

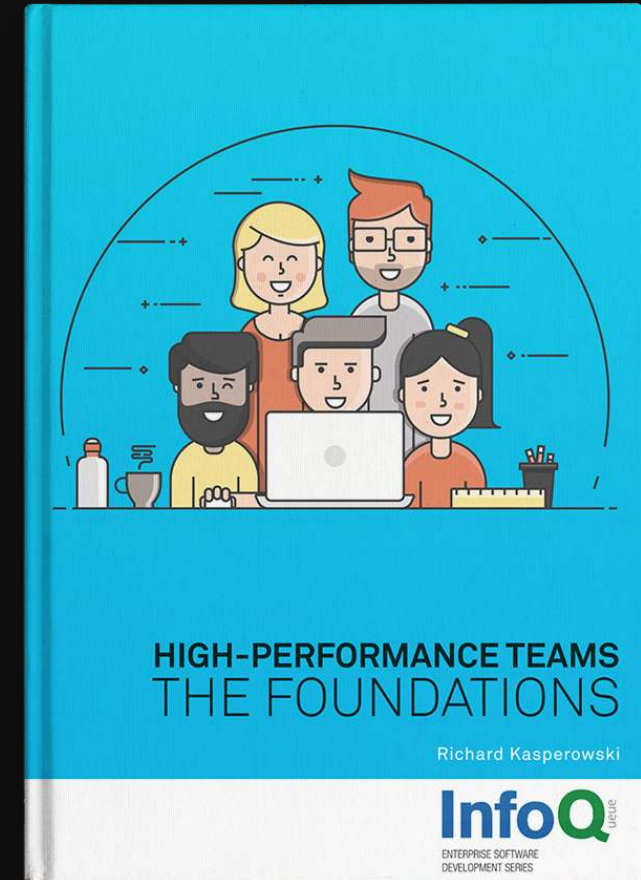
Scrum Doesn't Matter

(And It Never Did)

Richard Kasperowski

Co-founder & CTO, Alli Connect

Global Scrum Gathering · Vancouver · May 5, 2026





Richard Kasperowski

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[Ali Connect](#) (Techstars '22)

Agile Software Development at Harvard

Author: *High-Performance Teams: The Foundations & The Core Protocols: A Guide to Greatness*

ACT I

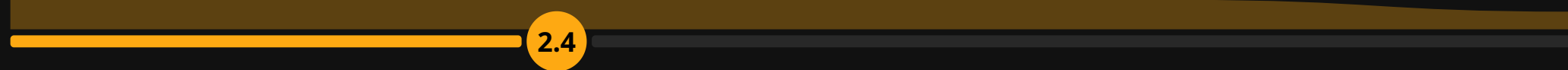
A terrible way to build software

How important is Scrum/Agile?

Scrum/Agile is important to me



Scrum/Agile is important to my CEO



Not even a little bit

The only thing that matters

**"Agile is a terrible way
to build software."**

**"Agile is a terrible way
to build software.**

**And it's the only way
that actually works."**

— Random dude, over dinner in Bilbao

Coming full circle

- **SOFTWARE DEVELOPER**

- **1990s** — Rising software developer. Learning the trade.
- **2000** — XP book with Spencer and Stan. Automated tests — some before the code. It was good.
- **2003** — CentrePath with Oliver. Real TDD + pair programming. Best code of my life. Fun.

- **COACH · TEACHER · CONSULTANT · MANAGER · AUTHOR**

- **2006** — First engineering manager gig. Nellymoser. Sneaky Scrum is born.
- **2010** — Nokia. Agile at scale with Jorgen. My first Scrum Gathering.
- **2013** — Consulting, coaching, training. Sharing worldwide.
- **2015** — Created CSCI E-71 "Agile Software Development" at Harvard.

- **SOFTWARE DEVELOPER AGAIN**

- **2022** — Co-founder & CTO, Alli Connect. Back to building — and learning more by doing.

Business people **never** cared about Scrum.

They just wanted great results.

So what actually produces great results?

Sneaky Scrum

Don't tell anyone anything about Scrum.

Just introduce safe little experiments.

Sneaky Scrum: Just try these

- What if we met every morning?
- What if we split the project into 2-week chunks?
- What if we made a plan at the start of each chunk?
- What if we kept track of our progress on the wall?
- What if we kept track of what's in our way? (I'll work to clear it.)
- What if we showed what we built at the end?
- What if we reflected and made a plan to get better?
- What if we estimated the work in relative size units?

If it doesn't work — blame me.

A few months later: it was exactly Scrum. And it worked.

I'm still doing it today — at Alli Connect.

Sneaky Scrum: Speak your CEO's language

"We sound like moon people — crazy jargon no one else understands." — Heidi Helfand

Sprint	a week
Sprint #173	week ending May 8, 2026
Sprint planning	weekly planning
Daily Scrum	daily planning
Sprint review	weekly product review
Sprint retrospective	weekly retrospective
Story points / estimates	forecast for this week, month, half-year
Product goal	big important goal for this year

Same practices. Zero jargon.
Colleen gets this.

ACT II

What Actually Matters

Scrum doesn't matter. Except it matters more than ever.

Remember when

Agile was about software development?

*The Manifesto: “developing software by doing it
and helping others do it.”*

XP was a full methodology — planning, standup, estimating, *and* the technical engine.
Somewhere along the way, we lost the plot.

The DORA Research

Pre-gen-AI foundations of elite teams.

What elite teams measure

THE FOUNDATIONAL 4

- Change lead time
- Deployment frequency
- Change fail rate
- Failed deployment recovery time

+ Generative culture

Practices follow metrics

— Jez Humble

Measure → try a practice → measure again. Keep what helps.

- Scrum — because it helps
- XP tech practices — because they help
- Continuous delivery — because it helps
- Core Protocols, Open Space — because they help

Drop anything that doesn't help.

Scrum was designed to work with these

- Pair / mob programming
- Test-driven development
- Behavior-driven development
- Continuous integration
- Collective code ownership
- Continuous delivery
- Trunk-based development
- Relentless refactoring
- Simple design
- Sustainable pace

Scrum gives you the **product framework**.
XP gives you the **technical engine**.
Together, they're unstoppable.

You can't ship fast if people can't **speak up**.

The Core Protocols give you [generative culture](#) — DORA's 5th marker.

Check In

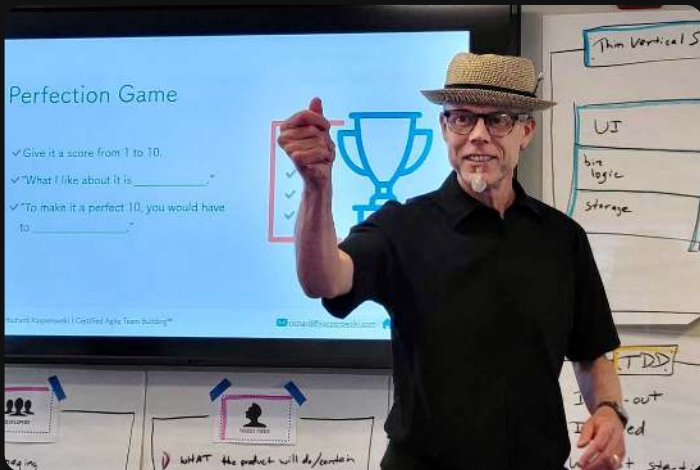
Share your current emotional state.

Ask for Help

The most powerful protocol. Vulnerability as a team superpower.

Perfection Game

Generative feedback. "What would make this a 10?"



Teaching Agile at Harvard

Because it should have been taught in universities all along.

"Remedial Agile" shouldn't be a multi-billion-dollar industry.

ACT III

AI as Your Solo Partner

Scrum doesn't matter. Except it matters more than ever.

The ethics of AI.

I have an **ethical responsibility**.

To my investors.

To my board.

To my users.

At Alli Connect, our goal is **zero deaths of despair**.

0 suicides · 0 alcohol & substance use disorder · 0 self-harm

So I follow the data. Wherever it leads.

Two practices I used to preach.

You might disagree. I did too — for decades. Then I measured.

Pair / mob programming

Then: Distributed mob + AI as third member. *It got me to 2026.*

Now: Solo + AI partner. *Data show it works better.*

TDD

Then: "No code without a failing test." *I said this in my CTO interview.*

Now: Let AI write the code. Tests pin it down. *Data show it works better.*

My context. Measure yours. I'm offering data, not doctrine.

Our fundamentals at Alli Connect

AI-powered predictive mental healthcare · Techstars '22

Cycle time (start to production)*	0.2 ± 0.3 days – really fast!
Deploys to production	Many times daily, on demand
Change failure rate	Approximately 0
Recovery time	Fast

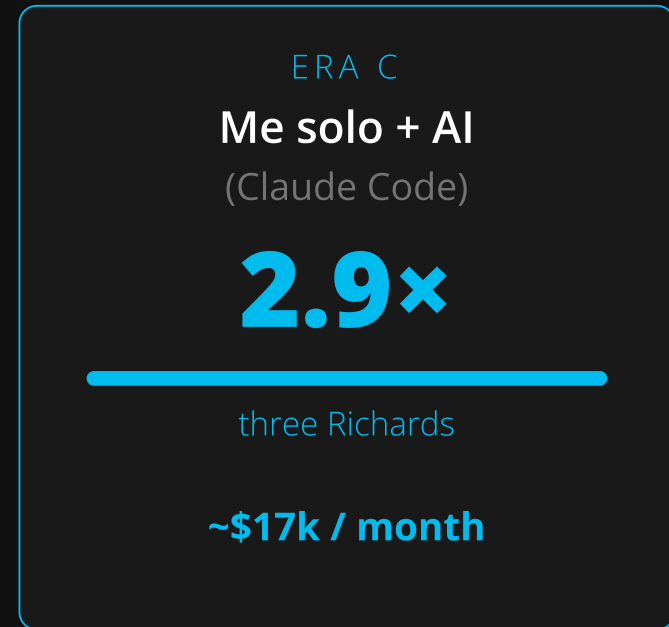
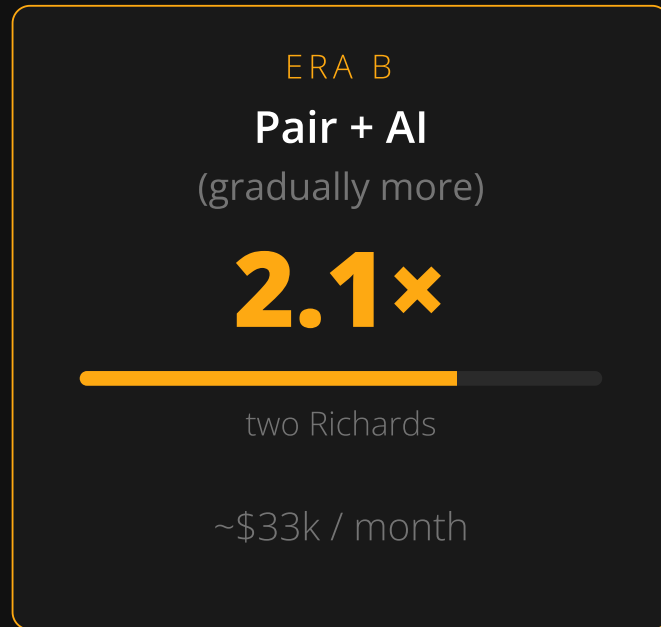
*Last 10 sprints, data through April 24, 2026.

How? **Automated tests + safe pipelines.** *I push code and don't worry.*

The fundamentals were in place *before* AI.
They're what made AI amplification possible.

Three eras. Same codebase. Same me.

3 repos · Aug 2022 – Apr 2026



Same monthly cost as me solo. Nearly **3×** the output. And **1.4×** more than pair + AI.

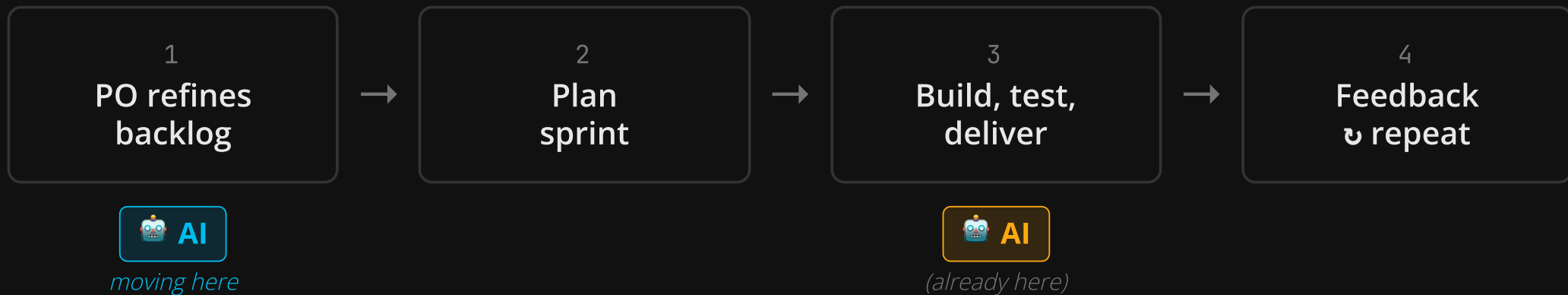
My AI partner costs **< 1%** of a human developer — and gets me **~3×** the output of me solo.

This scares me. And maybe it means any of us can launch new enterprises.

No agent swarm. No custom orchestration. **Just Claude Code in my IDE.**

My latest experiment: **AI as PO assistant**

"Is it the code that does what customers need/want?" — Lisa Crispin



← **Shift left** for product thinking.

It does more and better PO work than I can solo:

Competitive analysis · Market research · Signal detection from meeting transcripts and other notes ·
Big-picture backlog organization · Detailed PBIs for next sprint

DORA 2025 — no longer the *State of DevOps*, now the *State of AI-Assisted Software Development*

AI amplifies your current capabilities.

High DORA + AI → way higher capability.

Low DORA + AI → even more chaos.

Strong fundamentals + AI

- Fast cycle time + CD → AI ships value in hours
- Tests everywhere → hallucinations caught before production
- Generative culture → team surfaces AI's mistakes
- Clear product direction → AI aims at real value

= Extraordinary

Weak fundamentals + AI

- Slow cycle time, rare deploys → bugs compound silently
- No tests → hallucinations ship to production
- Pathological culture → nobody questions the AI
- Unclear direction → fast work on the wrong thing

= Extraordinarily bad

What if the team is **all AI**?

Jeff Sutherland is already running it. *Scrum at Machine Speed* — his new book. Co-creator of Scrum. Not a prediction — production.

~100×

faster than humans

1 hour

sprint length

61

stories in one day (agents)

0

lines of code humans write

If I had more venture capital — more people, or more AI? *I'm not sure.*

The formula for awesomeness

Awesome product practices = AI-assisted **Scrum**

+ **Awesome tech practices** = AI-assisted **XP + CD + DORA**

+ **Awesome team** = **Core Protocols**

= **Awesome success**

Scrum/Agile doesn't matter?
Scrum/Agile matters *more than ever*.

ACT IV

Over to You

Scrum doesn't matter. Except it matters more than ever.

SNEAKY SCRUM

Safe experiments beat ~~big transformation.~~

Plain English beats ~~Scrum jargon.~~

Sneak it in. Speak the language your CEO already speaks.

LISA'S QUESTION

The **RIGHT thing** beats ~~more things~~.

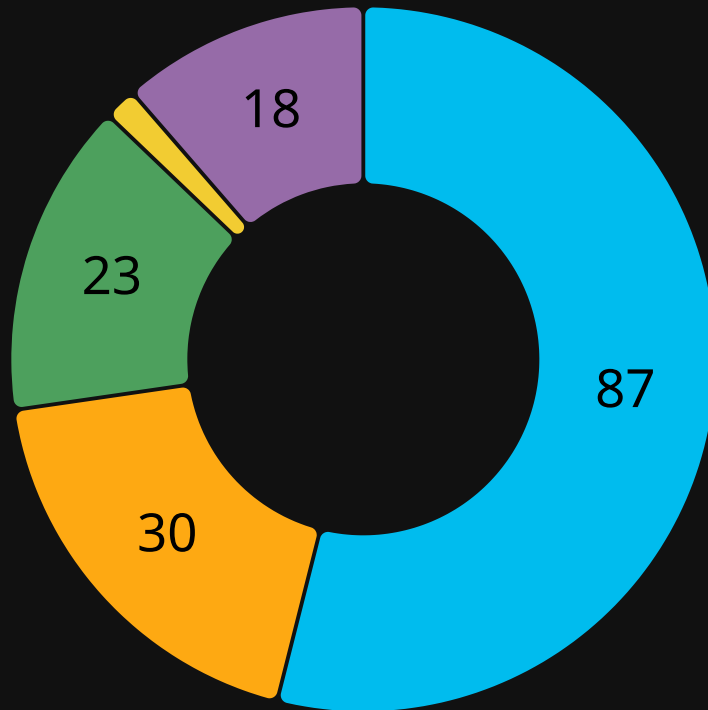
Better velocity isn't just about ~~speed~~.
It's about direction.

Scrum + XP/CD/DORA + Core Protocols

More important than ever.

Especially now that AI can amplify all of it.

What's your key takeaway?



- 87 The fundamentals still matter

- 30 Speak my CEO's language

- 23 Metrics drive my practices

- 2 Make it safe to speak up

- 18 Something else

**"Agile is a terrible way
to build software.**

**And it's the only way
that actually works."**

With AI, building software is within reach
for all of us in a way it never has been.

Go build something **extraordinary**.

COMING UP



Global Coding Dojo

TDD · Mob programming · AI-assisted coding · All skill levels

2nd Wednesday of every month · **Next: May 13, 2026**

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Book Signing #1 — Right after this session

High-Performance Teams: The Foundations

You received a free copy — bring it and I'll sign it. Let's chat about your teams.



Book Signing #2 — Comparative Agility booth

The Core Protocols: A Guide to Greatness

Exhibitors area. First 10 visitors get a free copy. Come hang out.

Ask me for help.

Anyone. Any time.

richard@kasperowski.com

(I mean it.)

Feedback



Richard Kasperowski

Co-Founder & Chief Technology Officer

[Alli Connect](#) (Techstars '22)

Agile Software Development at Harvard

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