



Free Resources

Are you looking for another great resource to learn more about Agile? Leading Agile is an outstanding blog with quite a bit of traffic. Visit the blog at: <http://www.leadingagile.com>

Credits:

• Agile Theory vs Workplace Reality

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

• Falling for Agile or Flailing?:

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

• Agile Q&A:

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

Agile Mentor January 2009

Agile Dad

14643 South River Chase Road
Herriman, UT 84096
<http://agiledad.blogspot.com>

January 2009

Agile Mentor
Agile World

Agile Mentor



About the Author:

V. LEE HENSON CST

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.

lee@agiledad.com

this issue

Agile Theory vs. Workplace Reality **P.1**

Agile Theory vs. Workplace Reality **P.2**

Agile Methods **P.3**

Resources & Credits **P.4**

Agile Theory vs. Workplace Reality

Agile Theory tells us that the grass truly is greener on the other side. Yet anyone who has attempted to implement agile practices across their organization, business unit, department, or in some cases even team has come to realize that we are consistently faced with real-world challenges and issues. My goal is to present the challenges that have resulted in wins and losses and the priceless lessons learned from each pitfall and success.

I will briefly touch on three projects and share examples from each that reinforce the effectiveness of many agile principles when they are correctly introduced and implemented effectively within a business organizational unit. These examples will include the following:

- Implementing / Scaling of Agile in a small, medium & large scale deployment and the challenges that come with each.
- Bringing people into the fold – helping management see the benefits of agile methodologies.
- Bringing better insight to planning, development, and integration.
- Creating visibility from the top down and the bottom up – Finding the tools that work best for your team or teams.

The smallest agile implementation I have been involved with was working with a technologies group providing services to a State Police agency. We were a group of five and I was an acting developer and part time scrum master. After reading a short article on the benefits of agile practices in the early 2000's, we were determined as a group to give it a shot.

The largest challenge we faced was figuring out how to take this wonderful article and process it into actual work. We had grown accustomed to our large and heavy CMM process and were very good at writing the required documentation. Going agile meant we would have to stop all of the heavy upfront planning and get to work.

Poor planning, slow development, and lack of funds were a short list of the smaller challenges that came our way. I am happy to report that the end result was an amazing system that is still in use today. Persistency, consistency, and solid daily reporting helped us stick with it and see things through to completion. The retrospective taught us all a great deal in general, but more than anything it taught me of the importance tied to a timely and well organized iteration.

Agile Dad



Falling for Agile or Flailing

Many people out there are searching for the Agile Holy Grail. People have a hard time believing with a solution so simple that there cannot be a silver bullet approach to adoption and acceptance. The truth is more organizations try to add their own flavor into the process based on the way they were used to doing things and find themselves more violently flailing than those who adopt a more vanilla Agile process.

As hard as I try to discourage teams from leaning too far to the left or right, many teams still feel it is a needed part of the Agile transition Process.

To me teams who fall for Agile and adopt the entire process are the ones with the highest success rate. You need to truly be passionate about not only what you do, but also how it gets done. The key is to continue to listen and focus on what makes sense.

Ken Schwaber said it best, It really is all about common sense. Now go out and do something sensible.

V. Lee Henson - AgileDad



Agile Theory vs. Workplace Reality Continued

“A good hard failure, the kind where your face hurts for weeks, is often the medicine needed to learn and grow from “

– V. Lee Henson CST

The medium sized implementation also dealt with building software applications for law enforcement agencies. When I interviewed for this position, I felt for certain I had found the place to call home. This organization had buy-in from the VP level down and was interested in implementing Scrum as their agile methodology. I was brought on as a senior program manager and promptly sent to Washington for ScrumMaster Certification from the legend himself Ken Schwaber.

I returned to work completely energized and ready to take on the world! I was initially responsible for three development teams which included a representative from Quality Assurance, Documentation, Training & Development, and Customer Support in addition to the standard five developers.

What I could not be prepared for were the challenges that lied on the road ahead. Now that I had my first level of ScrumMaster Certification,

It was known throughout the organization that I would be the person responsible for dropping the hammer and forcing the adoption of the agile process to a completely non-agile group.

I quickly learned that this was a huge change from the process that had been in place for some time and the product line managers were none too happy with the swift and sudden changes.

This caught me off guard because every book I had read advised me to jump in feet first.

Policies were slowly created and implemented in closed door meetings that brought the unit further and further away from the goal with which I was originally hired to bring them towards. Through all of the frustration, I was still able to prove the value of visibility and able to implement many agile principles, but overall the group did not have a clear grasp of what they really wanted.

I was placed in charge of seven teams and watched as things slowly turned back to the way they were long before I ever got there.

This taught me that no matter how good you are as an agile coach or scrum master, there are times where even with all of the right equipment it is tough to make a strong enough impact without support for key players.

“Every book I had read advised me to jump in feet first.

– V. Lee Henson CST

I also had the opportunity to learn about the power of a good retrospective. Retrospective sessions proved to be the

the catalyst that helped the teams understand the process better and afforded them the willpower to press on.

I was employed as a senior program manager for a large online services organization and I was placed in charge of a company-wide agile deployment project. This time around I was certain not to fall in the traps I faced in previous agile implementations.



I insured that we had buy-in from the top down and a grassroots effort from the ground up. We started with a couple of beta teams, a solid training session for program, project, and product managers to help them realize the impact agile practices would have and present the benefits to all involved parties. We had architects researching tools that tie in to visual studio to help us track iteration progress. We had story boards that are updated daily and consistent daily standup meetings. We played mountain goat poker and planned out our iterations.

We researched tools to integrate with our build and defect testing systems.

Although the road was rocky to say the least, some may say the third time is a charm. Many may find it a hard pill to swallow but a good hard failure, the kind where your face hurts for weeks, is often the medicine needed to learn and grow from the experiences you face. Accept the challenge, Get buy-in, Implement change, Learn from the retrospective, Experience success.

Have Something to Say?:

We are all EARS! We want to hear your feedback and thank you for your contribution to support the continued success of this newsletter.

The world is listening, what do you have to say?

Sound off in the next Agile Mentor Newsletter.



This Month's Agile Q&A

Q: Can I advertise in the Agile Mentor Newsletter?

A: We would LOVE to have your business sponsor an issue of the Agile Mentor Newsletter!

To get the process rolling send an email to lee@agiledad.com or leehenson@gmail.com and we will get our advertising specialist in touch with your organization!



Q: How many people read this Newsletter?

A: Great question! Based on the Feedjit presence and the number of emails I have been receiving regarding this publication, I would say we are picking up steam rather quickly!

I just hope I do not run out of topics that have value to post here! ☺

EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

Certified ScrumMaster Offerings:

March 31st – April 1st Lehi, UT
Just south of Salt Lake City and north of Provo, UT.
<http://www.scrumalliance.org/courses/4545-certified-scrummaster>

April 20th-21st Alpharetta, GA at the VersionOne Headquarters
Just outside of Atlanta, GA
<http://www.scrumalliance.org/courses/4507-certified-scrummaster>

Orlando Scrum Gathering –
March 16-18 Orlando, FL

Better Software Conference -
June 8-12 Las Vegas, NV

AgileDad 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:

Lee Henson – 801-898-0295
lee@agiledad.com
Steve Davis – 801-361-2643
davisbase@mac.com