# joyous

# The
# Agile Adoption
# Conversation Guide

Everything you need to start talking
about Agile adoption at work

# Content

# Agile adoption conversations

The Agile Adoption guide is a set of 24 conversations geared to increase Agile adoption and performance in squads.

This set is designed to:

1. Uplift growth mindset adoption in individuals
2. Improve collaboration at a squad level
3. Assist with diagnosing and addressing Agile risks at the enterprise level

Agile squads work in a collaborative and self organising way. An individual's ability to adapt to new practices and processes plays an important role in their success within the squad.

Timely feedback can really help people to course correct - enabling them to better serve the objectives of the squad, while also keeping the environment and culture positive and supportive.

These conversations are designed to help people within a squad to reflect on themselves, and to support their fellow squad members.

They are curious questions that don't bruise egos, and they are written in simple English - ensuring that people with a low reading age or English as a second language will be able to understand and participate equally.

## Reduce adoption time for Agile practices and increase adoption of Agile mindset in year one

### Practices

**Technology & Environment**
Physical environment, Delivery pipeline, Systems

**Structure**
Responsibilities, Team structure, Governance

**Processes**
Rituals, Planning, Performance

### Mindset

**Collaboration**

**Adaptability**

**Learning cycles**

**Fairness / inclusion**

**Well-being**

*Most critical to success*

Improving individual mindset and squad collaboration will boost squad productivity and increase the speed at which you deliver value to your customer.

# How (fr)agile is your organisation really?

If you are reading this, you are likely either *considering* switching to an Agile operating model, or you are already in the process of *transforming*. If you're doing it right, well, then the transformation never ends.

Regardless of whether you are *considering* or *transforming*, the Agile journey is one that can reap untold rewards. It is the veritable holy grail of productivity after all.

You might even picture scenes of jubilant tribe leads dancing, being cheered on by Agile coaches, with squads chanting in awe around the many autonomous fires of innovation they managed to build consistently in short periods of time - all the while reflecting on how to build even bigger fires next time. And, best of all, the organisations' revenue has sky rocketed, simultaneously delivering masses of value to your beloved customers...

Oh wait, no. Reality check. That almost never happens.

**The journey to Agile can be so fragile that you run the risk of actually seeing a decrease in productivity, and therefore even less value delivered to your customers than before.**

This is particularly true if you are a large organisation. Unless you started out Agile, most likely you'd feel inclined to stick with the safety of the well-known bureaucracy that you already understand and can somewhat control. And understandably so.

So, let's consider: how (fr)agile is your organisation really? What are the factors involved? And what can do you to reduce the risk of falling into *Camp Fragile-not-really-Agile*.

You will be forgiven for believing the likely factors involved are: the organisational structure; the processes and rituals, or even the technology & environment. Sure, those are some of the key pillars of Agile. They are now also well understood, and there are many experienced transformation consulting firms that know how to get this right. So, if you work with them, you are likely to have a decent structure and process in place to launch and continuously refine from.

**In reality the biggest factor that remains a challenge, both at the outset and ongoing, is the adoption of an Agile mindset. I'm talking at an individual level, across the entire organisation.**

So lets perform a quick (fr)agility check shall we?

## How many of these statements are true of everyone in your organisation?

1. People in your organisation take a collaborative approach to solving problems.
2. People in your organisation feel empathy for each other and your customers.
3. Your people are all singularly focused on delivering value to your customers.
4. People in your organisation are comfortable adapting to continuous changes.
5. People are often making improvements to do better out of their own accord.
6. People are regularly self-identifying what has worked well for them and what has not.

If you confidently answered *true* to all six questions, then you are probably experiencing something like that scene I described above. If, however, you are part of the vast majority of organisations, then these questions are likely to make you feel a little uncomfortable - you don't actually know the answer. But, you strongly suspect it's mostly false.

Why? Because, you know that this just isn't the way your culture is geared. The mindset of your organisation, therefore, isn't truly Agile. It's fragile.

## Agile requires a change in the mindset of each individual of your organisation. That is not a small task. That's a huge cultural shift.

So what can you do to help the individuals in your organisation adopt and maintain a healthy Agile mindset? This is the million dollar question. Get this right, and you'll be the stars of that scene above for real.

## Large organisations need a solid foundation that supports each individual to continuously shift and maintain their mindset.

I once worked at a large organisation that transformed from Waterfall to Agile. It was bloody hard. It blew our minds a little. Despite our best efforts, it was clear *people didn't feel Agile*. I came up with the phrase: "The red tape police." At times it felt like the rituals and processes overtook us, and there was little time to actually get stuff done.

Find yourself a few levels up in the organisation and it was often a total mystery what was going on, what was being produced, and how people were genuinely feeling about it. We ended up restructuring many times, and well, being one of the pioneers of that change isn't one of my best memories. But, oh! The lessons I've learned!

So, what went wrong? Well, *we just didn't get it*. There was no thought put into individual mindset, let alone encouraging it. It didn't even occur to us. So, individuals continued to focus on procedural correctness, unsurprisingly like the bureaucrats we were all accustomed to being.

What we did was focus 100% of our energy into understanding the practice and structure. So, even though we put Agile in place correctly on a structural and process level - it just wasn't effective.

### Now, what if there was a way to automatically and regularly help individuals in squads to:

1. Find ways to identify and seize opportunities
2. Be open & curious
3. Embrace critical thinking - as in acting not reacting
4. Be humble and reflect
5. Report with transparency

Well, this could really help enable squad members work together to earnestly improve over time. If this was done in an open forum amongst squad members, then this could further support the open conversations that are meant to occur at rituals like retrospectives and post-mortems. Everyone would naturally have more empathy, and be able to more easily support one another. Even Agile coaches would have more data to support them in their arduous role of keeping Agile healthy.

Instead there is often a sense that squad members avoid openly considering the consequences of their individual actions for fear of judgement, or even retribution. Too much time is spent stroking egos over valuing outcomes. And there is often of a culture of playing with the numbers and rebelling against measurement and growth.

So, exactly how could you put a foundation like this into place?

This is what Joyous is built for.

We ask people in large Agile organisations one question a week from our unique Agile Conversation Set, covering the entire spectrum of Agile topics.

All squad members are asked the same question at the same time across the entire organisation.

- This gives the organisation an Agile index informing the likely performance level at any given time.
- Within squads, people can see the responses of other members in their squads, and can take part in conversations with each other around these important topics, which include mindset (similar to the questions I asked you above), but also all the other facets of Agile.
- The organisation can gain insights from detailed theme analysis across the Joyous squad conversations, informing action and bigger refinements across the organisation.
- Above all, asking these questions of individuals on a regular basis helps individuals to self-identify, self-organise and continuously improve. *Without relying on prompts from another Agile stakeholder to drive this mindset.*

Now, I really hope you come and talk to us about how we can help you with this. However, we mean it when we say we want to help make life better for people in Agile organisations.

> ### Remember, if you nail the Agile mindset for every individual in your organisation, productivity will improve as a direct result!
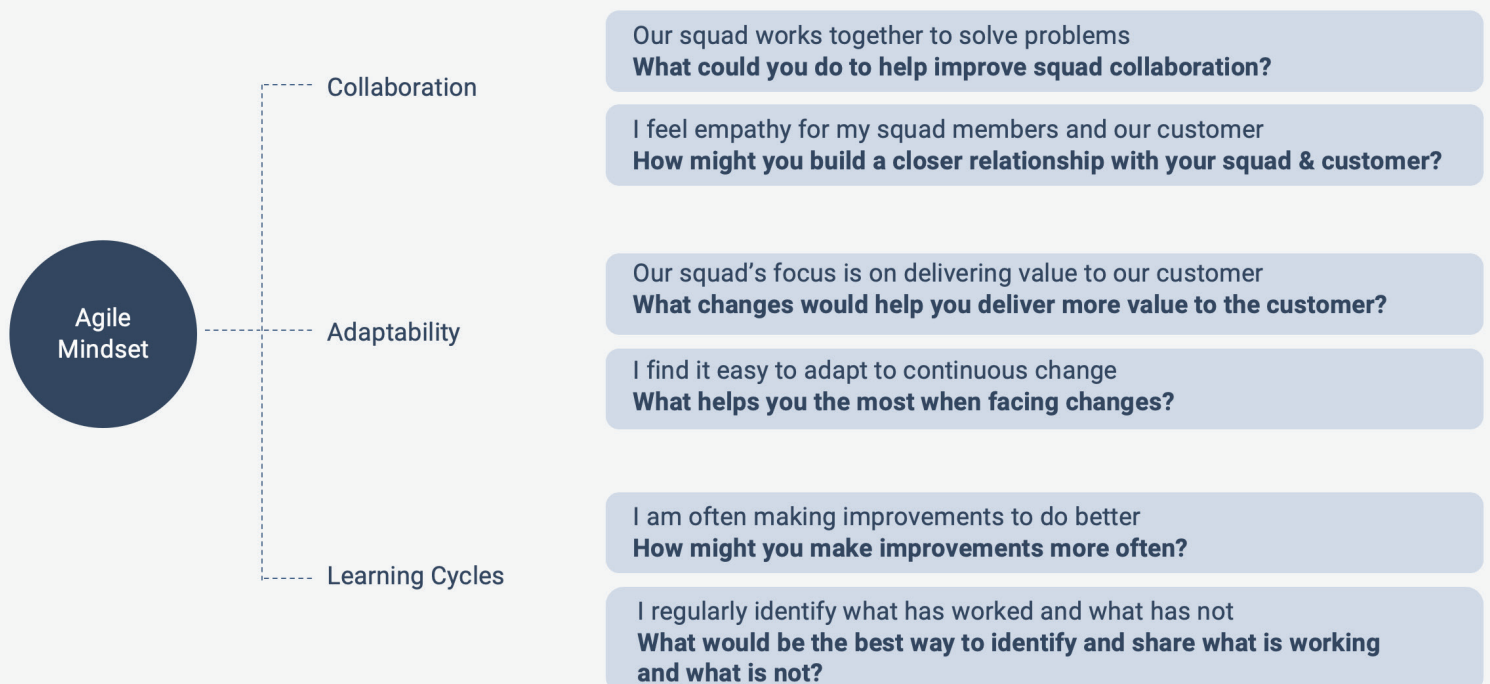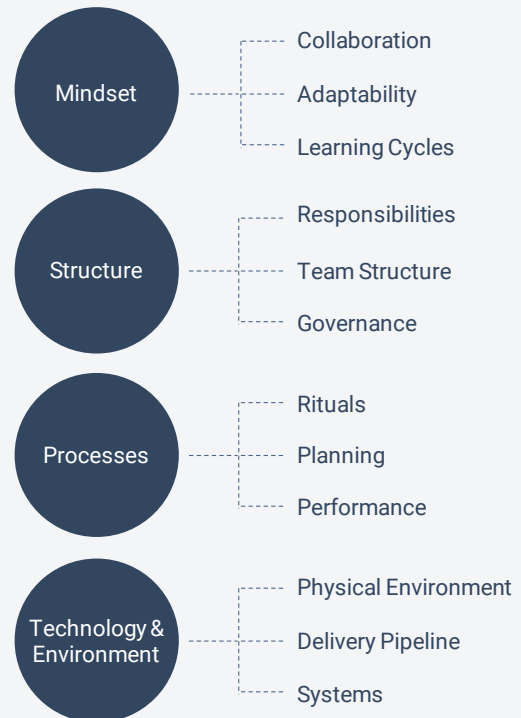
# Psychological safety and transparency underpin Agile workplaces. Joyous seeks feedback in an Agile way. Open. Closed-loop.
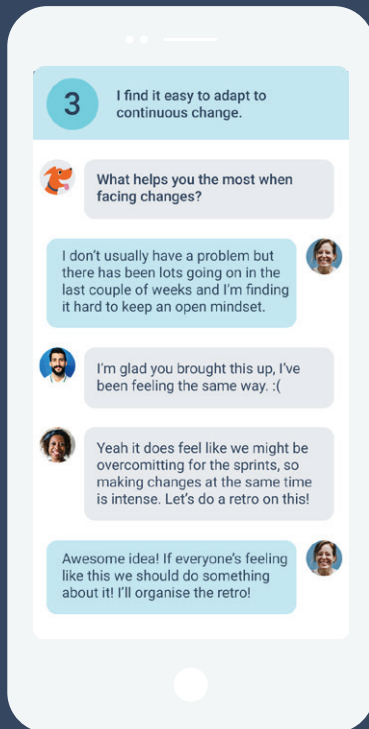
## Conversations designed for Agile

Each week a conversation is started from a different category from the set developed by Joyous, ensuring balanced insights.

Joyous conversations don't bruise egos or invite criticism. They're about an individual's experience within their squad, and are designed to encourage everyone to participate openly.

The set uses common Agile terms like our squad, delivering value to customers, and Agile way of working. Language is familiar and easy to understand so everyone can contribute.

**Mindset**
- Collaboration
- Adaptability
- Learning Cycles

**Structure**
- Responsibilities
- Team Structure
- Governance

**Processes**
- Rituals
- Planning
- Performance

**Technology & Environment**
- Physical Environment
- Delivery Pipeline
- Systems

**Agile Mindset**

**Collaboration**

Our squad works together to solve problems
**What could you do to help improve squad collaboration?**

I feel empathy for my squad members and our customer
**How might you build a closer relationship with your squad & customer?**

**Adaptability**

Our squad's focus is on delivering value to our customer
**What changes would help you deliver more value to the customer?**

I find it easy to adapt to continuous change
**What helps you the most when facing changes?**

**Learning Cycles**

I am often making improvements to do better
**How might you make improvements more often?**

I regularly identify what has worked and what has not
**What would be the best way to identify and share what is working and what is not?**
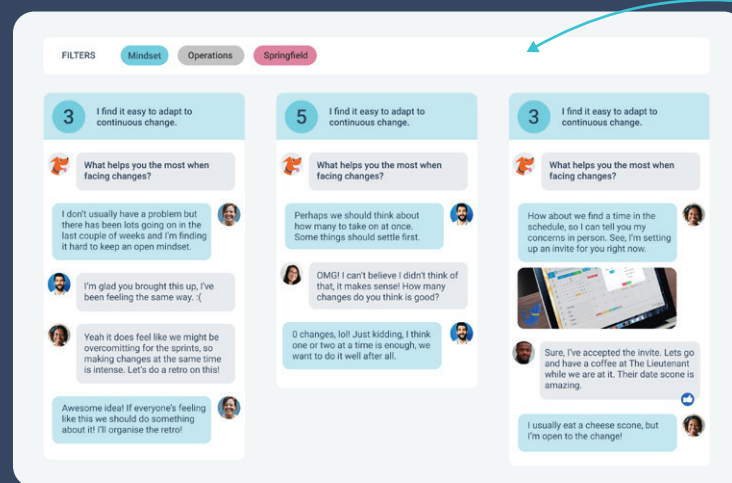
# Using this guide for conversations

### Weekly chats

Joyous runs a weekly cadence of conversation starters from a library of topics about Agile Practices and Agile Mindset. Accelerate Agile adoption by quickly actioning feedback to address roadblocks and drive continuous improvement.

*Filter the feed on almost anything*

### Live feed

Tribe or chapter leads, squad members, coaches and product owners can participate in conversations. Collaborating and supporting one another.

### AI-driven insights

Joyous uses AI to crunch all of the conversations about Agile topics. Understand your level of Agile adoption. Create deep insights into successes and roadblocks.

**The one thing you should focus on right now:** making sure the rate of change isn't interfering with the squad's ability to deliver.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Technology & Environment | 8.8 ↑ | | | | |
| Structure | 9.4 ↑ | | | | |
| Processes | 7.2 ↑ | | | | |
| Mindset | 4.3 ↓ | | | | |
| I find it easy to adapt to continuous change. | | | | | |
| Our squad works together to solve problems. | | | | | |

If you only ever ask for feedback anonymously, you send a message that feedback is unsafe. Joyous helps everyone feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback that sparks action.

# Conversations

# Mindset

## Collaboration

| AA | Our squad works together to solve problems. |

What could you do to help improve squad collaboration?

| AA | I feel empathy for my squad members and our customer. |

How might you build a closer relationship with your squad and customer?

## Adaptability

| AA | Our squad's focus is on delivering value to our customer. |

What changes would help you deliver more value to the customer?

| AA | I find it easy to adapt to continuous change. |

What helps you the most when facing changes?

## Learning cycles

| AA | I am often making improvements to do better. |

How might you make improvements more often?

| AA | I regularly identify what has worked and what has not. |

What would be the best way to identify and share what's working and what is not?

# Structure

## Responsibilities

AA It is clear how my role helps our squad deliver value to our customer.

Is there anything you do that's missing from the squad's definition of done?

AA The role of each individual in my squad is clear to me.

Are there any roles you would like to understand more about?

## Team Structure

AA It is clear how ACME's Agile structure allows our squad to perform.

Are there any Agile roles missing from ACME?

AA Our squad is able to deliver value independently.

How might we solve for dependencies faster?

## Governance

AA Our sprint planning and grooming sessions are efficient.

How might we make planning and grooming more efficient?

AA Our squad prioritises the work that delivers the most value.

Do you have any questions around our priorities?

# Processes

## Rituals

**AA** — I get value out of participating in our squad rituals.

🐕 What might make our rituals more valuable to you?

**AA** — Our squad rituals are well-run.

🐕 Which ritual should we focus on improving?

Sprint planning    Retrospectives

Grooming sessions    Standups

Sprint review    Post mortems

🐕 How might we improve our squad rituals?

## Planning

**AA** — The way we plan and make decisions enables us to rapidly test and learn.

🐕 How might our squad test and learn more rapidly?

**AA** — I feel like I have a say in our planning sessions.

🐕 What is one thing you would like our squad to consider more during planning?

## Performance

**AA** — My performance is measured by the outcomes I help deliver.

🐕 What is an outcome you helped to deliver recently?

**AA** — My squad delivers value to our customer regularly.

🐕 What might our squad do to deliver value more regularly?

# Technology & environment

## Physical environment

**AA** **I have the devices and connectivity I need to work effectively.**

Are there any issues you have with your devices and connectivity?

**AA** **My squad's physical environment allows us to work in an Agile way.**

What ways could your squad adapt the physical space to be more suited to Agile?

## Delivery pipeline

**AA** **Our test approach is as automated as it should be.**

What aspects of our test approach would you like us to automate further?

**AA** **Our integration process allows us to deliver value often.**

Is there anything we could do to speed up our integration process?

## Systems

**AA** **Our squad has the right tools to support an Agile way of working.**

Are there any tools that your squad needs to be more Agile?

**AA** **Our systems enable us to perform at a sustainable pace.**

How might we improve our systems to support a sustainable pace?

# Recommended conversation order

Start by asking the less challenging conversations; the ones squad members will find easiest to contribute to. This helps people get engaged in the process and makes it easier for them to participate in more challenging conversations later.

| | Rating statement | Free-text conversation starter |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | I find it easy to adapt to continuous change. | What helps you the most when facing changes? |
| 2 | It is clear how my role helps our squad deliver value to our customer. | Is there anything you do that's missing from the squad's definition of done? |
| 3 | I get value out of participating in our squad rituals. | What might make our rituals more valuable to you? |
| 4 | I have the devices and connectivity I need to work effectively. | Are there any issues you have with your devices and connectivity? |
| 5 | Our squad works together to solve problems. | What could you do to help improve squad collaboration? |
| 6 | Our squad is able to deliver value independently. | How might we solve for dependencies faster? |
| 7 | The way we plan and make decisions enables us to rapidly test and learn. | How might our squad test and learn more rapidly? |
| 8 | Our integration process allows us to deliver value often. | Is there anything we could do to speed up our integration process? |
| 9 | I regularly identify what has worked and what has not. | What would be the best way to identify and share what's working and what is not? |
| 10 | Our squad prioritises the work that delivers the most value. | Do you have any questions around our priorities? |
| 11 | My squad delivers value to our customer regularly. | What might our squad do to deliver value more regularly? |
| 12 | Our systems enable us to perform at a sustainable pace. | How might we improve our systems to support a sustainable pace? |

| | Rating statement | Free-text conversation starter |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | Our squad's focus is on delivering value to our customer. | What changes would help you deliver more value to the customer? |
| 14 | The role of each individual in my squad is clear to me. | Are there any roles you would like to understand more about? |
| 15 | Our squad rituals are well-run. | How might we improve our squad rituals? |
| 16 | My squad's physical environment allows us to work in an agile way. | What ways could your squad adapt the physical space to be more suited to agile? |
| 17 | I feel empathy for my squad members and our customer. | How might you build a closer relationship with your squad and customer? |
| 18 | It is clear how ACME's agile structure allows our squad to perform. | Are there any agile roles missing from ACME? |
| 19 | I feel like I have a say in our planning sessions. | What is one thing you would like our squad to consider more during planning? |
| 20 | Our test approach is as automated as it should be. | What aspects of our test approach would you like us to automate further? |
| 21 | I am often making improvements to do better. | How might you make improvements more often? |
| 22 | Our sprint planning and grooming sessions are efficient. | How might we make planning and grooming more efficient? |
| 23 | My performance is measured by the outcomes I help deliver. | What is an outcome you helped to deliver recently? |
| 24 | Our squad has the right tools to support an agile way of working. | Are there any tools that your squad needs to be more agile? |

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