



Why Product Operating Models Are on the Rise —and How They Align with SAFe



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With a passion for sustainable change, I've helped organizations ranging from Fortune 10 companies to U.S. government agencies achieve greater business agility. Over the years, I've served as a business leader, executive consultant, speaker, mentor, advisor, and SAFe® contributor—and I remain an active member of the SAFe community.

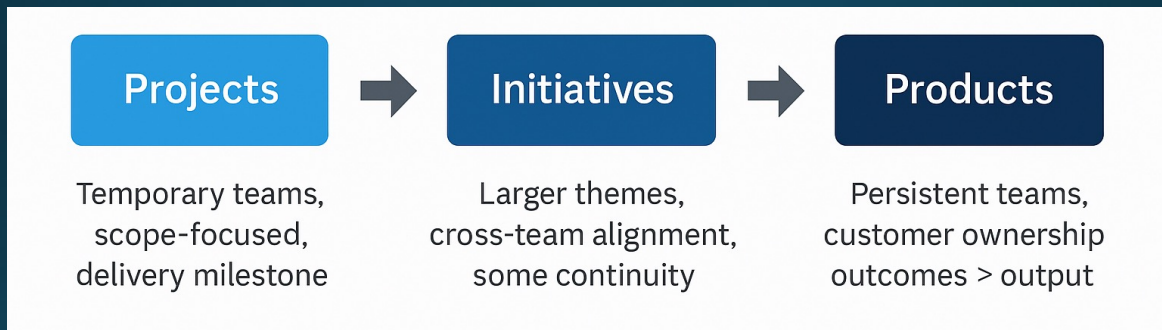
My Lean-Agile journey began as an internal change agent in 2009, and I started working with SAFe in 2013. Being part of this community has played a huge role in my ability to support others on their journey. In 2014, I launched the Scaled Agile DFW Meetup, and I'm proud to say we just celebrated our 10-year anniversary this month.

I live in McKinney, Texas with my wife, daughter, a poorly coordinated cat, and a frequently grumpy chihuahua.



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Why This Topic Matters



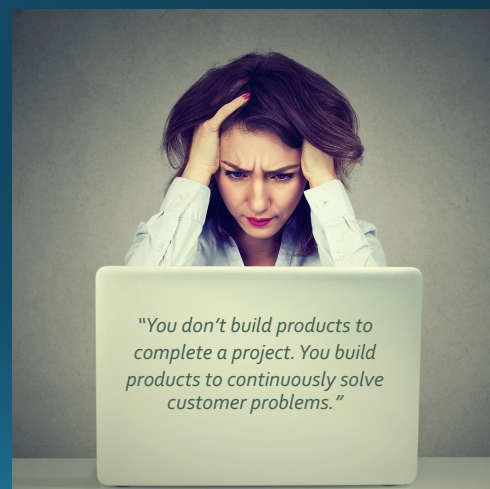
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What You'll Get From This Session



- A shared understanding of what a Product Operating Model is
- Clarity on why organizations are making the shift
- Insight into how SAFe supports and connects with POM thinking
- Confidence to engage in product-focused conversations



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Connection Points Between POM and SAFe



- A way of working built around long-lived product teams
- Shifts focus from projects to persistent customer value
- Emphasizes outcomes, ownership, and flow
- Aligns teams to business and customer problems—not departments

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Why POM: SVPG's View



It's about product thinking and a mindset shift

- Project teams deliver output—product teams deliver outcomes
- Roadmaps are guesses without problem validation
- Teams lack context, autonomy, and ownership
- Innovation requires space to discover, not just execute

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Why POM: McKinsey's View



It's about organizational change across many dimensions

- Project delivery models are too slow for dynamic strategy
- Siloed org structures limit speed, alignment, and innovation
- Annual funding cycles constrain adaptability
- Product models require rethinking org design, governance, and mindset
- Structural change is necessary to realize the full benefits

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Why POM: SAFe's View



It's about leveraging the framework to work with Product Operating Models—not against them

- SAFe emphasizes value streams, persistent teams, and flow of value
- Product strategy, discovery, and delivery all have analogs in SAFe
- Lean Portfolio Management supports strategic alignment and funding
- SAFe roles and practices can flex to fit product-aligned orgs
- Product models and SAFe share a customer- and outcome-driven mindset

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What Enables the Product Model at Scale?



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Where Does SAFe Fit?

SAFe provides patterns that support product thinking at scale. It

- SAFe aligns teams to value streams—like product models align to outcomes
- Agile Release Trains (ARTs) can map to product groups or customer journeys
- Lean Portfolio Management enables product-centric funding and governance
- Shared focus on customer centricity, flow, and relentless improvement

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SAFe's Perspective on the Product Operating Model



•These concepts originated with SVPG and are now supported in SAFe guidance.”

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Connection Points Between POM and SAFe

SAFe and the Product Operating Model share more than just intent—they share practical connection points you can use today.

- Shared focus on flow, feedback, and customer value
- Product Teams ≈ Agile Teams and ARTs
- Product Strategy ≈ Strategic Themes, OKRs, Portfolio Vision
- Product Discovery ≈ Continuous Exploration and Design Thinking
- Product Delivery ≈ DevOps, Agile Release Trains, PI Planning
- Product Culture ≈ SAFe Core Values, Leadership Development, Lean-Agile Mindset

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Wrap-Up and Key Takeaways



- Product Operating Models are gaining traction across industries
- SVPG, McKinsey, and SAFe all emphasize outcomes, ownership, and flow
- SAFe provides patterns and disciplines that support product thinking
- You don't have to choose—POM and SAFe can work together
- Clarity, flexibility, and leadership alignment are key to success

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Question and Discussion



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Learn More



Download Scaled Agile Inc's Executive Guide, "The Product Operating Model at Scale"

- <https://scaledagile.com/resources/product-operating-model-executivebrief/>

Read SVPG's "Product Model Concepts" article:

- <https://www.svpg.com/product-model-concepts/>

Read McKinsey's "bottom-line benefit of the product operating model" article:

- <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/the-bottom-line-benefit-of-the-product-operating-model>

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Thank you!

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