a collection of stories that were for the vision, they were able to discard the ones that were lower value or lower priority, or work that would have just been racked up in the project WBS if they would have done it the traditional way.

Another aspect of providing leadership is to set aside time to ensure communication, listening, and having a common understanding of what it is the team is supposed to achieve. This includes not just describing what it is the team is supposed to do, but why the team needs to accomplish the goals. Through this, leadership allows the team to ask questions, where agreement is reached on committed work. The managing partner said:

People in management roles in large organizations are often pressed for time. One of the side effects is there is no time to have open conversations. The representative of the business should explain why (the objective) is important, and then provide the time to discuss and align out of courtesy and respect for the team, and allow people to ask questions that they need to ask, to get to a point of understanding.

“Providing Leadership” enables teams to ensure they have the right work committed, and completion of the committed work meets expectations the first time to reduce rework.
Chapter 5. Discussion

This research found strong evidence that Servant Leadership Behaviors enable Agile teams to complete committed work on time. The top three Servant Leadership Behaviors are Values People, Displays Authenticity, and Develops People. The participants have informed the study by providing examples where SLBs were used and which enabled teams to complete their committed work on time. Participants have differing experiences and observations based on their professional careers. This study serves as a guide for SLBs that create an atmosphere that allows Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. Not all observed SLBs will be precisely replicated depending on the organizational circumstances. There are many dynamics (team makeup and consistency, ability to work well together, good team behaviors, etc.) that could also be a component to on-time delivery of committed work.

It is important to note that “Values People” was ranked as the most important SLB, and “Provides Leadership” was ranked last. We believe this to mean that the most important thing that leaders can do to exhibit the SLBs is trust the people, and allow the knowledge workers the autonomy and decision making necessary to allow the work to get done. Leadership should support the teams, remove impediments, and provide a protective barrier for the teams which allows them to focus on the work.

Some of the participants highlighted organizations that were in transition from traditional project management methodologies to Agile, where some of the processes and cultures conflicted with the organization’s decision to transform. With the transformation to Agile, leaders are learning and using SLBs, and in some cases, are maturing. We call out those instances where it is important to note that transformation and maturation were
happening. When an organization is going through a transformational change to SAFe, there is learning and development that takes place. For example, leaders will learn to serve the teams rather than tell them what to do, and during this transformation, conflicts may arise due to internal conflict of the leader, or due to the culture within the organization. Depending on the leader’s values, they will either change with the organization or elect to leave because SLBs are not inherent in their own leadership styles. The North American portfolio Agile consultant stated:

There is an aspect of culture that is critical. If you have a strong hierarchical culture with the fear factor, for example, it doesn’t matter how persuasive you are.

Organizational culture creates an interesting dynamic when there is change. It takes a long time to change the culture of an organization, and there may be resistance to change, and the resistance may be stronger in some organizations than others. The managing partner stated:

A lot of times when you’re trying to move into this new domain (Agile and Servant Leadership behaviors), there’s a lot of inherent dysfunction in the system and that dysfunction expresses itself a lot of times. You start to change the culture, and dysfunctional behavior starts to manifest rather strongly. But that’s part of the developmental process. Sometimes you need to break up teams or kick people off teams, while not villainizing them. Some people choose to quit. In a dysfunctional organization, if they are the big shot on the team, and need to change their behavior and treat people like peers…then they may leave.
This study does not focus on change within organizations, but we believe it is relevant to Agile and SAFe transformations.

Engagements that take place between leaders and followers are important aspects of how SLBs are communicated and received. The way things are communicated, and how the followers perceive the message are important aspects of leader-member exchange (LMX). There may be perceptions that the leader is disingenuous, and that could have an impact on the leader’s ability to be a Servant Leader.

During the interviews, several of the participants noted that certain organizations have “pockets” of SLBs, while others have SLBs installed from the very beginning of company formation. It was mentioned by several participants that startups that survive have SLBs incorporated into their culture. Organizations that have been around for a long period of time that are transitioning from traditional to SAFe do not do as well at instilling SLBs. According to the North America Portfolio Lead:

Organizations where average tenure is shorter (less than 10 years) compared to those with more than 20 years tenure seem to have more instances of SLBs. Organizations with more than 20 years have more command and control, and hierarchical behaviors. Startups, that we’ve heard of and have been very successful, have SLBs at their core compared to those who haven’t (been successful). Long standing, well established organizations will have less SLB examples because of performance management. In a hierarchical organization, a hero culture is present, where you must shine in comparison to your peers. In an organization that has SLBs, you lead by serving, and become the oil in the engine and reason for the teams to thrive, and there is
self-sacrifice. That is opposite of hero culture.

Although not included in the results, this signifies that organizations which have been in existence for a long period of time may not always have SLBs at their core. It was also noted by several other participants, and they agreed with notion that startups naturally have SLBs, where large organizations that have been around awhile have some or none. Large, long standing organizations may change their cultures to thrive in today’s competitive environment. Agile methods using SLBs leads to a culture change that may help them deliver value internally and their customer faster, and allow them to stay competitive to conduct business in the future.

Implications for Research

This study advances the field of SLBs in SAFe by providing qualitative evidence that using SLBs in SAFe positively impact Agile teams to deliver committed work on time. It identifies linkages between SLBs and SAFe behaviors which positively impact Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time. This is valuable for future research on SLBs, their use in SAFe, and the relationship with Agile teams delivering on committed work on time.

This study presents an opportunity for organizations to that are adopting SAFe or have adopted agile to determine if SLBs are valuable, and specific examples of how they were used by leaders, and the impacts SLBs had on Agile teams.

Implications for Practice

Managing knowledge workers in SAFe may require different leadership behaviors than that of traditional project management. “Valuing People” was determined as the most important SLB because Agile teams know what work they need to accomplish, and need
leadership to support the Agile teams’ willingness to meet their commitments. Leaders who use SLBs are more likely to get positive results from Agile teams. SLBs are found to be effective in a SAFe environment to keep the teams focused on the committed work within a timebox.

When using SLBs, a leader should consider their position in the organization from a management perspective and determine when and how they will utilize the SLBs. A leader may persuade by having formal authority while attempting to use SLBs, and though the leader has the intention of using SLBs, the Agile teams may consider the authority as part of their decision making. The findings in this study discuss implications of authority and SLBs and can help practitioners think through the scenarios in which to use SLBs, and now.

SLBs can change the way managers think and act in an organization. It can lead to developing people and teams. A senior manager of consulting said:

> When using Servant Leadership, the people managers switch from managing the work and telling people what to do to ask the teams to accomplish something and praise them in their accomplishments. We need to change our way...it is about supporting our people to do the best work. Our behavior needs to change, and we must be a builder of people. (The leaders) become more interested in the growth of the person and their career, and their abilities than what they did. The people and teams can take on any challenge that is handed to them while working together.

Changing the way a manager thinks and acts can lead to enablement and performance.
Limitations

We interviewed SAFe experts who observed SLBs positively impacting Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work. However, we did not collect Agile team performance data from the participants to show evidence. We could not verify the actual performance of Agile teams.

We did not focus, nor ask questions reference organizations changing from traditional to SAFe in projects and/or programs. Although organizations that were undergoing agile transformations were mentioned by several participants, those results were not recorded in the study.

We did not show evidence on misuses of SLBs, how they were corrected, or if they are correctable. This study did not feature organizational and/or team failures to adopt a Scaled Agile Framework or Agile methodologies. We did not study or ask specifically about Agile transformational journeys from beginning to end.

Culture and location were not taken into consideration in this study. There may be organizational implications in cultures globally that impact whether SLBs would enable Agile teams to complete committed work on time. Locations could have additional impacts on culture.

There are many studies on Servant Leadership behaviors that focus on the individual instead of an organization. Therefore, we chose to use Laub’s SOLA as the SLB characteristics due to its focus on organizations. Other SLB characteristics described in a variety of other literature were not used in this study.

The interview questions were not centered on SLBs that do not enable Agile teams to deliver committed work. Also, we did not ask for, nor did we receive any data related to things
to avoid as leaders, and how LMX may positively or negatively impact Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work on time.

All participants were recalling specific instances in different industries. Information not available was the hierarchy, processes, and tools in which the projects were managed. Therefore, there were no findings on the bureaucracy or complexity of the organizations.

We did not interview any members of Agile teams, where they could have informed this study from their perspective. Having Agile teams inform the study may have impacted the results or displayed further evidence where SLBs positively impact Agile teams’ ability to deliver on committed work.

Organizational specific data was asked, but not presented in the findings due to the variety of organizations that were divulged. There was not a focus on any particular organization, firm, or technical domain such as engineering or software development. Therefore, the organizational data was not presented in this study.

**Future Directions**

These SLBs could be a valuable tool for organizations using SAFe or Agile methodologies, or where Agile teams may be struggling to deliver committed work on time. It could be helpful to determine if these SLBs were successful in different Agile environments, such as engineering or product development. It would be interesting to determine if these SLBs are relevant to other cultures in different countries where SAFe is utilized and practiced.

This study did not focus on a specific industry, culture, or organizational environment, and therefore we are not able to determine if these SLBs are effective in all organizations. Although specific industries were identified during the interviews, we did not find that it was valuable to include in our findings. Therefore, industries were excluded from the results.
A different perspective in a future study would be helpful to determine whether the SLBs that are exhibited by leaders help Agile teams deliver committed work on time. We believe that replicating this type of study asking the perspective of the Agile teams may help extend the literature of SLBs. Another possible direction of future studies could be a longitudinal study, where these SLBs are assessed at the beginning of an Agile team(s) transformation from traditional to SAFe, and then determine whether or not the assessed values increased, and showed positive relationships with Agile teams delivering committed work on time. It would also be helpful to determine if the SLBs changed in ranking throughout the transformational journey.

A quantitative study with empirical data would be helpful to determine if these SLBs were the most important for Agile teams in a variety of different cultures and organizations. A possible direction for a quantitative study could be a survey asking experts if the SLBs mentioned by Laub (1999) are connected to SLBs in the context of SAFe. Another data point to survey would be to determine which SLBs positively helped Agile teams’ ability to deliver their committed work on-time. Also, it would be helpful to note which leadership behaviors are not associated with Agile teams’ ability to deliver committed work.
References


organizational leadership (SOLA) instrument.


Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*: SAGE.


Spears, L. C. (2010). Character and servant leadership: Ten characteristics of effective, caring


Appendix A

Informed Consent

College of Business Administration

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Leadership Behaviors that Positively Influence Delivery of Committed Work by Agile Teams in a Scaled Agile Framework

Participant __________________________________________ HSC Approval Number ____________

Principal Investigators: Robert Barclay Phone Number: 314-813-3055

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are invited to participate in a research study that seeks to understand how Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence delivery of committed work by Agile teams in Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe). The research is conducted by Robert Barclay, a DBA student at UMSL. You have been asked to participate in the research because of your expertise in Scaled Agile Framework. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University, or any relations with your existing clients. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What is the purpose of this research?

You are being asked to participate in a research study that seeks to determine what Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence delivery of committed work by Agile teams in Scaled Agile Framework.

What procedures are involved?

You are being asked to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Again, your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue involvement in the study at any time. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you can stop the interview at any time. No one will know or be informed of your refusal to answer.
What are the potential risks and discomforts?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study. In the event that some questions cause distress or discomfort, you have the ability to refrain from discussion. Again, you can refuse to answer any of the questions and you can stop the interview at any time.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

Research subjects will not obtain any direct benefits from participating in the research study.

Will I be told about new information that may affect my decision to participate?

During the study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation, that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue to participate in this study will be re-obtained.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research participant are members of the research team. No information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- If necessary, to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured and need emergency care or when the University of Missouri-St Louis Institutional Review Board monitors the research or consent process); or
- If required by law.

When the results of the research are published or discussed at conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

In addition, your name and any information that could identify you will be removed from the data, which will be entered into an in-house computer only accessible to research staff. These data will be stored for 2 years. A separate list containing your name and any other identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet that will only be accessible to the lead researcher over the course of the study (approximately 1 year). Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. All information received will be held in strict confidence. The data we collect may be used for publication or presentation, but your comments and identity will remain anonymous.

Will I be paid for my participation in this research?

There are no monetary costs associated with participation.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
You can choose whether to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You also may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. If you decide to end your participation in the study, you may request that the Investigator to send you a copy of the withdrawal letter.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**

The researcher conducting this study is Robert Barclay. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher at 314-813-3055.

**What are my rights as a research subject?**

**Remember:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or existing clients. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

You will be given a copy of this form for your information and to keep for your records.

I have read the above statement and have been able to express my concerns, to which the investigator has responded satisfactorily. I believe I understand the purpose of the study, as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I give my permission to participate in the research described above.

**All signature dates must match.**

____________________________________________  ________________________________
Participant’s Signature  Date

____________________________________________  ________________________________
Researcher’s Signature  Date
Appendix B

Interview Request

Robert Barclay, Researcher

University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL)

8001 Natural Bridge Road

St. Louis, Missouri 63121

(314) 813-3055 | rdbytc@mail.umsl.edu

(Recipient's Name)

Thank you for agreeing to share my request with appropriate experts in the Agile field. As you now know, I have been working on my doctorate for the past two years and am currently working on my dissertation on Servant Leadership behaviors in scaled Agile. I am seeking people who have the heart for such a topic who may be able to assist in this dissertation project. Would you help me connect with those that can assist with the following?

The expert is requested to participate in a recorded interview for approximately one hour where questions will be asked about:
- Background and qualification
- Servant leadership behaviors and how Agile teams were enabled to deliver committed work

The potential outcomes of this study will help affirm good Servant Leadership behaviors that are best utilized to best enable Agile teams to deliver their committed work. Please ask them to call or email me at their leisure to express their willingness to participate. I can make any reasonable accommodation to ensure the conversation can transpire.

I appreciate your time in considering my request.

Sincerely,

Robert Barclay
Appendix C

Thank You Letter

Robert Barclay, Researcher
University of Missouri, St. Louis (UMSL)
8001 Natural Bridge Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63121
(314) 813-3055 | rdbytc@mail.umsl.edu

Dear Recipient Name:

Thank you for your time interviewing on this important topic of Servant Leadership behaviors in scaled Agile. Your passion, knowledge and expertise of the subject was evident during the interview process. I really appreciate the time you took out of your day to help inform us about positive leadership behaviors that enable Agile teams. Here are some 'next steps' you can expect:

- I will send you a summary analysis of our conversation to confirm accuracy
- I will provide you a courtesy copy prior to dissertation defense

Again, thank you very much for your time, and look forward to further conversations as the process continues. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for any follow-on recommendations, notes, or thoughts we may have missed during the interview.

Sincerely,

Your Name
### Appendix D

#### Interview Question Formulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant Leadership Behaviors (Leffingwell, 2018)</th>
<th>In the context of SAFe</th>
<th>The Servant Leader (Laub, 1999)</th>
<th>Servant Leadership Characteristics (Laub, 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Persuades rather than uses authority            | • Asks questions that encourage the team to look at decisions from new perspectives  
• Articulates facts, helps the teams see things they may have overlooked, helps them rethink | Shares Leadership | • By facilitating a shared vision  
• By sharing power and releasing control  
• By sharing status and promoting others |

**The relationship of “Persuades rather than uses authority” with “Shares Leadership”:** Persuasion is an element of sharing power, and empowering others by “sharing power and releasing control” (i.e. Sharing Leadership) is a good match with “persuades rather than uses authority”

**Interview Question:**
Tell me about an experience where a project did well at using persuasion rather than authority, and how that enabled teams to complete user stories on time.

**Thinks beyond day-to-day activities; applies systems thinking**
• Sets long-term operating goals for the team, such as Lean-Agile practices to master, new skills to acquire, etc.  
• Examines what is missing in order to

**Provides Leadership (Laub, 1999)**
• By envisioning the future  
• By taking initiative  
• By clarifying goals
The relationship of “Thinks beyond day-to-day activities” and Provides Leadership:
An element of providing leadership is that it clarifies goals, which is an understanding of what it takes to achieve a vision. In the context of SAFe, that translates into setting long-term goals, taking the initiative to prioritize improvements, and putting them in a backlog so that they will be achieved.

Interview Question:
Describe a project where leadership correctly took the initiative to clarify goals and priorities, and how it enabled teams to complete user stories on time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supports the teams’ Commitments</th>
<th>Values People (Laub, 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates ad-hoc meetings, if needed</td>
<td>• By trusting &amp; believing in people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps the teams find access to external sources of information: subject matter experts, shared resources (architects, UX designers, tech writers), etc.</td>
<td>• By serving others’ needs before his or her own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps clarify and articulate rationale behind priorities, Milestones, and commitments</td>
<td>• By receptive, non-judgmental listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Helps teams prepare for the System Demo</td>
<td>• Helps the teams find techniques to be more collaborative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship of “Supports the Teams Commitments” with Values People:
By facilitating and helping the team, you are serving them, and ensuring their needs are met. Helping the team and facilitating lends more to valuing people.
**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership supported the team by helping, putting the teams’ needs before their own, enabling them to deliver user stories on time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is open and appreciates openness</th>
<th>Shows appreciation for team members who raise serious issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages and facilitates open communication among team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages healthy conflict during team meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gives open, honest opinions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Builds Community (Laub, 1999)</th>
<th>By building strong personal relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By working collaboratively with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By valuing the differences of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The relationship of “Is Open and Appreciates Openness” with “Builds Community”:**
Showing appreciation for team members who raise issues, encouraging and facilitating open communication among team members Builds Community by working collaboratively with others while valuing their differences. The differences could be different perspectives than the leaders.

**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership encouraged candor. Did this build personal relationships with the teams? Did it help them complete user stories on time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listens and supports team members in decision identification</th>
<th>As a good facilitator, encourages everyone to express their opinions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is attentive to hesitant behavior and body language during stand-up meetings, PI Planning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I&amp;A, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps the teams identify positive and negative feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values People (Laub, 1999)</th>
<th>By trusting &amp; believing in people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By serving others’ needs before his or her own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By receptive, non-judgmental listening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The relationship of “Listens and supports team members in decision identifications” with “Values People”:
By encouraging teams to give their opinions, understand the behavior and body language and help teams means the leader is trusting & believing in the people, while listening, being receptive and non-judgmental.

**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership recognized hesitant behavior and body language and was receptive and non-judgmental in their listening. How did this impact their completion of user stories in assigned iteration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creates an environment of mutual influence</th>
<th>Develops People (Laub, 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitates PI Planning and shared team ceremonies for all ART team members and stakeholders</td>
<td>• By providing opportunities for learning and growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Openly asks for opinions and input, and carefully considers the response</td>
<td>• By modeling appropriate behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• By building up others through encouragement and affirmation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship of “Creates an environment of mutual influence” with “Develops People”:
Facilitating PI Planning and ART ceremonies means the leaders are modeling the appropriate behavior and supporting the team by being present and engaged. Openly asking for opinions, and considering the responses has the potential of “building up” others through encouragement and affirmation that their perspectives are being considered. This can potentially change show that leadership welcomes and desires input.

**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership solicited opinions from teams and acted on the information which resulted in user stories completed in assigned iteration

| Understands and Displayed Authenticity |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Shares in celebrating every successful | • By being open and accountable to others |

**Table:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative changes during I&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship of “Listens and supports team members in decision identifications” with “Values People”:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By encouraging teams to give their opinions, understand the behavior and body language and help teams means the leader is trusting &amp; believing in the people, while listening, being receptive and non-judgmental.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership recognized hesitant behavior and body language and was receptive and non-judgmental in their listening. How did this impact their completion of user stories in assigned iteration?
| Empathizes with others | System Demo and Solution Demo, feels bad about impediments, failures, etc. | (Laub, 1999) | • By a willingness to learn from others  
• By maintain integrity and trust |

| The relationship of “Understands and empathizes with others” with “Displays Authenticity”: | Sharing in the celebrations and feeling bad about failures is being open and accountable to others. This gives opportunity to learn from others, which Displays Authenticity to the teams. |

| Interview Question: | Tell me about a project where learned from failure, made decisions to improve, and the teams were able to deliver user stories in assigned iterations |

| Encourages and supports the personal development of each individual | • Encourages team learning  
• Fosters collaborative practices: teamwork, continuous integration, collective code ownership, short design sessions, specification workshops, etc.  
• Encourages rotation in technical areas of concern: functionality, components/layers, role, aspects, etc.  
• As much as possible, facilitates team decision-making rather than making decisions for the teams |

| Develops People (Laub, 1999) | • By providing opportunities for learning and growth  
• By modeling appropriate behavior  
• By building up others through encouragement and affirmation |

| The relationship of “Encourages and supports the personal development of each individual” with “Develops People”: | Encouraging the teams to learn, while fostering a collaborative environment is modeling appropriate behavior. Encouraging rotation in technical areas provides people opportunities for learning and growth. Facilitating team decision making rather than making decisions for the team builds encouragement and affirmation that the teams own their destiny. |
**Interview Question:**
Tell me about a project where leadership intently sought training and development for people and teams.
Interview Questions

Interview questions were formulated to answer our research question “What Servant Leadership behaviors positively influence the delivery of committed work by Agile teams in a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe)?” These following interview questions are categorized by the qualifications of participants (demographic details) and Informing Positive Servant Leadership Behaviors.

**Demographic details:**

1. Title?
2. What Industry are you in?
3. Years of experience in Project Management?
4. What year did you begin using Agile?
5. What certifications do you hold?
6. How many years of consulting experience do you have?
7. How many clients or organizations have you engaged by coaching Scaled Agile?
8. What type of industries have you consulted for within Scaled Agile?

**Informing Interview Questions:**

9. Tell me about an experience where a project used persuasion rather than authority, and how that enabled teams to complete committed work on time.
   
a. Using persuasion rather than authority is an effective Servant Leadership
Behavior (SLB).

Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

10. Describe a project where leadership took the initiative to clarify goals and priorities, and how it enabled teams to complete committed work on time.
   a. Leadership taking the initiative to clarify goals and priorities is an effective SLB

Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

11. Tell me about a project where leadership supported the team by helping, putting the teams’ needs before their own, enabling them to deliver committed work on time
   a. Leadership supporting the team by helping, and putting the teams needs before their own is an effective SLB

Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

12. Tell me about a project where leadership encouraged candor. Did this build personal relationships with Agile teams? Did it help them complete committed work on time?
   a. Encouraging candor and building personal relationships is an effective SLB

Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

13. Tell me about a project where leadership recognized hesitant behavior and body language and was receptive and non-judgmental in their listening. How did this impact completion of committed work on time?
   a. Recognizing hesitant behavior and body language, and being receptive...
and non-judgmental in listening is an effective Servant Leadership Behavior Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

14. Tell me about a project where leadership solicited opinions from teams and acted on the information which resulted in completion of committed work on time?
   a. Soliciting opinions from teams and acting on the information is an effective Servant Leadership Behavior
      Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

15. Tell me about a project where leadership learned from failure, made decisions to improve, and the teams were able to deliver committed work on time
   a. Learning from failure and making decision to improve is an effective Servant Leadership Behavior
      Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

16. Tell me about a project where leadership intently sought training and development for people and teams, and how it helped teams deliver committed work on time
   a. Intently seeking training and development for people and teams is an effective Servant Leadership Behavior
      Strongly Agree / Agree/ Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

17. Please rank the Servant Leadership characteristics from 1 to 6; 1 being most important, and 6 being least important, from this list:
**Servant-leadership is ...**

an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant-leadership promotes the valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led, and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization, and those served by the organization.

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<th>The Servant-Leader ...</th>
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| **Values People**      | • By trusting & believing in people  
                          | • By serving others’ needs before his or her own  
                          | • By receptive, non-judgmental listening  |
| ** Develops People**   | • By providing opportunities for learning and growth  
                          | • By modeling appropriate behavior  
                          | • By building up others through encouragement and affirmation  |
| **Builds Community**   | • By building strong personal relationships  
                          | • By working collaboratively with others  
                          | • By valuing the differences of others  |
| **Displays Authenticity** | • By being open and accountable to others  
                          | • By a willingness to learn from others  
                          | • By maintaining integrity and trust  |
| **Provides Leadership** | • By envisioning the future  
                          | • By taking initiative  
                          | • By clarifying goals  |
| **Shares Leadership**  | • By facilitating a shared vision  
                          | • By sharing power and releasing control  
                          | • By sharing status and promoting others  |

**The Servant Organization is ...**

an organization in which the characteristics of servant-leadership are displayed through the organizational culture, and are valued and practiced by the leadership and workforce.