

## Agile Coach Failure Modes

### Quotes

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Posted on : 2010/11/1 5:10:00

I have just finished reading the book "Coaching Agile Teams" by [Lyssa Adkins](#). This book is full of excellent content but I just want to share some of her honest thoughts on coach failures with you.

"I know so much about the many ways agile coaches fail because I have failed by falling into the trap of every one of them presented in this chapter" "My firsthand experience with agile coach failure modes makes me an expert in them. At one time or another, I have been one (or more) of these personas in action. The accompanying figures offer a tongue-in-cheek view of these. See which describes you:

- \* The Spy spends just enough time observing the team to pick up topics for the next retrospective and then slinks off into the night
- \* The Seagull swoops in at stand-ups, poops all over the team with well-intentioned observations or advice, and flies away again.
- \* The Opinionator expresses opinions often, gets attached to them, and loses the objectivity needed to coach the team to have great discussions.
- \* The Admin undermines team ownership by becoming an unnecessary middle man for meeting logistics, access requests, and other administrivia.
- \* The Hub acts as the center of the universe for communication between team members and for task-level coordination.
- \* The Butterfly flits around from team to team, landing just long enough to impart a pearl of wisdom or pose a philosophical question.
- \* The Expert gets so involved in the details of the team's work that the forest gets lost in the trees.
- \* The Nag helpfully "reminds" the team to start stand-up, update the storyboard, complete the tasks they committed to, and so on. "Where do failure modes come from? Failure modes arise when a coach's ego or continuous partial attention (or both) are in play". "A way to avoid or, at least, recover from the failure modes is simple and difficult: Replace fear with trust." **Reference:** "Coaching Agile Teams", Lyssa Adkins, 315 pages, ISBN 978-0-321-63770-3 [Get more details on this book or buy it on amazon.com](#)  
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