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• Free Resources

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• Agile Q&A:

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Agile Dad

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Agile World

Agile Mentor

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What is your Credit Score?

So, I know what you are thinking.. Has he lost his marbles? What on Earth does a good credit score have to do with all things Agile? Actually, I would argue the two are more tethered than one might imagine. In fact, the two are nearly synonyms. Allow me to explain.

For anyone who has ever struggled with the burden of excessive debt, I dedicate this newsletter and the vision it contains to you. Once the truth has been revealed, over 75% of all Americans have incurred some form of excessive debt. In fact, the very US Government has decided to allow the national deficit to continue to explode at an unprecedented rate.

When asked why we allow ourselves to be placed in this position, we often find that we say we are doing it to better our own lives and or the lives of others. As awkward or uncomfortable as this may feel, the fact is if we had been better prepared as a country and as a people, if we had been given the right tools and skill set, the debt may never have been incurred.

To tie this all to Agile, I will start with a question: How well does your organization address and deal with mounting debt? Organizations will challenge that technical and financial debt are necessary in order for the company to expand and grow. I would argue that this is not the case.

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From a very early age we are taught to save for what we want and spend only for what we really need, yet more and more young people are being introduced to the concept of credit cards.

Every organization has been issued a platinum credit card. A card with no limit that they have been instructed to use wisely. Even with this as a consideration, cardholders still spend far in excess of what would be considered as a reasonable spending amount. This is done under the premise that as long as they meet the minimum required monthly payments, that the debt will eventually go away.

Returning to reality, one should note that making every minimum monthly payment, the debt almost never goes away and in some cases even increases! How can this be so? This is the often overlooked concept of compounding interest.

Even if we meet the obligation the best we feel we can, the debt continues to grow in size and severity until we become a slave to the debt. How do you identify that you have become enslaved by mounting technical debt? Take a look and face the facts.

Agile Dad



Test Driven Development

A previous edition of the Agile Mentor Newsletter focused on the logic behind and reasons to promote test driven development within your organization. I felt it necessary to bring this up here as well since TDD helps eliminate building technical debt.

When executed correctly, TDD forces the entire Agile team to work as a unit and identify what the intent of the code is before a line of code is ever written. For many this is counterintuitive, but the fact remains that teams who practice TDD have fewer defects and more reliable code. I encourage you to take a moment and read what TDD authority Christian Hargraves had to say on this topic and use this as a tool to help eliminate debt from your organization.

The August 2009 Agile Mentor Newsletter can be found at:

<http://www.AgileDad.com/documents/AgileMentorAugust2009.pdf>



Cont: What is your Credit Score?

“When quality continuously suffers, you are accruing technical debt.”

– V. Lee Henson CST

If quality in the current product or project is continuing to suffer and the teams are never reaching a point where the existing bug log is diminishing, they are suffering from growing technical debt.

When developers are drained because the QA process takes far longer than it should, and the development team calls for a better process to handle testing, this is a sign that technical debt is nearing a breaking point.

When the product is nearing release and only the absolutely required test cases have been addressed, technical debt could be an issue.

When the customer is enraged that the product does not perform in an expected manner, that also can be tied to increased technical debt.

Now that we have identified what happens, let's spend the rest of our time together talking about what we can do to address this and take care of debt before it gets out of hand.

The first required step to get past the growing debt cycle is to identify each creditor and the amount you owe each one. Once each has been identified, you need to communicate to each one about your plan to eliminate each debt in a concise and planned way.

In the real world, this means letting the customers and stakeholders know that at the risk of slowing down new development and enhancements on current or future projects, the debt must be addressed.

This news is never easy to deliver and people are never happy to hear about the delay. However, they are forever grateful once all is said and done and the product turns out all the better because of the addressed debt. In fact, once the dust settles the key stakeholders will be even more grateful to have a product or project that exceeds their expectations.

Anyone who has ever dealt with a creditor knows that one of the most difficult tasks is convincing the creditor that they will need to wait to be paid until you have paid other creditors and are in a position where you are ready to pay them their share. The same holds true with stakeholders. We need to help them realize that we will focus on their project as soon as possible.

“One of the keys is transparency.”

– V. Lee Henson CST

The next key is negotiating what is reasonable and customary. Often times we agree to bite off more than we can chew.

We need to only commit to what we can do and make certain we are transparent in our work in order to allow others to see the benefit in addressing and taking care of our debts.

Creditors will never take you at your word if you make promises and fail to deliver. As part of the structured repayment program, you need to meet all obligations.



Even once all of this has been done, you need to realize that your credit score does not instantly increase. It is through meeting your obligations and eliminating debt that over time your creditors will deem you once again responsible and extend credit to you.

This change does not happen overnight and trust is something that needs to be re-established as soon as possible with all key stakeholders on the project.

Another consideration is that we need to only focus on the debt that is not forgiven us. I

Corporations do not embrace the concept of technical bankruptcy. There is no debt scrubber that automatically enables companies to eliminate all debt and re-structure. Once a company has been burdened with debt, it needs to work to remove the said debt. The keys to success are simple:

- 1) Act NOW!
- 2) Identify Key areas.
- 3) Enable testers.
- 4) Stop forward work as needed.
- 5) Make commitments.
- 6) Remain transparent.
- 7) Avoid additional debt at ALL cost!

The lesson learned is that debt is easy to build and hard to eliminate. It takes a certain amount of grit and determination to be successful in the quest to eliminate or drastically reduce debt.

The key as mentioned earlier is to have a plan and stick to it. Snowball to eliminate debt and make certain everyone can see and relish in your success. Reading this newsletter could be the first step towards your organizations SUCCESS.

This Month's Agile Q&A

Q: Why AgileDad?

A: As a father of four young children, I have learned that there are concrete parallels between raising a family and working as part of an Agile project team.

I chose AgileDad because it brought reality into focus and allowed me to see where family and business intersected. This very newsletter is an example of how eliminating debt can help us ultimately be successful.



Q: Is Agile still an option for us?

A: When I first received this question, I thought it must be some kind of joke. I soon realized that it was no joke and the question was one that needed to be answered. I have recently spent a lot of time working with groups engaged with the DOD.

Some people out there have given up all hope on Agile. I have even heard one organization proclaim Agile is an excuse to not deliver anything. This made me both laugh and feel sad inside.

As with any other method, there is good agile and bad agile. Good Agile is not easy. It is hard work that results in smart work. Bad Agile does deliver a lot of nothing more quickly. Recognize and avoid bad Agile no matter what!

EYE ON IT Upcoming AgileDad Engagements:

Oct. 1st Agile Roundtable SLC

Oct. 6th – 9th Colorado Springs, CO

Oct. 20th – 22nd Oakland, CA

Oct. 27th – Oct. 29th Broomfield, CO

Oct. 31st Happy Halloween!

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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All courses are offered through VersionOne and participating partners.