



WHITE PAPER

SAFe 101:

HOW TO ACCELERATE SOFTWARE DELIVERY WITHOUT WORKING HARDER

The Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) has become the world's most popular framework for business agility since its introduction in 2011, and with good reason.

Read how the marriage of Agile, Lean, and DevOps at scale can drastically accelerate your delivery.

Michael Dougherty

National Project Manager

March 2019

When Dean Leffingwell introduced the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) in 2011, there was skepticism. Some thought the approach, which is based on establishing Lean-Agile principles and DevOps concepts, was too complicated. It provided a detailed framework to the complex challenges of delivering quality software at the scale of 50 or more people. But would organizations implement it?

Fast-forward to today and the verdict is in: yes and in accelerating numbers. In last year's **"VersionOne: State Of Agile Report,"** SAFe had the highest scaling Agile adoption rate at 29 percent, significantly higher than Scrum of Scrums at 19 percent.

Why is SAFe proving so popular and what could SAFe mean for your organization?

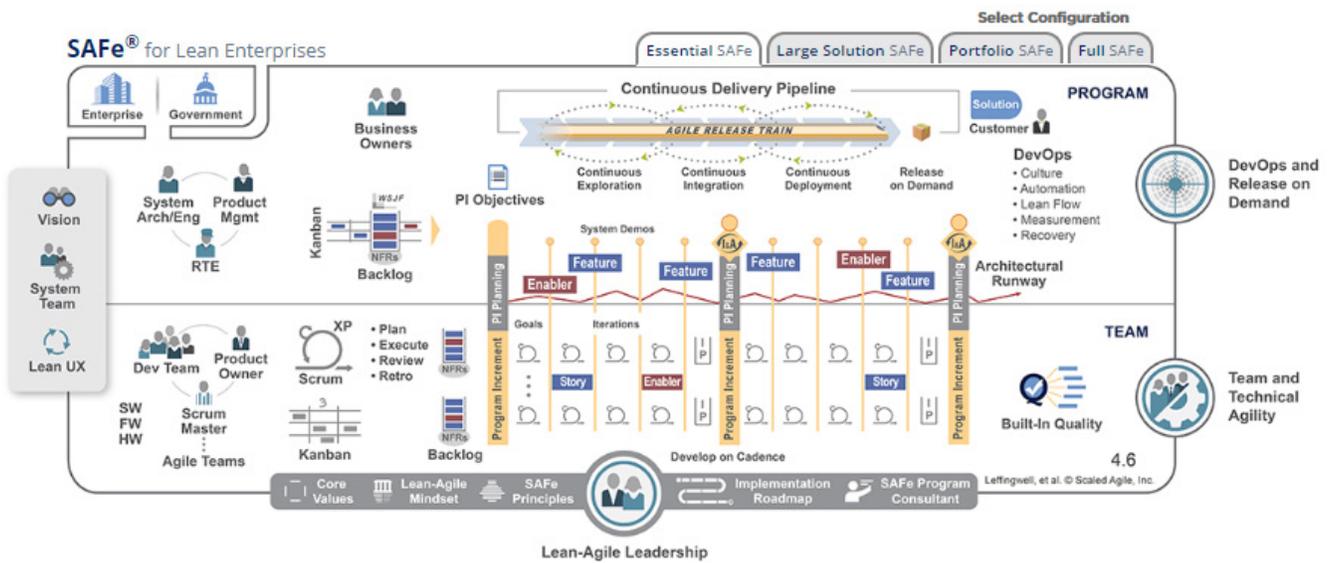
SAFe Is Not Just a Mindset

SAFe is more than a technology solution. It is also more than just a mindset. It is an implementation framework for the entire enterprise. When SAFe is introduced properly at the leadership level, it permeates the organization and lifts your culture. It's a philosophy rooted in integration, alignment and harmony.

SAFe empowers employees at all levels to become manager-teachers of a Lean-Agile oriented framework, which then creates an inclusive culture of equal sharing, tearing down traditional boundaries of communication. Everyone becomes servant leaders, helping each other towards commonly agreed upon objectives and goals.

The SAFe educational material is clear, concise, and very effective, helping elevate the Lean-Agile concepts quickly to those unfamiliar with the framework. Focus on reducing delay as opposed to "working harder," SAFe has built a compelling message of unification and achieving greatness instead of merely focusing on problem solving.

SAFe has four levels: Team, Program, Large Solution, and Portfolio. It scales fluidly and logically in a hierarchical fashion and takes advantage of assets you likely already have. For example, the first level uses the Scrum delivery framework that now dominates software development. Level two SAFe expands into the program level, building on top of level one delivery with focused business and IT alignment. This is known as Essential SAFe.



Those first two levels are all you need to embark on your journey.

Essential SAFe keeps the framework of Lean-Agile principles and the ideas of building and releasing Agile Release Trains (ART) as the chief method of delivery. Having experience with the most common Agile delivery methodologies (Scrum, Kanban, XP) is helpful but not necessary. The most important step is to just start your transformation journey no matter your current capability.

SAFe Brings Strength in Alignment

SAFe helps your employees see the same picture, throughout your organization, via frequent and focused communication for all stakeholders horizontally across departments and vertically up and down all organizational levels. Historically, these departments don't always speak the same language or work off the same page. But with SAFe, you can start to align your organization quickly and seamlessly around a set of principles and ceremonies, even in a matter of weeks. This is where leadership support is crucial. The barriers of traditional organizations do not fade without effort. At any stage you can take a step back and validate part or the entire framework. That is not only an option but an imperative.

Of course, change is hard even at a small scale. SAFe requires change at a large scale. Introducing something new can be a tough sell. But stick with it, using the **Kotter change model** as one approach. Get a coalition of people who are champions in it. If you follow with experienced SAFe practitioners, your SAFe champions will grow. That growth will then take place throughout your organization.

Focus on the End User

SAFe builds in the framework for the end user in mind. Instead of focusing on only what IT or the business wants, or thinks the end user wants, SAFe prescribes frequent feedback loops. As Humphrey's Law states, "The user does not know what they want until they see it," SAFe minimizes the impact of building something assumed a user does not want by obtaining feedback once a small set of changes are complete. Based on that feedback, the software can then be quickly changed or even trashed with a minimal impact on cost.

SAFe further accelerates that feedback loop by incorporating the principles of DevOps with Security. That consists of Continuous Exploration of user needs, Continuous Integration for better delivery alignment, Continuous Deployment for faster deployment rates, and Release on Demand for delivering when an approved stakeholder makes a decision and then measuring that value. The goal is to minimize the cost of any negative software development choices. For instance, Facebook has over 10,000 versions running at any given time to minimize negative reactions to changes at a very localized level, decreasing loss of advertising revenue.

From Quarterly Releases to Weekly Releases

At Magenic, we help clients implement SAFe, which often has a gradual, but profound impact on their business. We help organizations move away from operating from the 'tyranny of the urgent' — putting out fires on a reactive basis — and more toward a long-term strategy through predictable delivery with minimized unplanned work. We have discovered that by focusing on reducing delay and achieving greatness in teams results in better financial outcomes than working more and fixing problems. SAFe promotes these key concepts.

Magenic worked with one retail client that was having huge IT problems with releases. They were unable to release even small changes more frequently than every three months. Then we started implementing an earlier version of SAFe (before DevOps was incorporated) and in time, the organization was capable of releasing software once a week. With the advent of DevOps, the client is running even faster now, able to deliver daily and effectively run weekly (yes, weekly) sprints.



Looking Ahead — With Magenic

The key is to get started. We often begin with a simple webinar, where we walk you through the basics, then bring you in for an executive workshop. When it comes to implementation, we bring in our Lean-Agile Manager-Teachers and Player Coaches to prepare for your first Program Increment Planning event, guiding you thorough the process every step of the way.

Magenic focuses on educating our clients to understand the value of what they own, what it does, how to properly invest, defining business goals, and what kind of cultural changes need to happen to move forward. Our Fast-Forward process is designed to maximize your assets and grow your business.



About Magenic

Magenic is the digital technology consulting company built for speed. We have the right digital strategies, the right process, and the right people to get our clients' digital products to market faster.

Visit us at magenic.com or call us at **877.277.1044** to learn more or to engage Magenic today.



This document is for informational purposes only. Magenic Technologies, Inc., makes no warranties, express or implied, in this summary. Other product and company names mentioned herein might be the trademarks of their respective owners. © 2019 Magenic Technologies Inc. All rights reserved.

