

Agile change: Start small, learn fast, then scale up

Adaptive module

~20 min

The large eighteen-month transformation plan often loses momentum before it delivers on its promises. This module sets out a different approach in three moves: start small (a volunteer pilot group, a short sprint, a measurable goal), learn and adjust every week, then expand without forcing it. It adds two lessons: being ready to reverse course when the signals call for it, as Klarna did publicly, and pacing the change, one priority transformation at a time.

— LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Start small: a single priority, a pilot group of three to five volunteers, a two- to four-week sprint, a measurable goal.
- 02 Adjust continuously through the weekly retrospective: what worked, what got in the way, what to change.
- 03 Expand and anchor: document what was learned, turn the pilot team into trainers, and build the practices into ongoing rituals.
- 04 Pace transformations: one priority at a time, a pause between two cycles, and the right to say “not now”.

— WHO IT'S FOR

Managers and teams who want to transform the way they work through small steps that work.

- **Prerequisite:** none

— HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

— ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Agile change in three moves (start small, learn and adjust, expand and anchor) – Afthonios method, building on classic agile methods
- Pilot group / short sprint / weekly retrospective – classic agile vocabulary (from Scrum)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Klarna – in 2024, an AI assistant (developed with OpenAI) handled two-thirds of customer service conversations in its first month; the approach was adjusted in 2025 for complex cases
- ING – since 2015, reorganization of about 3,500 employees into self-organizing teams, studied by McKinsey as a benchmark case of large-scale agile transformation
- Stouten, Rousseau & De Cremer (2018) – review of the success factors in organizational change
- William Bridges – the three stages of transition people go through during change