How to become Agile

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• Independent coach and consultant
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• As engineer
  • C++, Smalltalk, Java
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How to become Agile

Disclaimer

• This talk is not about
  • Introducing / explaining agile development

• This talk is about
  • Introducing agility to a project or to an organization

How to become Agile

Two Typical Approaches

• Guerilla tactic
  • Self-organization
  • Establishing agile development practices

• Supreme command
  • Roles and responsibilities
    • E.g. steering and feedback by customer
  • Incorporation of whole organization
    • E.g. infrastructure, quality assurance
Successful Transition Impossible without Management

Guerilla tactic difficult to succeed
• Customer involvement
  • Steering through product owner
  • Highest business value first
• Frequent delivery
  • Small releases
  • Frequent valuable feedback

Command and Control Transitioning Unfeasible

Supreme command tactic difficult to succeed
• Contradicts agility
  • Trust is already lost right from the beginning
  • Self organizing team?
  • Development practices can hardly be dictated
    • E.g. pair programming,
      even unit testing
Commitment from Everyone Necessary

- **Management and customer awareness, by:**
  - Project situation, such as
    - Market demand, new domain, failure, frequent changes, ...
  - Reports, such as
    - Forrester research, Standish report, ...
  - Articles, talks

- **Developer awareness, by:**
  - Conferences, trainings
    - Cutting-edge

- **Everyone, by:**
  - Retrospектив

Transitioning to Agility implies Change

- **Understanding change**
  - Elisabeth Kübler-Ross:
    - Denial
    - Anger
    - Bargaining
    - Depression
    - Acceptance
  - Virginia Satir:
    - Old status quo
    - Foreign element
    - Chaos
    - Transforming idea
    - Practice and integration
    - New status quo

- **In general**
  - Recommended reading:
    - Linda Rising, Mary Lynn Manns: Fearless Change
Often: Pain Threshold supports Change

- Typical quotes that will support the change:
  - "Everything that we will do differently will be better..“
  - "We can do anything, except the things we’re doing now..“
- Pain threshold is typically reached jointly
  - But often expressed / experienced differently:
    - Giving up
    - Cynicism
    - ...
- But: Not everyone has the power and believe to start over
Yet: Pain Threshold often Eases Change only Superficial

- Typical quotes that make it hard:
  - "This new idea is just old wine in new skin."
  - "Sounds cool, but nothing will change anyway."
- Generally:
  - Skepticism is healthy and natural
    - Highly enthusiastic people can be difficult as well
  - It’s important that everyone is getting heard

Pilot Project

- Often: Wishful thinking
- Moreover: Cream of the Crop often not helpful
  - Would have been successful anyway
    - No role model
    - No realistic (acceptable) conclusions
- Start with a regular team
  - Helpful if they are at least a bit keen on trying it
- Start with a regular project
How to become Agile

Rough Schedule

- Preparation
  - Talk, book reading, ...
- Retrospective
- „Readiness / Enabling“ Workshop
- Training
  - Ideally: Customized for project
  - Result: The team's own process
- Mentoring / coaching
- Sustaining change

Retrospective

- Reflect on:
  - Either past project
  - Or project so far
- Advantage:
  - No presentation of solutions the team is not aware of
  - Team is developing their own solutions
    - Taking ownership
    - First step to self-organization
  - Insight about necessary change
  - Awareness of good practices
Readiness / Enabling Workshop

- **Workshop objective**
  - E.g. Basis for decision for introducing agility
- **Applicability in the organization**
  - What's done already?
  - What's easy to apply?
  - What's really difficult to apply?
  - What's impossible to do?
- **Adjustments and process improvements**
  - What makes it difficult?
  - How could we benefit from the solution?
- **Next steps**
  - Precise necessary actions

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(Customized) Training

- **Education about agile development**
- **Setting up a concrete process**
  - When and where will the daily synchronization take place?
  - Develop your first product backlog (list of user stories)
  - Agree on roles and responsibilities
  - Estimate and prioritize first set of user stories
  - Agree on iteration length
  - Plan your first iteration
  - ...
Mentoring / Coaching

- Passionate change agent, who
  - Sees the difficulties
  - States problems
  - Insists on finding solutions
  - Helps implementing solutions
  - Is trustworthy, competent and respected

- It is helpful to empower someone inside the organization
  - Someone who has been there, done that
  - You might need some support from outside at first

Supporting Activities

- Offering
  - Talks, articles, conferences, ...

- For all roles
  - Management
  - Customer
  - Developer
  - QA
  - ...

- Three key roles:
  - Project leader
  - Passionate change agent
  - Architect / technical leader
How to become Agile

Steps in Learning

• It is easier to start with a process out-of-the-box
  • But: it is still important to understand the agile value system
  • Adjustments via regular retrospectives
• Respect the learning process
  • Shu
    • Copying techniques without modification
  • Ha
    • Reflection on meaning and purpose
  • Ri
    • Originally thinking and developing from background knowledge

Sustaining Change

• A few passionate people who care
  • Till the new status quo is reached
• Mentoring for newbies
  • Newbies work with seasoned team members
  • Foster parents support newbies
• Celebrate achievements
  • Share experiences
• Keep on learning
Lessons Learned

- Commitment from all sides necessary
- Change is never smooth
  - You will have to go through chaos
- Retrospective creates awareness
  - Helps later on to continuously improve
- Readiness / enabling workshop gives everyone a voice
- Customized training provides a jump-start
- Change agent provides overall support

Many Thanks!

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