



### **The CIO's Approach to Drive Digital Acceleration Using Scaled Agile Model**

In this episode "The CIO's Approach to Drive Digital Acceleration Using Scaled Agile Models", Luong To – Solution Architech of KMS Solutions – discuss every step toward Lean-Agile, benefits that strengthen the organization at every level will be recognized, such as increased engagement, improved quality, faster releases, and a slew of other beneficial outcomes

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# TECH ON MIC

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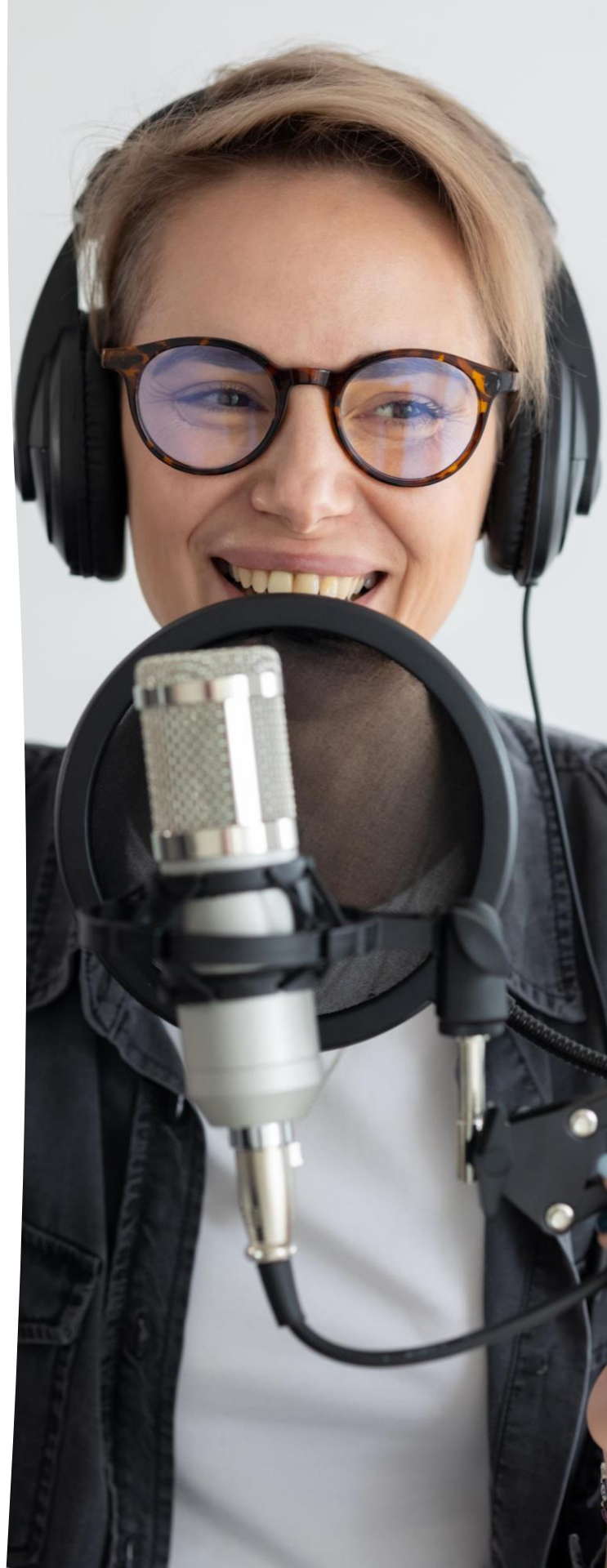
## Who should listen

Top executives, leaders of business and tech; C-suite in companies; innovators and tech evangelists leadership, business and technology



## KEY POINTS

- ✓ The Scaled Agile Framework explained; Understand why digital initiatives are critical to both executive leaders and CIOs
- ✓ Make a Strategy Agile with OKRs, steps can CIOs take to extend Agile to the rest of the company
- ✓ Master flow in the Lean-Agile organization





**Jewel:** In an enterprise scaled agile transformation process, CIOs play a critical role as lean-agile leaders. A CIO must create and communicate business value through technology and strategic business growth planning. He or She must also ensure that the company's technological systems and procedures are in sync with its goals and objectives.

If you Google "agile at scale" or "how to scale agile," the ingeniously marketed framework "Agile at Scale for Enterprise," or "SAFe," will most likely come up first. Is this the solution you've been seeking to achieve product-led growth or product agility? Let's find out.

**Jewel:** Hey guys, welcome back to Tech On Mic - a podcast series that keeps you updated with all the trends and topics in Digital Transformation. I'm Jewel and I'll be your host today. In this podcast session "The CIO's Approach to Drive Digital Acceleration Using Scaled Agile Models", you are going to learn about Scaled Agile Framework & Strategy from the eyes of the C-level. Before we get started, please welcome our guest today: Mr. Luong To.

**Luong To:** Morning Jewel, morning everyone.

**Jewel:** Thank Mr. Luong for joining this episode. With over 17 years of experience in Software Development, he is proficient in software architecture development for both web applications and mobile platforms as well as backend microservices, using Scaled Agile methodology in most stages of the software development lifecycle.





**Jewel:** He knows perfectly well the adoption of Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), as well as business process re-engineering. Combining with his hands-on experience working with global clients, Luong is going to offer his technical approach to designing and implementing a delivery process. Welcome to Tech On Mic podcast today, Mr. Luong To.

**Luong To:** That was a very nice introduction, thanks for having me here today.

**Jewel:** We are glad to have your presence. So before we get to it, can you tell the audience here a little about, what's your insight when you work with global clients. What is the thing that they are most concerned about?

**Luong To:** Okay, so very few established businesses enjoy the digital change in their organization, particularly I guess, in the Banking - Financial Services sector. But, in a world where technology can turn and can raise millions of dollars in business literally in a matter of months so change is unavoidable. So, to speak about building a business that does more than just survive now is the time for the organization to adopt a smarter way of working. a better way of working yields happier, more engaged employees.





**Luong To:** However, in order to achieve that, the thing that they are concerned about most usually is the Roadmap to Agility.

**Jewel:** 1 of the ways that lead to full agility without digital disruption, I learned that the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) has been used to facilitate the adoption of Lean-Agile methods in practically every industry and for all sorts of solutions since its conception.

Nowadays, we can see that SAFe is the most trusted agile framework that has been used worldwide with **more than 54% market share**. The Agile teams all over the world use the SAFe model to work smarter and develop better software, from the banking industry to automotive manufacturing.

But, in your opinion, what makes this framework so special? And what does Agile at scale mean for an enterprise?

**Luong To:** As you mentioned previously, we could see that this methodology is quite popular nowadays.

According to a report from the company Scaled Agile Inc, twenty thousand enterprises and one million people were trained and followed, and with over 500 partners providing consulting services on SAFe

So, with all of the information we have, we can see that SAFe is considered to be the leading approach and one of the key success factors. This is because it provides feasible practices for scaling as enterprises grow in size.





**Luong To:** So, anything special? I can say right the way, the special thing here is that the framework can adapt to any size of the corporation, either an SME or a huge global group with thousands or even hundreds of thousand employees, that still works, still be scalable

Everyone can see that this framework has actual results achieved by some of the world's leading companies such as American Express, Bosch, Porsche, Lockheed Martin, Pepsico, and others.

To question how businesses can effortlessly implement the framework and from which level that best fits them so SAFe has four levels to meet varying degrees of size & scale, that, enable it to stay up with changes in a business's growth:

**The lowest level is Essential**, which is the most basic configuration of the framework, and it provides the minimal elements necessary to be successful with scaled agile

And, the next is for enterprises who need more complex solutions or in case they need to do like doing Strategy and Investment funding or doing Lean Governance, In those cases, **the Large or Portfolio** option from the framework can help

Finally, **the Full option** is the most comprehensive configuration to support building very large and integrated solutions that typically require hundreds of people to develop and maintain.

In addition, this method encourages big groups of agile teams, to coordinate, collaborate, and deliver.





**Jewel:** But to my understanding, besides SAFe, we have Scrum, Disciplined Agile, and Spotify - which are other agile frameworks. And I could say that SAFe's features are very much comparable to those of Scrum, Discipline Agile, and Spotify. However, not all these agile framework approaches are created equally. Some methodologies may be better suited to the needs of specific users than others. We couldn't see SAFe as the right approach for every enterprise, right?

**Luong To:** Yes, absolutely, couldn't say anything different

**Jewel:** So how do you know that this methodology is suitable for your team? In any case, who should use SAFe?

**Luong To:** Well, to decide whether or not to adopt this new framework enterprises first need to be aware of the fact that the Scaled Agile Framework is more appropriate for large-scale projects.

It's ideal for businesses, that looking for Agile practices, across teams, portfolios, and programs.

With a dedicated structure, SAFe can also assist firms that are new to Agile, since they might be unsure about the values, unsure of the principles, or even unsure about the sorts of management roles need to be involved in their teams.

The tool has a lot to offer, and the users who will benefit the most from it are those who have the time and motivation to fully master the system.





**Jewel:** So how do banks know what factors should be considered?

Well, typical examples are overdrafts or business lines of credit, credit cards, bridge loans, or invoice financing. These are typically short-term loans - often revolving credits - which are repaid partially or fully upon a certain event, for example after salary receipt, payment of invoices, or the sales of your home.

**Hanh Ngo:** Depending on the customer segment, the duration of the credit, and the type of loan (revolving versus installment), dozens of loan products have been invented to support these different types of financing objectives.

**Jewel:** I think to the audience here today, some of them might believe that transformation in banking is just developing a new app - a new platform and adding new features. But clearly, digital transformation in banking has banks of all sizes scrambling to adopt new technologies and services across the board.

However, adopting new technologies and changing the whole core system is not a 1 day 2 days work. So how can they accelerate this transformation without data risk and ensure the quality at all channels?

**Hanh Ngo:** For fast and efficient transformation, one of the ways banking businesses around the world is moving towards is the application of Scaled agile in the enterprise, especially in the software development process.





**Luong To:** So, in my conclusion, with so many options from the framework on the market today, SAFe is best suited for users who want to use agile frameworks on a developing scale.

For example, many organizations that use SAFe have had a Scrum foundation already, they can easily figure out the similarities between these two frameworks. Even though both emphasize system thinking and lean thinking, they are different. If the SAFe is more strategy-focused, Scrum focuses more on customer customer-centric and Scrum is also more helpful for waste reduction.

**Jewel:** While SAFe leverages many proven and established methods, there are many concerns that this action is no less than building systems that are full of uncertainties, especially in today's fast-moving landscape. The question to be asked before adopting any new methodologies is how can enterprises ensure a smooth transition that benefits both their business and customers after the organization has weighed its options and decided to adopt SAFe?

**Luong To:** I would say that an organization must have executive-level sponsorship, a very clear purpose, and a Scrum foundation to prepare for SAFe.

The company Scaled Agile, Inc. and its partners, such as KMS Solutions, are the people to contact if you need advice on how to go Agile how to get started with the framework or how to prepare your enterprise for adoption.





**Luong To:** Originally, Agile was not designed with scale in mind, from the start.

The goal of Agile was just to unchain developers and engineers allowing them to tackle implementation on their own using their best judgment and incorporating learnings from one iteration into the next.

As a result, businesses need to leverage the benefits of Agile while acknowledging the need for coordination and compátibility of structure, organization, and oversight.

Agile at scale necessitates more rules and controls to ensure that the final product not only functions but also works seamlessly across various sub-components and that product suites appear and behave as if they were built by the same company.

**Jewel:** Hmm yeah, let's talk a little bit about it since we are discussing the things that enterprises need to do. I believe that Scaling Agile can provide enormous benefits at all levels of the organization, moreover, it also introduces more challenges than the relatively simple process of implementing Agile in a single team.

Let's take a look at what scaling Agile entails, the common challenges that companies face when scaling Agile, how to overcome those challenges and the benefits of successfully scaling Agile.

On an organizational level, changing people's minds and how they work is a difficult undertaking. Scaling Agile can be difficult for even the most experienced Agile software developers and forward-thinking businesses. With that being said what do you think are the major challenges of scaling up agile projects within an organization that they have to get over?





**Luong To:** have been in software development for years, with many enterprises, I can see that the biggest stumbling block for them while going agile, are, the inconsistency and lack of transparency. And, the very first change you'll need to make to attain true business agility is our mindset, as well as the health of the organization. This will allow you to accept change as part of your daily operations.

You will get there by making deliberate organizational, process, and leadership changes that support the new style of thinking over time.

**Jewel:** You know, I learned that there are dozens of tools that support the Scaled Agile Framework for continuous improvement, but not they may not all suit your business needs. So adopting a Scaled Agile framework and aligning operations across functions without disrupting operations can be tricky.

But Scaling agile methodologies without software tools is extremely difficult.

Then the question here is, should we adopt these scaled agile framework tools only until after the process and culture have changed?

**Luong To:** Hmmm... not really, to my opinion, businesses should allow the tool and process to evolve together in an iterative and agile manner.

Although in fact, as you said, many enterprises adopt scaled agile frameworks after the process and culture have been changed. They frequently employ tools that might be out of date and very difficult to adapt to new changes. So obviously, it is difficult and time-consuming for them to learn how to make or adjust to new tools because people have grown accustomed to their current IT systems.





**Luong To:** My advice is that it's necessary to, first understand the technology being used, and then have the technical know-how to help & teach people how to use it. It will be quite difficult to scale the Agile properly if you do not have the right technology solution.

Another quick way is to hire a good Agile coach with extensive experience and knowledge to teach and train your people on how Agile works. This will help the team gain a thorough understanding of Agile scaling.

Regardless of where you are on your agility journey, you can become a customer-centric, even customer-obsessed organization that produces inspired, long-term innovation and value.

**Jewel:** So we can see that the CIO is front and center in an organization's transformation to enterprise-wide agility. CIO takes charge of planning, instructing, and coordinating with other departments to facilitate the Agile transformation. Thus, it's undeniable that CIOs play an incredibly important leadership role here, setting the right tone from the start.

For the adoption of SAFe, what are the steps CIOs can take to bring Agile to the broader organization? How to become a scaled agile CIO?

**Luong To:** Talking about my career? how do I myself become a CIO

Traditionally, a CIO is responsible for managing the companies' IT infrastructure with duties including reviewing policies, planning, and budgeting for upcoming projects.





**Luong To:** However, in an agile organization, given the push to accelerate innovation and attract top people, the role is redefined — a good CIO has to fulfill three critical roles, I guess. First, he is supposed to be an Architect who can set the technology vision; for the team the whole business. Also, he needs to be a driver of knowledge and talent. Last but not least, he has to be a Problem solver who can get things done.

Back to the question of how to bring the SAgE to our organization enterprises require leaders who are proficient in what they are attempting to achieve and how they intend to accomplish it. In other words, a CIO must act as a Lean-thinking leader who understands very clearly how to lead and sustain changes.





**Luong To:** For instance, lately, I had an opportunity to speak with a CIO of a large insurance corporation in VN, the top 2 in the field. Even though consumers and shareholders have already viewed the firm as an industry leader, the CIO still pushed for digital transition given the market forces. Previously, their business model made heavy use of insurance agents to quote and sell coverage. This took consumers about a week or even more to sign a new contract. Yet, noticing that consumers nowadays much prefer getting insurance quotes and signing up for coverage online by themselves without any help from a single agent. That's the situation.

The CIO has decided to digitize their business processes.

The changes he made empowered this business to quickly adapt to customer behavior which is changing very quickly and gain a competitive edge over rivals.

Therefore, we can see that the CIO's leadership in driving digital transformation and evolution toward an agile enterprise is giving the business an avenue to recover lost ground and also expand its future competitiveness.

**Jewel:** Thank you for your real case study, it's really helpful for us to really understand how the actual business, in this case, the leading insurance company, works, and their mindset in reality. So lastly, for the audience who listens to this podcast, do you have any tips to bring Agile to the broader organization?





**Luong To:** There are many different paths to enterprise agility. Some organizations were born agile already — they use an agile operating model from the start. As for others, successful agile transformations need strong and aligned leadership from the top - with the right direction. The most important thing to going Agile is to train executives, managers, and leaders beforehand. Also, they have to clearly identify their value streams and the Agile Release Trains.

The idea of an undefined destination can be frightening but fully committing to agile transformation despite setbacks is critical not only for transformation success but also for the business's continued survival.

**Jewel:** Thank you Mr. Luong for today's talk, it's a great opportunity to discuss with you. For the audience, I hope that the following tips and strategies will help you along the way, greatly increasing the likelihood that your organization will successfully transition to SAFe.

**Luong To:** Thank you, Jewel, thank you everyone, and Tech on Mic for having me here.

**Jewel:** Guys, you've been listening to Tech On Mic, an original podcast from KMS Solutions. I'm Jewel. Thanks for listening. If you liked what you heard, leave a review on our channels, and don't forget to subscribe so you never miss an episode. This week's episode was all about The CIO's Approach to Drive Digital Acceleration Using Scaled Agile Models. For more information about Digital Transformation for Enterprise, visit [kms-solutions.asia](https://kms-solutions.asia) to learn more. Thank you and see you again.



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digital acceleration using

## Scaled Agile Model



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KMS Solutions is a member of KMS Group, specializing in consulting and providing modern and advanced technology solutions to digitalize business, optimize business operations, improve competitiveness and grow sustainability in the digital age.

Through its global reach and strategic partnerships with many of the world's leading technology companies such as GoodData, Katalon, Mambu, Kuliza, Airome, Scaled Agile,... KMS helps develop, deploy, integrate, optimize and operate solutions according to international quality standards. KMS Solutions' success is ultimately measured by the positive impact that it makes on the client's business

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