



Agile Coaching @ Spotify

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**Agile coaching doesn't stop once
the transformation is done.**



1. Coaching in already agile organisations is different

Than coaching in a transformation setting

2. What Spotify coaches do

And how we do it

3. What makes it work

1. Clear Accountabilities
2. Managing coaches well
3. Focusing on impact

Coaching in **already agile
organisations is different.**

Coaching in already agile organisations is different

Coaching in a transformation

- Make things very different
- Clear mandate
- Results are easily seen

Coaching in an already agile org

- Incremental improvements
- Mandate is less clear
- Results are often not so easily seen

Coaching in already agile organisations is different

What does this mean?

- The job of an agile coach changes
- Coaches need to use their skills in different ways and different combinations
- It's easier to question the value of agile coaching



Spotify context.





Squad



Squad



Squad

Product Area



Squad



Squad



Squad

Tribe 1



Squad



Squad



Squad



Squad



Squad



Squad

Tribe 2

Mission

**We optimise for full stack
coaching.**

Mission & Leads

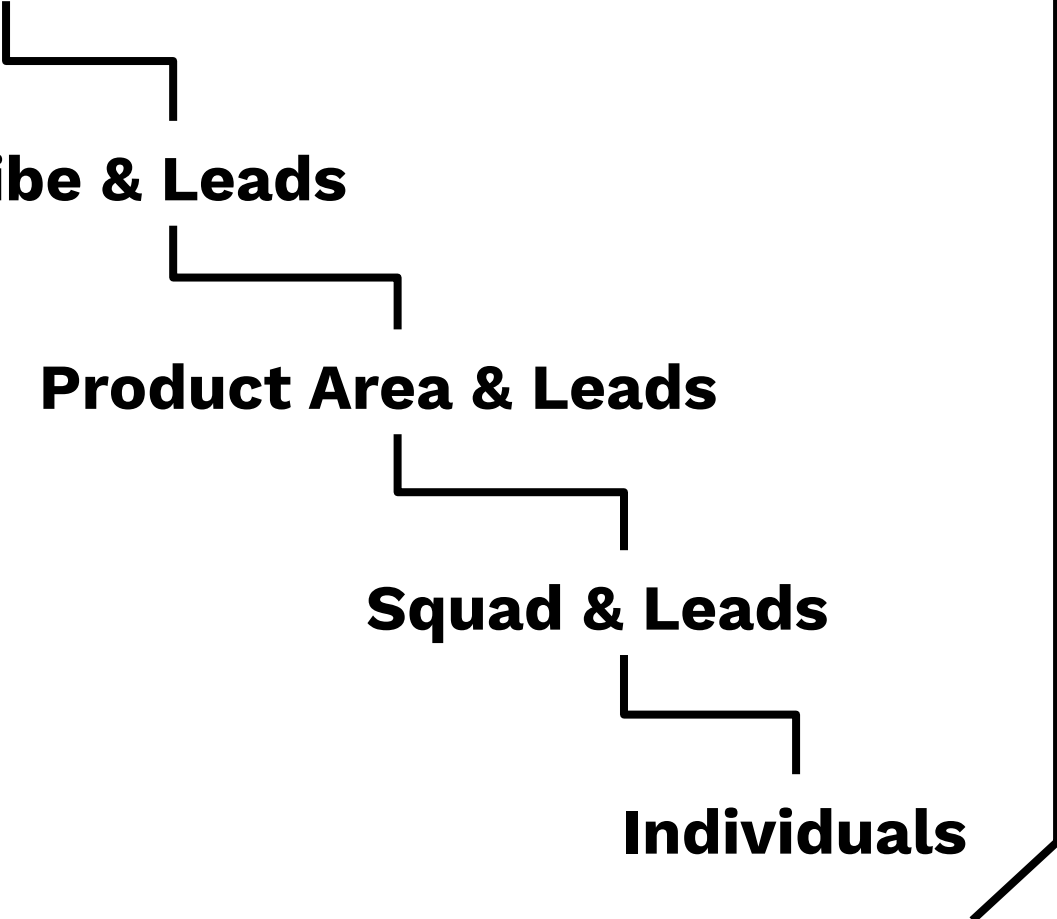
Tribe & Leads

Product Area & Leads

Squad & Leads

Individuals

**Coaching
across
the stack**



**What
Spotify
coaches do.**

What Spotify coaches do.



Our primary goal is high performing teams and a high performing organisation.

What Spotify coaches do.

Key Success Indicators (KSI)

- Teams are engaging in effective processes, frameworks, tools, and behaviours, and using qualitative and quantitative measurement to continuously improve.
- Teams are measurably improving:
 - Choosing the right things to work on
 - Aligning and coordinating efforts
 - Delivery outcomes (impact, timelines, quality, health)

Scrum

Sprints

**User
stories**

**Planning
Poker**

XP

**We definitely do the
basics...**

Demos

Kanban

**Stand
ups**

Retrospectives

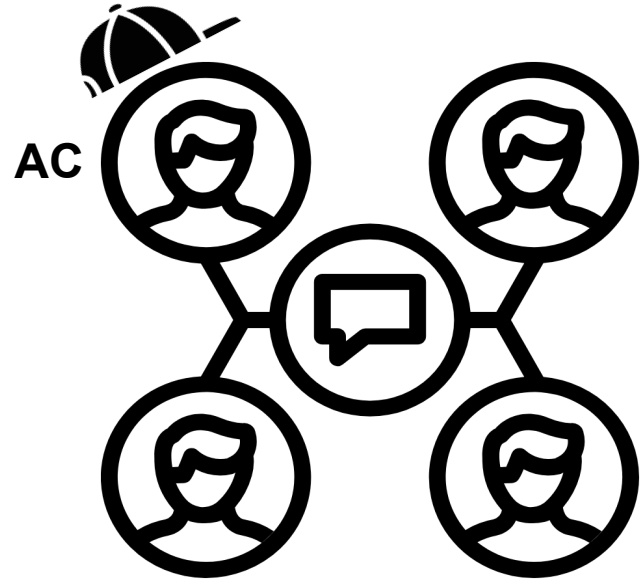
**Story
Points**

What Spotify coaches do.

**They are only a peripheral
part of the job at Spotify.**

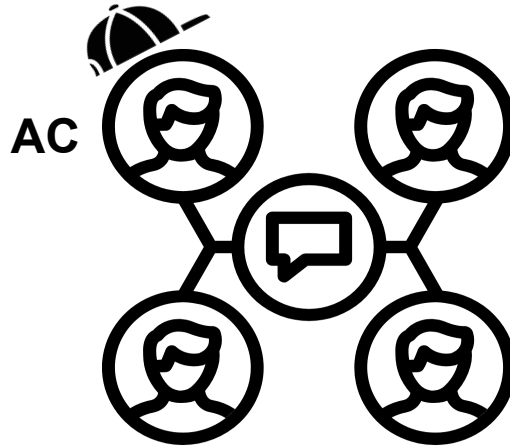
What Spotify coaches do.

What are
micro-
interactions?



What Spotify coaches do.

What are we **doing**
in those moments?

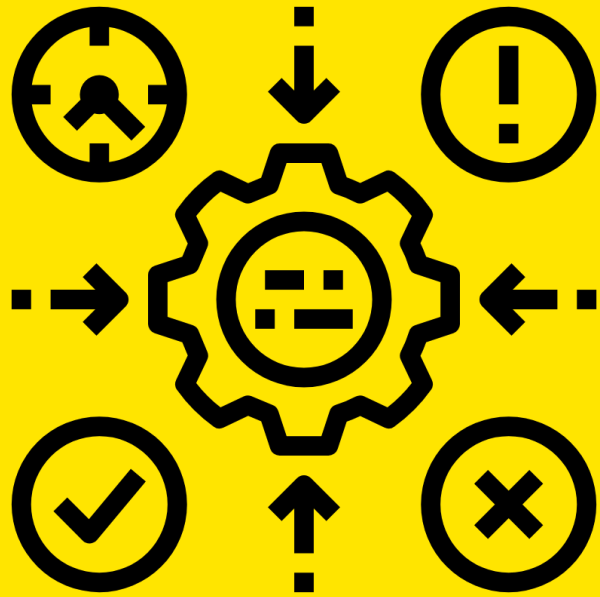


What Spotify coaches do.

**Establishing
& reinforcing
simple
principles**



What Spotify coaches do.



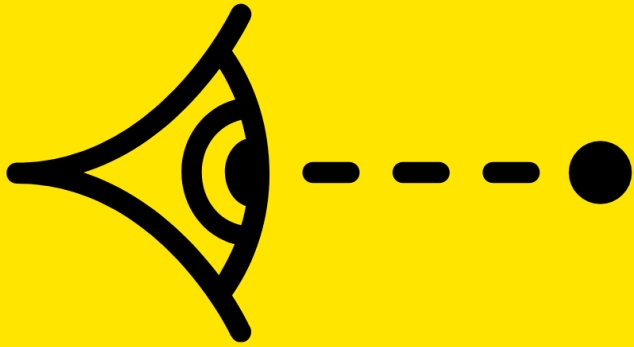
**Increasing
context
sensitivity**

What Spotify coaches do.

**Observing &
influencing
group
dynamics**



What Spotify coaches do.



**Making the
unseen
visible**

What Spotify coaches do.

**Boosting &
supporting
other leaders**



What Spotify coaches do.

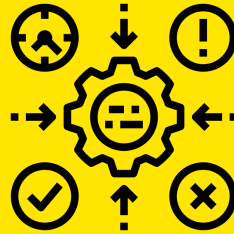


**Facilitating &
encouraging
constructive
dialogue**

What Spotify coaches do.



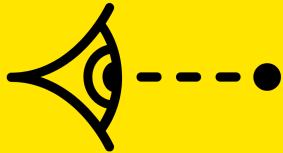
**Establishing
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Doing complexity leadership theory: How agile coaches at Spotify practise enabling leadership

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/caim.12303>

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**What
makes it
work.**

What makes it work?



1. Clear accountabilities

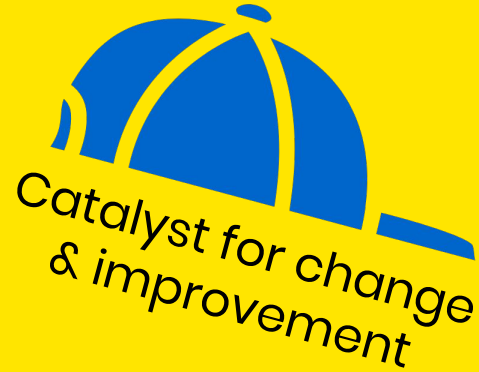
What makes it work? – Clear accountabilities

**Agile Coaches are
primarily accountable
for driving the
continuous improvement
of team-based
delivery of value.**

What makes it work? – Clear accountabilities

**One coach,
many hats.**

What makes it work? – Clear accountabilities



What makes it work?



2. Managing them well

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Understand the role of agile coach



If managers don't, then a coach will:

- Have trouble showing impact
- Struggle to grow and develop
- Miss out on being given interesting and challenging opportunities

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Understand the role of agile coach



Managers/Leaders: If you haven't worked with coaches before, educate yourself - read the role description, talk with coaches, talk with other leaders who have worked with coaches.

Coaches: Learn how to explain your role and demonstrate the incremental improvements you're making.

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Advocate for your coaches



- Not all coaches can do this for themselves, and even if they can they may still meet resistance
- A good manager will help by smoothing the way and opening doors

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Advocate for your coaches



Managers/Leaders: Be a salesperson for your coach. Make spaces for them.

Coaches: Ask for this help from your manager, especially if you are being asked by them to work with a team (rather than the team asking to work with you).

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Give feedback



- A coach needs input like anyone else
- Give concrete and constructive feedback on things the coach could do differently

What makes it work? – Managing them well

Give feedback

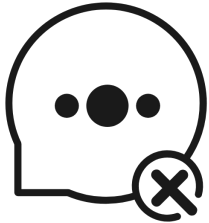


Managers/Leaders: Make sure you know what your coaches are doing, why they are doing it, and see them in action, so you can talk to them about their work in a constructive way.

Coaches: Make sure your manager understands what you are doing and what help you need.

What makes it work? – Managing them well

They don't coach their manager



- Don't put your coach in a position that they have to coach their manager
- Managers need to be skilled people managers
- If necessary, change who the coach reports to

What makes it work? – Managing them well

They don't coach their manager



Managers/Leaders: You need to know how to be a good people manager, mentor and coach.

Coaches: Don't do it. Find someone else to coach your manager, or find a new manager.

What makes it work?

3. Focusing on impact



What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

Objectives & key results



Objective: Consistent use of beyond-quarter roadmaps across the Mission.

KR: 100% of Product Areas are using some form of beyond-quarter roadmap

What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

Engagement Models



[Engagement Template]

Unassigned

Due Date

Description

A brief description.

Why are we doing this?

- Top 2-3 reason why we are doing this
- Cost of delay, ie. the consequence of not doing this right now

Desired Outcome

- What is the result we want to see as a result of the engagement.

Scope

- In the form of acceptance criteria, or activities.

How the coach will engage/support

- How the AC will engage, including the mandate of the AC.
- Example: Coach squad, be part of PA leads team

Engagement Review

- The cadence should the engagement be reviewed
- How the engagement will be reviewed.

Exit, Evaluation & Ramp-down

- When and how the coach will start to ramp-down and eventually exit.
- How to evaluate the engagement

What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

1. Identify

A list of high-level needs in the tribe right now.

2. Verify

Description of the opportunity, it's importance, the cost of not doing anything.

Decision to scope further or deprioritise.

3. Scope

Defined engagement goal, scope and desired outcomes

How the coach will engage/support, and when (or under what conditions) the coach will exit.

Engagement models



What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

4. In progress

Review and evaluate progress on a continuous basis, refine and update the engagement

5. Ramp down & evaluation

Evaluating the desired outcomes

Prepare the team to continue without the support from an Agile Coach

Engagement models



What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

Conditions that help this work:

1. Coaches keep a finger on the pulse of the Tribe so they can spot where there are opportunities
2. Coaches make the final decision, using an advice model rather than trying to stack rank

Engagement models



What makes it work? – Focusing on impact

Hiring

- Not all coaches are the same
- Create a clear hiring rubric for your context
- Example: Focuses on the right things

Indicators of a strong response

- Approach demonstrates flexibility and understanding of different agile approaches
- Open to teams choosing among a variety of practice -- no “one size fits all” with regard to what processes are followed
- If coach chooses to be more directive it is based on assessment of team (e.g. team seeking more guidance, new team that is still forming)
- Things that are considered “sacred” have very strong rationale -- are more about desired outcome than about specific process

Takeaways.

**Coaching doesn't stop
when the
transformation is done.**

**Coaching in an agile
organisation delivers
incremental value.**

**Incremental value
is
harder to see.**

Set your coaches up for success!



- 1. Give them clear accountabilities**
- 2. Manage them well**
- 3. Help them focus on their impact**

Tack.

That's Swedish for thanks.

(Psst. Spotify is hiring coaches.)