



The Agile Coach Competencies Report

Introduction

We understand that the role of an Agile Coach is key in the Agile transformation journeys of organizations. This role has the biggest impact on all changes from individual level to organizational level and has recently started to be appreciated the way it deserves. However, although this interest is precious, it also has negative effects by contributing to the popularity of the role. With this in mind, we decided to conduct this study in order to point out both the importance of the role and such negative aspects.

While working with Agile coaches, we take great pleasure in acting together with them in their journey of adopting the Agile mind-set and continuous development. We have come to the conclusion that an assessment is necessary in order to build this development brick by brick so to speak, by addressing the vision of Agile coaching, and especially to provide insights to individuals who have just embarked on this journey. For this purpose, we used The Agile Coaching Growth Wheel*. We aimed to transform the model into a self-assessment and development tool, while at the same time improving the model itself, in a way that also honours Shannon Carter; Rickard Jones; Martin Lambert; Stacey Louie; Tom Reynolds; Andre Rubin Santos; Kubair Shirazee; Rohit Ratan; John Barratt; Helen Meek, and Mark Summers, who discovered this model and made it available to Agile Community with their experience gained over the years.

We would like to thank 95 Agile Coaches we work in Turkey for participating in this study. The results of the study shed light on the individual development of Agile coaches through feedback and contain data that will mark certain development initiatives on a global level. We also developed a tool for you, which is available at survey.acmagile.com in order to keep the study data live and to give everyone an individual assessment opportunity. We hope that this study will make great contributions to the global Agile community for improving the competencies of Agile Coaches.



Deniz Uludağ | Agile Consultant

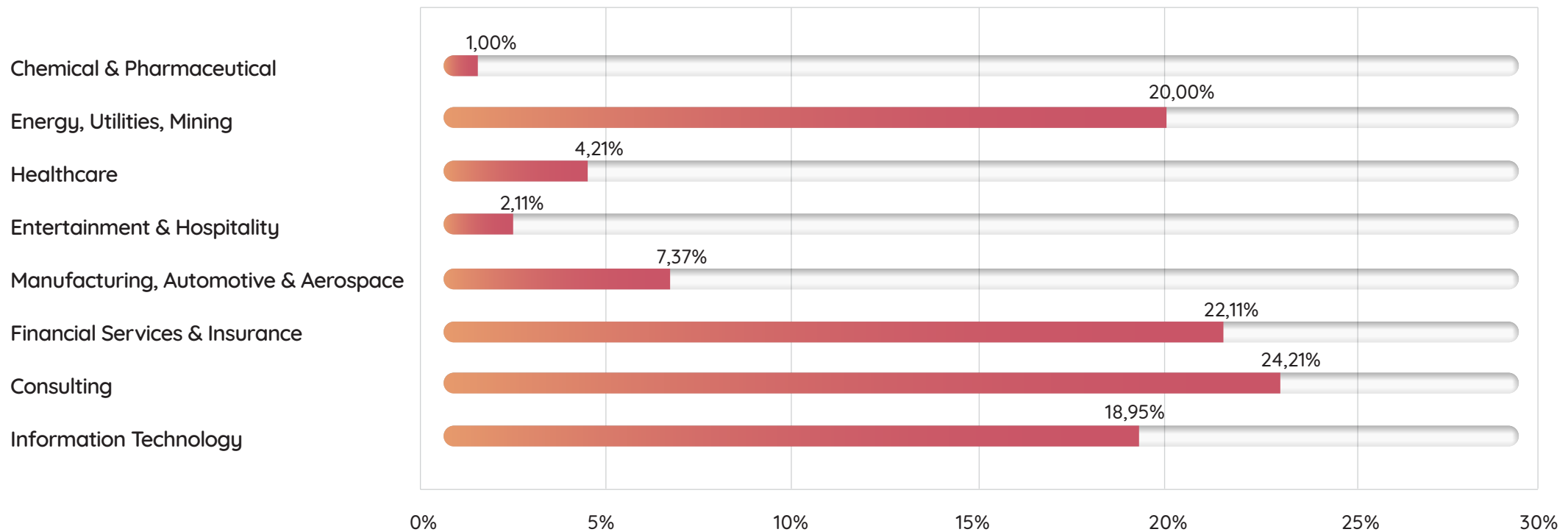


Barış Bal | Agile Consultant

Demographics

Our study involved 95 individuals who are known to have taken on the Agile Coach role. Please see the table below for a breakdown of the participants by sector.

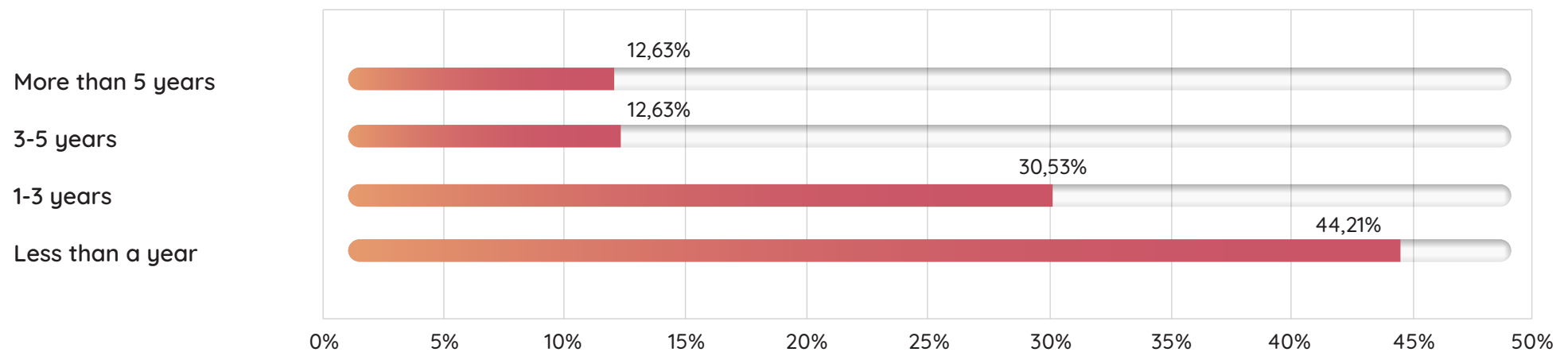
This shows us that Information Technologies, Banking and Finance, as well as Consulting sectors have had high number of Agile coaches in the past years, and Energy & Production sectors have also started to attract Agile Coaches.



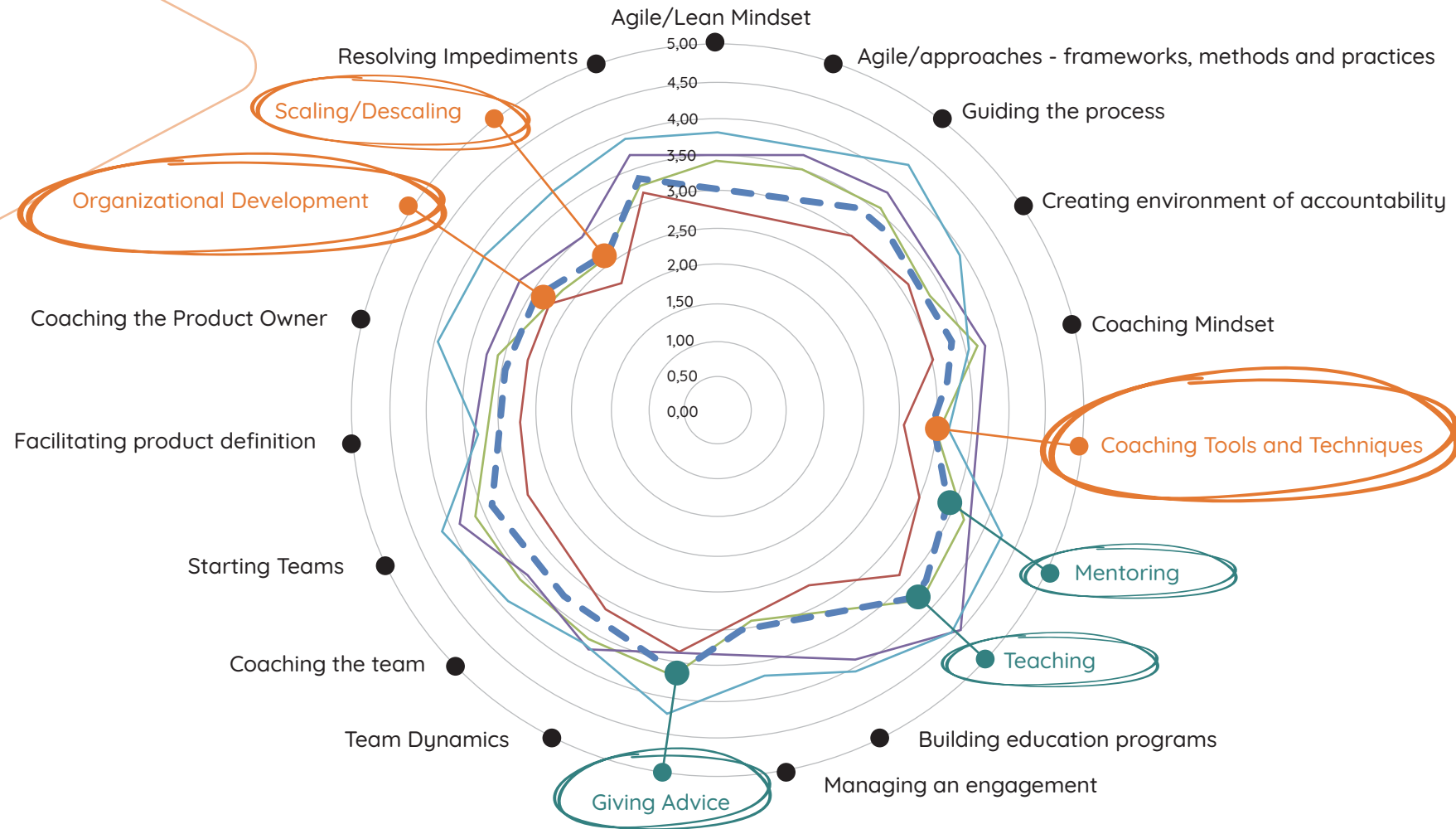
Experience of Participants in the Agile Coach Role By Year

75% of Agile Coaches with an experience of five years or more works in the Consulting sector.

36% of those with an experience of one year or less works in the Energy sector, while 33% works in the Production, Automotive and Finance & Insurance sectors. We have observed that the Agile Coaching role is starting to transform into a permanent role for companies rather than a consultancy service. We can interpret this in a way that organizations make investments to have a sustainable Agile culture.



Survey Results - General



TOP 3 STRENGTHS

- Giving Advice
- Teaching
- Mentoring
(Advising&Facilitating Learning)



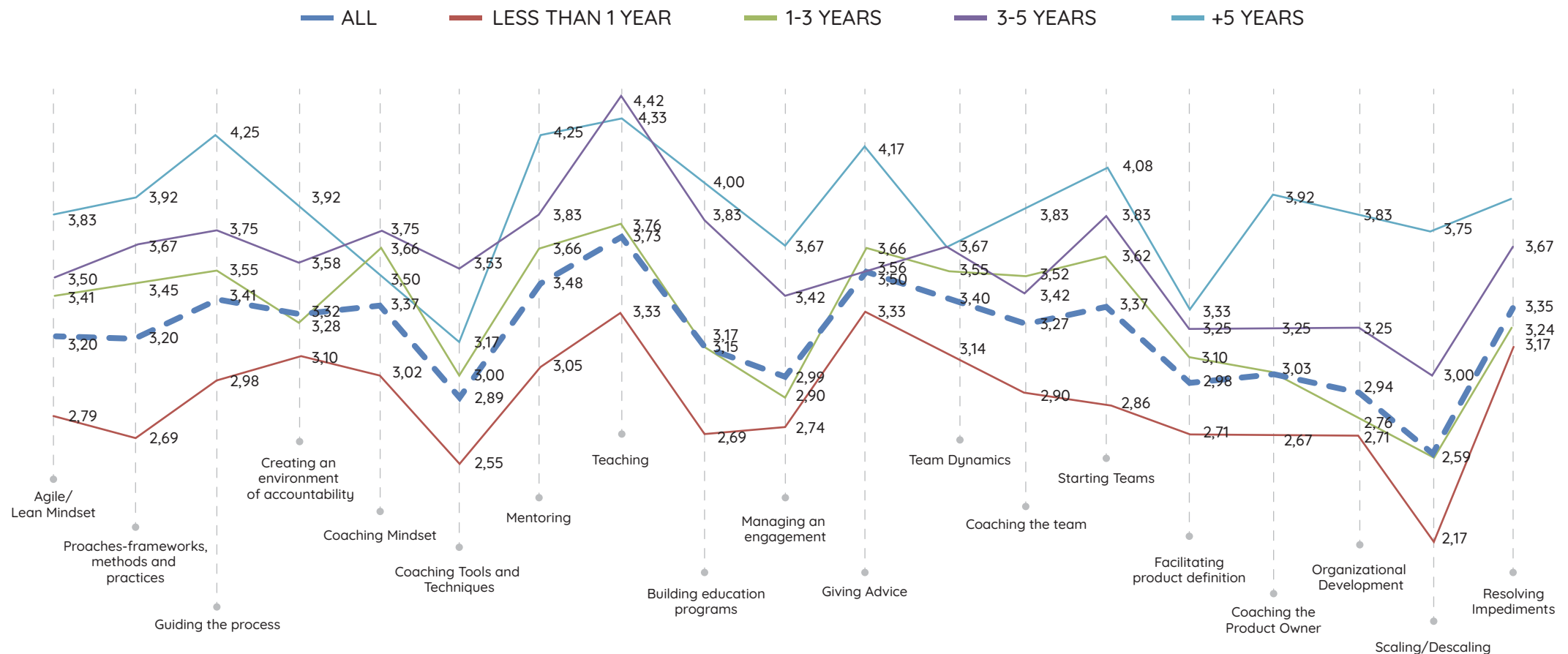
TOP 3 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Scaling/Descaling
- Coaching Tools and Techniques
- Organisational Development
(Coaching&Serving the organisation)

Strengths of Agile Coaches

On average, Teaching and Giving Advice turn out to be the most remarkable strengths. Accordingly, we understand that the theoretical knowledge is strong and the selected coaches see themselves competent in transferring knowledge. We can consider this as a visible result of Agile Coach trainings' starting from a knowledge-intensive point. The longer the experience of coaches responding to our survey, the more they see themselves competent in all areas on average.

We have also observed that the competence areas of Teaching and Mentoring were consistently given higher scores on strength compared to others, for each level of experience under five years.



Key Areas of Improvement for Agile Coaches

Considering the average results of all coaches, it is evident that there is a particular need for improvement in the areas of Scaling/Descaling and Coaching Tools & Techniques. Surprisingly, the areas of Managing an engagement, Serving the Product Owner and Organisational Development were given lower scores than others. This may be telling us that coaches gain extensive amount of experience and feel that they are competent when coaching teams, while they need a little bit of improvement and clarification when coaching an organization or even the Product Owner.



SCALING/DESCALING



COACHING TOOLS & TECHNIQUES



MANAGING AN ENGAGEMENT



SERVING THE PRODUCT OWNER



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At this very point, we need to ask "Is this really a need for improvement?" or "Do Agile coaches prefer to stay on the team-coaching side among the three areas?". If they are making this preference on purpose, this may not be considered as a need for improvement; otherwise there is a need for improvement. The difference between these areas and other ones in terms of the scores of coaches with an experience of more than three years is getting smaller.

We can compare the sub-categories of Agile coaching competencies to different hats. Instead of using and wearing out the same hats, staying in the comfort zone and reducing their effects, what is becoming important is the ability to pick the right hat on a case-by-case basis and to demonstrate the necessary competence at that moment.

INTER-COMPARISON OF COMPETENCIES BY LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE:

Section	Subsection	All	Less than 1 years	1 - 3 years	1 - 5 years	+5 years
AGILE LEAN PRACTITIONER	Agile/Lean Mindset Agile approaches-frameworks, methods and practices:	3,20	2,79	3,41	3,50	3,83
		3,20	2,69	3,45	3,67	3,92
FACILITATING	Guiding the process Creating an environment of accountability:	3,41	2,98	3,55	3,75	4,25
		3,32	3,10	3,28	3,58	3,92
COACHING	Coaching Mindset Coaching Tools and Techniques	3,37	3,02	3,66	3,75	3,50
		2,89	2,55	3,00	3,58	3,17
FACILITATE LEARNING	Mentoring Teaching Building education programs:	3,48	3,05	3,66	3,83	4,25
		3,73	3,33	3,76	4,42	4,33
		3,15	2,69	3,17	3,83	4,00
ADVISING	Managing an engagement: Giving Advice	2,99	2,74	2,90	3,42	3,67
		3,56	3,33	3,66	3,50	4,17
SERVING THE TEAM	Team Dynamics Coaching the team Starting Teams:	3,40	3,14	3,55	3,67	3,67
		3,27	2,90	3,52	3,42	3,83
		3,37	2,86	3,62	3,83	4,08
SERVING THE PRODUCT OWNER	Facilitating product definition: Coaching the Product Owner:	2,98	2,71	3,10	3,25	3,33
		3,01	2,67	3,03	3,25	3,92
SERVING THE ORGANISATION	Organizational Development: Scaling/Descaling: Resolving Impediments:	2,94	2,71	2,76	3,25	3,83
		2,60	2,17	2,59	3,00	3,75
		3,35	3,17	3,24	3,67	3,92

All Agile coaches with an experience of up to five years gave the lowest score to the competence area of Scaling/Descaling. The competence areas of Coaching Tools and Techniques, Facilitating Product Definition were also given lower scores by all Agile coaches. Interestingly, these two areas were given low scores also by Agile coaches with an experience over five years.

COMPARISON OF COMPETENCIES BASED ON LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE:

Section	Subsection	All	Less than 1 years	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years	+5 years
AGILE LEAN PRACTITIONER	Agile/Lean Mindset Agile approaches-frameworks, methods and practices:	<div></div> 3,20	<div></div> 2,79	<div></div> 3,41	<div></div> 3,50	<div></div> 3,83
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		<div></div> 2,60	<div></div> 2,17	<div></div> 2,59	<div></div> 3,00	<div></div> 3,75
		<div></div> 3,35	<div></div> 3,17	<div></div> 3,24	<div></div> 3,67	<div></div> 3,92
		3,22	2,87	3,31	3,59	3,86

It is observed that scores in all competence areas increase consistently with higher levels of experience. The competence area of Coaching Tools and Techniques improves with an experience level up to five years, while a decrease is seen in Agile coaches with an experience of more than five years.

Our Suggestions

According to the result of the above-mentioned study, the insights we gained and through a collective review of the analyses of ACM consultants, suggestions are listed below to help improve the Agile coaching competencies.



SCALING/DESCALING:

- Improvement is necessary in theoretical knowledge on scaling models. Trainings, case studies and experience-sharing sessions may be organized for this purpose.
- Learning may be facilitated by making use of the experience of different sectors by participating in the events of Agile communities, conducting site visits and organizing immersion workshops.
- On-the-job training may be provided by engaging Agile coaches in shadow coaching, coach pairing and other similar methods.



COACHING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES:

- Participation in theoretical coaching courses may be considered.
- Practical coaching experience may be increased through pairing, shadow coaching and observation, etc. with experienced Agile coaches.



FACILITATING PRODUCT DEFINITION:

- Increasing theoretical and technical knowledge on complex product management is suggested.
- Practical knowledge may be increased on techniques used in product managements, by studying concepts such as Minimum Viable Product (MVP), Growth Hacking, EBMT, etc., as well as real-life cases.
- It may be ensured that Agile coaches gain some experience for a while in certain roles, such as Product Owner, Product Manager, etc.

Liberating organizations and inspiring individuals to thrive