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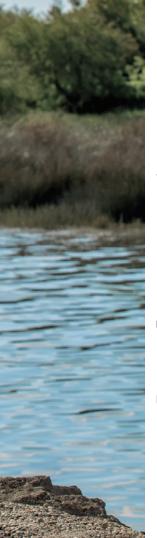
Dr. Patrice Petit,
Founder,
Certified Scrum Trainer
& Agile Coach

AgilBee

BUILDING AN AGILE WORKFORCE.
ENHANCING THE SUCCESS.

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By Royce D'Souza

Rationalism vs. empiricism—the two schools of thought have always been at loggerheads. Remember the time when our grandparents told us, 'if you study well, then a good job, a nice house, and a good retirement will follow'? This holds true in the context of a rationalistic world, resulting from a culture that dates back to Plato, where everything was demonstrable and predictable. In today's empiristic world, illustrated by Gödel's theory and driven by the emergence of computer science, not everything can be scientifically demonstrated. It is the one that promotes change, the emergence of new business opportunities, the need to learn continuously, and builds important relational networks to stay on top of the wave. Evidently, the real and virtual worlds, driven by rationalism and empiricism, respectively, induce different behaviours in people. These two worlds collide strongly at present. So much so that the longevity of rationalism-based businesses has sharply reduced in recent decades as they are no longer able to cope with the new IT-powered world. The fallout being people are depressed, dissatisfied, and feel their lives are a failure. And they are striving hard to reorient their career amidst an impending burnout. Here, the question arises, "How to succeed in such a situation that is changing so quickly and being disrupted by uncertainty?

The solution lies in enabling people to adapt to the empiristic nature of the business to sustain and flourish. This can be achieved by transitioning the workforce to a model where graduation and one's first job are considered as a launchpad. "To enable this, we offer a solution that places the concept of learning at the heart

of this transition," says Dr. Patrice Petit, Founder, AgilBee. The coaching, facilitation, and training company is dedicated to bringing agility to organisations, individuals, and projects.

Tracing back on the transition timeline, Dr. Petit points out that on the hard side of change management, organisations, in order to tackle and enforce change, resorted to aggressive communication, which is often deemed the only way to drive change. Kotter's 8-step change model thus has a flagship scope but is considered to be tough in terms of change management and lacks the understanding of how to run a business on a human scale and how to adapt quickly in the wake of continuous change.

On the contrary, AgilBee offers a more harmonious company orientation, and therefore, the employee is not manipulated for lack of competence or personal interest. The goal is to create a continuous learning organisation, which is reinforced by the participation of top leadership and employees alike. "It starts by revisiting the importance of people in business and managing the culture of your organisation," says Dr. Petit. The goal is to align the teams with enterprise strategies in a way that also drive individual success.

Agility: The Foundational Phrase

AgilBee was born with a desire to explore new ways to organise the complexity of contemporary business and society. As an Agile Coach and Certified Scrum Trainer, Dr. Petit has been practising agile since 2000 and created the first big event on agility—Agile Tour. This represented a dynamic movement that helped exponentialise the concept of agility. Dr. Petit's desire was to share his company's vision on agility as, according to him, the future is going to be complex, and humans need to be resilient.

AgilBee is focused on leading companies to rediscover the meaning of the word "performance." "It is based on people because in the tertiary sector it is the main source of performance and when the fun is aligned with the objectives, performance can be achieved," says Dr. Petit.

The company organises and facilitates participatory activities with all the

stakeholders through workshops and collaborative games to provide solutions for problems that organisations face. AgilBee specialises in education, training, coaching and mentoring to accelerate groups and individuals to learn new skills. As a facilitator, AgilBee steps in when companies need an impartial and operational third party to help them in their agile journey. The company has supported more than 4000 companies in their agile change transition journey and trains and certifies more than 1000 people in scrum and agile every year.

Dr. Petit reiterates that agility is not just a tool for geeks or an isolated team. "To be agile, the whole company has to move, and we are here to make it happen," he says. To this end, AgilBee uses a meta-framework to internalise the renewal conditions, leveraging their systemic coaching, facilitation tools, and skills.

Since the traditional change models are based on fear and strong communication compelling people to move, it creates a culture that is not sustainable. As renewal is necessary continuously, the need is also for a meta-framework that enables this.

To maximise value and address the need for continuous renewal, AgilBee has introduced a model for continuous change management called Enterprise Renewing Model, which focuses on four main functions: Strategy, Transformation, Learning and Movement. Building on its proven experience in agility, facilitation and enhancing team performance, the company carries out change management through individual coaching of managers and teams, incorporating all the elements of agility with an emphasis on leadership, innovation, and ownership to succeed collectively at a sustainable pace.

AgilBee offers a slew of internationally recognised certified training on agile and scrum. Moving away from traditional training and e-learning, the company delivers more than 400 workshops and games including Agile Dojo. It is an active and participatory training device, a place where individuals and teams can practice continuously through games to discover and learn new concepts, refine their expertise, enhance their decision-making and think out of the box.

Performance, Acceleration and Leadership

The prime reason for companies to seek AgilBee's guidance is because their teams are slow, and the myriad of communication from management no longer seem to work. The scenario draws analogies with a machine that seems to have completely stopped working. Companies are at a loss trying to figure out how to restart. To address this predicament, AgilBee has a slew of techniques in its arsenal. For example, when AgilBee helps companies embrace agile transformation, they always support managers with individual coaching, the main goal being to remove the emotional imprints that keep them from moving forward and improving their leadership quality. Dr. Petit points out that during their training sessions, companies tend to place more importance on methods. However, the AgilBee team firmly believes that process is not what makes people perform. "If they have decided that the challenge is not right for them, then they will not perform even with the best processes," he remarks.

Therefore, the AgilBee team, at the very outset, gathers information from the different groups about their feel-good factors that enabled them to perform and be successful in the past. "We build on this information. It is

neither a question of a method, nor of predefined frameworks, but a moral contract between people. It is about building an environment anchored on trust," he states. Subsequently, the team brings out practices, including agile, based on what seems to be important and aligned with the objectives of their client's teams.

The focal point of the company's coaching requests is about helping companies be agile. Quite often, companies are agile but don't know their level of agility. "We measure that for them," says Dr. Petit. "However, today, a few companies can say they are truly agile." They also work on extended agility mechanisms with Action Types for integrating neuroscience into individual coaching. "At AgilBee, we go so far as to train people in the world of sports coaching. Performance and agility are the two properties that we master. And the result is there," he remarks.

Beyond Systemic Coaching

With deep-drawn expertise in software engineering, methodology, and psychology domains, the company's coaching method has similarities with traditional coaching and, more particularly, with systemic coaching and that of sports. The coaches not only adorn the roles of a listener but also of a facilitator, mentor, trainer and consultant. "Our talent is in not only using the techniques of traditional coaches but also more on a lot of new participatory tools invented by the agile community to lead a group to success. In instances where an organisation's culture induces behaviour that is not aligned with their goals, we then shift to a mentoring, training or consulting mode to get them on track. Subsequently, we resume a posture close to a systemic coach based on active listening," explains Dr. Petit.

With close to two decades of experience in agile training and coaching, AgilBee's clients garner undeniable value in the management and fluidity of their organisations. Petit's advice is to start by "Relearning how to work in a team, visualising your workflow, improving processes and quality of your life. And then add the fun element." In short, when the world seeks strong interaction and continuity in this interaction, AgilBee restores a framework for successful projects aligned with the company's strategies and in harmony with its own needs, and strongly centered on customer needs

and satisfaction. Dr. Petit recalls an instance when they implemented the framework for a group of accountants who individually had 20 years of experience. Although they were apprehensive at the beginning, after one week of collaborative work, this is what the client had to say, "We are not going back to our old approaches of working!"

AgilBee's work is anchored on the pillars of 'succeed, live differently, and create a pleasant working environment,' which is the basis for future performance that they offer to clients whatever the field of activity. In an implementation highlight, a French media company requested AgilBee for effective training in the role of the product owner. Four years later, AgilBee continues to support them to set up agile coaches whose objective is to help teams and executive committees linked to strategy. "The people certified with us since the first years undeniably showcase our difference," says Dr. Petit.

Towards an Agile Society and Business

In the backdrop of the pandemic, paradoxically, AgilBee had more coaching than training requests, which is unusual in times of crisis, where more training than coaching is generally the norm. The pandemic had a greater impact on the mental health of their clients' teams, which made coaching take the front seat. Moreover, in the wake of the pandemic, when remote working became the new normal, small framework deviations become potential catastrophes with distance. Often a factor of complexity and frustration creeps in with the work-from-home norm. When people do not know how to work effectively as a team, then the distance effect highlights the differences and imperfections.

Even during these trying times, AgilBee maintained a high level of quality in their remote training. "The good news is that this is becoming a sign of quality and we trained almost as many people in 2020 as we did in 2019," extols Petit.

Additionally, the team took advantage of the few moments of forced respite during the pandemic to develop new services based on customer studies. AgilBee created new training programmes with every training program augmented by an hour of individual coaching for those that require it. As per Petit, training is not a destination but a journey.

The company's short-term plans include providing post-training interventions for clients, which will be applied primarily to their agile coach, scrum master, and product owner. In addition, an open space-based unconference will emerge online for agile coaches to share their experience or work on a topic of their choice. "Unconferences are a demonstration of what we do and what our coaches can do in coaching businesses and changing their culture," adds Petit.

As pioneers in agile training and coaching, Dr. Petit draws attention to the prevailing global culture, which might develop a new leadership model. However, the know-how and the impact of agile on society is still at a nascent stage. To this end, since 2005, AgilBee has been helping communicate developments in agile through conferences. "We are an activist company for a more agile society and business," Dr. Petit signs off. **CA**

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