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• Facilitation Foundation – Not Just Another Agile Meeting

V. Lee Henson CST

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• Free Resources

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• Agile Q&A:

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Agile Dad

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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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Facilitation Foundation – Not Just Another Agile Meeting

A new conference means a new opportunity to share a new idea or concept. Many people have become frustrated that they are spending way too much time in Agile meetings. I took some time and did my homework only to find that not a ton of materials exist on this topic. I decided to take it upon myself to create some new material and the description I included for AgilePalooza looks like this:

"Many teams struggle with the meaning behind or the value provided from attending Agile Meetings. This session is designed to help people better understand the logic behind Agile meeting patterns and is intended to present a new and more creative approach to meeting facilitation.

This session is geared towards both team members and product/project managers as well as any person who facilitates a session. Each participant will leave with a better understanding of why meetings fail or become painful and what they can put in their toolkit to help engage and bring added value to the meetings they attend or facilitate."

The intent is to open the door for additional discussion and allow teams to realize that meetings are about common sense and for the most part there is a better way when it comes to meeting facilitation.

Without giving away the entire talk, I would like to share some ideas with you.

I welcome and even encourage your honest and open feedback.

I would like to start by identifying all of the different types of potential meetings that Agile organizations could potentially participate in and identify which provide value and which many teams are struggling with. Once we identify which meetings may not be providing full value, we can work to identify what practices will need to change in order for meetings to be more effective.

Is there a general dislike for meetings that is causing the team to fall away? Or, is the team not finding value in the meetings because they really do not understand the 'why' behind the 'what'?

The most common misunderstanding when it comes to meetings is the knowledge of why the expectation to have the meeting exists and what benefit will it provide to me?

The point here is that all meetings should have a clearly defined purpose and should provide value to all attendees. This is the meeting golden rule. If people are not seeing value in the meeting, should they really be present? If so, why are they not finding value? I have put together an Agile Checklist document.

Agile Dad



Innovation Games

These interactive techniques let your customers and prospects help you create the products they want. Understand customer needs, identify product functionality, learn how customers interact with your products, and shape your products' future.

Luke Hohmann has devoted his professional career to creating environments where everyone can work to their fullest creative and intellectual abilities. He is a committed coach, working with every individual and the organization as a whole to achieve greater levels of performance.

There are at least 12 unique innovation games (and any number of new games derived by combining elements of these 12 games).

More information about these Innovative Games and how they can help you and your organization achieve success, please visit:

<http://innovationgames.com>



Facilitation Foundation – Not Just Another Agile Meeting

“The key is to help teams realize that visibility is a great thing! “

– V. Lee Henson CST

The intent of the document is to discuss each Agile meeting and share key information including attendees, meeting inputs, expected results, etc. Many teams have expressed that the greatest value has come from the general guidelines or basic meeting rules. These cover all of the basics and give a birds eye view into what needs to happen at Agile meetings in order for them to be successful.

The goal is that once individuals and teams see value in the meetings and understand where they affect others who may be interested in learning more about the state of a project or product, they will see additional value in Agile meetings and understand how to make the meetings both efficient and effective.

The key is to help teams understand that visibility is a great thing and that they would not be negatively impacted even if the revelations show that the team may not be exactly where they need to be with regard to expectations.

The second key issue with meetings is that often times metrics are construed as a result of news that was delivered in a meeting. Thus teams are being judged and evaluated based on the results of what happens during these Agile Meetings. This truly is unacceptable behavior as teams should not be judged.

People need to be aware that the purpose of Agile meetings is to give the team a frequent opportunity to inspect and adapt the product, process, and service. Teams should be judged on output.

The sooner we identify that time should only be used as an input towards establishing capitalization on necessary projects, the sooner the output of the team will have greater value.

We are quick to say that teams need to run faster and be more efficient, but we are quickly disappointed when we come to the realization that this impacts project debt.

One of the most common questions I get asked by teams who are new to the Agile process is when, where, and how do I account in my records for all of the time team members are spending in Agile meetings?

How can I continue to support the Agile solution if the team itself does not believe that the meetings are providing value?

“Teams should be judged on output.”

– V. Lee Henson CST

The key to success in this situation is to help the Agile team better understand the why behind what they are doing.

This begins with the vision. Teams need to be aware and reminded often that the work they are producing follows a vision, is part of a strategy, and contributes to a greater good.

The next step is to assist the team in establishing some basic meeting structure and rules to help streamline the meetings and make the time spent in meetings valuable.

Once we have established rules in place, the team needs to understand that every agile meeting they are asked to attend has a purpose and provides value. It is up to the meeting facilitator to insure that the purpose for the meeting and the agenda are both published and perfectly clear. This will really jump start the team in understanding the why behind what they are committing to. Teams may at first be resistant to this process, but when the dust settles, they will be grateful for the streamlined process that was put in place for them.

All meetings should be timeboxed and provide valuable output. Many Agile teams struggle because they feel meetings are all about beating an already dead topic. We really do need to work as facilitators to time box each meeting agenda item and stick to the time we assign to each. This shows the team that we care about their time and we are grateful for their participation. The expected output from these meetings should be revealed prior to the meeting to all participants.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the team should all be aware of any action items, decisions, or assumptions and should have a clear understanding of what will be done with each.

Most importantly, we need to be innovative in the way we facilitate and manage meeting spaces. As a result, we will be happier, productivity will increase, and the team will be very appreciative for the effort.

The team will Love you!



This Month's Agile Q&A

Q: Will there ever be an AgileDad Conference?

A: Although I would love to say yes, that is currently not in the cards or the budget. As the movement continues to grow, who knows what will happen? The fact is, I suppose we could all get together at Agile 2009 or something... Let me know if that sounds like something any of you would like to do.



Q: Have you ever seen an Agile project fail?

A: Yes, however, I have seen many more succeed than take a dive. There is a good reason for the number of companies who are adopting Agile Methods! They work! The key is to get the right Agile foundation in place and focus on the basics. Nothing new, we need to crawl before we walk.

EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

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

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

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

June 24th – 26th San Francisco
Innovation Games Conference

AgileDad Private Course Offerings:

Private course offerings are available including:

- Agile For Executives
- Agile Boot Camp
- Agile Business Requirements
- Agile Meeting Facilitation
- 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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