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V. Lee Henson CST

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Agile Mentor March 2009

## Agile Dad

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

March 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](mailto:lee@agiledad.com)

## Scrum Gathering - Orlando

All was gathered in! The recent Scrum Gathering in Orlando brought on a host of interesting topics and a great mix of interesting people. Many of the talks and presentations were geared toward the Scrum community reaching out to the rest of the Agile (and waterfall), world and taking action. The message was clear and consistent, in order for the continued adoption of Scrum or any other Agile practice to continue to broaden its reach, we needed to be more tolerant and explain the value behind what we do by proving ourselves through the outcome of our work.

One talk that especially stood out was hosted by Dr. Alistair Cockburn and Ken Schwaber where they did a lightning round discussion on various Scrum related topics. There were many "A-Ha moments" that came from the discussion. Here are the top ten topics that were discussed and a brief summary of each.

The first topic identified was that people needed to be treated more like adults. People are treated like they are of great value at home, yet we do not treat them like they are worth the 100K plus we are paying them at work. They are responsible for managing tons in their life already. Why do we not let them carry this same value into the workplace and continue where they left off? This left me thinking about the difference between how we perceive ourselves to be versus how we behave.

The second topic focused on people versus resources. It felt like a continuous flow of the previous conversation except this is where the theory of the topic met the practical nature of how I think. We were challenged to go home and tell our spouse that he/she is our most favorite resource. Ouch! I have a feeling that would not go over so well. Yet in the workplace we often refer to team members as resources and not people. Can a person be divided into many small functional chunks? The message was crystal clear. We need to start treating people like people and not like units.

Third we discussed the best / most practical way to ask the team how they feel about a given topic or to gain their insight. Ken made this look very simple. He used a bell like chime and said that was his official 'ask the team' device. The point he clearly drove home is that they are doing the work and they know more about what they are building than we ever will. Whenever we are in doubt or need a little reassurance, asking the team is not a bad idea. If we cannot trust the team, then who can we trust? Remember, the team is a group of people that were formed because they are the best at what they do. Respect them and treat them that way.

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## Agile Dad



## Product or Service Review?

Do you have a product or service that you would like to tell the Agile Community about? Here is your chance! For the first time ever, AgileDad will be accepting applications to review products and or services offered by the Agile community! What better way for you to learn about the greatest new tool or product than to have it featured right here in your favorite Agile newsletter!

The rules are simple:

- 1) It must be Agile
- 2) The product and or service must be made available to everyone
- 3) You must email [lee@agiledad.com](mailto:lee@agiledad.com) for additional details.

It really is that easy! Do not wait! Take advantage of this offer now before we become drowned with pieces to review!

Lee ~ AgileDad



## Scrum Gathering Orlando - Continued

“Often times the mirror does not reveal the fairest of them all”  
– V. Lee Henson CST

The fourth topic of discussion surrounded the concept of doing what makes sense. I remember being in one of Ken's very early ScrumMaster Certification classes where he challenged us frequently to figure out whether what we were planning to do as a solution actually made sense. If we were unsure he always fell towards asking the team. Alistair reminded us that Agile processes in general are successful because of our ability to Inspect and Adapt frequently.

Fifth, we had a chance to dive a little deeper and talk about what Scrum really is. Scrum is not a free gift. You still need to work hard for Scrum to be successful. Many people feel like once they read a couple of books and have a Certified ScrumMaster on staff, the rest will fall into place. This rang especially true to me as I have been trying for some time to teach people the importance of the fundamentals. Many people take the basics for granted and expect for change to happen as dictated by superiors.

Once we regain our focus on the fundamentals, Scrum will continue to grow in adoption.

The sixth topic taught us that Scrum is a mirror. Like it or not, Scrum exposes the often unclean underbelly of things that happen within an organization.

In order for us to be successful, we need to be able to accept that we are not perfect in the process and look to improve where needed in order to get better. Often times the mirror does not reveal the fairest of them all.

Our seventh topic was an in depth look at Scrum with all beginners. The fact is, Scrum with beginners produces crap! No offense to teams just starting out, but I tend to agree. Anytime we shorten the timeline from months to weeks, we should expect a result that may not meet our expectation. The good news is with a little patience, teams will improve and people will eventually get things done.

The key here is to understand that the team will get better as they inspect and adapt.

The eighth topic proved to be even more interesting. Alistair pointed out that Scrum is a genetic algorithm. In other words, the biggest mistake we can do in adopting Scrum is to create a process which is mandated that everyone must follow.

“We need to regain our focus on the fundamentals”

– V. Lee Henson CST

This prevents teams from focusing on continuous ‘us’ improvement and forces teams to rely on prescribed procedure.

People need to be able to focus on individual performance improvement and teams need to be able to inspect and adapt regularly. If we fail to allow these retrospective sessions to occur, we are setting ourselves up for imminent failure. We need to trust and rely on the people we work with to make the choices that are best for all parties involved.

The ninth topic squelched a common misconception. The way in which the topic was introduced was quite unique. The team does not fail a Sprint. The Sprint fails as a result of the actions taken or not taken during the course of the sprint. The focus needs to remain on the work we completed not on the effort we put into completing the work as individuals.

Ultimately, success will be the outcome if we focus our attention on what it takes to be successful during the sprint, and executing to perfection.

The final topic was surrounding Project Managers. We need to make a conscious effort not to shun project managers and help them become world class servant leaders and impediment removers. We need to focus on helping them identify the best traits they bring to the game and help them improve upon those traits. It takes a lot to become a great project manager. Do not underestimate their ability to help a Scrum team become successful.

The closing remarks may have been what hit me the hardest of all. Many people are just not able to do Scrum. In fact, 20% fail! The teams that typically fail are composed of managers who like to dictate what to do, and teams who only show up for the detailed instruction.

The discussion was enthralling and there was certainly lots to learn. Remember, we are all in this together so let's start acting that way.



## EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

May 29<sup>th</sup> San Francisco, CA  
AgilePalooza – I'm Speaking!  
<http://www.agilepalooza.com>

June 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Las Vegas, NV  
Better Software Conference  
I will be there!

June 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Salt Lake City,  
Agile Roots Conference  
<http://www.agileroots.com>

June 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> San Francisco  
Innovation Games Conference

## 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](mailto:lee@agiledad.com)  
Steve Davis – 801-361-2643  
[davisbase@mac.com](mailto:davisbase@mac.com)

## This Month's Agile Q&A

**Q: Do people actually read this newsletter?**

A: The fact that you just asked is at least an indication that you read this newsletter! In fact, there are many people out there that do not realize that this newsletter touches the eyes of thousands of individuals all over the globe who are interested in Agile! It is up to you to spread the word and keep the Agile Mentor Newsletter movement in swing.



**Q: Can I talk about my company in this newsletter? Or, is there ever going to be a forum for me to discuss specific Agile related topics?**

A: Great Idea! I think in the very near future we may open up an Agile Dad Agile Forum to give people a chance to talk more about their specific Agile needs and situations.