

# INTERVIEW WITH KEN SCHWABER

Mikael Boman

Ken Schwaber developed Scrum together with Jeff Sutherland in the early 1990s. He was one of the authors of the Agile Manifesto in 2001 and one of the founders of the Agile Alliance. Citerus' consultant Mikael Boman caught up with Ken when he recently visited Citerus and Sweden.

**Mikael Boman:** *Could you shortly tell us about your background - how did you get started in software development?*

**Ken Schwaber:** I was a deck officer in the United States Merchant Marine. We used analog computers frequently. Once, when I was ashore, a friend asked me if I knew computers. That quickly led to assembler language programming of operating systems at the University of Chicago. Odd transition from analog to digital.

**Mikael:** *What sparked your interest in agile processes, and when did it happen?*

**Ken:** I had been part of the structured methods and Computer Aided Software Engineering movement in the 1980's, trying to improve, tighten down, visualize our development processes better. My company provided software that automated methodologies that automated the descriptions of these processes. One day I was in a class where a methodology was being taught; I heard one developer say to the other, "We have to do this and our regular work, too?"

**Mikael:** *Why do you think agile has taken off the way it has?*

**Ken:** It works.

**Mikael:** *What about agile do you see as most exciting today?*

**Ken:** The ability for people in our profession to enjoy going to work to build top quality software that pleases the punch out of our customers.



**Mikael:** *What is the biggest challenge you face in implementing agile processes in companies?*

**Ken:** Most companies are organized for Frederick Taylor manufacturing type operations, with hierarchical command and control. Learning people Scrum isn't too hard, but people undoing their learning and habits from before and seeing where they fit into an agile organization is very hard, taking 3-5 years or more.

**Mikael:** *What do you see as the biggest gain for companies implementing agile development?*

**Ken:** Empowered, creative, productive employees that build systems and products better than anyone else.

**Mikael:** *What do you see as the biggest threat to agile software development processes today?*

**Ken:** People and organizations that don't understand it wanting to profit from it. They build assessments, tools, and services to take advantage of the movement, rather than understanding and promulgating it.

**Mikael:** *How do you divide your time between teaching and consulting? Why this particular division?*

**Ken:** 33% writing, 33% training, 33% consulting. I train people in what I believe and has worked before, I consult to help organizations use what I trained them in and discover what doesn't work, I write books to scale this knowledge.

**Mikael:** *Why did you write your book about Scrum and the Enterprise?*

**Ken:** Many enterprises wanted to take the Scrum approach and philosophy and use it throughout the enterprise. The book spelled out my experience doing so, with guidelines for building on the basic Scrum building blocks to do so.

**Mikael:** *What is your view on the need for engineering practices such as TDD, continuous integration and so on? Is it widely adopted in the companies you work with?*

**Ken:** Scrum teams have to build quality, "done", software every Sprint. To do so, they often have to learn and apply many engineering practices that have been known for years but ignored under the pressure of "just get it out the door."

**Mikael:** *What is your next professional goal or challenge? Are you writing a new book? Are you devising a new course? Do you wish to revolutionize the software development industry?*

**Ken:** I think we got a pretty good start with the software development profession. However, we got lost when we started using prescriptive process control, aping the manufacturing industry. My challenge is to have us and our customers see us as competent professionals that can be trusted.

**Mikael:** *Why do you invest time in the Agile Alliance and the Scrum Alliance?*

**Ken:** I want them to be communities where people who understand the value of what we are doing can get together and share.

**Mikael:** *Why do you feel that the Scrum certifications are needed when everything about Scrum is open source?*

**Ken:** The written word is good for scaling, but terrible for deep understanding. I found that my initial book was widely misinterpreted, people reading it within the context of the structured methodologies and command and control context they worked within. I devised the certification program as a way for people to have face-to-face work with an experienced instructor that has worked personally with me, gets the basics of Scrum, and knows how to help people transition.

**Mikael:** *What do you see as the "next big thing" in software development?*

**Ken:** No "big thing." Instead, the small thing of people flocking to our profession because of the job, quality and professionalism that we exhibit.

**Mikael:** *Thank you for your time, and we look forward to seeing you in Sweden again soon!*



**Mikael Boman** is one of the co-founders of Citerus and actively working with improving the success-rate in software development by helping others improve their programming techniques and project methodology.

#### Learn more about Ken Schwaber and Scrum

- <http://www.controlchaos.com/>
- <http://www.citerus.se/scrum>