



Free Resources

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<http://www.leadingagile.com>

Credits:

• Agile But?:

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

• Leading Agile:

Mike Cottmeyer CSM

<http://www.leadingagile.com>

• Agile Q&A:

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

Agile Mentor October 2008

Agile Dad

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Agile Mentor
Agile World

Agile Mentor



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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 But: The Silver Bullet Approach

I have recently been invited to train on a number of different engagements at a variety of organizations. One of the approaches I use when it comes to training in general is to gain an idea of just how agile an organization is.

Part of our human nature is not to admit when things are not going exactly as planned. We always want to say we may not be perfect but we are doing the best we can.

Some other organizations have yet a different approach. They 'try' agile and decide that since every part of the process is not perfect, they must need a tool to set them on the correct course.

In other words, nobody likes to admit that they are a faltering organization looking for help to get back on track. Even if they do, many organizations insist that they have instituted an agile method within their organization.

We use Scrum but we do not follow all of the meetings. We do XP but we have elected not to pair program. We do iterative development, we have decided as an organization to align our iterations with our annual release, as in one iteration per year. These solutions may sound like they are from the twilight zone when in fact these are things I have heard time & time again.

Often times I sit down with a prospective client and run through an Agile Checklist. This allows me to see areas where a team may be struggling and it helps the client realize just how agile they may or may not be.

Inevitably, the next question is now that we have identified the issues we need to work on, what is the proposed solution? In an uncertain economy where we should all be keeping an eye on the budget, organizations do not generally have money to buy a full tool solution complete with on-site training and coaching, with a full support contract and a per user license fee. I am often told we have budget for only one of these solutions.

Which solution is indeed the 'silver bullet solution'? The answer may not be as easy as it seems. We all realize the benefits of having a great tool in place to help us manage backlogs and get thorough reporting from an agile backdrop. No team can deny the benefits of having a sound agile coach on-site to assist teams in establishing a sound agile foundation. Once again, this affords the question, which solution provides the greatest bang for my shrinking dollar? My answer to this question is a lot more simple than most of you may think...

Agile Dad



Do you have a potion or other solution to help Agile teams be successful? Do you have a business that would like to advertise to hundreds of persistent subscribers of this newsletter? Do you have something to say to the Agile community and are looking for a platform to publish your thoughts? Look no further! AgileDad has decided to open up a portion of this monthly newsletter to any who would like to tell the community more about their organizations or ideas when it comes to Agile. Please submit all articles for consideration to: leehenson@gmail.com

Put your advertising dollars to work for you and reach out to a targeted audience that focuses on and believes in Agile methods! The map on the blog tells the story! People all over the WORLD are reading the Agile Mentor Newsletter! Organizations looking to advertise in this space please contact: leehenson@gmail.com



Agile But: The Silver Bullet Approach Continued

“We need to make strides to no longer be an ‘Agile but’ organization. “
 – V. Lee Henson CST

The solution is to make a commitment to no longer be an agile but organization. We need to take a step back, take a deep breath and decide which agile method fits best within our culture.

Once we have selected the method, step two is to do an honest unbiased assessment of our current process to measure just how agile we really are. Once we have completed the assessment, we should put together a checklist of changes we would like to see within the organization that are simple to do and or free to implement. Notice we still have not spent a dollar yet!

Next we need to set the correct expectations for everyone engaged in this endeavor from the senior level executive all the way down to the front line worker. No success will ever emerge without proper understanding of the roles and responsibilities for each party within the organization.

This could mean bringing in an outside representative (coach), to assist in making certain everyone on the team has a solid foundation and understands the process.

For some, this could equate to a humbling experience. You first have to be able to admit that what you have been trying to do is just not working out. The fact is, once you have reached this milestone, you are well on the path to Agile success.

Once you have worked with an Agile Coach to make the needed changes to establish a sound foundation and have buy-in from all of the people involved the next step may be to select tools for your toolkit to help make your life easier for planning, grooming, and managing an iterative development backlog. Whether your tools consist of cards and white-boards, an excel spreadsheet, or a web based tool solution, make it affordable and do an evaluation of many solutions before making a final decision.

Once you have selected a tool solution, (keep in mind even the large commercial tools have free versions out there), you may still have some money left to invest in lunch for the team to celebrate and kickoff!

I can already read your mind, what happened to the silver bullet? This solution is multi-tiered and a bit more complex than some of you may have expected. The point of this edition of Agile Mentor is intended to point out that there really is no silver bullet solution. In order for teams to find success in agile or anything else in life for that matter, they need to work hard and endure to the end.

The most challenging part of the process could be identifying the Agile Champions within your organization to work as the leaders & carry the torch forward to spread throughout your team, department, business unit, and ultimately organization.

“There truly is no silver bullet solution.”
 – V. Lee Henson CST

the torch forward to spread throughout your team, department, business unit, and ultimately organization.

The reward is priceless. Once the team discovers that Agile is a reality and realistic expectations have been set from top management down, the team will have the chance it needs to grow and be productive while engaging in meaningful work.



The Agile Checklist:

On multiple occasions I have been asked for the Agile checklist I use to help teams through best determining their needs. The truth be told, I have never taken the time to put all of the thoughts in my head on to paper.

As your AgileDad, I owe you the commitment that in the month of November, I will take this on as a special project. Until then, I have provided the excel spreadsheet scorecard just to get you past the entry level of defining where you are in the Agile process. The Agile checklist is coming soon.

November - 2008

Better Software: Agile Development Practices Nov. 12th -13th Orlando, FL :

Are you planning to make the trip down to sunny Orlando, FL? If so, make certain to stop by the VersionOne booth and say hello. Also make certain you do not miss one of the hottest sessions on track for this conference!

On Thursday November 13th at 12:45PM I will be presenting: "With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility" Empowering the Agile Team

Managers at many levels are often afraid to let go of the reins for fear of losing control of the project (and their position of power). V. Lee Henson explains the benefits of letting go and outlines the expectations of a responsible, empowered agile team. Through presentation of multiple real-world scenarios and years of project management experience, Lee will show that often our own human nature is the greatest impediment to being a better manager. Lee focuses on the attributes of an effective agile manager/leader, the expectations and attributes of an empowered agile team, the pitfalls and warning signs of a "damaged" team, and the rewards an organization can expect from adhering to basic agile principles. You will leave with the tools to help any agile team become more empowered.

This Month's Agile Q&A

Q: Where can I find a good Agile tool evaluation checklist?

A:VersionOne offers a great Agile tool evaluation checklist called:

The Agile Tool Evaluator Guide.

At first I was leary, thinking that the guide would be more slanted toward selecting the obvious solution above all others. Although they are in no way humble when it comes to displaying just how robust the solution really is, I feel the guide is helpful in pointing out some of the less obvious things someone doing a tool evaluation may not have thought of. Even if VersionOne is not on your short list of tools, the free guide is a must have!



Q: Does AgileDad have a website outside of the blog space?

A:Great question! And the answer is... Yes! We are in the process of building out AgileDad.com to be a one stop resource for all of your agile coaching, training, and consulting needs.

The best part about this is even if you do not have an immediate need for any of what's listed above, the website will be filled with loads of white papers, slide decks, presentations, and book previews that make the site a viable stop for anyone looking to learn more about Agile.

The launch of AgileDad.Com is coming soon!

EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

November 12th-13th 2008
 SQE Agile Development Practices Orlando, FL
 Session T8 at 12:45 PM on the 13th = With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility – Empowering the Agile Team

<http://www.sqe.com/agiledevpractagil/Concurrent/Default.aspx?DaD=Thursday#T8>

Come by and say hi at the VersionOne booth and pick up a free t-shirt!

AgileDad Course Private Course Offerings:

Private course offerings are available including:

- Agile For Executives
- Agile Boot Camp
- Agile Business Requirements
- ScrumMaster Certification
- Scrum Product Owner Certification
- Managing & Grooming The Product Backlog

On-Site Agile Coaching and Consulting are also available.

For more information or to book a course today, please contact:

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