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Cross-functional Identity? The Impact of Scaled-agile Organizations' Transformation Processes on Professional Role Identity

Research-in-Progress Paper

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Abstract

Within the ever-faster changing digitalized world, organizational work models constantly evolve towards increased agility to ensure innovation and competitive performance. Initially, agile methods were designed for small teams to develop software products. However, the focus has shifted towards combining and strategically expanding agile teams into scaled-agile organizations (SAOs). Traditionally, individuals' role perception was highly dependent on hierarchical structures. However, when a new organizational model is implemented, hierarchical roles and structures change. To understand how the transformation into SAOs affects individuals' professional role identity (PRI) and how they reconstruct their PRI in SAOs, we conduct a qualitative case study with employees holding various positions in SAOs. Our work contributes to the literature by providing insights into individuals' opportunities and challenges within SAO transformation processes. Our preliminary findings indicate PRI changes from team-based to product-based PRIs as a reaction to the (novel) cross-functional SAO structure. However, if the transformation is involuntary we see inherent role conflicts, identity losses, and the occurrence of agile silos as employees try to retain their previous PRIs.

Keywords: Agile Transformation, Professional Role Identity, Scaled-agile Organizations