

Striking the Balance: The Delicate Art of Scrum Master Leadership in Self-Managed Environments

Roman Lobus

Regional Scrum Gathering

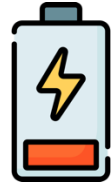
9-10 September 2024 |
Stockholm



#1 What is difficult about growing self-management?



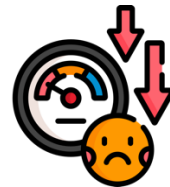
When self-management is not there



Tired scrum master and product owner



Low team morale



Product quality goes down



Extreme archetypes of Scrum Masters



What gets in the way

1

Leaders don't know what to do to consciously develop self-management in teams

2

Guidance on self-management is tool-centric and fragmented – no holistic theory available to Agilists

3

Personal accentuations of Scrum Masters/coaches reinforce unhelpful patterns preventing self-management to grow



#2 What does self-management look like?



Self-Managing:

Scrum Teams are ... self-managing, meaning they internally decide who does what, when, and how.

Scrum Glossary



CDE Model

Describes the **three conditions** that determine **speed, direction, and path** of a system as it self-organizes.



Container:

Similarities that contain the system while patterns emerge (C);



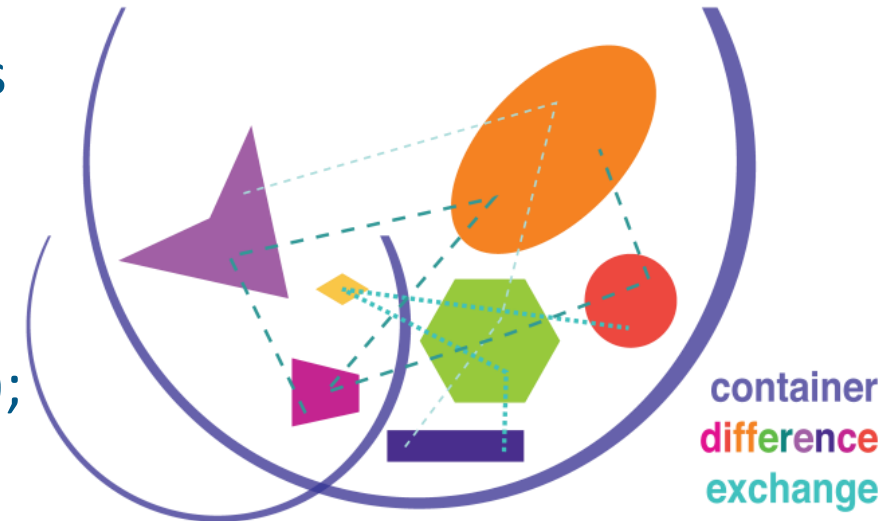
Differences:

The significant distinctions that hold tension and have greatest influence on decision and action (D); and



Exchanges:

Connections in the system that ensure the movement of information, energy, and other resources (E).

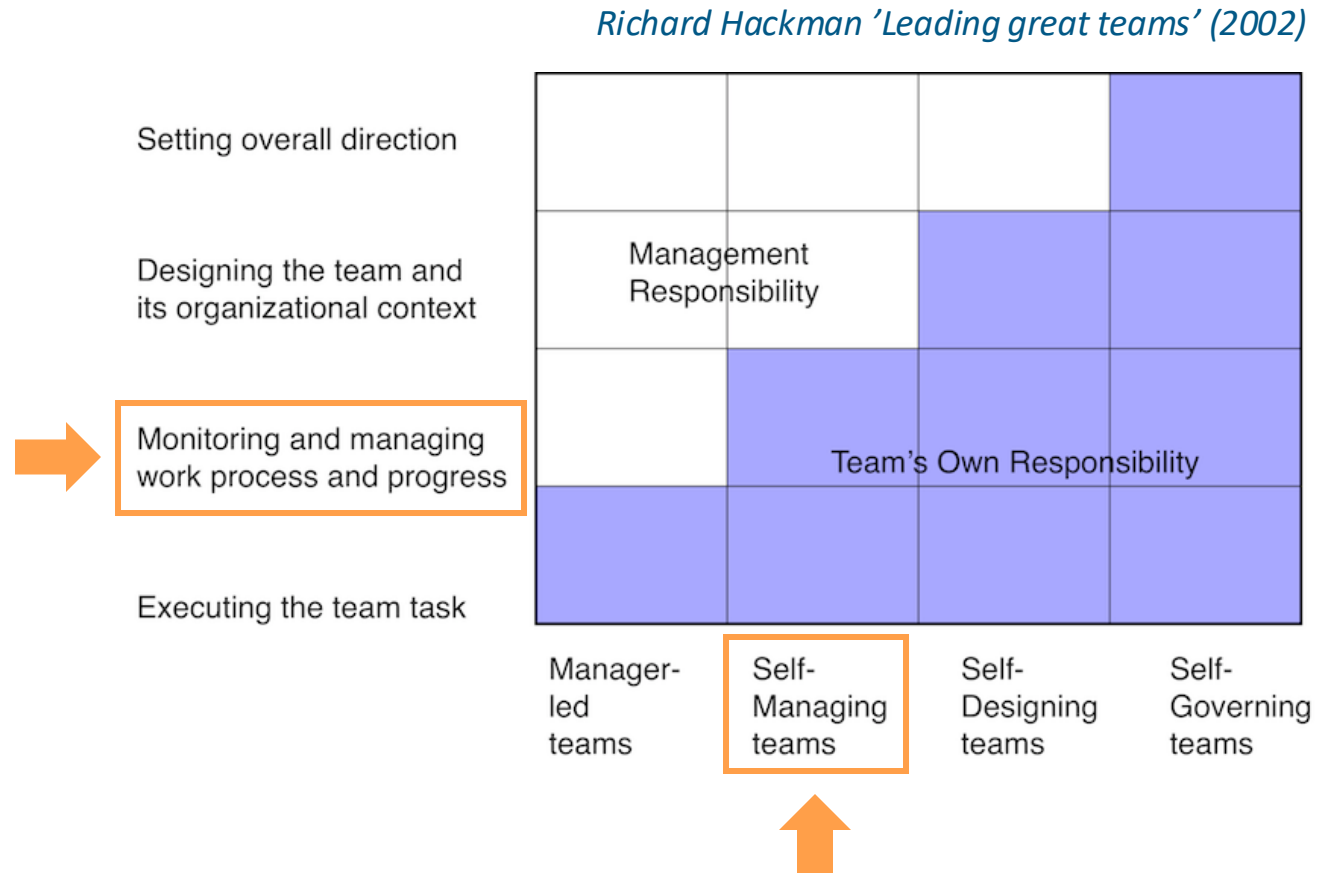


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Richard Hackman's five factors of team effectiveness

1. Real team
2. Compelling direction
3. Enabling structure
4. Supportive context
5. Expert coaching



A framework for Self-Management

How the team manages their work practices is a good indicator of whether the team is self-managing:

- Do they define and improve their quality practices?
- Do they continually improve their adoption/implementation of Scrum?
- Is the work that's being done transparent?
- Are they dedicated to doing the work well?
- Do they "live" the Scrum Values?

How the members of the team interact with each other gives clues to whether it is a self-managing team:

- Do the developers decide **who** picks up the work?
- Is the team collaborating to solve problems?
- Does everyone on the team have a voice?
- Do they trust each other?
- Do team members work with and help each other?

The team manages their work by deciding **what they should be doing** on a day-to-day basis:

- Are you operating toward clear goals; does your team use the Product Goal and Sprint Goal to guide their decisions?
- Does your team focus on the value?
- Does the team decide what they should be doing without direction from outside the team?

The team manages their work by deciding **when they should do certain activities**.

They do this without outside direction:

- Does the team select a realistic and challenging amount of work for the Sprint and does the team get the work to Done?
- Does the team choose what and when to release?



Action Plan

1

Find out what your self-management will look like to create a generative image of the desired future BEFORE coaching a team. Contract for that outcome.



#3 What do leaders need to do to foster self-management?



Ken Schwaber & Jeff Sutherland

The Scrum Guide

The Definitive Guide to Scrum: The Rules of the Game

November 2020

*Scrum Masters are **true leaders** who serve the **Scrum Team and the larger organization**.*

...

*The Scrum Master serves the Scrum Team in several ways, including: coaching the team members in **self-management** and cross-functionality;*



Facilitating/Enabling self-management

'In the beginning'

With new-comers or when a team just started

'Discovery'

Team has worked together for 2-4 sprints

'Exploration'

Team has worked together for +4 sprints or stuck here forever

'Habitual sprinting'

Team considers itself as established

FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP

LEADER AS A COACH

Focus on creating the 'container': design clear 'contracts' – agreements

- Excessive anxiety
- **Structurelessness**
- Confusion about roles

- Clear contracts
- Clarity of boundaries and facilitate clarification of team's purpose
- Getting to know each other

The Scrum Master must survive 😊

- Defensiveness / glosses over conflicts
- **Taking any of 4 drama roles (Victim, Rescuer, Persecutor, Bystander)**
- Ignoring the conflict

- Take feedback seriously
- Validating people's right to their feelings, thoughts, opinions, and concerns without giving up rights

Support the team in holding themselves accountable for their own rules and norms

- Rigidity in appreciation and recognition
- **Restricting team's autonomous movement**
- Setting rules instead of norms

- Facilitating team's norm development
- Flexibility around norms
- Respect for team's uniqueness

Allow team members to perform leadership and minimise control while maintaining safety

- Criticizes destructively
- **Deprives team of autonomy**
- Tells people what they do is not good enough

- Allow people to be leaders
- Minimum control but maintains some safety boundaries
- Open to experimentation



The Scrum Master must survive 😊

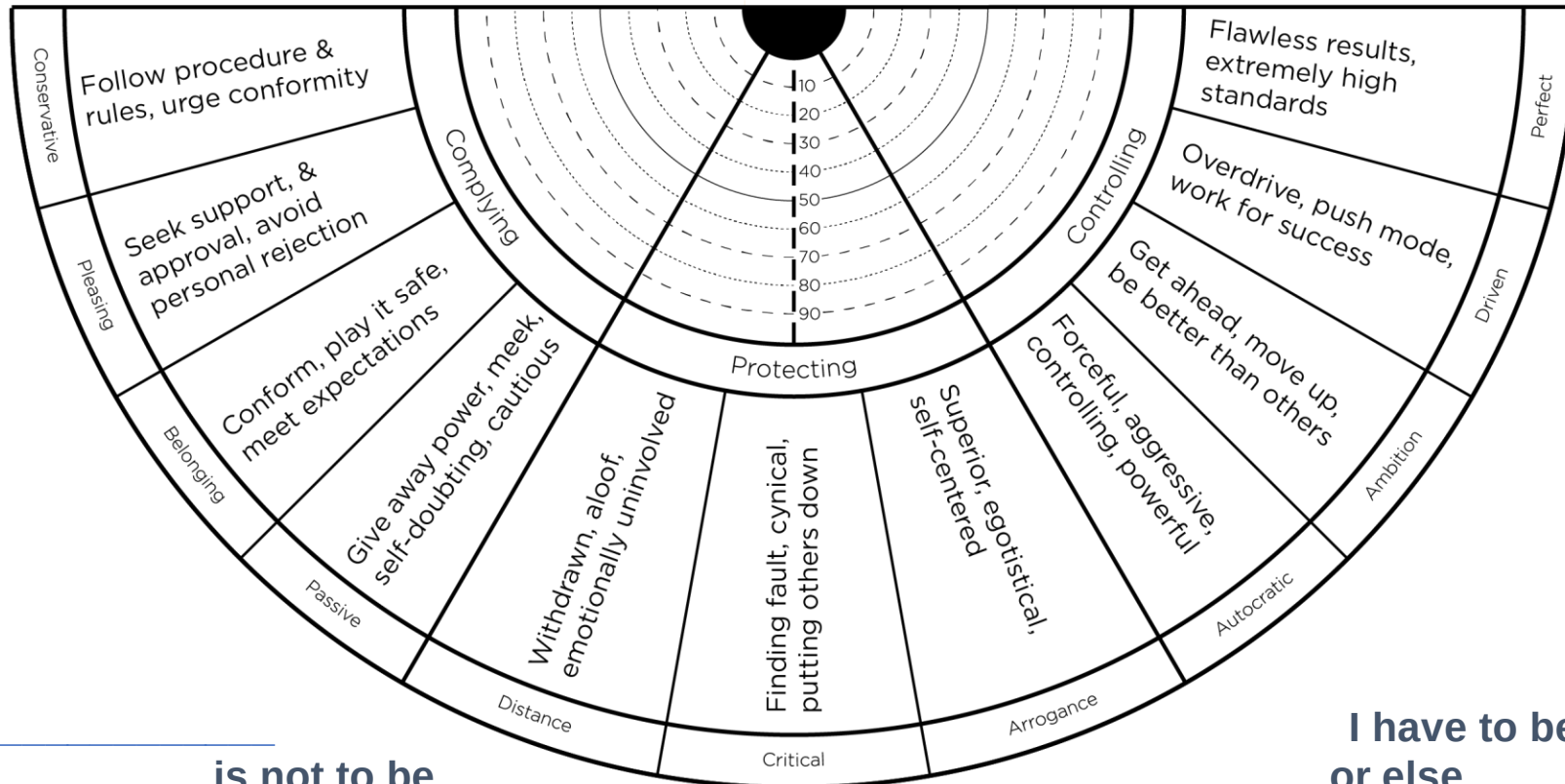
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The Identity Hook

If I am not _____ then _____.



To be is to be _____
Not to be _____ is not to be

I have to be _____
or else _____

REACTIVE



Tip for a coaching conversation



Action Plan

1

Find out where the team is on the journey together

2

Check if the Scrum Master is effective in their leadership tasks

3

Watch out for “red markers” – destructive behaviours, share observations, or reflect on them

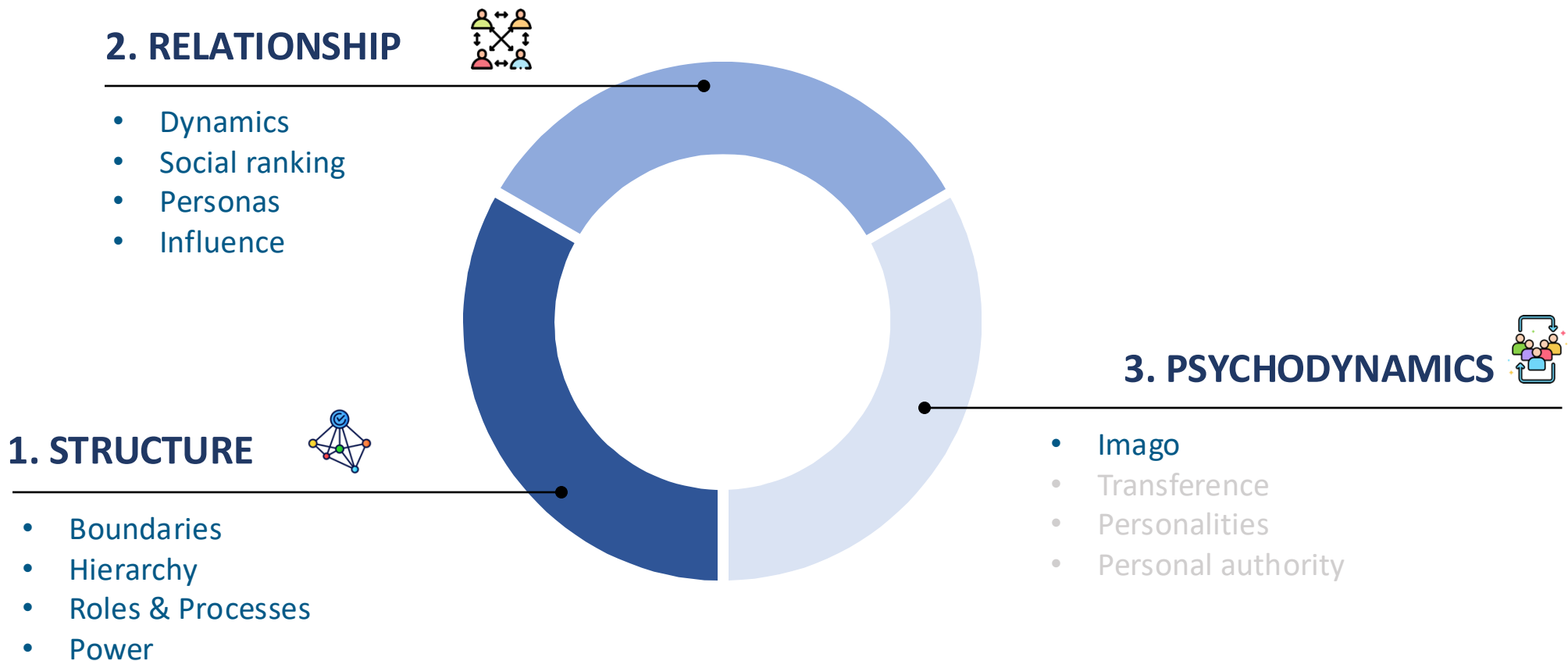
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Design coaching conversations to achieve more “green markers” – constructive behaviours



Journey to a self-managed team

Based on Transactional Analysis (Eric Berne)



Untangling relationships



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Can team members be themselves in the team?	Is there enough cohesion?	Do people gossip about each other?	Are there fights between people in the team?	Is there a lot of agitation?	Can the team be with each other in conflict?
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WHAT TO LOOK FOR - 'RED MARKERS'

	Team avoids talking about issues	Conflicts become personal / unproductive	Scrum Master is ignored / not visible	Team members rarely say positive things about each other	Team members discount their ability to influence / change anything	Team members avoid expressing their individuality / believe it's too vulnerable
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COACHING INTERVENTIONS



The Four Horsemen
Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, Stonewalling



Skillful feedback
SBI (R)



Frequent Appreciation
Appreciation loop, Kudos cards



Design Team Alliance (DTA)



2% Truth



Cycle of Resistance (Discounting) vs. Accounting



Establishing structure



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is it a real team?

Are the team members clear about their roles & responsibilities?

Are team members dedicated to this team?

Do the team members understand the future state of the product?

Do the team members associate themselves with what they do or with the product/team?

WHAT TO LOOK FOR - 'RED MARKERS'



No collective ownership of sprint outcomes

No goals

No interdependency between Product Backlog Items (no collaboration)

Team members confused about Scrum events' objectives and team roles

No artefacts to capture team agreements

Developers disinterested in teammates' work during Daily Scrum

COACHING INTERVENTIONS



Design Definition of Done (DoD)



WINFY
Scrum Master, Product Owner, Developers



Outcome goal setting
Product goal, Sprint goal



Applied Professional Scrum (APS)



Product backlog structure
Enables incremental value delivery



Pair programming / Swarming



Team agreement



When creating agreements, focus on behavioural elements that explicitly say what the team members do



Revealing the hidden dynamics



KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

What do team members dream up about their team?

Where is there mismatch between dreams and reality?

What is trying to happen?

Are people getting triggered?

What secret selves are active?

WHAT TO LOOK FOR - 'RED MARKERS'



Team members don't feel like they fit in

Team members are "sick" of their role

Team's behaviour is influenced by ghosts of the past

There is no explanation for some conflicts / interpersonal issues

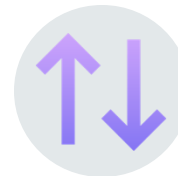
COACHING INTERVENTIONS



Constellations
(Informal)



Bringing down the vision



High/Low Dream or Reclaiming the High Dream



De-triggering



Action Plan

1

Contract with the team for a required change

2

Go from 'Structure' to 'Psychodynamic' levels and assess whether 'red markers' are present

3

Design interventions at the appropriate level



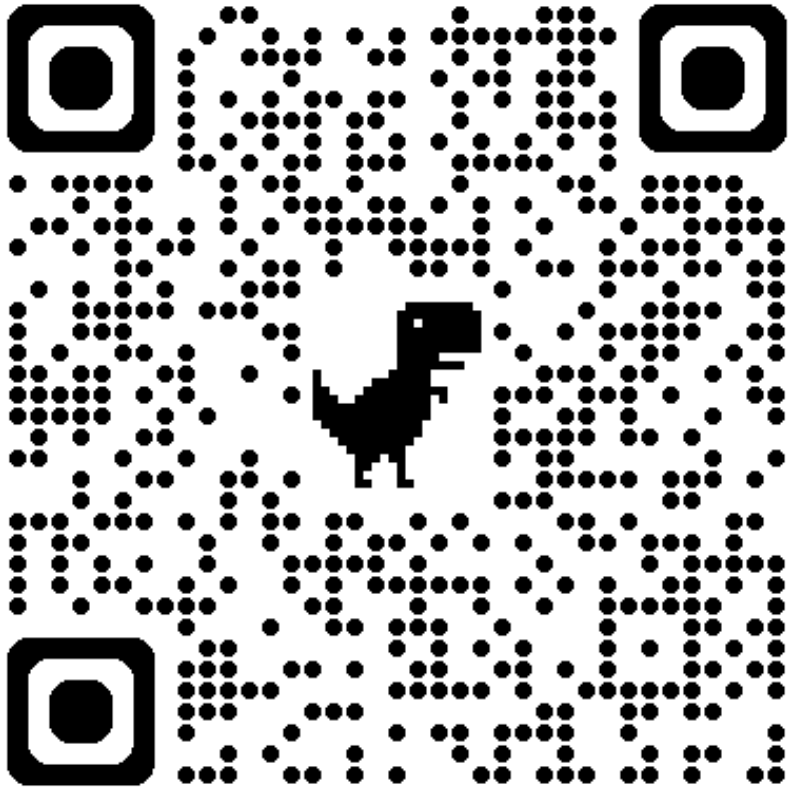
What has been left out?

Contracting

Supporting Context

(rewards system, performance appraisal etc.)



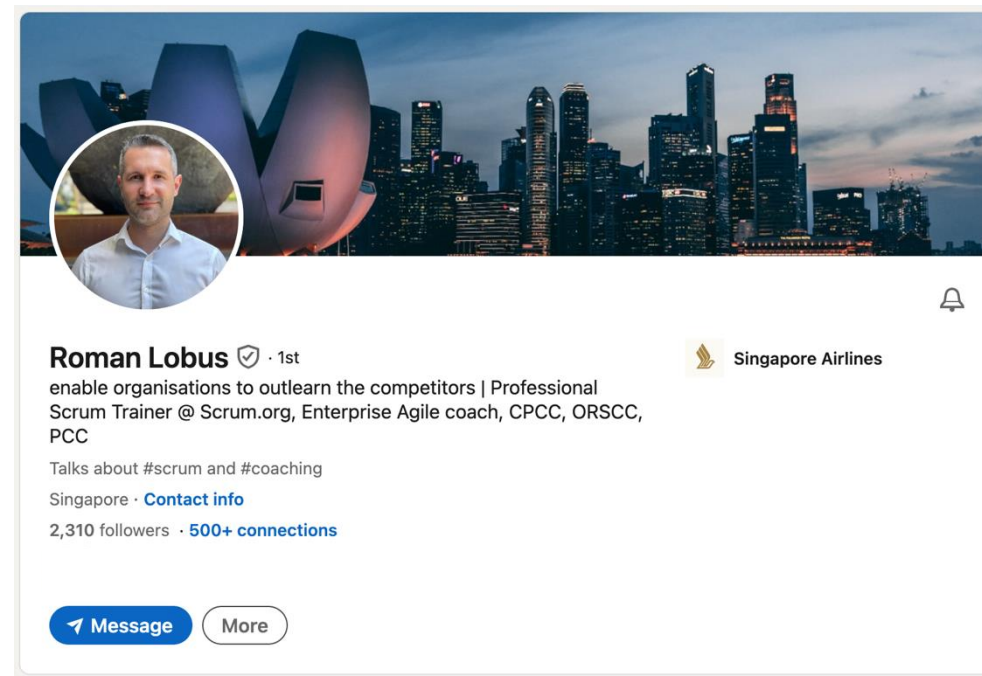


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Thank you!

