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Leaving agile island: using Flight Levels at the ALBA Synchrotron

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Integrating agile methodologies within large, non-agile organizations often results in isolated agile islands and inefficient Water-Agile-Fall models. This work outlines the practical approach adopted by ALBA Synchrotron's Computing Division to embed agile practices effectively within a traditional, hierarchical structure. Instead of complex, large-scale frameworks (SAFe, SoS or LeSS), we employed a flow-based agile integration strategy based on Klaus Leopold's Flight Levels.
Teams utilize agile development at the operational level (Flight Level 1). The critical integration occurs at Flight Level 2 (Coordination), focusing on optimizing end-to-end value streams across teams. Key FL2 mechanisms at this level include visualizing the entire workflow, enforcing strict Work-in-Progress (WIP) limits to enhance predictability and throughput, fostering targeted communication, and ensuring reliable commitments. In practice, we have developed a custom app drawing data using the JIRA API (Atlassian ecosystem) as a key stone, which ensures the crucial aspects of workflow visualization and enhanced communication.
To bridge the gap with non-agile stakeholders, we track progress via time investment versus estimates and utilize milestones (e.g., MVPs, system validation) as governance and delivery checkpoints.
Additionally, we will discuss how these practices illustrate reliability and transparency, cultivating organizational trust between agile teams and the wider hierarchical structure.

Footnotes

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