



# Human-Centered Agile: Embedding Values into SAFe and Projects

Agile frameworks like SAFe, Scrum, and Kanban have brought structure to iterative delivery and scaled collaboration—but are we leaving behind the **human side** of agility?

In today's digital workplaces, Agile leaders must do more than manage backlogs and velocity. We must create spaces where **empathy, equity, and ethics** are embedded into how we work.

Beyond frameworks and processes lies the heart of true agility—the human element. This presentation explores how to create Agile environments where empathy, equity, and ethics thrive alongside delivery excellence.



by Kimberly Wiethoff

# The Human Dimension of Agility



## Process Without Humanity

Frameworks without values become mechanical exercises that miss the purpose of agility.



## Values-First Approach

Human-centered agility aligns team behavior with people, not just processes.

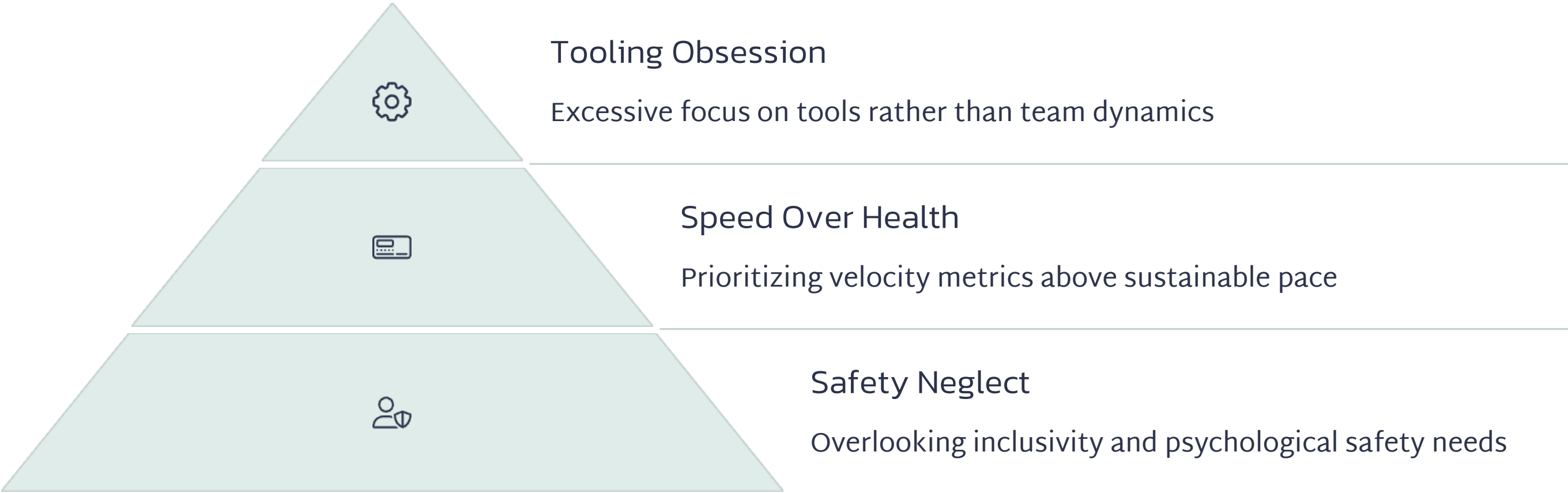


## Sustainable Outcomes

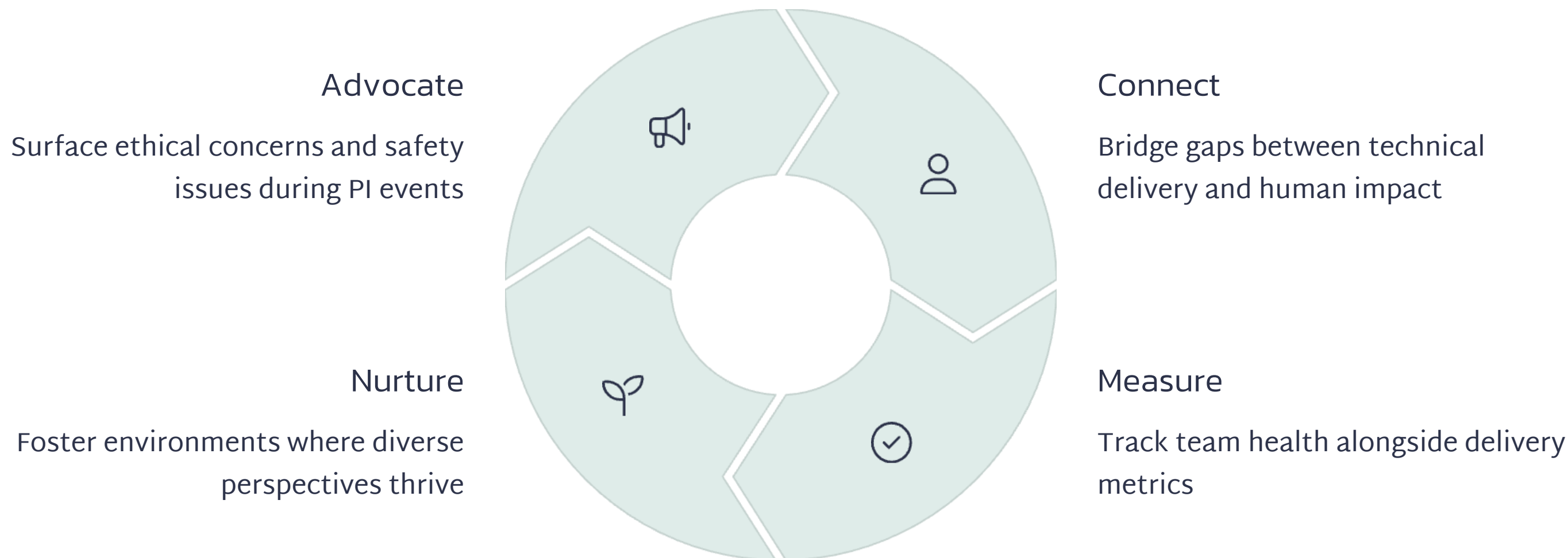
Balancing delivery speed with team wellbeing creates lasting results.



# When Frameworks Overshadow Humanity



# The Value Champion Role





# Empathetic Team Agreements

## Assume Positive Intent

Begin interactions with the belief that others have good intentions.

## Encourage All Voices

Create space for quieter team members to contribute their perspectives.

## Call Out Burnout

Give permission to identify unsustainable workloads before they cause harm.

## Respect Cognitive Diversity

Acknowledge different thinking styles and adapt communication accordingly.



# Human-Centered PI Objectives

## Traditional Objective

"Deliver payment gateway integration by end of PI"

## Human-Centered Objective

"Reduce checkout abandonment by 15% through intuitive payment flow"

## Traditional Objective

"Complete migration to new database architecture"

## Human-Centered Objective

"Reduce support team load by 20% through system stability improvements"





# Story Mapping Through Personas



## Create Diverse Personas

Develop realistic user representations across different abilities and backgrounds



## Map User Journeys

Trace each persona's path through your product or service



## Identify Pain Points

Discover moments of friction or exclusion in the experience



## Prioritize Human Impact

Rank backlog items based on meaningful user outcomes

# Human-Centered Practice Toolkit



## Empathy Maps

Visualize what users think, feel, say, and do during backlog refinement.



## Accessibility Audits

Include in Definition of Done to ensure inclusive product design.



## Team Health Checks

Run recurring assessments to gauge psychological safety and engagement.



## Equity-Focused Stories

Write user stories from diverse perspectives to broaden solution thinking.



# Leadership That Models Humanity



## Create Safety

Establish environments where vulnerability is valued

---



## Celebrate Inclusivity

Recognize behaviors that support diverse perspectives

---



## Enable Hard Conversations

Make space for discussions about bias and burnout

---



## Bridge Organizational Silos

Partner with HR, DEI teams to align values

# Implementation Roadmap



## Assessment Phase

Evaluate current framework implementation for human-centered gaps.

Duration: 2-4 weeks



## Role Integration

Introduce Values Champion role and train initial champions.

Duration: 1-2 months



## Practice Adoption

Implement human-centered tools in selected teams.

Duration: 3-6 months



## Framework Evolution

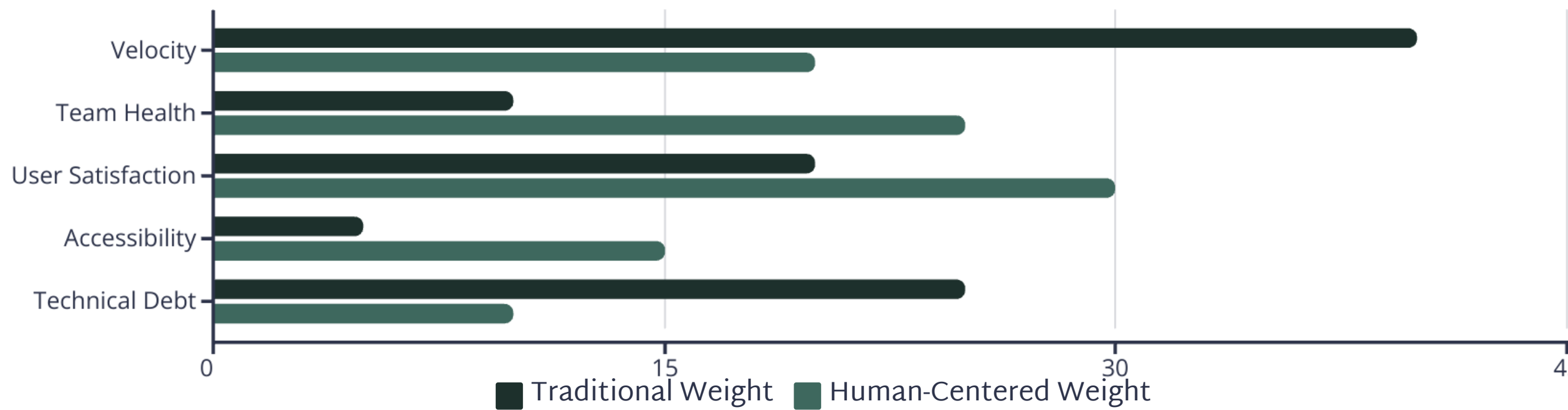
Formally adapt ceremonies and artifacts to incorporate human values.

Duration: 6-12 months



# Measuring Success Beyond Velocity

Traditional agile metrics often overemphasize speed at the expense of human impact. A human-centered approach rebalances our success indicators to value both delivery and wellbeing.



Notice how human-centered metrics shift emphasis from pure output (velocity) toward outcomes that matter to both users and team members. This balanced approach leads to more sustainable delivery, higher quality products, and healthier teams that can innovate over the long term.

# Frameworks Evolve—Values Endure



Human-Centered Agile doesn't compete with SAFe—it completes it. By embedding empathy, inclusivity, and ethical reflection, we create resilient teams and responsible products.

Great Agile isn't just fast—it's fair, thoughtful, and human.