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Leader & follower role transition processes in agile teams

Examiner: Prof. Dr. Claudia Peus
Chair of Research and Science Management

Person in Support: Dipl.-Psych. Ulf Steinberg (TUM)
Hanna Skorczynska Sznajder (UPV)

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Admón. y Dirección de Empresas (UPV)

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Author: Andrés Crespo Dualde

ERT: Facultat de ADE, UPV

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the emergence and the different transition processes between leader and follower roles in start-up companies that use the agile methodology. In order to do this, it identifies the roles that fit into the description of a leader or a follower. A qualitative multiple case study research design is used. The sample includes individuals working in start-up companies who use an agile methodology. Data were collected in individual semi-structured interviews and analysed using an open coding system. Several open questions which were aligned with the theoretical framework were proposed. Results, which are also discussed with previous research findings, showed that, contrary to what some literature suggests, leader and follower roles do exist in agile companies and role transition processes are influenced by a variety of factors including experience, educational background and age. In light of these findings, it is concluded that a deeper understanding of the transition processes in start-up businesses should be studied in more detail in the future. Future research directions are also suggested in this study.

Keywords: roles; role transition processes; agile methodology; agile teams; start-ups.

1. PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION

This paper studies the emergence of leader and follower roles and the transition processes among them in start-ups that use agile methodologies.

Emergence and proliferation have been identified as prominent features of roles in today's society (Ritzer, 1996). In this context, Richter (1984) previously defined role transitions as the movement between roles, which include role exit and role entry. However, there is an interesting practical problem, since it is important to highlight the potential contradiction between role emergence and proliferation and the start-up businesses which use the agile methodology, since this methodology is characterized by the existence of few roles (Cervone, 2011). In addition, this paper also aims to research on the possible existence of a leader figure in start-ups' agile teams.

The initial position of this study considers role transition processes, start-ups, and agile methodologies. In the next paragraphs, some of the most relevant studies in these fields will also be introduced.

Role transition processes take place throughout our everyday life, and they are increasingly becoming a main feature of our social skills (Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). Two types of role transitions have been distinguished. "Micro" transitions, which are "frequent and usually recurrent" (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472) and "macro" transitions, which, on the contrary, are defined as "infrequent and often permanent changes" (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472). This paper will focus on "micro" transitions, which will be studied in the contexts of agile methodology and start-ups.

Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 474) also mentioned "flexibility" and "permeability" as the "key concepts affecting the process of micro role transitions". These authors defined flexibility, following Hall & Richter (1988), as "the degree to which the spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable" and permeability, following Pleck (1977) and Richter (1992), as "the degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviourally involved in another role" (Ashforth et al (2000, p. 474).

Both the start-up and the agile methodologies contexts have been chosen for this study, due to their relevance (Bjarnason, Wnuk, & Regnell, 2011; Sedláček, & Sterk, 2017).

Start-ups have been defined as new ventures which, from a role perspective, are often founded by entrepreneurs who are interested in the initial development of the business. However, they tend to have very limited managerial interests or capacities (Willard, Krueger, & Feeser, 1992). They have been proven to be a significant booster of a country's economy. Data from the European Commission's EU start-ups monitor supports that each start-up is, on average, planning to hire 7,5 new workers within the next 12 months. From these 7,5 new hires, an 87,3% are expected to be from the start-up's country of origin, according to the report (Mauer & Steigertahl, 2018).

Agile methodology creates an environment in which "teams place a heavy emphasis on collectively articulating their goals, frequently reflecting upon and adjusting work plans, facilitating authentic group interactions, improving team dynamics and encouraging experimentation and innovation" (Smith & Sidky, 2009, p. 292). However, the presence of a defined leader in these teams will be studied.

One of the beneficial aspects of the implementation of agile methodologies to a team's routines is mentioned by Rasnacis & Berzisa (2017, p. 49), who indicated that the "implementation of agile PM methodologies is related to improvement of development process: less bugs, faster delivery, more and effective communication, better quality, better risk analysis, less over costs etc." However, despite the relevance of the contexts mentioned above, no research studies have been found that investigate their relationships. Therefore, one of the questions that remain unanswered is the following: contrary to what Ritzer (1996) stated regarding role proliferation, agile teams include few roles, as mentioned above. Based on that scenario, the following research question will be addressed in this study: how does the emergence of leader and follower roles and the transition among them work in start-ups with agile teams?

The relevance of this research question lies in the proliferation of start-ups (Bjarnason et al. 2011), the increasing use of agile methodologies (Sedláček, & Sterk, 2017, and on the importance of role transitions in all business organisations (Ashforth et al., 2000) as well as on the relevance of the leader figure (Day, Gronn & Salas (2006).

2. THEORY

This section will be dedicated to the different central theoretical concepts used in this paper, to the three models that provide the appropriate framework to better structure and understand the study, and to the results provided by previous research on this field. It will also include the open questions drawn from this literature review.

2.1. Role transitions, scenarios and types of roles

Regarding the scenarios of role transitions and types of roles, Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 473) differentiated three “major domains of everyday role transitions”, which are the backgrounds or situations in which they take place. These domains are the following: work – home, which includes “commuting and home-based work”; work – work, which involves interaction between roles such as “subordinate, peer, superordinate...”, and work – 3rd place, which implies relations between work roles and other roles unrelated to the professional environment (clubs, bars...). The management of micro role transitions and the work–home boundary was studied by Fonner & Stache (2012). They analysed the cues and rituals home-based teleworkers use to facilitate transitions between work and home roles. They concluded that teleworkers primarily engage in strategies aimed at segmenting work from home roles.

This study will focus on the second domain (work – work), since the role transitions between leader and follower roles, are clearly represented when individuals switch between subordinate, peer or superordinate roles, among others. This role switching process has also been developed by the literature.

The process of “switching cognitive gears” has been also mentioned by Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 475) when referring to these role transitions between roles. This concept was previously introduced by Louis & Sutton (1991, p. 55), and defined as the mechanism by which an individual carries out the process of “disengaging psychologically from the identity implied by one role and reengaging in the dissimilar identity of a second role” (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 475).

Another important concept related to this study, is “vertical code-switching”. This was defined by Anicich & Hirsh (2017, p.659) as “the act of alternating between behavioural patterns that are directed toward higher-power and lower-power interaction partners”. They proposed that middle-power positions and mindsets would frequently lead to this act.

Within this context, Ashforth et al. (2000) identified two different types of roles, considering its role blurring level. First, the segmented roles, which “tend to be relatively impermeable, role occupants are less concerned with being distracted by cross-role interactions” and “the primary cost is in crossing role boundaries” whereas “the primary benefit is in creating and maintaining role boundaries” (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 477). Secondly, the integrated roles imply “that there are virtually no differences between roles – only “a single, all-purpose mentality, one way of being, one amorphous self””, as Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 479) defined, based on the work of Nippert-Eng (1996, p. 568).

The theoretical model on role transition processes for both segmented and integrated roles was proposed by Ashforth et al. (2000). This model is depicted in figures 1 and 2.

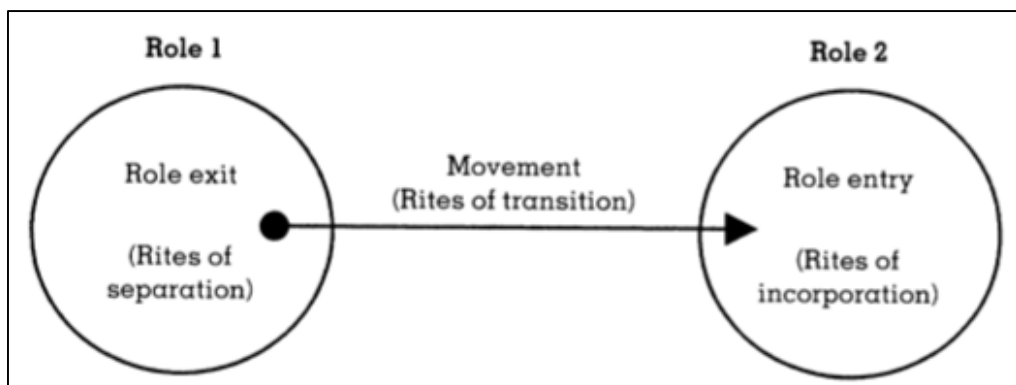


Fig 1. *The role transition process for segmented roles (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 478).*

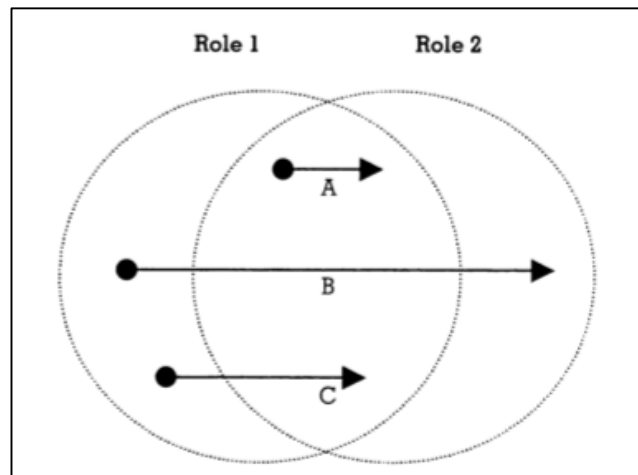


Fig 2. *The role transition process for integrated roles (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 480).*

The main problem statement of this study is related to the area of roles and role transitions, which has received considerable attention from the literature. Several studies have analysed role breadth (Parker, 1998), role boundaries (Ashford et al., 2000), and distinctions on role behaviours (Tepper, Lockhart, & Hoobler, 2001). Furthermore, Neale & Griffin (2006) developed a model of individual role perceptions and applied it to the problem of role transitions. The model was based on 3 components: system requirements, role-schemas, and role specific self-concept. They concluded that all of them influence behaviour on the job.

Considering the role transition processes context, another interesting area of research has been that dedicated to the study of mid-managers. Mid-managers are the individuals within a company's staff which would fit the described profile who experiences the most the emergence and role transition processes between leader and follower roles and have been defined by Harding, Lee & Ford (2014, p.1213) as the ones that “occupy a central position in organizational hierarchies, where they are responsible for implementing senior management plans by ensuring junior staff fulfil their roles”. In their study, Rouleau & Balogun (2011, p. 954) concluded that middle managers “lack the formal role authority held by their seniors to act strategically”.

From a perceptual perspective, the differences between the perceived behaviours of individuals who hold roles with more power and those who hold roles with less power were investigated by Anicich & Hirsh (2017). These authors concluded that “middle-power positions and mindsets lead to frequent vertical code-switching—the act of

alternating between behavioural patterns that are directed toward higher-power and lower-power interaction partners” (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017, p. 659). These authors also stated that “the concepts of “middleness” and code-switching are crucially intertwined” (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017, p. 663). The first concept is strictly related to the mid-manager one, which has been lately developed in this paper, and the second one could be related to the previously explained process of “switching cognitive gears”, developed by Ashforth et al (2000, p. 475) and Louis & Sutton (1991, p. 55).

It is also relevant to better understand the problem statement of this study to emphasise the scenario of employees playing several roles with simultaneous existence in a business. Anderson & Brion (2014) asked for a deeper understanding of this situation. They put the example of the simultaneous leader and follower role assumption who has a high-power role when it comes to his subordinates, but remains as a subordinate towards his own boss, by means of a low-power role. This low power role that the authors mention is the follower role will be studied in this thesis. Further issues such as the indicated by Ramarajan & Reid (2013, p. 622) who said that “we understand little about how people interpret and respond to different sorts of organizational/occupational pressures on their identities” will be covered. Among these organizational matters, hierarchy and team leadership, are considered very relevant to this study, and therefore will be developed in the next paragraphs.

Hierarchy and team leadership are two constructs that form the context to the main topic of this study, the role emergence and transition. However, due to their huge complexity and enormous dimension, only the relevant studies for this thesis will be mentioned. As Magee & Galinsky (2008, p. 352) stated: “hierarchy, in its various forms, is prevalent in so many groups and organizations that it appears to be one of the most fundamental features of social relations”. In addition, a specific aspect applicable to this study is the concept of informal hierarchy, introduced by Blau & Scott (1962) and lately developed by as Magee & Galinsky (2008), among others. Informal hierarchy has been defined as an “unofficial stratification among members of a social system because of conscious or unconscious social processes” (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011, p. 1516), and it is believed to be “created and maintained by powerful members” (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011, p. 1529).

Team leadership is also of particular interest for this study. Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam (2010) ensured that research around the term leadership has proliferated in the last years. Moreover, team leaders are believed to be the ones that generally manage events taking place in the context of a team (Morgeson, 2005; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006). Furthermore, considering as well that Day et al. (2006, p. 213) suggested that “team leadership as a discipline appears to be on the cusp of some truly significant breakthroughs”, we can perceive how authors support the importance of the figure of a leader.

2.2. Agile and Scrum methodologies

Within the agile methodology context, the Scrum framework has been defined by Schwaber & Beedle (2001, p. 33) as a strategy “to manage development projects through an iterative and incremental method”. According to Cockburn (2002) it consists of the development of a final output characterised by the following traits: a team of approximately 10 people that will define plans to obtain, as quickly and efficiently as possible, a specific output. Furthermore, the team will carry out short meetings on a continuous basis to test the results and provide feedback to the rest of the team members, to make the necessary adjustments in the process. This set of phases (planning, development, testing and reviewing) will be called sprints. Following several sprints, preliminary outputs will be progressively shaped to finally achieve the desired output. (Rising & Janoff, 2000).

Scrum is the variant of agile methodology which is studied in this thesis. A model for the Scrum methodology was developed by Schwaber (1997). The main stages which take place in the processes of the agile methodology mentioned by Cockburn (2002) and Rising & Janoff (2000) are illustrated in the model depicted on Figure 3.

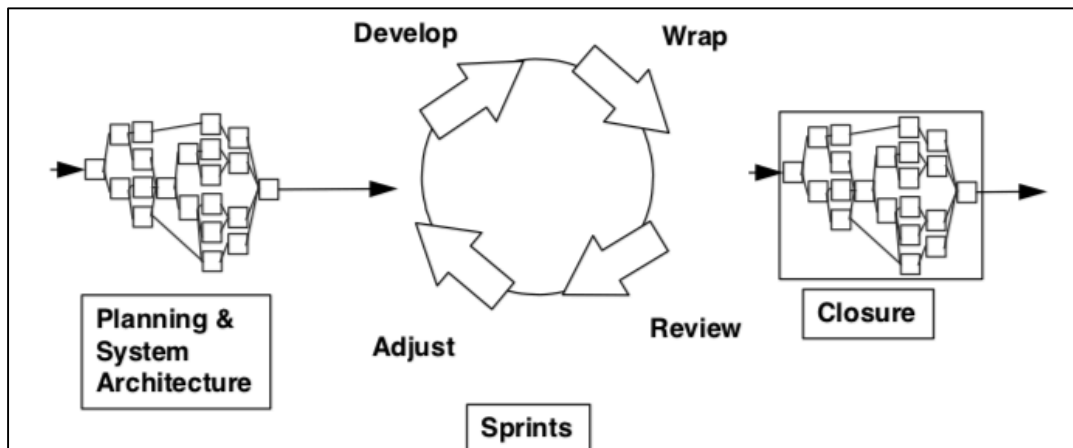


Fig 3. *Scrum Methodology (Schwaber, 1997, p. 10).*

For the purpose of our study, it is also relevant to emphasise the existence of several defined roles in agile teams. Cervone (2011) provided the following descriptions:

- Scrum master: this role would be the equivalent to a project manager. Scrum master's main tasks include executing Scrum values and dealing with difficulties in the overall development process.
- Scrum team: it is typically a multidisciplinary team which consists of a group of between five and ten people working only on a specific project. The Scrum team should be self-organizing, which commonly means that there is not a determined leadership role within the members of the team.
- Product owner role: performs as a manager whose main ability consists of noticing the necessary traits to develop and in which order for the outcome to be successful.

Regarding the leader and follower role emergence and transition processes in these teams, this author stated that “the team is self-organizing, which has been interpreted in various ways, but most often means that the leadership role within the team is not fixed and changes depending on the needs of the specific iteration (known as a sprint) in process at the time” (Cervone, 2011, p. 20). However, the present study will challenge this assumption since it is believed that, as it happens in all organisations, these roles are fixed (Morgeson & DeRue, 2006).

Surprisingly enough, the study of roles and leader conflicts in start-ups team that use agile methodology has not attracted much attention from researchers. In fact, as Abrahamsson, Warsta, Siponen, & Ronkainen (2003) stated, scientific research in this area is scarce. However, Shamir (1999, p. 49) stated the need of leaders to “serve simultaneously as both agents of change and “centers of gravity” in organizations that cope with rapidly changing environments”, such as the ones in which start ups use the agile methodology, as Smith & Sidky (2009) remarked. These leaders acting as “centers of gravity”, “provide the necessary integrative functions and endow collective action with a sense of meaning and purpose, [...] primarily through the consolidation of identities” (Shamir, 1999, p. 49).

The fact that this methodology has been widely applied among work teams all around the world supports our intention to base this research in the context of agile methodologies (Rasnacis & Berzisa, 2017).

As per the research setting of this paper, the start-ups businesses, the presence of an entrepreneurial role with limited resources that should adapt to the increasing complexity of the rapid growth of the company was identified by Willard et al. (1992) as one of its key characteristics. This feature is very relevant to this study.

2.3. Leaders’ motivational strategies

The role of leaders when motivating their employees is also relevant to this study due to its influence in role emergence and transitions. These leaders use two approaches, as identified by Berson, Halevy, Shamir and Erez (2015, p. 1): “vision communication”, which “involves formulating relatively abstract, far- reaching, and timeless messages”, and “effective goal setting”, which “involves formulating specific, challenging and time-constrained objectives”.

Regarding these strategies, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996, p. 37) had already mentioned that, “although visions and goals are similar in some respects [...], there are significant differences between them”, since “visions are general and are never fully achieved in practice ... whereas goals are specific and can be readily achieved”.

The model that illustrates the process which leaders adopt to motivate followers, as proposed by Berson et al. (2015), is depicted on Figure 4.

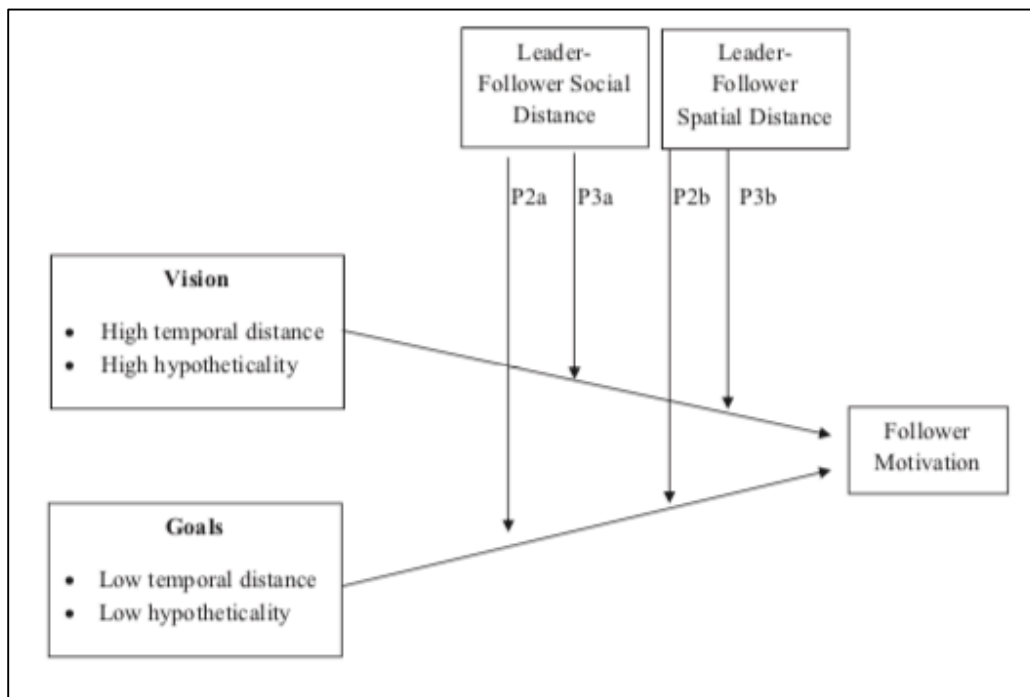


Fig 4. *Attaining construal fit: psychological distance moderates the effects of visions and goals on follower motivation (Berson, Halevy, Shamir & Erez, M., 2015, p. 3).*

The following table summarises some of the key concepts used in the study and the sources from which they have been obtained.

Table 1. Key concepts used in this study.

Key concepts		
Concept	Definition	Source
Role transitions	- The movement between roles, which include role exit and role entry	Richter (1984)
Types of role transitions	- “Micro” transitions: which are “frequent and usually recurrent”	(Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 472)
	- “Macro” transitions: which are “infrequent and often permanent changes”	
Concepts affecting micro role transitions	- Flexibility: “The degree to which the spatial and temporal boundaries are pliable”	Hall & Richter (1988)
	- Permeability: “The degree to which a role allows one to be physically located in the role’s domain but psychologically and/or behaviourally involved in another role” (Ashforth et al (2000, p. 474).	Pleck (1977) and Richter (1992)
Scenarios of role transitions	- Work – home: includes “commuting and home-based work”. - Work – work: involves interaction between roles such as “subordinate, peer, superordinate...”. - Work – 3 rd place: relations between work roles and other roles unrelated to the professional environment (clubs, bars...).	Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 473)
Switching cognitive gears	The mechanism by which an individual carries out the process of “disengaging psychologically from the identity implied by one role and reengaging in the dissimilar identity of a second role”	Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 475)
Role blurring level	Segmented roles: Roles that “tend to be relatively impermeable, role occupants are less concerned with being distracted by cross- role interactions” and “the primary cost is in crossing role boundaries” whereas “the primary benefit is in creating and maintaining role boundaries”.	(Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 477)
	Integrated roles: Roles in which “there are virtually no differences between roles – only “a single, all-purpose mentality, one way of being, one amorphous self”.	Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 479)
Mid-managers	Managers that “occupy a central position in organizational hierarchies, where they are responsible for implementing senior management plans by ensuring junior staff fulfil their roles”.	Harding et al. (2014, p.1213)
Vertical code-switching	“The act of alternating between behavioural patterns that are directed toward higher-power and lower-power interaction partners”.	Anicich & Hirsh (2017, p.659)
Start-ups	New ventures which, from a role perspective, are often founded by entrepreneurs who are interested in the initial development of the business. However, they tend to have very limited managerial interests or capacities.	Willard et al. (1992)
Scrum	An agile methodology “to manage development projects through an iterative and incremental method”	Schwaber & Beedle (2001, p. 33)
Leaders’ motivational approaches	- Vision communication: “involves formulating relatively abstract, far- reaching, and timeless messages”	Berson et al. (2015, p. 1)
	- Effective goal setting: “involves formulating specific, challenging and time-constrained objectives”.	

Based on the selected concepts and frameworks as well as the results collected from the literature review, this study proposes the following open questions:

- Question 1: How do agile start-up teams' members perceive role transition processes in their workplace?
- Question 2: How do agile start-up teams' members perceive the presence, if any, of leader and follower roles in their teams?

3. METHOD

3.1. Sample

The sample of this study is characterised as follows: a total of 12 team members of agile teams in start-ups., of whom 5 of them are females and 7 of them are males. The mean age is 26.25 years old, and all of them have secondary education. The mean number of years worked for their companies is 2.33 years. Their education level is the following: all of them have a Bachelor's degree with 7 of them having a Master's degree.

A specific start-ups' incubator who used the agile methodology was chosen in order to select the candidates for the interview, including different business sectors.

3.2. Research design

The research design of this study is based on a qualitative descriptive multiple case study.

A qualitative approach has been chosen since it has been considered by authors such as Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas (2013) to pursue the comprehension of a determined scenario by taking into account its main characters' experiences.

Neergaard, Olesen, Andersen & Sondergaard (2009) and Sandelowski (2000, 2010) have defined qualitative descriptive design as the one with less amount of theory in comparison

with other qualitative designs, enhancing flexibility and adaptation to the specific framework when carrying out the study.

3.3. Measurement of variables

The measurement of the data has been carried out by means of the open coding method, developed by Strauss (1987) and Lune & Berg (2016).

Open coding is characterized by a thorough analysis of the data source, which are the addressed interviews, “line by line, or even word by word” (Strauss, 1987, p. 28) in order to define codes, sub-categories and categories, in which the interviewees’ interventions will be classified, and analyse them, to reach clearly defined conclusions (Lune & Berg, 2016).

3.4. Data collection process

Data were collected using a survey specially developed for this study in order to apply the survey/qualitative design methodology.

Regarding the procedure of developing the guideline for the interviews, I followed the problem statement and the research question of the introduction, and the key concepts and models included in the theoretical framework of this paper. In this way, the obtained guideline for the interviews had a strong relation with the stated problem in the introduction, the research question and the literature in the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, the designed questions were neutral, open ended, and used a different terminology regarding the key concepts of the study, for the answers of the interviewees not to be shaped by the questions.

The guideline of the interview was meant to be flexible, in order to adapt it to the specific answers of each interviewee, by means of the addition and/or subtraction of sub-questions, related to the main ones initially designed. Therefore, I also prepared several optional questions that were or were not used depending on the answer.

As per the order of the questions, it was adapted after the first interviews because it was not easy to predict the way the conversations were going to evolve. I found out that ordering the questions according to the theory part was not natural when it came to the real conversation. Therefore, the questions about agile and role transitions were formulated at the end. This was done to find out if the interviewees talked about these and other topics on their own and how were they referring to them with their own words.

In the following table, a summary of the profiles of each of the interviewees can be found, including their main traits.

Table 2. Summary of the profiles of each of the interviewees participating in the study.

Interviewee number	Gender	Age	Education	Time working for the company	Previous professional experience	Role in the agile team
1	Female	24	M. Sc.	2 years	Internships in two companies of different sectors	Scrum team
2	Male	22	B. S.	Less than 1 year (7 months)	None	Scrum team
3	Female	34	M. A.	3 years	Commercial department of international companies	Product owner
4	Female	22	B. S.	2 years	Intern for less than 1 year in a start-up of the same sector	Scrum team
5	Male	23	M. Sc.	1 year (10 months)	1 year working for an auditing company	Scrum team
6	Male	24	B. A.	Less than 1 year	3 years working in his own start-up in the same sector.	Scrum master
7	Male	31	M. Sc.	5 years	More than 6 years working in the financial sector	Scrum master
8	Male	20	B. A.	Less than 1 year (6 months)	None	Scrum team
9	Female	26	M. Sc.	3 years	2 years working abroad in a technologic company	Product owner
10	Female	24	M. Sc.	2 years	Internship in another start-up	Scrum team
11	Male	39	B. A.	6 years	Around 7 years working in HR.	Scrum master
12	Male	27	M. A.	2 years	4 years working as tax and legal advisor	Product owner

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this paper is to study the emergence of leader and follower roles and the transition among them in start-ups with agile teams.

The results will be presented according to the categories and subcategories identified, and discussed with those from previous research that have been included in the theory section. The obtained data has been used to build a model which includes the most relevant traits (Figure 5).

Table 3 summarises the coding scheme used to analyse the interviews, including categories, subcategories, the applicable codes and some meaning units' examples used to identify and classify each piece of information.

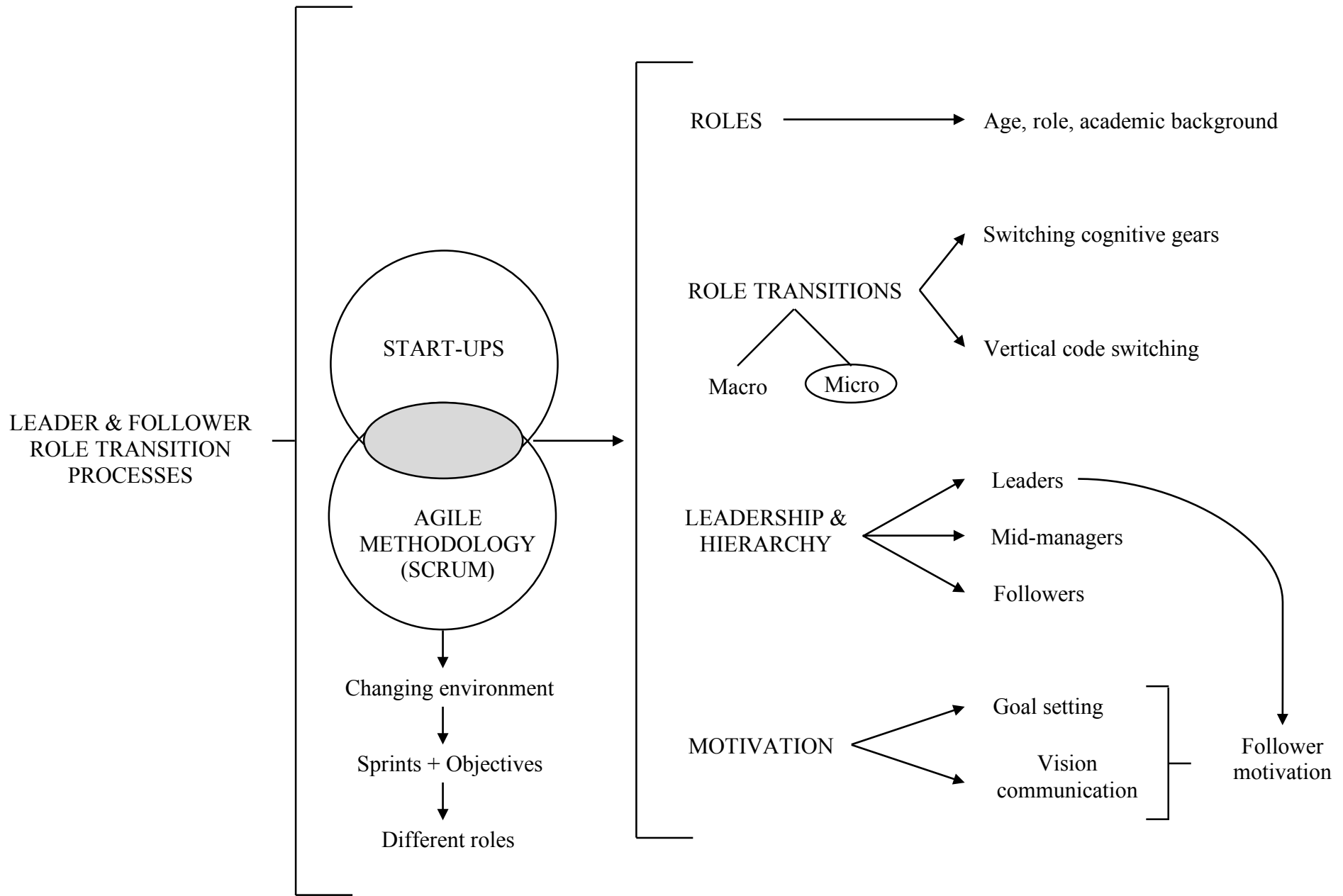


Fig 5. Model of interpretation of leader and follower role transition processes in start-ups with agile teams.

4.1. Coding scheme

Table 3. Coding scheme used to analyse the interviews.

Category	Subcategory	Code	Meaning unit
Roles	Role emergence	Emergence of a role as a consequence of several assigned functions	"...the emergence of roles [...] is one of the fundamental bases of our everyday life".
		Shaped by agile methodology	"...the emergence of roles [...] as well as the transition between any of these roles, are enhanced by the agile methodology".
	Role transitions	Role transitions due to a new job	"years of experience, since at the beginning it was a harder process".
		Role transitions in a specific workplace	when someone addresses "the Scrum team, in contrast to [...] the CEO".
		Frequency	"on a daily basis, and even many times in the same day".
	Relation between roles	Shaped by agile methodology	"role transitions take place much more often" than in companies which did not use agile methodology.
		Segmented or differentiated	"both the language and the personal relationship I have with each type of partner is too different to use related roles".
	Leadership and hierarchy	Leader & follower roles	Integrated or similar
Mentioning these or similar concepts regarding responsibility positions			"play the leader role" "workers with lower rank"
Hierarchy existence		Mentioning a reporting relation	"colleagues and superiors".
		Existence supported by a present superior predominant role	"most experienced members are higher in the hierarchy".
Hierarchy permanence		Manifested by the presence of a defined hierarchy	"I report to [...] due to the little amount of time" worked at the start-up.
Motivation	Goal setting	Existence of goal settings as motivation tools	"the deadlines and objectives to be met in that week, in each of the sprints".
	Vision communication	Presence of vision communication in motivation procedures	"the objectives that the company has in the long term, also mentioning the start-up's core values".
	Other sources of motivation	Alternative sources of motivation	"try to hang out together at least twice a month".

4.2. Roles

4.2.1. Role emergence

The answers of the interviewees supported the role emergence in start-ups' agile teams. This was mentioned by all interviewees, since they could all identify in their answers not only a specific role that they play, but also the emergence of other relevant roles in their work places. Furthermore, interviewee number 6 summarized this idea by saying that “undoubtedly, the emergence of roles, regardless of whether they are the roles of the directors, or of the other workers, as well as the transition between any of these roles, are enhanced by the agile methodology model” (Interview 6 – Q13).

In addition, interviewee number 10, claimed that the emergence process takes place in a rather natural way in this context, and every worker seems to adapt significantly quickly to their role.

Furthermore, according to interviewee number 9, “in an agile team, the emergence of roles, as well as the transition between all of them, is one of the fundamental bases of our everyday life” (Interview 9 – Q13).

First, regarding the sample mean age, which was 26.25 years old and to which some interviewees referred when asked about their roles and experience, I initially considered it rather low. Even though that the start-ups context might be intuitively related with junior professionals, a solid support to this situation was needed in order to use the sample. However, Åstebro, Bazzazian & Braguinsky (2012, p. 663), stated that “a recent graduate is twice as likely as her professor to start a business within three years of graduation, and that the graduates' spin-offs are not of low quality”, supporting the average age of the individuals in our sample.

The fact that interviewees considered agile methodology as a useful tool for the processes studied in this paper supports the view of Rasnacis & Berzisa (2017), who talked about the increasing use of these methodologies in work places.

In addition, since interviewees were mostly aware of role transition processes and its importance, another similarity between the data and what Ritzer (1996) suggested regarding role emergence has been found.

4.2.2. Role transitions

Role transitions have been claimed to be present and recurrent by the majority of the interviewees. From all 12 of them, 9 stated that they are aware of experiencing these processes, and 8 of them ensured that they experience them very frequently or even on a daily basis. Interviewee number 3, for instance, stated that she experiences “role transitions every day”, such as when he addresses “the Scrum team, in contrast to [...] the CEO” (Interview 3 – Q8).

In addition, interviewee number 7 mentioned that, in his opinion, role transitions take place “on a daily basis, and even many times in the same day” (Interview 7 – Q10).

On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees, either were not aware of these processes, or did not rate their frequency as something relevant, such as number 2 and number 5, declared that they are not so aware of experiencing role transitions, and seem to blame their lack of experience in the sector or the specific start-up they work for and their subordinate situation, respectively.

Regarding the views on the processes through which they all switched from one role to another, from the 8 interviewees that specifically talked about these processes, 5 of them found them easy to carry out, regarding the used roles in the transitions, whereas the other 3, claimed that the transition processes could be hard to complete, for any reason.

Interviewee number 11, for instance, ensured that he finds these processes easy to complete, but because of his “years of experience, since at the beginning it was a harder process” (Interview 11 – Q9). Furthermore, interviewee number 7 stated “that similarities the roles have” make it easier for him to “carry out the transition process more quickly from one role to another” (Interview 7 – Q9).

However, the views of interviewee number 12 show that, depending on the relation the roles of the role transitions have, he finds it more difficult to change from one role to another: the more differentiated they are, the harder it is for him to carry out the transitions. In addition, regarding differentiated roles, interviewee number 10 stated that “since these roles are so different, I would say that sometimes I have to concentrate to completely change from one role to another” (Interview 10 – Q9). However, she also mentioned that once the transitions had taken place, she would not “get distracted by the other roles” (Interview 10 – Q9).

The significantly high frequency with which the majority of the interviewees claimed to experience role transitions also matches the definition of the “micro” role transitions concept introduced by Ashforth et al. (2000).

In addition, it was interesting how interviewees’ answers when asked about role transition processes and its traits, reminded of some theoretical concepts. The concepts of “middleness” and “switching gears”, proposed by Anicich & Hirsh (2017, p. 663) and Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 475), respectively, were the ones mainly related with these interventions of the interviewees.

However, some results showed that not every interviewee’s views on role transitions existence and experimentation matches the “proliferation” of roles trait that Ritzer (1996) introduced.

When asked about the relation between the roles present in these role transitions, interviewees did not specifically mention any aspect such as the “vertical code-switching” concept, proposed by Anicich & Hirsh (2017, p.659). However, the fact that some interviewees had a middle position in the start-ups they worked for, supports what these authors indicated regarding the fact that this kind of workers would experience these transitions.

4.2.3. Relation (or not) between roles

From the interviewees who were aware of having experienced role transitions, who were 9 out of 12 from the sample, a third of them stated that, in their particular case, the roles

taking place in the role transitions they had experienced, had a certain degree of similarity and were not too differentiated between each other. As interviewee number 3 ensured, these roles were, for her, “quite closely to each other and share many traits” (Interview 3 – Q9). From these interviewees, a couple of them had the role of product owner, and the other one played the Scrum master role in their agile teams, respectively.

On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees who claimed to have experienced role transitions, this is, a 66% of them, denied any similarity or close relation between the existing roles in these processes. An example of this part of the sample’s views on the matter in hand could be the one provided by interviewee 11, who stated that “both the language and the personal relationship I have with each type of partner is too different to use related roles” (Interview 11 – Q9). Furthermore, interviewee number 1 ensured that the differences between the roles was “due to the different people to who I have to speak when I am playing each of them” (Interview 1 – Q9).

As per the relations that the roles taking place when switching from one another, different opinions were found, without being one of them a significantly predominant one, as exposed above. Some of them match or have similar traits to the “segmented” roles concept, whereas others are rather similar to the “integrated” roles concept, both introduced by Ashforth et al. (2000, p. 477 and p. 479).

However, even a mixture of both types has been found in the data, showing that these types can take place for the same person at a given situation.

4.3. Leadership and hierarchy

4.3.1. Leader and follower roles

From all 12 interviewees, 10 of them talked, at some point of the interview, about the existence of the leader and/or follower roles in the start-ups they worked for, by using these or synonym concepts.

Regarding the leader role, it was mentioned by all those 10 interviewees. However, only 4 of them literally mentioned the “leader” concept, whereas the remaining 6 talked about

the “boss” role. Interviewee number 5 and interviewee number 10, for instance, were the only two interviewees who referred to this role both as “leader” and “boss” role. Interviewee number 5 identified the partners of the start-up he works for as “bosses” (Interview 5 – Q3), as well as the ones who “play the leader role” (Interview 5 – Q5). Furthermore, interviewee number 5 also remarked “the importance of the leader role” in his workplace (Interview 5 – Q11).

As per the follower role, 3 out of those 10 interviewees referred to this concept at some point. In this case, just one of them literally mentioned the concept “follower role”. However, instead they used concepts such as “the workers that [...] report to me” (Interview 1 – Q6), “workers with lower rank” (Interview 7 – Q8) or “workers who follow the guidelines of those bosses” (Interview 9 – Q4).

Interviewees were significantly aware of a leader figure in their teams, even though not all of them called it like that. Furthermore, the definition of her/his main traits or the answers that had relation with this concept matched the one provided by Morgeson (2005) and Morgeson & DeRue (2006).

This fact also supports the view of Day et al. (2006, p. 213) on the importance of leadership in the academic context.

In addition, some interviewees’ views on their paper as intermediators between team leaders and followers, also matched what Harding et al. (2014) studied on middle managers, and supports the categorization that Rouleau & Balogun (2011) mentioned regarding this same role.

4.3.2. Hierarchy existence

With regard to the existence of a defined hierarchy, it was found that most of the interviewees related the reporting relations they have with the rest of co-workers to their age, experience in the sector or start-up, and their academic background. An example of this can be found in Interview 2, where the interviewee stated that he reported to most his “colleagues and superiors, due to the little amount of time” that he had worked for that start-up (Interview 2 – Q2). Similarly, interviewee 8 also mentioned that, since he had

only been working less than one year in the start-up, he reported “to all the workers who have more experience” (Interview 8 – Q2).

From the interviewees that had some knowledge about the way their start-up was organized regarding workers’ responsibilities, all of them but one, interviewee number 2, clearly identified the existence of a defined hierarchy in the start-ups they work for. One of the clearest answers regarding hierarchy existence was the one provided by interviewee number 4, who mentioned that her team was at the “most basic stage of the company, while the most experienced members are higher in the hierarchy” (Interview 4 – Q3).

Furthermore, interviewee number 10, stated that, when she first joined the start-up, “there was not a clearly defined hierarchy”, however, she found that, over time, some co-workers of her automatically and voluntarily started playing the “leader roles” until the company formalized that situation into a defined hierarchy (Interview 10 – Q3).

However, interviewee number 2, despite mentioning the existence of a kind of leader or boss, also stated that most of his co-workers seem to be “all at the same level” and that, often, the one playing the leader role “asks others for advice, and lets them make important decisions” (Interview 2 – Q3).

As per the age factor, after finding the individuals to who address the proposed questions, we found that most of them (10 out of 12) remained within the age gap of 20 and 30 years old. This aspect will be developed in the next part of the paper.

Hierarchy was claimed to be present in their workplaces by the clear majority of the interviewees, as stated above. This fact clearly supports what Magee & Galinsky (2008) mentioned about prevalence and importance of hierarchies in human teams and relations.

It was interesting to note how several interviewees somehow related the way the start-up they worked for was organized with either their age or professional background.

A reference to the “informal hierarchy” concept introduced by Blau & Scott (1962) and defined by Diefenbach & Sillince (2011) was found in the data, when interviewee number

10 mentioned the formalization of a sort of informal hierarchy initially formed, proving, in this case, its existence.

However, there is also an example in the data that contradicts these literature, in which the interviewee denied any kind of hierarchy, describing a flat one.

4.3.3. Hierarchy permanence

Regarding the permanence of these hierarchies, out of the 10 interviewees who could identify a hierarchy in the start-up they worked for, none of them referred to a possible disappearance of it, supporting its permanence.

4.4. Agile methodology and Scrum

All the interviewees who had an opinion about the influence of agile and Scrum in role emergence and role transitions, stated that, in the start-up context, they perceived agile methodology as a facilitating tool for these processes between leader, follower, and other roles. An example which illustrates this could be the statement of interviewee number 12, who claimed that agile methodology “is crucial in this context”, regarding role emergence and role transitions (Interview 12 – Q13). In addition, interviewee number 3 also supported that, thanks to agile methodology, she perceives that the leader role played by the CEO of the start-up she works for has remained stronger over time.

In addition, comments on the specificities of agile regarding the contexts in hand also supported its use. For instance, interviewee number 6 remarked “the many changes faced at each sprint, and to which we have to adapt” as a key aspect of agile which facilitates and makes role transitions crucial processes (Interview 6 – Q11). This changing environment concept was also mentioned by other interviewees, and was developed in depth by interviewee number 3, who added to it that they had to adapt quickly “not only to the environment, but also to each other in the office” (Interview 3 – Q11).

Furthermore, interviewee number 3 also stated that “role transitions take place much more often” than in companies which did not use agile methodology (Interview 3 – Q12).

The opinion of interviewees regarding how agile methodologies facilitates several processes taking place in start-ups, matched some pieces of the theory. Rasnacic & Berzisa (2017) also stated that this application helps companies improving their performance, among other processes. Within these processes role emergence and transitions can be found, according to the data.

The changing environment trait of start-ups that use agile methodologies, mentioned by several interviewees, was also mentioned by Shamir (1999), and previously introduced by Willard et al. (1992).

Generally, the same point of view on this matter was given by the interviewees, supporting the application of agile methodologies such as Scrum to the start-up context.

4.5. Motivation

4.5.1. Goal setting and vision communication

11 out of the 12 interviewees identified at least one of these tools as a motivation procedure used in the start-ups they worked, and the one remaining, interviewee number 12, did not specifically deny it.

From these two motivation procedures, goal setting was claimed to have been used by 10 of those 11 interviewees. For instance, interviewee number 4 stated that, in the company she worked for, they usually communicated her and her co-workers “the deadlines and objectives to be met in that week, in each of the sprints” (Interview 4 – Q6).

On the other hand, vision communication was identified by just 4 of them. Interviewee number 2 specified that he was reminded with “the objectives that the company has in the long term, also mentioning the start-up’s core values” (Interview 2 – Q6). In addition, interviewee number 8 also said that when he is being motivated, he is told that his work should be “aligned with the start-up’s core values” (Interview 8 – Q6).

Furthermore, from those 11 interviewees, 4 of them, this is, more than a third of the total, identified both tools of motivation as the ones they perceived their start-ups used to motivate employees.

Tools for motivating employees were identified by an overwhelmingly majority, as shown. The ones provided by Berson, Halevy, Shamir and Erez (2015), this is, vision communication and effective goal setting were the ones mainly mentioned by the interviewees. However, contrary to what it was expected, not most interviewees claimed to have perceived motivational strategies which combined both tools. In fact, less than a half of the interviewees did.

In addition, goal setting was, with significant difference, the most perceived strategy used to motivate employees by the workers themselves.

4.5.2. Other sources of motivation

Additionally, at least 3 of the 11 interviewees who identified any of those motivation tools in their work environment also mentioned a third tool, such as interviewee number 11 does, who gets the workers together and lets “them express their concerns and suggestions as a group, to see what we can do about them” (Interview 11 – Q6). Also, interviewee number 1 mentioned that in the start-up she works for, she and her co-workers “try to hang out together at least twice a month, in order to build strong relationships both inside and outside the office” (Interview 1 – Q6).

The additional sources of motivation which interviewees mentioned were mainly strategies they used, irrespective of whether they were team leaders, mid-managers or followers. These strategies were not present in the proposed model by Berson, Halevy, Shamir and Erez (2015, p. 3), perhaps due to its informality, which could be perceived by the analysis of the answers in which interviewees mentioned them.

Previously in this paper, based on the key concepts and frameworks of the theory section, several open questions were proposed. These questions, written in order according to the one presented in the theory section, will now be answered.

- **Question 1: How do agile start-up teams' members perceive role transition processes in their workplace?**

Interviewees generally perceive role transitions as known processes often experienced with a high frequency, even on a daily basis. Most of them were familiar to the concept, supporting its importance in the contexts in hand. In addition, many of them also perceived agile methodologies such as Scrum, as a facilitator for these processes to take place in a workplace, backing the good combination agile and role transitions make.

- **Question 2: How do agile start-up teams' members perceive the presence, if any, of leader and follower roles in their teams?**

The existence and predominance of leader roles in the studied teams is widely supported by the interviewees, who clearly remarked the presence of somebody playing the leader role in their workplaces. Furthermore, the importance this role has in start-ups was also extracted from the interviewees' views. Finally, interviewees also referred to themselves as workers with middle-managers' traits, which also help depicting the hierarchies the studied start-ups' use.

4.6. Practical implications

The main statement of this study is that agile methodologies such as Scrum play an important role when it comes to role emergence and role transition processes in start-ups, enhancing, among others, the leader figure, which is generally perceived as a permanent one.

Therefore, this statement provides several practical implications, also considering the provided answer to the open questions previously proposed in this paper. The first one is that start-up companies using an agile methodology should consider the perceptions of their employees regarding role emergence and transitions, to facilitate both their performance and satisfaction. Secondly, these companies could redesign some of their everyday activities considering the perceived importance their leaders have among the employees. Finally, senior executives, directors and human resources personnel, need to

put in place the appropriate motivational strategies that will contribute to the improvement of the well-being of the company's employees.

4.7. Conclusion

This study has led to the conclusion that employees of start-ups which use agile methodologies such as Scrum, clearly perceive role emergence in their businesses as well as role transitions, and support their importance. Furthermore, most of the interviewees supported the existence of a leader figure in their teams, and remarked the significant tasks they performed. In addition, they also perceived a prevalence of a motivational strategy based around short term goal setting, as more predominant than long term vision communication.

However, this study has a series of limitations. The first one is the limited size of the sample. The second one is the business context, since only employees of a determined start-ups' incubator participated as sample in this research. Another aspect is related to the tool used in this study. The questionnaire consisted of 13 initial questions. Obviously, a longer questionnaire could have been used in order to obtain further details as well as to gather more information on the subject of study.

The conclusions of this study also provide with several future lines of research. Further studies could investigate the permanence of emergent roles in this type of companies using these methodologies. Another possible research could study the influence of variables such as age, years in the job, and position within the business structure and their influence on role emergence and transitions. A longitudinal study could also be conducted to further understand the possible changes over time related to these processes. These are some of the possible future directions of research in this area that could be suggested.

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6. APPENDIX

6.1. Interview outline

The following interview outline includes both the main questions, as well as the ones which could be removed, depending on the interviewees answers.

“Hello, my name is Andrés Crespo Dualde. I am carrying out this interview so as to document the qualitative study in which my bachelor thesis is based. The data will be recorded and stored for academic purposes. This interview will be recorded in Spanish, in order to ensure a fluid communication. However, the transcript will be written in English for its use in the paper.”

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it? Did you have any other roles prior to this one?
2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.
3. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.
4. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples? Within which roles do you experience them?
5. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?
6. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?
7. Therefore, how would you describe your position?
8. How would you describe the hierarchy in the start-up you work at?
9. What about the predominant roles that exist in it?
10. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees? Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?
11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?
12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any

difference or similarity in the processes? Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

6.2. Interviews transcript

INTERVIEW 1

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 24 years old and, well, I have worked as an intern in a couple of companies in different sectors than this one, which were the hotel sector and the fashion sector. I have been working for this company for two years now, since summer of 2017. As for my role, I am part of the Scrum team, and I am in charge of carrying out all the tasks for which I am trained in order to help the rest of the team, which are quite variable, depending on the project we are working on at a given moment.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

I have not played roles other than the current one in this company, and in the companies where I have worked previously, for the hotel and the fashion company, I was also part of a similar team of workers, but it was not a Scrum team, since in any of those places they used agile methodology.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Well, I report directly to the CEO and, when a specific situation requires it, I also report to the product developer assigned to the project we are working on at any given time, or to the product we are developing. Since I am part of the Scrum team, officially, no one reports me directly, although it is true that newcomers may sometimes consult me and take my corrections very seriously since, sometimes, they consider me somehow their supervisor. But, officially, I have no subordinates that report to me in a continuous basis, no.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

In the case of the start-up which I work for, there is a clearly defined hierarchy: in the first place, the two founder partners are the CEO and the CMO, and they are the ones with all the decision-making power. I mean, you can perfectly tell they are the ones ruling here, you know? Secondly, the product developer is their most trusted colleague, and she supervises the rest of the workers. Yes, that is pretty much it... Well, and finally, the rest of the workers are the ones remaining, of course.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, if we understood my professional career in this company as a line, with several stages, I would say that I am in one of the first ones, since, despite having some degree of authority in my team, as I said before, I still have several people above me ... But this motivates me a lot, since, in this way, I have plenty of room ahead for improvement both as a person and as professional of the sector.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, the predominant roles, as I said, I think they are the ones adopted by the two founders, CEO and CMO, who have a sort of boss role..., and then, I would highlight the role that we, the rest of the workers, have, since, by number, we are more people, and, at the end of the day, that makes us more visible.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

Well, I would say that they motivate us continuously, with short meetings almost daily, where one of the founders and, sometimes, the product developer, of whom I was talking earlier, reviews the situation in which we are at a given moment of the process, and encourage us to continue like this, or correct us, depending on the situation ... But, regarding the motivation among the rest of the workers, I really like how we do it, since we all try to hang out together at least twice a month, in order to build strong relationships both inside and outside the office.

Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate the ones that report you? (If the interviewee does not have subordinates, this last question will not be addressed)

Well, it's not like I do anything special like those talks they give us to motivate the workers that sometimes report to me, but I guess occasionally I also try to talk to the ones I work with and get them motivated.

7. How would you define role transitions?

For me, role transitions are the changes that I can be involved in when playing a different role to the one that I am playing at a given time, right?

Exactly, that's right.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Yes, I think I am constantly experiencing role transitions. Since both at work and at home I am constantly interacting with people with whom I have very different relationships. For example, when I talk to the CEO, I adopt a different role that when I turn to the novice workers of the start-up. And the same goes for when I am addressing any external person to the start-up that comes into the office, for example...

Within which roles do you experience them?

I think I experience role transitions, specially between the roles of supervisor when I talk with the new workers, and the role of subordinate, when I'm addressing the CEO, or any other worker with a superior role, sometimes. But, the majority of the time I have a neutral role, actually...

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

I think that these roles are quite different in my head, and they are not like each other at all, they are rather different to each other... due to the different people to who I have to speak when I am playing each of them. As for the process, the truth is that it costs me nothing to change from one role to another ... This is, I do it almost automatically... it is not something I have to think, no.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

As for the frequency with which I experience these processes... as you can imagine, it is in a daily basis... and the truth is that they occur several times in the same day, since I can have conversations and interact with the different partners more than once with each one, or even with external people.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Well, I think that the fact of having several workers with different roles and competences means that we constantly have to be experiencing role transitions, as I said before... I think that if, for example, I worked alone in an office without this methodology, it would have nothing to do. In addition, I think that the constant change of objectives, in the short, or medium term, also help these processes to take place more often.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology?

Yes, in the two companies that I mentioned at the beginning of the interview.

Regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

Actually yes, since there, as we were not organized as we are in Scrum, it seems to me that role transitions were not as frequent or as intense, I think... although I had never considered that comparison. I would justify that due to the agile aspects that I mentioned in the previous question.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

It seems to me that, in this context, the agile methodology facilitates these transitions for the same reasons that I have said, yes. It really helps us all to adapt faster and better to a changing environment, and I think that this is actually why we use it.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

I would describe them as quite remarkable and necessary processes in this context, mainly because of what I had been saying with the previous answers: the frequency of transitions, the richness of relationships between partners of different work places, etc.

So that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 2

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Well, I'm 22 years old and I don't have experience in this sector nor in another company, since this is my first professional experience. I've been working here for less than a year, and my role in this company is being a member of the Scrum team, and I am getting used to my workplace. The first thing I should do is learning to work with the rest of the team members and become familiar with the work environment of this company.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

The truth is that, in the situation I am, I report to nearly all my colleagues and superiors, due to the little amount of time I have been working here, in comparison to the rest of the people here. The fact that I have been working in this company for less than a year means that, even though not officially, all my colleagues are, in some way, superior to me in knowledge, since they all have more experience than me, and I trust a lot their opinions for me to improve in my work.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Actually, I do not really know how the company is organized... but I do know that here, one of the founders, who is also the CFO, is the one who directs most of the projects taking place here. You can see him every day going from one place to another, and just because of the way he acts and addressed to people, you can tell he is the boss. However, as per the rest of the people, it seems that they are all at the same level, and many times, the CFO himself asks others for advice, and lets them make important decisions.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, it is not that I am the last worker in the hierarchy, but it is true that I must be in the group of the less experienced workers, both regarding experience in the sector, and on

how this start-up works. Anyway, I think this is normal, since I have just started to work for this start-up...

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

For the short time that I have been here, I have realized that the founder I was talking about, the one that is also playing the CFO role, is the one who occupies the traditional boss role, and is the one who stands out the most, I would say... The rest, on the other hand, really respect him, and take everything he says into account... probably due to his experience.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

In this start-up, they sometimes motivate us in a rather abstract way, in my opinion... often, they explain the objectives that the company has in the long term, also mentioning the start-up's core values, and they also tell us about the importance of teamwork and so on ... Personally, that procedure does not help me much to be motivated... What does help me is when they remark the objectives of each week, and becoming friends with the team mates I work close to, in order to feel good and not to feel alone when I am working.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

Actually, I have never thought about a definition of role transitions... so I will need a moment... I imagine that it must be something like a transformation or change between one way of being or behaving and another... this is, between the roles, with everything that that would imply... yes, more or less something like that.

Great, thank you very much.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples? Within which roles do you experience them?

As far as I am concerned, I think that in my work environment I do not experience too many role transitions, since, as I said, I report to all my colleagues, who play a kind of supervisor role over me, so I am always adopting a subordinate role when I am interacting with them.

9. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Well, I'm not sure... maybe because I haven't been working with this methodology for much time, since I don't know how it completely works... you know?

Okay, no worries.

10. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Well, although I don't know the environment too much yet... it is true that it seems that in the way we work, the figure of the founder and CFO that I mentioned before, the one who had the role of boss, looks really remarked, whatever the situation in which we find ourselves is, and I think that this might be because of the way this start-up works and is organized, so I would say that the emergence and presence of that specific role is supported by the use of this methodology, maybe...

So that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 3

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 34 years old and my professional experience can be summed up in that I have worked in commercial departments of international companies. As for this company, I have been working for three years and my role is the product owner and CMO. Basically, I dedicate my time to trying to identify the areas in which the product or service we offer can be improved, apart from all the marketing-related activities' coordination.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

As I said, before having this role I have worked as a commercial, which has helped me to develop social skills that help me to interact with my co-workers.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Due to the roles which I play in the company that, as said before are the product owner role and CMO, the workers working on the areas which I control report directly to me, since I constantly review their progress, while, in some way, I report to the CEO, who is in charge of organizing all the processes in a general way, regardless of the project we are working on, and also kind of plays the role of a Scrum master.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

As we are few workers here, I perceive the hierarchy in a simple way: the CEO, who is the older partner, is the boss who is in the middle of all the other workers in the company. Then, I think I am closer to this centre of the company than some of the other workers here.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, I would describe my position as a regular CMO, who often has to communicate with different workers from different areas and experience, regarding general concerns, opinions, the situation of a project ...

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, I think that the main roles are, first, the one of the CEO, as you can imagine, who is a kind of director, then mine, which is a kind of a multitask CMO, and finally the role of the rest of the workers, who are those of lesser rank.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

Okay so, in the office we have a digital blackboard, which is updated quite often, with sales, financial, and other objectives... I find this procedure quite motivating, keeping those objectives in mind every day, since we all try our best to fulfil them.

Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates? (If the interviewee does not have subordinates, this last question will not be addressed)

Well, I do not use the blackboard method with the team, but it is true that I am constantly trying to motivate them, so that they are all happy while working, and wanting to reach their objectives, and the company's ones, of course ...

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

Well, I have recently read an article related to this topic, and I would define role transitions as the input and output of different roles in one's head, where an individual changes his attitude, among other aspects, so as to play new roles that fit better in a certain situation.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Of course, I think I experience role transitions every day, such as when I address the Scrum team, in contrast to the situations in which I speak to the CEO at the meetings we have, or even when I address the rest of the founding partners.

Therefore, within which roles do you think you experience these role transitions?

I consider that I experience role transitions mostly between the role of CMO and the role of ... employee with lower rank, to call it somehow, regarding my conversations with the CEO.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

The truth is that I think that both roles are closely related to each other and share many traits, so I do not think that they are too different to each other, actually... in any case, I do not usually have problems when it comes to relating to any of these people.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Well, in terms of frequency, I think that these role transitions happen to me very frequently, since I spend all day interacting with my co-workers, one way or another.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

In my opinion, the aspect of the agile methodology that most influences role transitions is undoubtedly the environment of change in which we are constantly working. As every week, or even every day, new significant changes may arise, we have to adapt very quickly, and not only to the environment, but also to each other in the office.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

When I worked in commercial departments we did not use the agile methodology... and it is true that I have noticed that here, at least in this start-up, I get the feeling that these role transitions take place much more often than in those previous companies I worked for... even though I also experienced them back then, of course.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Well, I think that in terms of the emergence of roles, the figure of leader that the CEO plays, seems to me to be, without a doubt, the one that has remained stronger throughout the years that I have worked here. Secondly, in terms of role transitions, I think I would remark again what I've been saying: the high frequency, its importance in my workplace, and so on.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 4

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Hi, I'm 22 years old, and I've worked as an intern for less than a year in a start-up in the same sector as the one I'm currently working on, where I've been working for two years now. I'm part of the Scrum team, and my work It consists of helping in what I can and, together with the rest of the team, carrying out the project on which we are working.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

In the company I previously worked for, I had the same role, so I do not have any experience at all regarding different roles to the one I have now...

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Since I am part of the Scrum team, I report to the CEO and the CDO, so that both control both my work and the one of the rest of the team. At the moment, no worker depends directly on me, but it is true that, in the specific case of my Scrum team, on the way in which all the members are organized, we all depend on each other, and rely in each other's work to do our own.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

As I said, I believe that my team is at the most basic stage of the company, while the most experienced members are higher in the hierarchy. As for the managing partners, the truth is that I don't know any of them and I don't know very well the role they have.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, I would say that my position is one of several that exist in the company which is at the base of it... I am part of the basic workforce of the company... more or less... Yes, I would say that I am one of the workers which has to execute everyday tasks in order to progress with a project.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

I would not know very well how to identify the predominant roles, but I suppose they would be the ones of the most experienced members, in contrast with the roles of people like me, who have less experience. The roles of the CEO and the CDO are the ones more present here, because of the sector in which we are operating, of course.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

In this company, they follow a very personalized motivation strategy, since they communicate to each small group of employees the deadlines and objectives to be met in that week, in each of the sprints ... I really like it, actually.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

I think that role transitions are something like the change of role which a person can experience at the moment of receiving certain external stimuli, which have, as a consequence the appearance of a different role than the initial one, right?

Okay, that is a good definition.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Now that you mention it, I think I have experienced these role transitions in my workplace at some point, yes. An example could be the change of role or attitude that I experience when I move from being in the room where I work with the rest of the Scrum team, to the office of one of the directors: financial director, HR director..., when I go there to consult anything about my contract, for instance.

Within which roles do you experience them?

Well, I think I experience role transitions between a kind of relaxed role when I am with my co-workers of my same level, and a more formal role, where I don't discuss anything or question what I am told, when I talk to the bosses I mentioned before.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

For me, the roles do not have any similarity or relationship, since my attitude and my way of expressing myself in each of these situations is completely different, as you can imagine... therefore, the process by which I change from one of the roles to another, makes me distinguish myself completely in each of the situations I play those roles.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

In my opinion, the truth is that I do not really experience these role transitions too often, since nearly every day I exclusively interact with the rest of the Scrum team, and the meetings with the directors I talked about before are not very frequent, so I don't usually change my role too much, no.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Well, I would say that contact with different people makes role transitions gain importance in this environment... Even though that in my case it does not work like this, some colleagues have mentioned this aspect.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology?

No, since in the start-up where I was working before we also used agile methodology.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

Well, I think that this is a methodology that facilitates these transitions, but it is also true that I have never worked with other methodology, so I cannot really compare, but I really think it helps, yes.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Actually, as I said before, these transitions are not something that I have perceived as predominant in my stage in this start-up, but it is true that, due to the way of working here, using Scrum, it is true that, in an almost automatic way, roles appear according to the functions of each one, bringing with them the consequent role transitions.

So that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 5

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 23 years old and I have no experience in the sector, since I have worked 1 year for a well-established company related to the auditing sector. As for my experience in this company, I recently completed my first year working here, and my role is as a member of the Scrum team. My everyday life consists in working along with my teammates on a specific project.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

My role in the company where I worked before was something different, since we didn't work as a team nor interacted too much with my other co-workers. I really like it more in here, since I like working with people.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Since I have been in the company for a relatively short time, I report to almost all the most experienced workers in the Scrum team. On the other hand, although the logical thing would be for no one to report to me, since I am relatively new to the company, I have adapted very quickly and have understood the agile methodology very well, according to my bosses, and a partner who started his work the same month that I usually consult and ask for my opinion about the work he does. In addition, some colleagues with some more experience in this company have also come to ask me about their work. That makes me very proud of my progress.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Actually, the hierarchy in this company is something curious, since there are start-up partners and co-founders at each level according to different responsibilities. That way, they have us all more or less controlled and know what happens in each phase of product development. I imagine that they will also have different ranks among them...

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

I would say that my position is rather basic, but it has grown a lot in terms of professional responsibility, since in a short time I have managed to advance a lot in my knowledge and little by little I am gaining importance in the processes ... Each day more co-workers ask me for my opinion, and also specific doubts. I am quite happy with my progress, yes.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, I imagine that the most predominant roles are those of these partners, who play the leader role in each section they control.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

As for the motivation we receive, it is generally based on informal conversations about the objectives to be met each sprint...

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

I believe that role transitions are something like personality changes that an individual may experience throughout his life, right? Something like that.

Well, according to Richter (1984) they are the movement between roles, which include role exit and role entry.

Oh, I see.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

I am not sure that I have experienced too many role transitions throughout my career, you know ... I would not know how to give you any example ... the truth is that, in my job, I always do what they tell me And I do not interact so much with the others, and I limit myself to what is strictly necessary in regard to teamwork, and, as a whole, we make good progress.

9. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Let's see... I am not actually aware of every aspect of the agile methodology, but I think that the changes to which we and the projects we are constantly exposed are very important in this regard, in my opinion. Each day we are facing new challenges and situations which, maybe in other work environments, do not take place.

10. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

In the audit company where I worked they did not use agile methodology, and the truth is that I have not seen too many differences either, since, considering my functions and responsibilities, my position is somewhat similar to what I had in the company, although I work more team up.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

So, I think that it sometimes helps organizing all the work, because weekly sprints really help me, for instance, to structure everything, yes.

11. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

It seems to me that something that is evident is the importance of the leader role of the partners of whom I spoke before, who are present at all levels of the company, since we, the rest of the workers, have them very present in our projects, since in the end of the day are those who have all the power of decision.

So that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 6

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 24 years old, and I have worked less than one year in this company, since the previous three years I had been developing my own start-up, related with this same sector. Thanks to my previous experience working with agile methodologies, in this company I have as a main role the one of Scrum master, and I my job mainly consists of supervising the development process of each project in order to avoid problems or issues that may arise.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

As for previous roles I have played, I have always played the role of scrum master, since, as I said, the previous company was founded by me, and I was very good at performing those functions, besides being the CEO, of course, because at the beginning you tend to do a bit of everything...

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

In this start-up, since there are few people working and, as I said, I have experience with these methodologies, all the agile team workers report to me. As for the people to whom I report, I could say that they are the two or three members of the team with more experience than me, who, honestly, do their job very well and have lots of knowledge, both about agile methodologies and of the sector in which we are competing. I would like to reach their level one day.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Well, I consider that I hold a high position in the hierarchy, which I think is dominated by the two or three members with more experience, of which I spoke before, and later, below us, I could identify the other workers. The ones who report to me. But we all tend to work as a team.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

I would describe my position as one of the main ones in terms of project management in this start-up. I think this is due to the fact that I have influence over the rest of the agile team workers, due to the characteristics of my workplace.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

I think that the predominant roles are those of the people to whom I report, who have the role of directors, the ones I mentioned before, although it is also important the role played by all those who are below in the hierarchy, who perform really good at their work, and without them it would not be possible to grow, of course.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees? Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Well, both the other experienced workers and myself, we try to keep the rest of the colleagues motivated, through the communication of small objectives to be met in the short term, as well as the transmission of the company's values. Above all, we all try to be respectful with each other, without forgetting that we are all professionals trying to perform as good as that we can.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

In my opinion, role transitions are the movement that exists between different roles that a person can adopt at different times in his life, work ... right?

Exactly, thank you.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples? Within which roles do you experience them?

It seems to me that I experience role transitions during my everyday professional life. As examples, I can think of all the situations in which, in a short period of time, I have to talk to a client, an investor, one of the new workers that have just arrived at the start-up... since with all of them I don't have the same professional relationship, of course.

And what could you say are the roles present in those role transitions?

I would say that I usually experience role transitions between all the roles I play when I talk to all those different people, yes.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

Well, the truth is that I would describe them as completely different roles because, as I said, as I may have to talk, in the same morning, with an important investor, as well as with one of the new guys, I have to change roles quickly which have nothing to do with each other ... The good part is that, for me, it is not difficult to differentiate when I am playing a certain role from when I am playing another. This is, it would be impossible for me to get confused or to make mistakes when playing each role.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Well, actually there are situations, such as meetings with investors, that do not happen every day, so I do not usually experience many of these transitions on a daily basis, although I do on a weekly basis, for sure, because other different situations between each other do take place more frequently.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

I would undoubtedly say that the many changes faced at each sprint, and to which we have to adapt, play a key role in regard to role transitions, in my opinion.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology?

No, because when I owned my previous start-up, I also used agile, as I said before.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Undoubtedly, the emergence of roles, regardless of whether they are the roles of the directors, or of the other workers, as well as the transition between any of these roles, are enhanced by the agile methodology model, taking into account my experience both in this start-up and in the one I founded.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 7

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 30 years old, and I have worked five years in this company, and previously, I worked six years in the financial sector. I have the Scrum master role, due to my experience in the company and my knowledge about the agile methodology. I usually direct the scrum team throughout the production process, addressing any incidents or unforeseen events that may occur.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

In the previous job, I played the role of Chief Financial Officer, having been part of the financial department team.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

I exclusively report to the CEO of the start-up where I work, since I have known him since we were young, and he really relies in my decisions and in the work that I perform. In other companies, this may not work this way, but in the company I work for, they value a lot the five years of experience I have been working with them, besides the friendship we have, as I said before. For the same reason, nearly all workers report directly or indirectly to me, which makes my position one of great responsibility and importance for the start-up.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Following what I have said before, the hierarchy of this company is basically based on the decisions of the CEO, as well as those that I make in the areas in which he has delegated to me. At the other end, we find workers with less decision power and influence.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

I think that my position in this company is, among the workers without share in the company, the most relevant and the one with the most powers.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

I would say that the most predominant role is, without a doubt, the one of the CEO, since, despite having a very good relationship with him, I must say that he has a quite strong personality and that shows a lot. He was born to be a leader.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees? Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Well, I believe that I am one of those responsible for motivating workers, and I would say that we do it through praising the workers, reminding them of certain goals that we must meet in each of the sprints, in order to progress as a company.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

I would define role transitions as the process by which a worker can adopt different roles depending on the person he is addressing or the situation he is in, right?

Perfect.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Yes, of course. I am constantly experiencing role transitions in my day to day. For example, I adopt different roles when I talk to the CEO, even if he is my friend, and when I talk to the rest of the workers, whose rank is lower.

Within which roles do you experience them?

I think that my role transitions mostly occur between the role of advisor or consultant, when I speak with the CEO, and the role of leader, in the case of my relationships with the workers with lower rank.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

It seems to me that, at first sight, they are a bit different roles, although... well, it is true that, by my way of being, I also address to people of lower rank with sympathy, and especially with respect, that is what I do with everybody... so, therefore, yes, I consider that similarities the roles have help me to carry out the transition process more quickly from one role to another, yes.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Undoubtedly, I experience these role transitions on a daily basis, and even many times in the same day, I would say, since I am constantly exchanging opinions with people from different ranks of the start-up.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

In my opinion, I would say that the most important aspect of the agile methodology in this context is the work environment in which we find ourselves, which constantly changes and challenges us to be more and more precise. I think that these aspects are key when it comes to role transitions in this situation.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

Yes, since when I worked as a financial director, in my workplace we did not use the agile methodology. Actually, in my previous position, I did experience these transitions, so I do not find too many differences in this aspect ... but agile helps, of course.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

As I said, in this job I experience these transitions very frequently, and they have a great importance, so I definitely think agile helps, anyhow.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Well, I would say that the emergence of roles is something that is always present in this context, as well as the transitions between them. A bit in line with what I said in the previous question, I believe that this work context makes these processes much easier, in addition to the presence of certain permanent roles, which are differentiated by the hierarchy established in each case.

So that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 8

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Hello, I am 20 years old and I have been working for this company for less than a year. I have no experience in this sector nor have I worked in other companies in my life. This is my very first job. I am currently part of the Scrum team in this company, since I am the least experienced worker in agile methodology, and I have to learn how it works and its main features.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

As I said, I have not played any other role or role in any other company since I have no prior professional experience.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Since I have only worked for a few months in this start-up, I report to all the workers who have more experience than me, which in my case are all of them ... This is, they all control everything I do, more or less. Although, in theory, the rest of the Scrum team members have the same rank as me, I also report to them, since in the case of my start-up, everyone has been in their positions for more than two years. As you can imagine, no worker reports to me, given my situation.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Well, the truth is that I don't have much knowledge about how start-up works ... Although I do recognize one or two older workers who seem to be the bosses of the working groups there are.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

I believe that I am in the initial position, in which, the most important thing is to establish a good base of the knowledge used in the workplace, paying attention to small details that in the future will help me to grow both as a professional and as a person.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

As I said, I am not very sure about that... but I imagine that those two roles I mentioned before are the ones that have more relevance in the start-up, I think, but I am not really sure.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

It seems to me that the motivation in this start-up is entirely based on the small talks that bosses give us when they arrive at work in the morning. That's when they review what we have to do during the next few days and keep us motivated and in tension, always talking about being aligned with the start-up's core values.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

Actually, I don't know what to say... I think role transitions are something like a change in the way you think about a specific topic ...

Well, we really understand by role transitions, according to Richter (1984) as the movement between roles, which include role exit and role entry.

Okay, thank you for that.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Even considering the definition you have stated, I do not really know ... no, I can't think of any case in which I experienced a role transition... anyway, it seems to me that it is not that I play really different roles, I think... I am quite new to all of these things.

9. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Well, it seems to me that I don't know the methodology so much in order to answer TO that question ... I'm sorry.

No problem, do not worry.

10. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

As I was saying, I don't think I know the methodology so much to answer very well, but, from what I have seen in this short time, it is true that I see that workers, regardless of their rank, have very present the different roles that occupy each of the other workers, always respecting the figure of the boss, of course.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 9

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Well, I am 26 years old, and, as for my professional experience, I have worked for two years in the technology sector and, currently, I have been working in this start-up for three years. I have the role of product owner, and my job consists of study the situation in which the product is at all times, in order to identify new points to improve or include. I also help the ones of marketing when they need any help.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

In relation to my previous roles, I also played the role of CMO in the technology company where I worked in Ireland.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Due to the way the start-up which I work for works, I report directly and continuously to the CDO and Scrum master, who in our case is also dedicated to carefully review each of the steps that are taken on the service proposal what we offer. As for the workers who report to me, there are all the members of the Scrum team, since the direction of the start-up in which I work has given me responsibility to lead them all.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Well, I think there are two large groups: first, the one of the bosses that I told you, and then, the one of the rest of the workers. And I think I'm more or less in the middle, as I said.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

It thinks that I am, regarding hierarchy, halfway between the group of bosses and the group of workers who follow the guidelines of those bosses, more or less.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, I think that the most important roles are those of some of the bosses that interact most with the other workers, and the group of workers of the Scrum team, who act as subordinates of those bosses, and they really work quite well.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

I believe that they often motivate us through the communication of very long-term objectives, and sometimes in a rather an abstract way... but it is true that they manage to motivate us all for the way in which they speak. Of course, they also remind us with the objectives of each sprint, because that is one of the main features of Scrum...

Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Well, I try to be a little more concise and communicate to those who report directly to me the things we really try to get in the day we are in, for example.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

From my point of view, role transitions are the change that, for example, I can experience when I change the way I act in a given situation. That is, when I change roles.

Exactly, thank you.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

I guess so, right? I imagine I don't have the same role when I'm at home or when I'm at work ... So, yes, I do experience role transitions, of course.

Ok, and as for when you're at work, could you develop that situation?

Sure, I was thinking about that at the moment... At work, I do not have the same relationship with all workers equally, since it is not the same to address one of the bosses as the workers of whom I am their boss, say.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

Well, let's see, it is true that I change some aspects of my way of expressing myself and my attitude in general, but I am not usually addressing the people who report to me from a too bossy position, so these roles are not so different from each other... I try not to have a very strong personality in any situation, in order to let things flow.

Great, what about the transition processes?

Well, for that same reason, the transition processes are not very costly in terms of difficulty, since the roles are somehow related.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

I would say that these processes occur in my situation on a daily basis, since my job requires it. I have short conversations with different workers throughout the day, and, of course, that means carrying out these role transitions, yes.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

Actually, I had never thought about that... but I think that the frequency with which we review the work and progress all together plays a very important role in this regard, I think. We, the ones that, at some point, have to review others' work, think that continuous improvement is the way to compete in such a difficult sector. It does not matter at which level we are, we all think like that here.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology?

No, since when I worked in Ireland I also worked in an agile team.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

In my opinion, in an agile team, the emergence of roles, as well as the transition between all of them, is one of the fundamental bases of our everyday life, since, at least in my case, we all work in a relatively small space, and thanks to the proper functioning of these processes, we are gradually achieving all our objectives.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 10

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Well, hello, I am 24 years old and I have been working for this start-up for two years. Regarding my professional experience, I have done internships in another start-up, similar to this one, which also used agile methodology. Regarding my role in this start-up, I am a member of the Scrum team, and I work together with my teammates following the instructions of our direct supervisors. Within a few months, I may be assigned a higher rank role.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

In the company where I worked before, I was also a member of the scrum team, so not really.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

I directly report to the supervisor that the company has assigned to my Scrum team. Thanks to my previous experience in the use of agile methodology, my supervisor has allowed me to review the work of other colleagues and, in this way, they report to me directly. I am sure that this is due to my good performance and my previous experience.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

At the beginning, when I joined the company, there was not a clearly defined hierarchy, but over the months, almost automatically, some workers were playing kind of leader roles over small groups, until the company's management decided to make them supervisors, who in turn, named assistants, as is my case.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Even considering that I am part of the Scrum team, I consider that I am in a situation of a greater rank than my teammates, but still inferior in relation to the position of my supervisor and the other bosses, of course...

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, I would say that the most remarkable roles that exist here are the ones of those supervisors, who are really reliable, in my opinion, since they managed to lead small groups, gaining their trust very quickly and improving their productivity.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

I understand that bosses assign supervisors some goals to meet, and they are responsible for transmitting them to the rest of the team. Examples of these goals can be increases in sales, and other things like that.

Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Well, I try to motivate my colleagues, but not only those whose work I supervise, but everybody who is next to me, in a friendly way and valuing their efforts, because I think that is the way to be happier in the workplace.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

In my opinion, role transitions are something as simple as the change between the roles that the same person may have in a determined context, right?

That's it, perfect.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

Yes, of course, how not. Based on the definition that I have given of role transitions, I think that examples of role transitions that I can live are the situations in which I move from relating to my peers whose work I review, like I said before, to relate to, for example, the founder of the company, which, in the case of this start-up, is like the absolute boss here.

So, among which roles do you usually experience these role transitions?

I had never thought of naming these roles, but I suppose they would be subordinate versus boss roles, right?

Okay, very good.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

I would describe the relationship between these roles as quite distant, since they have nothing to do with my way of being with ones in front of my way of being with the owner of the company, as said before.

Okay, and what could you say about the transition processes?

Well, since these roles are so different, I would say that sometimes I have to concentrate to completely change from one role to another, but it is true that, once I switch between these roles, I do not usually get distracted by the other roles that I am not playing at that moment...

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Well, the truth is that I do not speak every day with the founder of the company, so these transitions do not really happen to me as often as you might think ... Although perhaps that is a particularity of my situation, I do not know ...

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

In my opinion, a key aspect of agile methodology in this context is the fact that we are constantly trying to improve products, and therefore, interacting with each other to consult things.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology?

No, since in the start-up in which I did the previous internship they also used agile methodology, which, well, that is why I have adapted so well in this company ...

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Well, I think that these processes take place in a very natural way in this start-up, and that is because of the way we work here. Not only if you have previous experience with agile, you can feel integrated, but that anyone, at the very beginning would be integrated in these processes, and in a very fast way one would assimilate a new role, also adapting to the existing roles of the teammates, such as the roles of the supervisors, peers, etc.

Well, so that is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 11

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

Hello, I am 39 years old. And I have been working for this start-up for six years. I previously had management roles in different HR departments. My role in this start-up is the one of Scrum master, and I am mainly in charge of supervising all the team's work in general, as well as distributing the main tasks and set the objectives to be fulfilled.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

Earlier in this same start-up, I had the Scrum team member role, as well as the product owner role, although the one that best suits my personality is the one I have now, Scrum master. As per my positions at previous companies, my role was somewhat similar, despite not having to deal with as many changes as in the context of start-ups and agile.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

Basically, all the workers in my environment, regardless of the role they occupy, report to me. Given the experience I have in this company, I consider it normal. About the people to whom I directly report to, we would be only talking about the executive director of the company, with whom I have a good relationship after so many years. The truth is that I value the relationship I have with the director, as we have been through many professional difficulties throughout these six years.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Well, I think that if we took a pyramid as an example, the executive director would be at the top, I would be the next one, and then the rest of the workers, who have no rank above each other.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, again, because of my experience in this company and the closeness I have to the executive director, I would describe my position, in relation with these pyramid-shaped hierarchy, always keeping in mind that it is not me who has the last word in decisions, of course.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

I believe that the most predominant role is mine, since the director has delegated many competences to me, and I am the one who manages the day-to-day start-up while he is not there. Fortunately, I do not need too much help because there are not too many workers and they are not conflicting at all.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees? Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Well, since the director has entrusted me with the task of organizing meetings to motivate, I can tell you in detail what I usually do. First, I gather the workers every few days, and let them express their concerns and suggestions as a group, to see what we can do about them. Then, we try to reach agreements to satisfy everything we can, and I end up with a kind of talk in which I tell you the main objectives that we should meet to grow with respect to the previous sprint.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

Well, I would say that role transitions are a kind of transition between various roles or ways of acting that people can play.

Okay, great.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

I suppose so, since I perceive that I adapt my way of expressing myself as I address the executive director, of whom I spoke before, or to any other of the employees, who have all been in the company for less time than me. Therefore, that is why I think that I experience role transitions, especially in these situations ...

Within which roles do you experience them?

I would say, that they take place among the roles of personal advisor, since it is more or less the relationship I have with the executive director, and the role of leader, since this is how other employees perceive me, as I have understood by surveys that are being carried out over the years.

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

The truth is that, in my opinion, these roles do not resemble in almost anything, since both the language and the personal relationship I have with each type of partner is too different to use related roles ... And, about the processes, I could say that it doesn't cost

me much to switch between roles... But I think this easiness is due to my years of experience, since at the beginning it was a harder process to me...

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Well, because of the good relationship I have with the executive director, I talk with him quite often, and, with the rest of my colleagues too, for professional reasons, obviously. Therefore, I would rate these processes as rather frequent.

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

I would say ... that the permanent atmosphere of change and competition in the market is what most influences the role transitions we talked about before.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

Yes, since when I worked in HR I did not play any role in agile teams ... In that regard, I would say that in these teams the roles are more differentiated, and, for example, my figure as a leader in this company is well defined, so like the roles of the other people who work here.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

Well, I think this methodology makes all these processes a lot easier, yes.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

Well, a bit as I said before, it seems to me that they are processes that are favoured by the way we work, and the roles are enhanced by the coexistence between the people who perform them here.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW 12

1. Could you tell me about your age, experience in the sector, experience in this start-up and your specific role in it?

I am 27 years old and I have previously worked for four years as a tax and legal advisor in a company. Now I have been working for two years in this start-up, and I have always occupied the role of product owner, being my main tasks reviewing the work done in each session as well as constantly looking for aspects to be able to produce a better output. In addition, sometimes I take care to solve legal issues.

Did you have any other roles prior to this one?

In my previous job, I was a junior associate, so I had a role with more people to who I reported, who controlled me every day, while in this start-up I don't have so many people to report to.

2. Do you report to somebody and/or somebody reports to you? Please elaborate as much as possible.

As I said before, I don't report to many people in this start-up, since, in the way we work here, only the Scrum master directly controls my work. Although, from time to time we present our progress and the status of a certain project to some investors and partners of the company, who also do not monitor the work then. With regard to the people who report to me, I could identify people with less experience working in my company, since I was assigned the role of their tutor.

3. Is there a specific hierarchy in the start-up you work at? How does it work?

Actually, the start-up partners are the ones who should lead it, but they are not usually present... Instead, the Scrum master, who is also the CMO, is the one who occupies the role of boss most of the time, while the rest play rather a follower role.

4. Therefore, how would you describe your position?

Well, a little along with what I said before, I would describe my position as intermediate, since I am between the ones I supervise and the people to whom I report.

5. What about the predominant roles that exist in this start-up?

Well, it would be those two that I said, the leader would be the CMO and Scrum master, while the followers would be the others, each in a different way, of course.

6. Could you describe the procedures the start-up uses in order to motivate employees?

I would say that the motivation that we receive the workers in this start-up can be summarized in the individual meetings we have with the CMO, which, as I said before, is the one that plays the role of boss. In those meetings, we address all kinds of issues that concern each one of us. It is very good that they take into account our opinions.

Do you use those or any other procedures to motivate your subordinates?

Yes, well, I do more or less the same with the less experienced workers, since I value what the CMO does with me, and I want others to value it as well.

7. How would you define role transitions? If incorrect, I will explain the concept.

Well, the truth is that I think that they are the transitions that I could experience when I express or behave in different ways depending on the situation or the people in front of me.

8. Are you aware of experiencing these role transitions? Can you provide any examples?

I think so, since I behave differently, depending whether I am advising the company in the legal field, performing my duties as a product owner, or if I am talking with any of those investors, on who it depends that some projects progress.

Great, then, among which roles do you think you experience those role transitions?

Well ... I wouldn't know what to call them, but basically, they're the ones I've told you before ...

9. How would you describe the relation between those roles and the processes through which you move from one role to the other?

The relationship between these roles is quite distant, since in each situation a different thing is intended with the established communication, so I do not think there are too many similarities between these roles... although it is true that the role used when he spoke with investors and when I talk to managers it's somehow similar...

Okay, could you tell me about the transition processes between those roles?

Of course, I would say that, as I said, between the roles used when I talk to investors and managers, it is not too difficult for me to change from one another, since they are similar... But I have a little more difficulty when it comes to a transition to a role that I use with the rest of the co-workers of whom I am tutor.

10. How would you describe the processes, regarding their frequency?

Thinking about it a bit, it seems to me that I experience these processes quite continuously on my everyday job, really...

11. In your opinion, which specificities of agile methodology play a relevant role in role transition processes?

I'm not sure, but I guess interactions like these meetings, and teamwork, make this methodology and role transitions closely related.

12. Have you previously worked in a work environment without using agile methodology? If yes, regarding role transition processes, have you perceived any difference or similarity in the processes?

Yes, because in the company where I worked we did not use agile methodology, and the truth is that here, the whole thing of the roles is quite remarked ... it is one of the things that surprised me the most when I started working for this start-up.

Therefore, which is your opinion on agile methodology regarding this aspect?

Well, although I don't think it's 100% decisive in this regard, I do think that it plays an important role for the existence of all these roles and the transition between them.

13. How would you describe the emergence and role transition processes between roles in your agile team?

I think, as I said, that the roles are of great importance here, both their emergence and the transitions, and as soon as I started working for this company, I realized and tried to assimilate it as fast and good as possible. Therefore, I believe that this methodology is crucial in this context.

That is the end of the interview, thank you very much.

