# Interview with De Baak - Sjors Meekels

**Being a manager-freak does not necessarily change while working Agile.**

### Daily planking to ensure short and concise sessions

I am now in an environment where we need to work with several teams simultaneously. In order to let people interact in another way, among others, I organize boot camps. Working out together; that is an excellent way to get to know each other better. It is team transient and it creates short lines. If you also know people from a different setting, it will make a difference than just passing the office. In addition, I have also seen organizations where they do the daily stand-up in the planking pose. Be sure that it helps keep things short and concise.

### Working Agile won't solve all problems, it does make them very visible though

I have been enthusiastic about working with agile teams and organizations for years. Being part of the IT side of an organization, you know how difficult it is to build things well and, on the other hand, to build the right things. The faster the uncertainties and problems that clutter the process are made clear, the better it is for everyone.

Sometimes you see new management that thinks 'that's a great method that will solve a lot of things for us', they are wrong. Agile does not solve organizational problems. It will help, but the problems themselves are not resolved. The problems are systematically and quickly made visible.

### Trust is an important bottleneck in transitions

An important bottleneck in an Agile transition is to keep everything controlled. One of the values of Agile is to make teams responsible and in control. Make them self-organizing to solve problems and do everything needed to become successful. This requires trust from managers and the room to fail. Sometimes this proves to be hard, it is not how we are used to run companies or departments. For all distinct roles we had people, procedures and guidelines. To overcome this, is a major challenge for a lot of organizations.

### Don't envy a Product Owner's position

The Product Owner is the one who determines what is being build and in which order. He also ensures that stakeholders are involved continuously. It is a crucial role. The Product Owner must act in a field with many different interests, multiple stakeholders and many different priorities.

Classic is the contradiction between developing new customer demands versus upgrades or maintenance of systems. New opportunities then collide with the continuity of the systems. So, you'll have to be an excellent Product Owner with a good vision of what is best for the company. 'Quick wins' and stability of the system should be considered. That is an unfortunate position! A product owner must act as a small entrepreneur and be daring. In my opinion, this is the most critical role in an Agile environment. The Product Owner is the one controlling flame or fame.

### Cross team knowledge sharing: Lunch pitches

Also within an Agile context knowledge sharing will not happen on its own. If a team has gained

brilliant insights, as an organization you'll want other teams to learn from it. At one organization, we actively went shopping at the teams. If you have something you would like to share, please let us know, we will schedule it. We made sure that were no blockers: at lunch time! There are always a few first movers who will stand up: I have something to share. "

**Does Agile impact the way we communicate?**
Communication per se? I do not see that would be very different if you work agile. If you were a freak in the old organization, you could be very well be one the agile organization.

**About this interview**

This interview was originally in Dutch and held for De Baak, in case you're interested: inteview. De Baak is one of Hollands leading firms when it comes to education on topics as management and leadership. More information about De Baak can be found here: www.debaak.nl. Any faults in the translation can only be my mistake…