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### Credits:

#### • The Airport Needs a Runway!

V. Lee Henson CST

<http://blog.agiledad.com>

#### • Free Resources

V. Lee Henson CST

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#### • Agile Q&A:

V. Lee Henson CST

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Agile Mentor November 2009

## Agile Dad

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

November 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)

## The Airport Needs a Runway!

Call me Captain Obvious, but the Airport needs a runway. After all, would an airport be an airport at all without one? Even people who fly crop planes will profess that they need a sound place to take off and land from.

Yet I have visited many organizations who have recently proclaimed that the runway needs to be part of the actual project or in one case that the runway is someone else's responsibility. I went on to ask if they would feel the same way if they were in the airplane at 32 thousand feet when they learned that the airport they would land at did not bother to build a runway.

The analogy to being Agile has been likened to building a plane while it is in the air. There is even a YouTube video of this process. My question to you remains, how important is it for our airport to have a runway to take off and land upon? Who is responsible for making certain the runway is in place within your organization?

After all, without a sound architectural runway, where will your projects take off and land? Who is ultimately responsible for establishing the foundation and making certain all is in order and integrated when it is time to release? Who holds the keys to the kingdom when it comes to making certain all that we build rolls out according to planned expectations?

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Many Agile methods do not embrace a preparation phase deeming it all part of the evil waterfall conspiracy. I am here to argue that this is not the case. Although we would like to think that minimal planning is the only Agile solution and that everyone on any Agile team has the skill set required to lay the sound foundation for the runway, I am here to announce you are sorely mistaken.

Teams ultimately rely on someone out there to have foundational measures in place for them to build upon. Many argue this is the role of the development manager. Other organizations with a more formal release structure actually build a release team that focuses solely on getting the project built and out the door. In this case, the release manager would be the responsible party.

What many small to mid-size organizations that do not practice formal release planning techniques fail to realize is that although no formal role exists for the party responsible for launch, the role does still exist!

Indulge me and picture if you will for a moment that we were all preparing for the Space Shuttle to launch.

## Agile Dad



### Agile New Year!

As the Agile New Year quickly approaches, it becomes time for me to make commitments to you the Agile Mentor Newsletter audience. My first commitment is a reenergized focus on the newsletter content. I never have professed to be the keeper of all knowledge, as such, I will seek out those who are authoritative in their respective fields and ask them to contribute to the newsletter offering. In addition, I will update the blog on a more regular basis allowing you the most accurate & up to date information in the community. In consideration that you are the key audience here, I would like to hear from you about what I can do to make this blog, website, and newsletter more enjoyable to you. One last thing, the website will be launched very soon! I am very excited to provide you with this additional resource as a place to turn for All things Agile! Until next time I remain:  
~ AgileDad



## Cont: The Airport Needs a Runway!

“Are you going to be the team who has everything in its place and be prepared for launch? “

– V. Lee Henson CST

At T minus 1 minute someone turns to the group and says the payload is securely on board right? Oh.. the payload, let me get right on that.

Next someone says the crew is securely on board as well correct? Of course your answer is the crew, of course, I will call them right away and have them notified of today's launch.

Finally, someone asks if all of the fuel is on board and the ship is ready to engage for takeoff. Your response of course was fuel.. I knew I was forgetting something.

Although this example may sound a bit extreme, the fact remains that we go about our assignments without regard for whether all of the preparations have been made for us. We rely on other competent people to make certain the groundwork for our success has been put into motion. It is rare to see a single team that fully executes this responsibility.

Nonetheless, we continue to point fingers when things fail.

The question remaining to be asked is if you are going to allow yourself to be the prepared party who has everything ready for launch? Or are you going to settle for letting everyone else figure it all out in hopes that the people, payload, and delivery all go off without a hitch?

The reality of it all is that at some point in the process, we need to put our faith in people and know that what we are asking for will be accomplished. This does not however mean that we should not be well prepared.

I have come to notice that on more than one occasion, Agile shifts it's focus toward all that is happening now without regard for all that will be happening soon. Many teams even choose to forego release planning as it does not provide the immediate and tangible reward that organizations may be seeking. So how do we continue to focus on the now while laying the foundation for the future?

Well, we can certainly begin by going back to our airport analogy. Just as we encounter in travel, some airports are more pleasant to visit than others. Even with a safe place to take off and land upon, there is still more to making for a great airport. Amenities often make the difference between desirable and dreaded places to stop at on your way to the destination.

“Some Paths are much smoother than others.”

– V. Lee Henson CST

In an Agile world, this is really much like a release plan. Some are more smooth and others are very rough.

When we focus on both the quality of the delivery and arriving on time and under budget, we can draw towards always taking the best path to reach the destination. The best path is often a combination of the one that ensures safe arrival and smooth delivery. If we knew a certain flight path consistently provided undesirable results, we would try to avoid it.

Yet, knowing all of this is true, in a software development world, we often find it hard to adjust even if we have been down the path before.

What do we need to do to act in a responsible way and make certain that we are doing what is best for the team, release, organization, and end user? How do we go about making certain the key people are in place to make reaching the final destination an enjoyable venture? Who do we turn to when we need to verify not only that the runway is there for takeoff, but that we can plan all is well for a safe arrival?

There are certain distinct steps which we can follow to help us make certain the takeoff, flight, and landing go off without a hitch.

- 1) Identify key resources that will be able & responsible for ensuring the underlying architecture is in place before taking on & committing to the work.
- 2) Learn to inspect & adapt allowing you to follow those routes that have the least turbulence.
- 3) Fly often! The more frequently we fly the routes, the more familiar we become with successful delivery.
- 4) Plan ahead for landing! Frequent conversation with the control tower helps us land well every time.
- 5) Never procrastinate! Do not put off doing what is right!
- 6) Deliver Early and often. It is the only way we can course correct.



## EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

- Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Seattle, WA
- Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> - Agile Roundtable SLC
- Nov. 7<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Manchester, UK
- Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> – Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> Dallas, TX
- Nov. 26<sup>th</sup> Happy Thanksgiving!

## 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:

Lee Henson – 801-898-0295  
lee@agiledad.com

All courses are offered through VersionOne and Elite Participating Partner Providers.



## This Month's Agile Q&A

### Q: Can you speak to our group?

A: Although my days recently have been VERY busy, I am going to go out on a limb here and say call for an appointment! I have always found time to help teams and Agile groups, especially when you see I will be visiting in an area near you!

### Q: Does AgileDad provide any additional services?

A: In fact, with a degree in psychology and a general belief that people are generally good, I have been asked to do a large number of public speaking appearances, as a keynote address and to offer words of inspiration from a motivational perspective.

I have been recognized by multiple organizations for excellence in public speaking and as a result have been asked to share my personal success story to many different audiences. Call and check for availability.

