Leadership Coaching Scenarios

1. Team managers are "swooping in" to their respective teams each time they (the team) encounter a critical problem. They keep taking the problem solving and accountability from the team and you can see the morale, ownership and empowerment waning across all of the teams. As their coach, how would you respond? What if one particular manager, very senior, experienced and respected, simply isn't responding to your coaching.
    a. *What would you do as far as "next steps"?*

2. After the last Sprint Review the VP of Development stopped you and inquired about being "truthful" in providing demo feedback. It seems that they use a Fist of Five as a feedback technique and she "voted" a 5 for all of the teams. But the reality was she thought it was 2 or even 1. She's looking to you to convey her overall "true feedback" to the teams in their retrospectives.
    a. *As her coach, how do you respond?*

3. You observed the Chief Product Owner influencing estimates on more than one Backlog Refinement session. The "good news" is that she is very interested and engaged in these team meetings. The "bad news" is that she is influencing the estimates, and more importantly, the conversations. You've brought this to her attention several times before, but the behavior if anything has gotten worse.
    a. *As an organizational agile coach, how would you approach this with her?*

4. You're meeting with a new client for the very first time. They give you a litany of current challenges that they believe "going Agile" will address for them. The biggest is getting more products to market faster. Their understanding actually shows an incredibly superficial and naïve understanding of agile methods and principles.
    a. *As their potential agile coach, how do you address this?*
    b. *Oh and BTW, there is the possibility of an incredible payday for you and your coaching firm…so don't "blow it"!*

5. You kicked off Agile / Scrum practices in your Toronto office. It was across a set of 6+ teams, including development, QA, design, BA, and DevOps. You thought it went very, very well as the teams started sprinting while you were in town. But you are now visiting after the first two sprints to "check up" on things. You just attended a team's standup and one engineer starts to "yell at" her manager to provide more help. After checking-in with the "managers", you find out that they are deferring everything to the "self-directed teams". Meaning, they weren't leading at all.
    a. *As their coach, how would you handle this? Oh, and keep in mind this is a remote team that you'll only be around ~ 20% of the time.*

6. You've been coaching at your client for a number of sprints/weeks. You've noticed a horrible pattern where members of the senior staff interrupt individual team members with emergency customer requests or repairs. What's insidious is that the entire culture is tolerant of this behavior, so the teams, Product Owners, and Scrum Master simply acquiesce to it. But on the flip side, these very leaders berate the teams for missing their sprint goals and commitments in the sprint demos.
    a. *From your coaching perspective, how would you handle this?*

7. You had advised the company's PMO of a set of "effective Agile Metrics" to use. They seemed to be open-minded to reducing the KPI's and refocusing them more towards agile-centric metrics. However, they just sent an email out to the entire company reaffirming the same project centric metrics that they've always managed to. You know this will have a detrimental effect on the teams AND on the progress the agile

transformation is making. But at the same time, the PMO is only acting "for" the senior leadership team and what they want to track on the portfolio dashboards.

   a. *How would you handle this as a coach?*

8. We all know that a Scrum Masters job is to put themselves "out of a job". That same criteria applies to agile coaches. You've felt that your coaching influence at your current client has "run its course". Your ability to influence things in the beginning was strong. However, of late, you (and the organization) seem to be going "through the motions". You've even heard this from a wide variety of leaders and team members. You have at least 6 months left on your contract.

   a. *Do you "ride it out" or do you have a conversation?*
   b. *Do you leave? Or reframe your focus?*
   c. *And who/how would this conversation occur?*

9. When you joined this organization as an agile coach, you were impressed with their focus on team members, creativity, and innovation. They really seemed to want to <u>activate</u> their teams. However, as you've "peeled the onion" in gaining experience, you've realized that those aspects are solely focused on managers and team leaders around and within the teams. "Average" team members don't really get a chance to offer their perspectives. And this seems to be across the entire 150 Scrum team organization. Not only is this impacting overall innovation and risk-taking, but its hindering the agile transformation too.

   a. *As their "head coach", how & when do you bring this up to the Agile Steering group?*

10. You had hoped that your coaching managers and senior managers would begin to start seeping back down in the culture. That is, as the leaders began to understand agile principles more, their behavior would change and they'd begin to coach their teams towards solid agile principles. In other words, they'd start to "walk their talk". However, only about 10-15% of the managers are actually helping the transformation. The others seem to be resisting the agile effort and perhaps 20% are even undermining it. You are personally aware of 3 managers in the latter category.

   a. *As their coach, how would you approach the organization-wide challenge?*
   b. *And how would you handle the individual managers?*

11. Your key leadership sponsor pulls you aside and tells you that they are a little unsettled with your coaching style and more importantly the lack of results. She explains that of the 20+ teams in the organization, only 3 have consistent and increasing velocity. These same 3 teams seem to be working the hardest as well. She' challenging you that you only have 2-3 more sprints to get the remaining 15+ teams "up-to-speed" with the other teams or else they'll have to find a coach who can driver the results they (the senior leadership team) are after.

   a. *How do you handle your response?*
   b. *And what would be any follow-up coaching (or discussions) that you would consider?*

12. You've been engaged by a brand-new client who is about to dip their toes in the agile waters. You're fairly excited about this greenfield opportunity. However, they've asked you to tell them what flavor of agile to leverage and to be very specific about the individual practices. Basically, they're expecting you to be the Oracle of Agility in setting things up. And they want them setup soon. One challenge is that everyone on the staff has different agile experiences and opinions about what is "right". You're finding the going tough to recommend something that will align with the needs and the masses

   a. *As the Coach – Oracle, how would you approach establishing a core definition of agility for the organization? Think in terms of downward, outward, and upward coaching; what would each of those conversations look like?*
   b. *What if the first thing they want to do is (1) bring in Rally as a tool and (2) install SAFe as the scaling framework? Oh and BTW: they've had presentation from the vendors and pressure is building. Oh and 5 of the senior executives have attended a 1-day SAFe leadership class AND they're excited.*