NOT-SO-TYPICAL REMOTE PI PLANNING CHECKLIST FOR RELEASE TRAIN ENGINEERS

With virtual being the new norm for the near future, here is a checklist of not-so-typical activities and guidance to support Release Train Engineers (RTE) responsible for conducting remote Program Increment (PI) Planning.

Increase Focus on Cadence-Based Activities

Remind leaders to update Enterprise Strategies / Strategic Themes
Be diligent on refining Epic / Feature/ User Story backlog
Evaluate teams' velocity
Update Stakeholder / Program level / Team level roster

Over-Coordinate for Better Preparation

Enable and validate use of virtual capabilities, including breakout rooms
Assign co-facilitator or an agile coach to support the RTE
Set up and maintain communication on multiple channels - email, Slack, internal postings, blogs, confluence sites
Take a break! Include 5 min breaks every hour and 15 min breaks every 3 hours
Play games during breaks - Show us your pets, kids, or favorite thing in your house?

Ensure Accountability – Do Your Job!

Provide refresher workshops or training on role accountability, purpose of ceremonies, principals, etc.
Check in with Scrum Masters and empower them to act
Establish a daily stand up with the Program team to ensure consistent messaging and action plan
Remind leaders of purpose and outcomes for PI Planning
Conduct retrospectives and do not skip Inspect & Adapt (virtual tools are available)

Prepare Context In-Depth

Take this opportunity for senior stakeholders to act as Business Owners (They are at home - they cannot run away!)
Rehearse with Product Managers to ensure the messaging of features is clear during PI Planning
Refresh teams on objective writing to ensure clear communication back to Business Owners and Product Managers
Work with Architecture and Engineering to provide training or enablement to the team on a new skill set to build competency

Lastly remember to laugh and be vulnerable. Something will go wrong but the show must go on...