

# ENSURING SAFE TRANSFORMATION WITH HRO

## CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION AND TRUST-BUILDING



**KERSTIN KNOPF** HRO PROGRAMME LEADER

**FRANK BARNER** CORPORATE AGILE TRANSFORMATION TEAM AND AGILE COACH

How to ensure a safe transformation of skyguide? It is all about integrating the ideas of a High Reliability Organisation (HRO) and Agility into our daily practice, since both are based on principles and values that translate into concrete good practice behaviour, mindset and actions. Both HRO and Agile focus on people, the way we collaborate, interact and communicate, with the aim to reduce risks and increase continuous learning and improvement. Kerstin Knopf, HRO programme leader, and Frank Barner, part of the Corporate Agile Transformation Team, explain the approach they developed for fostering these elements through joint reflections, called “Team Flow Progression”. The objective is the company’s transformation in an HRO way, and ultimately to be more reliable and agile.

“AGILE AND HRO SHARE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES LIKE OPENNESS, TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND THE HANDLING OF ERRORS”

SKYGUIDE **How is HRO defined, in particular by skyguide?**

**KERSTIN KNOPF** The HRO concept is a set of actions, good practices, behaviour and mindset to reduce risks and prevent incidents, and to react appropriately whenever something happens. This includes reporting of errors honestly, responding quickly, learning from mistakes, having a systemic approach and improving the process for the next challenge. HROs principles are based on collaborative teamwork, iterative learning approaches and the ability to communicate. HRO is guided by five principles. Three deal with prevention: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to oversimplify and sensitivity to operations. The last two with damage containment: resilience and deference to expertise. Especially when going through a transformation, it is important to integrate the five HRO principles equally in daily activities.

**What do HRO and Agile have in common?**

**FRANK BARNER** Agile and HRO share values and principles like openness, trust, transparency and the handling of errors. Those Agile values and principles, as well as Agile practices, are much more about behaviour than about processes.

**KK** HRO and Agile develop cross-functional cooperation and trust. They strengthen continuous learning, reduce risks through early detection of signals of weakness and errors, strengthen the individual responsibility and empower the organisation to take decisions according to the existing knowledge.

**FB** Agile is not new, but common sense rebranded. The concept of one man thinking and hundred individuals working is no longer sustainable in modern working environments where complexity rises at a high pace.

**What was the initial driving force for Agile and HRO?**

**KK** HRO and Agile teams began to collaborate when the core strategic programme of skyguide, the Virtual Centre (VC), started taking off. At the beginning we heard some people say that the HRO principles can't be applied to transformation and that Agile is not HRO-compatible. Therefore, we started to reflect and we identified many similar or complementary aspects. The ultimate objective being to enable skyguide to be more reliable and flexible, thus fostering its transformation.

**You introduced joint reflections based on HRO and Agile values called "Team Flow Progression". Can you elaborate on their objectives?**

**FB** The team-reflection is an interactive session held in a retrospective format. The objective is to reflect on the team's way of communicating, interacting and collaborating according to HRO and Agile values and to generate commitment for improvement. Based on this, the team establishes working agreements. The Virtual Centre being the main driver for transformation, we chose to test this approach on three teams coming from this programme, specifically in the Tranche 2 (VCT2).

**Is this approach only applicable for Agile and project teams?**

**FB** No, the concept is not bound to Agile or VC. It can support any team, and we are looking to extend this approach to our whole organisation. The team-reflections are integrated into existing team sessions and regularly repeated to measure evolution and improvement. We want to encourage teams to organise themselves and to take over responsibility.

**KK** By a systemic and multi-stream approach, the HRO principles will be integrated into transformation and into most daily activities, in order to make them become part of our company's and employees' DNA.

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THE “TEAM FLOW PROGRESSION”  
OUR REGULAR TRIP!