



The Road to Success: from Rally to CA Agile Central and Beyond

by Guest Contributor (<https://www.ca.com/en/blog-agile-central/author/guestcontributor>) October 31, 2018

Working at CA Technologies (<https://www.ca.com/us.html>), one of the biggest software companies in the world, you don't often hear a coworker say, "I was employee number 21!"

When Melissa "Mel" Gallegos said she was "Rally employee #21," I was extra curious about her experience. Maybe it's because big events on the horizon, like the upcoming acquisition (<https://www.ca.com/us/company/newsroom/press-releases/2018/broadcom-to-acquire-ca-technologies-for-18->



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[9-billion-in-cash.html](#)) of CA Technologies by Broadcom, make people look in the rear-view mirror to see the road behind us. For those of us working at CA Agile Central (formerly Rally), that means looking back to the humble beginnings of a company that has had a great impact on how other businesses "do" agile.

"J" Burton: "How did you come to be employee #21 at Rally – now CA Agile Central (<https://www.ca.com/us/products/ca-agile-central.html>)?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "When I was a QA engineer at Rational, the [Agile Management \(https://www.ca.com/us/products/ca-agile-central.html\)](https://www.ca.com/us/products/ca-agile-central.html) movement was just starting to *move*— it was kind of a time of methodology. My manager at Rational had moved to Rally and that's how I started my journey there."

"J" Burton: "You told me that you were thinking about writing a book about your experiences at Rally, now CA Agile Central. I'm a writer myself, so I'm curious what was the lightning bolt moment where you realized, 'I should write a book.'?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "In 2004, agile was a new concept and new methodology—it was not mainstream at all. We were working through what it meant as a company that was living through it. When I was a Scrum Master, other folks continued to encourage me to capture our agile learnings in real time. Now hindsight is 20/20. It's been many years now and I'm like, damn it, I should have written a book!"

"J" Burton: "It could be perfect timing to write a book about Rally because it has gone through the whole software lifecycle – from being a startup to being acquired by a global software corporation. Would you say that it was still a startup when you first started with Rally?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "Yeah, they were."

"J" Burton: "With CA being acquired by Broadcom, a global hardware company, perhaps now would be great time to share your story."

"Mel" Gallegos: "Yes, let's do that! Looking back, I wish I had captured those moments. I would want to invite all of the old school people to contribute. I'm sure their memories and

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perspectives were different from mine coming from the Scrum Master role. I worked with developers, QA and product people. There are still people here in the office that I could talk to, as well as reaching out to others who have moved on to create a collection of those memories."

"J" Burton: "If I asked you about your top one or two memories about working at Rally in the early days, what comes to mind?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "The day I became a Scrum Master! Before I went from being a QA engineer to a Scrum Master (<https://www.ca.com/us/ca-agile-academy/courses/certified-scrummaster.html>), Ryan Martens (founder of Rally) was our CTO and acting as our Scrum Master."

"J" Burton: "You mean that Rally had just *one* other Scrum Master before you became a Scrum Master?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "Yeah, at the time. I think you could say I was the first dedicated Scrum Master. Before that, we had others acting as the Scrum Master but we realized we needed someone dedicated to the role.

We were such a small team. I remember Ryan sent me an e-mail one evening, asking if I would be interested in being our Scrum Master. And I replied back, sure, let's have a conversation. At standup the next morning, he announced "Hey, guess what? Melissa is your new Scrum Master!" And the rest was history.

It was crazy! I didn't know what I was doing. Ryan was my sole resource in understanding the responsibilities of this role. At this time, there was limited documentation, you couldn't take a class, there were no conferences, trainings or certifications."

"J" Burton: "That *sounds* crazy! What year was this?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "It was 2006."

"J" Burton: "I guess this is blowing my mind. I'm just starting to wrap my mind around how young this methodology is. I just got into the tech industry in 2014. And when I was making the transition from academia to tech writing in the year before that, all the job openings that I looked at were all, "agile, agile, agile." So, it seemed to be pretty mainstream by then."

"Mel" Gallegos: "Yep, well, we didn't have any of that!"

"J" Burton: "And now you can take classes right here in this building!"

"Mel" Gallegos: "We teach it!"

"J" Burton: "We are not the only ones. There's this whole booming industry dedicated to teaching and [coaching agile](https://www.ca.com/us/collateral/service-offering/ca-agile-coaching.html) (<https://www.ca.com/us/collateral/service-offering/ca-agile-coaching.html>)."

"Mel" Gallegos: "Exactly. But we didn't have any of that back then. It was super, super new. There were no resources available. I couldn't just Google "agile" and find results."

It wasn't long after I became a Scrum Master that Jean Tabaka (Agile Fellow) released her book, [Collaboration Explained: Facilitation Skills for Software Project Leaders](https://www.amazon.com/Collaboration-Explained-Facilitation-Skills-for-Software-Project-Leaders-ebook/dp/B001U5VJWC) (<https://www.amazon.com/Collaboration-Explained-Facilitation-Software-Development-ebook/dp/B001U5VJWC>) —that was the main text that I latched onto and read over and over again. [Agile Retrospectives](https://www.amazon.com/Agile-Retrospectives-Making-Pragmatic-Programmers-ebook/dp/B00B03SRJW/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1541098107&sr=1-1&keywords=agile+retrospectives) (https://www.amazon.com/Agile-Retrospectives-Making-Pragmatic-Programmers-ebook/dp/B00B03SRJW/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1541098107&sr=1-1&keywords=agile+retrospectives) was another book by Esther Derby and Diane Larsen that I internalized as well. And then obviously, mentoring from Jean and Ryan helped shape how I became agile today."

"J" Burton: "I know it's hard to distill down everything that you learned from someone like Jean Tabaka, but if you were going to tell me one thing that you learned from her, what would that be?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "Jean just had this calmness about her, and it didn't matter how excited, or heated, or passionate a conversation could be, she just had this amazing way to handle any situation. I learned the most by watching her, and attending her first ever 'Scrum Master' and 'Leading Collaborative Meetings' classes.

She was amazing with people. When I think about what I would take away, it's the way she would say things. Such as, at the end of a planning meeting she would say, 'Given what

we know now, how do we feel about our plan?' And then we'd do a Fist of Five (<https://docs.ca.com/en-us/ca-agile-central/saas/release-planning>), (a vote of confidence). It's definitely things like that, what she would say and do that I try to carry on."

"J" Burton: "That actually could be a great title for a book, *Given What We Know Now*."

"Mel" Gallegos: "Yes, that'd be a great title and I think Jean would like it also."

"J" Burton: "Since I'm a relative newcomer to tech, I didn't realize how young agile was. It was only 2002 when Ryan Martens started creating a tool that would help people "do" agile. How do you think that impacted the way people practice agile, or use agile software (<https://www.ca.com/us/products/ca-agile-central.html>) today?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "I think there were lots of things that impacted how people do agile. The thing is, people didn't know what agile was at the time. Ryan Martens and Tim Miller (Chairman/CEO) were proponents at helping push the concept internally and externally."

Onboarding Jean Tabaka to the team also contributed to external messaging. Jean was among the first to evangelize on this different concept, which was huge because we didn't have agile coaches at the time.

Internally, agile was helping us shape the tool differently. Here's a great example: If you look at the web services API today, you'll see that we still have an object called 'hierarchical requirement.' That is a very "RUP" term. It wasn't labeled what we commonly refer to as a 'user story'. That tells you how new the term user story was at that time and how Rally might have popularized it when we started to use it later."

"J" Burton: "Was there an "a-ha" moment for you when it came to doing agile?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "During one of my first planning meetings with Ryan, we had been talking about some work that we wanted to commit to and performed a Fist of Five. I was the only one

who threw up a 2, which meant that I was not comfortable moving forward with the plan we had developed.

I was scared to throw up a 2, but I did. Ryan asked what my concerns were. That was my 'a-ha' moment. I was thrilled to know that someone cared about what I had to say. In the past, as a QA engineer I had felt that no one really cared about my opinions. We were just expected to "hurry up and test" what and when we were told.

But with agile, I was able to communicate my concerns to the team; we had a productive conversation then made adjustments. After that, when he came back to me saying okay, does that change your 2 to a 3? I was like, "WOW!" Now I can change to a 3. I can move forward. That was my ultimate "a-ha" moment!"

"J" Burton: "The old Rally *has* come a long way from its early startup days; it was acquired in 2015 by CA Technologies. In what ways did that acquisition, that sort of elevation to a global audience, change Rally as it evolved into being CA Agile Central?"

"Mel" Gallegos: "I think having CA Technologies acquire Rally probably boosted the use of the tool and of agile internally for CA Technologies. It's had a huge impact on how we work, what agile means and how we apply it within a global company. Having such a big company adopt agile and try to help other businesses do the same has been monumental in selling CA Agile Central to other companies. All of that has been positive from an internal perspective. From an external perspective, I feel like there's been a little bit of a hit because of the name change. However, it is still an amazing tool."

"J" Burton: "There's a phrase in the industry "are you eating your own dog food?" And I love the dog food! I loved using Rally before, and love using CA Agile Central now. I'm wondering, did you hear through the grapevine after the acquisition by CA Technologies that someone internally had used Rally and that had motivated the acquisition?"

"Mel" Gallegos: No. But during the acquisition I did work with customers who had become customers during the acquisition; so, it was just a matter of getting them accustomed to the new name. And at Agile 2018, and I ran into a few people who still hadn't realized that CA Agile Central is the new Rally.

"J" Burton: What do you think it was about the original branding of Rally that was so sticky?

"Mel" Gallegos: I think Rally was so sticky because we were pioneers, one of the first companies to have a tool and services. We started our annual *Rally On* conferences, which provided an innovative space for the agile community to learn and grow. These powerful components helped... And I remember that Ryan had this little Mini Cooper, and I think that in his mind, Rally was more like a sport, embodying a fast, racing culture— being *agile*. I remember our early UI was completely different, representing more of a car theme. So that was very *different*.

"J" Burton: Now, CA Technologies is on the cusp of being acquired by Broadcom. I'm curious what you think a hardware company might bring to the table to positively impact "Rally", or maybe vice versa?

"Mel" Gallegos: I think they will understand how agile can help processes. Agile doesn't apply to just software, it can be applied to the hardware industry. It's more about bringing the work forward, seeing it from top down, making everything transparent. Getting the right people to talk each other. It's more about forming the right teams and building the trust.

"J" Burton: Thanks for talking with me today, employee #21!

"Mel" Gallegos: You're welcome!

As we look toward the future, as we zoom into the third decade of the 21st century, some things are unknown. But talking with Melissa "Mel" Gallegos about the history of Rally, made me certain of one thing: agile, and the tools and services that support it, such as CA Agile Central, are going strong. The road that brought us here is the same one that stretches out before us, shimmering with possibility.

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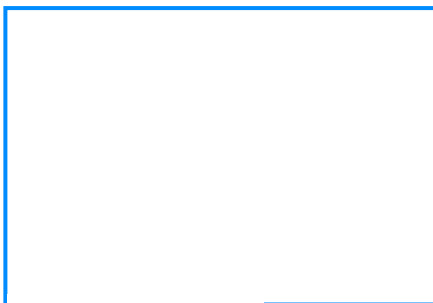
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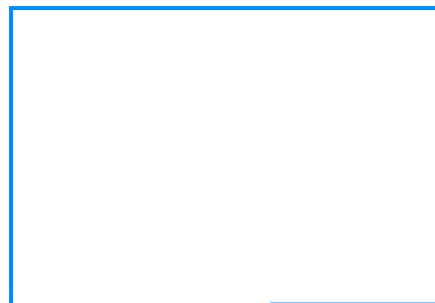
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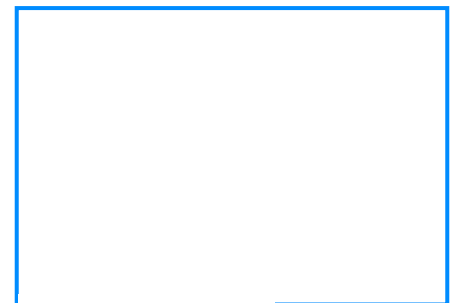
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