

Why do Businesses Need SAFe?

Enterprises must learn how to adapt quickly to changing technology and economic conditions or they will become extinct, no matter their size, smarts, or strength. This holds true even for businesses that don't consider themselves Information Technology (IT) or software companies. Professional services, financial services, healthcare institutions, and government entities are all highly dependent on their ability to produce new technology-based products and services.

Companies that understand the urgency to move and adapt faster—and change their ways of working—will succeed. Those that don't will struggle, or simply fade away. The business world is littered with examples: Blockbuster, Kodak, Tower Records, Borders, Palm Computing, Nokia, and Compaq were all iconic market leaders that couldn't adapt to new business models and technology innovations ahead of their competitors.

The Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) helps businesses address the significant challenges of delivering change and enterprise-class solutions in the shortest sustainable lead time. It is as an online, freely revealed knowledge base of proven success patterns for implementing Lean-Agile practices at enterprise scale.

SAFe combines the power of Agile with systems thinking and Lean product development. It synchronizes alignment, collaboration, and delivery for multiple Agile teams. As a result, SAFe provides dramatic improvements to business agility, including productivity, time to market, quality, and employee engagement, and more. Case studies written by customers confirm these benefits.

Scalable and configurable, SAFe allows each organization to adapt it to its own business needs. It supports smaller-scale solutions employing 50–125 practitioners, as well as complex organizations/solutions that require thousands of people.

The Business Benefits of SAFe

“Three years into this effort, our SAFe transformation has taken strong root, leading to high-quality, predictable software delivery and architectural runways.”

—Robert F. Crudup, SEI Investments, executive vice president and CIO

Now in its fifth major revision, SAFe 4.5 is improving business outcomes for companies of all sizes across the world. It has produced dramatic increases in time to market, employee

engagement, higher quality, higher customer satisfaction, and overall improved economic outcomes. It also helps create cultures that are more productive, rewarding, and fun.

Figure 1. highlights these benefits as derived directly from case studies written by SAFe end users.



Figure 1: SAFe Business Benefits

Quality

Built-In Quality practices increase customer satisfaction and provide faster and more predictable value delivery. They also improve the ability to innovate. Without quality, the Lean goal of maximum value in the shortest sustainable lead time cannot be achieved.

Enterprises that apply SAFe typically get rapid and compelling increases in solution quality.

- “95% decrease in defects.” —Telstra
- “5x reduction in deployment impact.” —CSG International
- “55% defect reduction rate.” —Hynix Semiconductor
- “44% decrease in post-release defects.” —Mitchell International
- “50% warranty expense decrease.” —John Deere
- “20–25% increase in client satisfaction.” —SEI Investments

Productivity

When productivity increases, solution delivery economics improves, as does employee engagement. For team members, productivity is a critical, personal need. Everyone feels better when they're contributing more and doing less wasteful work.

- "Productivity has increased by at least 20–25%." —Discount Tire
- "Team productivity is up by 20–50%." —BMC Corporation
- "A single defect gets fixed only once now." —TomTom

Employee Engagement

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), employees with the highest level of commitment perform 21 percent better and are 65 percent less likely to leave the organization. Clearly, employee engagement is directly linked to business performance.

- "Employee engagement increased 9.8%." —John Deere
- "Employee happiness rating went from 47–67% in 10 weeks." —Medical systems company
- "Improved productivity and morale." —Valpak
- "Overall happier teams." —Elekta

Faster Time to Market

Lean-Agile frameworks allow businesses to deliver value to the market more quickly. Companies that adopt Agile delivery practices routinely gain first-mover advantages and enjoy the higher gross margins afforded to market leaders. SAFe enterprises typically see a 30–75 percent (as much as 3x!) improvement in time to market.

- "Delivery down from one year to 126 days." —TomTom
- "Decreased time to market by 27 weeks." —Here.com
- "Time to market and level of quality have increased dramatically." —Discount Tire
- "Delivered higher-value business results in a shorter delivery cycle." —SEI Investments
- "Releases went from 12–18 months to 3–4x per year." —BMC Corporation

In addition to these "big four" benefits, SAFe users report other advantages as well, as highlighted in the following sections.

Program Execution

One of SAFe's core values is program execution. Mastering this means that Research and Development (R&D) or IT can become trusted and respected partners of the business—people who do what they say they're going to do. That allows other team members to plan and execute more effectively.

- "50% improved delivery predictability." —SK Hynix Memory Solutions
- "SAFe principles key to delivering on time." —French National Employment Agency
- "Since adopting SAFe, we routinely meet 95% of our commitments."—CA-Rally
- "A positive and significant increase in net promoter score from the business."—Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- Alignment

When management and teams are aligned to a common mission, all the energy is directed toward helping the customer. Everyone is on the same team and working toward the same purpose. Alignment communicates the intent of the mission and enables teams to focus on how to accomplish the objectives.

- "Management aligned and supportive of Agile teams." —Nordea Bank
- "Program Increment (PI) planning provides both vertical and horizontal alignment." —Elekta
- "Better alignment to common vision." —Infogain
- "SAFe makes it easier for us to focus on what has the most business value."—Travis Perkins
- "To see a waterfall program manager embrace SAFe only two days after participating in a PI planning session is remarkable." —Nordea Bank

Transparency

You can't manage a secret. Transparency builds trust. Trust, in turn, is essential for performance, innovation, risk-taking, and relentless improvement.

- "There is transparency through showcases. There is much better trust."—Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- "Better managed expectations." —Lego
- "Improved transparency through Rally reports and SAFe ceremonies."—Elekta
- "The SAFe recipe helped highlight dependencies and risks far in advance of what we saw before." —Intel

A final quote from Peter Vollmer, distinguished technologist at Hewlett Packard Enterprise, sums up the benefits of SAFe:

“With a proven framework, we can deliver solutions much faster and with less effort. SAFe defines the roles, teams, activities, and artifacts to apply Lean and Agile principles at enterprise scale, and provides outstanding training and coaching materials to increase our chance of success.”

—Peter Vollmer, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Distinguished Technologist