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[VersionOne.com/AgilePoster.asp](http://VersionOne.com/AgilePoster.asp)

Agile Mentor May 2008

# Agile Dad

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### Credits:

#### • Agile Project Management: Empowering the Team:

V. Lee Henson CST  
<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

#### • Changing the Tool Not the Process:

V. Lee Henson CST  
<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

#### • What is 'Agile Dad'?

V. Lee Henson CST  
<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

#### • Are we There Yet?

V. Lee Henson CST  
<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

May 2008

Agile Mentor  
Agile World

# Agile Mentor



## About the Author:

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This Certified Scrum Trainer's experience spans a broad array of technical software production roles and responsibilities. Lee has worked hands on as a GUI web developer, quality assurance analyst, automated test engineer, senior product manager, senior project manager, ScrumMaster, agile coach, consultant, and ADDIE training professional. He has worked with hundreds of teams to assist them in successful implementation of thousands of projects. His client list includes Fortune 500 companies, Government sector projects, small and large software production facilities, and multiple successful large scale e-commerce implementations.

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## Agile Project Management: Empowering the Team.

A recent real life adventure with my children quickly turned into an agile project management learning opportunity.

Not very long ago, I had an opportunity to teach two of my children how to ride their bike without training wheels. Go ahead, call me the official 'Agile Nerd', but as I taught them this basic right of passage over the course of several sessions I learned a lot about how Agile Teams learn and adhere to basic principles.

This adventure started a couple of years ago when we bought them each their very own bike (with training wheels of course). I liken this to the Director or Manager within the organization who decides to implement basic Agile Principles. The manufacturer adjusts the training wheels to be firmly planted on the ground while riding allowing the child to feel a sense of security and accomplishment as they learn the basic principles of how riding a bicycle really works. Beginning Agile teams need to feel this same sense of security.

With the training wheels still attached, I cannot begin to count the number of times I got to watch my children turn the wheel to far, or over correct in an attempt to stay on the sidewalk. I liken this to a team sampling basic agile principles within their organization. Some attempts firm up confidence and reinforce the basic principles of agile process. Others cause the agile bike to go freakishly out of control and flip right off course. Over time, teams realize what works best for them and they make needed adjustments.

Once the kids felt pretty confident, out came the wrench. I simply loosened the bolts and adjusted the training wheels to where they were not always touching the ground. At any given time one of the training wheels could touch the ground, but never both at the same time. Likewise, once the team has a pretty solid understanding of the basic principles, the time comes to make adjustments and fine tune. Holding a solid retrospective can help a team regain focus and point out areas where they are successful as well as areas for needed improvement. A good Agile coach or ScrumMaster can help teams press forward with increased accuracy and efficiency.

# Agile Dad

## Are We There Yet?

How many times have we collectively in one form or another wondered are we there yet? When it comes to implementing and or perfecting agile processes within your organization the answer is most commonly not yet. What we have to remember is the greatest benefit of an agile working environment is the ability we have to inspect and adapt.

This creates opportunity for continuous improvement cycle after cycle. Having worked in various roles on many agile teams, I have experienced first-hand that each team begins clicking at a different time and many teams take great strides but never seem to click.

What I have found is that the teams that take their time establishing their foundation are in general the teams that yield the greatest success. While many still try to measure a team's success based on productivity and other mundane measures, the fact is teams need to slow down before they can sprint. We need to remember that the marathon has never been won in the first hundred yards!

Make the team part of the working vision. Provide the team with the tools it needs to be successful. Empower the team to make decisions with regard to how they get the job done. Watch the team thrive in a near perfect setting.



Just when the teams think they have everything perfectly under control, there is almost always a change of course. For my son it was when he was riding his bike to the park and one of his training wheels flew completely off. The metal was bent so badly there was no way to reattach the wheel in question. At first I thought this was a good thing as it would teach him to ride with only one training wheel. I soon learned otherwise as he discovered that he could lean to one side and have the stability of the single training wheel. Where I was hoping this would teach him balance, this only taught him to lean very awkwardly.

Most teams need a little boost at some point to keep them fresh and balanced. In many cases, bringing in a strong Agile trainer who has served time in the trenches with many teams over a recent period allows the team to see that they really do not need to lean on that last training wheel. This reinforcement of what works best from a mouth outside of the organization teaches a team that they can be self organizing and balanced.

The trick here is that the team needs to be ready to remove the training wheels. This also means that you as an Agile manager have provided them with all of the tools they need to be successful as a team. (Collocated areas, white boards, team meeting area, effective project management tools, etc.)

Finally, the moment of truth arrives. My son came to me and asked for me to take the training wheels off all together. I have to admit I was more scared than he was as I thought he may need more time to practice prior to this noteworthy occasion.

Upon his insistence that he was ready I obliged and removed the training wheels all together. I in the role of manager needed to realize that letting go of the reigns did not mean I was losing control, it meant I was empowering a team of amazing individuals to achieve their maximum potential.

## Agile Project Management: Empowering the Team Continued

**“Most teams need a little boost at some point to keep them fresh and balanced.”**

– V. Lee Henson CST

It took a few hard falls, many scrapes and cuts and just shy of pint of blood for him to finally get the concept, but he did it! I watched him take off across the parking lot and tears filled my eyes as I heard him emphatically proclaim "I did it! Daddy Look at me! I am riding my bike!" I remember having this very same feeling (yes, for the record I did have tears in my eyes), when I sat in my very first retrospective where the team completed 100% of what they committed to.

**“Letting go of the reigns did not mean I was losing control”**

– V. Lee Henson CST

I watched the team stroll into the room with their heads up high. The high fives were flying.

The team was giving all of the credit to each other for the success. And it was that moment when the team realized and proclaimed "We did it! Look at us! We have mastered this iteration and applied Agile principles. We did it as a team!" All I was left to do was look on with tear filled eyes and say congratulations on a job well done!



Needless to say, once sister got a load of brother riding fast, confident, and strong without his training wheels, out came the wrench again, this time to remove hers. A team that is successful in their implementation of Agile often serves as an example to other Agile teams on ways they can make adjustments where needed to help them achieve success.

We can all master riding our Agile bicycle if we focus on the foundation that allows us to remember and apply the principles that got us to our initial successful iteration.

This may require us to take the bike to the shop for a tune-up, but we all know the fact is once you learn to successfully learn to ride the bike without training wheels, it is a practice that you will remember your entire life.

Your team will love you for making the agile transition a smooth one, and your company is bound to thank you once they realize the increase in morale & productivity of the newly empowered agile teams.

It is never too late to put on the helmet and start pedaling!

Of Note:

Each team has its own unique personality and adopts each agile principle in a different way. My goal as AgileDad is to provide you with a healthy combination of real-world experiences and practical solutions to some of the agile communities most perplexing outstanding issues. You should always make certain first and foremost that any attempted solution not only meets your organizations needs, but also fits well into the company culture. Healthy agile teams thrive only in an environment where they can be loved and nurtured. Empower the team to be successful and watch the results forever bloom.

## This Month's Agile Q&A

### Q: How do we become better at estimating and planning?

A: I could go on forever with regard to this topic and still not do it the justice of a very dear friend of mine. Mike Cohn has long been considered the industry expert on agile estimating and planning and covers this topic at great length. Some of the information you can find in his teachings include:

Why conventional prescriptive planning fails and why agile planning works

How to estimate feature size using story points and ideal days—and when to use each



How and when to re-prioritize

How to prioritize features using both financial and nonfinancial approaches

How to split large features into smaller, more manageable ones

How to plan iterations and predict your team's initial rate of progress

How to schedule projects that have unusually high uncertainty or schedule-related risk

How to estimate projects that will be worked on by multiple teams

Please visit: <http://www.mountaingoatsoftware.com> for more information.

## EYE ON IT Changing the Tool Not the Process?

As more and more agile project management tools emerge on the market, one common situation is almost always brought to my attention:

We have been using the same tools for testing, tracking defects, and checking in code forever. How can I find a tool that allows the team members to spend large amounts of time in the tools they feel most comfortable working in and still allow for the information and reporting of what they have achieved be recorded in a central repository without having to create duplicate entries?

This creates a perplexing situation. Many of the agile project management tool vendors out there profess integration with external off the shelf products. When selecting a tool to help facilitate the hub of your agile business process, you need to make 100% certain you ask about expected integrations and what you need to do to make them work in your current process!

## SOFTWARE Super Villain SDK Contest #2



The folks at VersionOne are at it again! The first thousand dollars crowned a deserving winner. Sandra McLeod from ED Financial Services walked away with a little heavier pockets after creating her Story Board Gadget. The SDK makes it possible to build really cool gadgets that will ultimately make the VersionOne user experience better.

The self-serving reason they are putting on this contest again, is to get feedback from our community about the SDK. They strongly encourage feedback from users of the SDK and will follow up with entrants to see how the experience was.

More details at:  
[www.versionone.com/sdkcontest/](http://www.versionone.com/sdkcontest/)