



The Human Agile Model

Specification Document

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1. Abstract

The Human Agile Model is an operating overlay for organization transformation when programmes perform on dashboards but break people in the building. Agile without AI is incomplete. AI without agile discipline is incompetent. Human is the architecture. Adapt, Implement, and Scale only run when the human gate passes.

The model is proposed by Anjish Bhondwe from field work across federated organisations. It is jurisdiction-neutral and applies to private, public, and multi-country transformation. It is not a replacement for Scrum, SAFe, or scaling frameworks. It is a human-focus lens and a sequence of moves run before and during adoption, embeddable in existing operating models and aligned with Agile and responsible AI standards where organizations require them.

2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Human Agile	An organizational state where receiver, deliverer, and changer are in the design of agile change; agility is practiced with humans inside, not performed for dashboards.
Dark Agile	Agility performed for dashboards, not practiced with humans inside. Speed, competition, and programme timelines turn agile into an instrument. Burnout, silence in retros, and attrition are treated as individual failure, not design failure.
Forced agile	Transformation dictated by budget and timeline. Adoption pushed without agency. Deliverers carry the programme on top of the day job.
Fake agile	Ceremony and reporting without human practice. Teams comply in meetings and reject the system in the room.
Dark AI	AI performed for board slides and efficiency metrics, not practiced with humans inside. Headcount reduction treated as success while deliverers absorb the risk.
Forced AI	AI adoption dictated by mandate and timeline. Copilot licenses rolled out without training, safety review, or agency.
Fake AI	AI theater without human practice. Prompt templates and usage quotas without skill building or honest feedback loops.
Transformation tabernacle	The combined agile and AI transformation enterprises run today. Adapt, implement, and scale under one roof. Under scrutiny because the human factor is at the core. Average impact so far is negative for humans, not for industries.
With human, for human	The design ethic of this model. With human: co-design with receiver, deliverer, and changer; agency and honest signal in the room. For human: subtract harm, protect deliverers, scale that keeps people who made it work.
Human gate	A checkpoint of five questions that must be answered affirmatively before Adapt, Implement, or Scale runs. If the answer is no, stop adding process.
Receiver	Customers, users, downstream teams, and business units asked to adopt change. Back in the journey, not an afterthought.
Deliverer	Engineers, product teams, and operators carrying the day job plus the transformation. Back in the room, not on a velocity chart.
Changer	Leaders, coaches, enablement, HR, and programme offices. Their behavior is part of the design, not above it.
Four moves	Human (see reality), Adapt (strip harm), Implement (co-build), Scale (re-humanize). A cycle re-run as pressure returns, not a waterfall rollout.
Operating rules	Five commitments that hold the model: encourage before push; subtract before add; learn do not judge; leaders enable; re-check at scale.
Human Agile Index	A diagnostic of eight questions measuring human practice in agile adoption. Score bands: Dark Agile (0–40%), Transitional (41–70%), Human Agile (71–100%).

3. Premise and problem

Premise: Organizations are made of humans who receive change, deliver through it, and change because of it. Enterprise rollouts treat them as headcount while agile and AI transform together under scrutiny and governance. The Human Agile Model puts them back at the center of design.

Problem: Dark Agile and Dark AI break people to hit dates and adoption targets. Industries report progress. Humans report strain. Human Agile builds with them to last.

What this model is not: Not a rollout timeline. Not a consultancy product. Not a replacement for existing frameworks. Not agile alone or AI alone.

4. Agile foundation

The Agile Manifesto (2001) lists individuals and interactions over processes and tools first. Working software is proof that humans collaborate well, not a substitute for putting them in the design.

Enterprise drift:

1. Customer-centric: agile sold as customer focus
2. Product-centric: velocity, dashboards, people as numbers
3. AI-centric: automation metrics, compliance, headcount targets
4. Human-centric: correction. Who receives, who builds, who changes

Transformation tabernacle: Agile and AI adoption run together. Incomplete without each other. Under heavy scrutiny because the human factor is at the core. Socio-technical tension rises when the social system is underfunded while industries look fine on scorecards.

Design order: Human is the architecture. Product and delivery are evidence that the architecture works. Product tells you what shipped. Human tells you whether it will last.

Human focus from two foundations: The Agile Manifesto (2001) puts individuals and interactions before processes and tools. Responsible AI governance, as privacy professionals track through IAPP across OECD, EU HLEG, UNESCO, and privacy law, converges on human oversight, human values, fairness, accountability, transparency, and privacy. The Human Agile Model holds both reads at the human gate: Adapt, Implement, and Scale run only when the people carrying agile and AI change are in the design.

Figure HF-1 (research diagram): Published at agilefragile.com/model.html#figure-hf-1. Original artwork copyright © 2026 Anjish Bhondwe. Download: agilefragile.com/downloads/human-focus-foundations-figure.pdf (PDF), .png, or .svg. Research reproduction permitted with attribution. Commercial use requires written permission.

5. Model architecture



The published diagram uses a black panel with a human figure at the center and outlined move cards below. See agilefragile.com/model.html#model-architecture.

Roles:

- **Receiver:** customers, users, downstream teams, adopting business units
 - **Deliverer:** engineers, product teams, operators
 - **Changer:** leaders, coaches, enablement, HR, programme offices
-

6. The human gate

No move runs until people are in the design, not on the receiving end of a timeline.

1. Are the people who will receive and deliver this change in the room when it is designed?
2. Is agile being built with teams, or pushed on a programme schedule?
3. Can teams reject ceremony that does not help?
4. Are dashboards for learning, or for judgment?

5. When honest feedback surfaces in a retro, is it heard or punished?

7. The four moves (full specification)

Move 1: Human: see reality

Purpose: Name who is hurting, excluded, or about to be pushed. Encourage before you push. No framework shopping yet.

Activities:

- Run the Human Agile Index with leaders and teams
- Listen for what dashboards hide: fear, overload, performative agility
- Map receivers, deliverers, and changers for this rollout

Outputs:

- Named pain and blind spots
- Baseline Index score (Dark / Transitional / Human Agile)
- Agreement on who must be in the room from here

Gate question: Will leadership hear unfiltered signal from people?

Move 2: Adapt: strip harm

Purpose: Figure out what is actually broken here, not what the playbook says. Subtract Dark Agile theater before adding anything new.

Activities:

- Audit ceremony load on top of the day job
- Reset leader behavior: enable, do not hover
- Define what human agile means in your federated context

Outputs:

- List of practices removed or simplified
- Leader commitments on psychological safety
- Local working agreement teams can keep

Gate question: Can teams reject what does not help without career risk?

Move 3: Implement: co-build

Purpose: Build change with the teams in the room. Leaders help. They do not track. Receiver and deliverer both shape the design.

Activities:

- Co-design rituals and flows with delivery teams
- Shift dashboards from judgment to learning signals
- Train for understanding, not checkbox compliance

Outputs:

- Practices teams chose and can sustain
- Visible leader enablement, less programme surveillance
- Retro formats where honesty is safe

Gate question: Is the change built with people, not done to them?

Move 4: Scale: re-humanize

Purpose: Grow across business units without losing the people who made it work. Each new rollout re-opens the human gate.

Activities:

- Spread patterns, not performative copies of what looked good on slides
- Re-run the Index as budgets tighten and speed returns
- Keep community and peer space for honest conversation

Outputs:

- Federated playbook with human checkpoints built in
- Rhythm for re-checking the Index at each unit
- Attrition and engagement watched as design signals

Gate question: Are the people who made it work still in the design?

8. Operating rules

1. **Encourage before you push:** Change earns trust. Timelines do not replace it.
 2. **Subtract before you add:** Strip theater, surveillance, and harm before scaling ceremony.
 3. **Learn, do not judge:** Dashboards surface signal for adaptation, not punishment.
 4. **Leaders enable:** Sponsors in the room. Not hovering above the retro.
 5. **Re-check at scale:** Every new rollout passes the human gate again.
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9. Human Agile Index (diagnostic specification)

Method: Eight questions. Each scored 0–3. Maximum raw score: 24. Percentage = $(\text{sum} \div 24) \times 100$, rounded.

Questions:

1. Are people in the room when agile change is designed? (Rarely / Sometimes / Usually / Always)
2. Is agile built with teams, or pushed on a timeline? (Pushed → Built with)
3. Do people feel valued in the transformation? (No → Most)
4. Are dashboards for learning or judgment? (Judgment → Learning)
5. Is burnout a design problem or a people problem? (People → Design)
6. Can teams reject ceremony that does not help? (No → Yes)
7. Do leaders enable teams or track and report? (Track → Enable)
8. Does agile work for your people, not against them? (Against → For them)

Score bands:

- **0–40%: Dark Agile:** Agility performed for dashboards. People paying the price.
- **41–70%: Transitional:** Human not forgotten, but delivery pressure still breaks people in places.
- **71–100%: Human Agile:** Humans in the design. Product outcomes can last.

Note: The Index measures human practice only. No velocity, roadmap, or delivery KPIs. A high delivery score with a low human score is still Dark Agile.

10. Dark Agile vs Human Agile

Dark Agile	Human Agile
Headcount, not humans	Receiver, deliverer, changer in the design
Framework bought before people consulted	Built with people, not rolled out at them
Dashboards that judge	Dashboards for learning
Retros for tracking	Retros where honesty is safe
Burnout is your problem	Burnout is a design signal
Best people quietly leave	Scale keeps the people who made it work

11. Application

1. **Diagnose:** Take the Human Agile Index
2. **Read the story:** Field notes on how enterprise agile lost the humans (agilefragile.com/about.html)
3. **Walk the moves:** Run the four-move cycle in transformation reviews
4. **React:** Share what resonates on the proposal page

12. With human, for human

With human: Receiver, deliverer, and changer co-design agile and AI change. Agency in the room. Honest feedback treated as learning signal, not programme disloyalty.

For human: Subtract harm before adding process. Burnout read as design failure. Scale only when the human gate passes. Outcomes must protect the people who will carry the next wave.

This ethic aligns the model with human-centered design practice and socio-technical systems research: technical and social systems designed together, with humans inside the transformation, not on the receiving end of it.

13. Research and expert foundations

Source	Guideline	Model application
Socio-technical systems	Technical and social systems must be jointly optimized	Transformation tabernacle, human gate, strain charts
Agile Manifesto (2001)	Individuals and interactions first	Human as architecture
Responsible AI principles (IAPP maps OECD, EU HLEG, privacy law)	Human oversight, human values, fairness, accountability	Human gate, Dark AI patterns, AI strain charts
Amy Edmondson	Psychological safety for speaking up	Human gate Q5, operating rules, Index
Edgar Schein	Leaders create culture	Changer role, leaders enable rule
Alistair Cockburn	People as first-order success driver	Receiver, deliverer, changer; Adapt before Implement
Ron Jeffries	Dark patterns oppress developers	Dark Agile, Dark AI, burnout as design signal
Human-centered design	Involve affected people in design; iterate on harm	Human move, four-move cycle, Index, re-check at scale

Full web version with advocate quotes: agilefragile.com/model.html#research-foundation

14. Industry proposal

A five-step adoption path for enterprises, assessors, and research partners:

1. **Name the tabernacle:** Acknowledge agile and AI change run together under scrutiny.
2. **Diagnose human practice:** Run the Human Agile Index with leaders and teams.
3. **Pass the human gate:** Five checkpoint questions before Adapt, Implement, or Scale.
4. **Run the four moves:** Human, Adapt, Implement, Scale as a cycle.
5. **Re-check at scale:** Every new wave passes the human gate again.

Partnership and licensing for research pilots and audit use: agilefragile.com/downloads/partnership-and-licensing.pdf

Proposal page: agilefragile.com/how-we-work.html#industry-adoption

15. Worldwide applicability

The Human Agile Model is designed for worldwide reference in organization transformation.

Generic scope. Receiver, deliverer, and changer describe any organization where humans carry change: software delivery, shared services, public agencies, banks, retailers, and federated enterprises. The human gate, four moves, operating rules, and Index do not depend on one industry, country, or scaling framework.

Jurisdiction-neutral. The model aligns with global Agile and responsible AI standards (section 16) without prescribing local law. Sponsors map the human gate and Index to their own regulatory context.

Teachable core. Like Scrum or SAFe, the model keeps a small set anyone can learn in a workshop: five gate questions, four moves, five operating rules, and eight Index questions.

Field basis. Interviews that shaped the model ran across telecom, financial services, retail, and technology. The specification is published for adoption, research citation, and licensed embedding worldwide.

16. Standards alignment

The Human Agile Model is a unique human-focus overlay. It does not certify conformance to external standards. It gives transformation sponsors a practical way to show how their programme meets Agile delivery ethics and responsible AI requirements through the human gate, four moves, Index, and operating rules.

Standard / framework	Core requirement	Human Agile Model application
Agile Manifesto (2001)	Individuals and interactions over processes and tools	Human as architecture; human gate before Adapt, Implement, Scale
Scrum Guide	Empiricism, respect, openness, courage, focus, commitment	Index and retros honesty; subtract before add; encourage before push
SAFe core values	Built-in quality, alignment, program execution, transparency	Human gate before scale; four moves in PI and transformation reviews
OECD AI Principles	Human-centred values, fairness, accountability, transparency	Receiver, deliverer, changer in design; Dark AI patterns; human gate
UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics	Human-centred approach to AI	With human, for human ethic; human focus at gate
EU AI Act (high-risk AI context)	Human oversight, transparency, accountability	Human gate Q1–Q5; changer role; re-check at scale before deployment waves
NIST AI RMF	Govern, Map, Measure, Manage	Human move (Map), Adapt/Implement (Manage), Scale with re-check (Govern cycle)
ISO/IEC 42001 (AI management systems)	AI MS with human oversight and stakeholder consideration	Embeddable layer in AI governance; human gate as oversight checkpoint
IAPP-mapped responsible AI	Human oversight, values, fairness, accountability, privacy	Figure HF-1 foundations; human gate; Index; Dark/forced/fake AI terms

Organizations subject to specific regulations remain responsible for their own compliance. This table shows alignment intent, not legal certification.

17. Embeddability in existing models

You do not replace Scrum, SAFe, ITIL, COBIT, or your transformation playbook. You embed the human-focus layer where change is designed and scaled.

Embed points:

- **Team level:** Sprint and PI retros (human gate Q5); backlog refinement (receiver and deliverer in the room); Index baseline
- **Programme level:** PI planning; transformation office reviews; four moves as a cycle on programme boards
- **Governance level:** AI governance and risk forums; human oversight before scale; Dark, forced, and fake AI alongside agile patterns
- **Operating model:** Human as architecture in capability maps; product and delivery as evidence the architecture holds

Licensed embedding. Agility assessors and transformation firms may embed the Human Agile Index and human gate under a non-exclusive license with attribution. See agilefragile.com/downloads/partnership-and-licensing.pdf.

Adoption rhythm: Index baseline → five gate questions → four-move cycle → re-check at every scale wave.

End of specification. Canonical web version: <https://agilefragile.com/model.html>