Starting and Developing Agile Teams

A Facilitation Guide

ProAgile

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For updates to this guide, visit proagile.se/teams

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A Team Development Framework

Why teams don't work

A well-functioning team can create magic, but here are some disturbing facts from teamwork in the real world:

- Research that compares the performance of teams with what is produced by an equivalent number of individuals who work by themselves almost always find that the individuals outperform the teams [1].
- In practice five out of nine interventions/attempts to improve team performance have no positive effect whatsoever! [2]
- There is much agreement in the research community on what works and not when it comes to helping teams get to high performance.

So, in theory we do know how to make things work. In practice, organizations do not apply this knowledge when starting and developing teams. Thus, they fail to get the full benefits from organizing in teams.

To help with this situation, we decided to put this simple guide together. It contains a framework and some hands-on exercises that you can use to start and support the agile teams in your organization. We created it to support Scrum Masters, Line Managers, Agile coaches and others that want to create great teams.

To avoid falling into the trap of the five out of nine techniques that sounds good but actually do not help at all, we based this guide on principles well grounded in the research.

This is not only a theoretical framework though. We have used it at ProAgile for more than ten years of helping agile teams to get started and keep improving. For us it has helped to create good results in practice. We hope you will find it useful too.

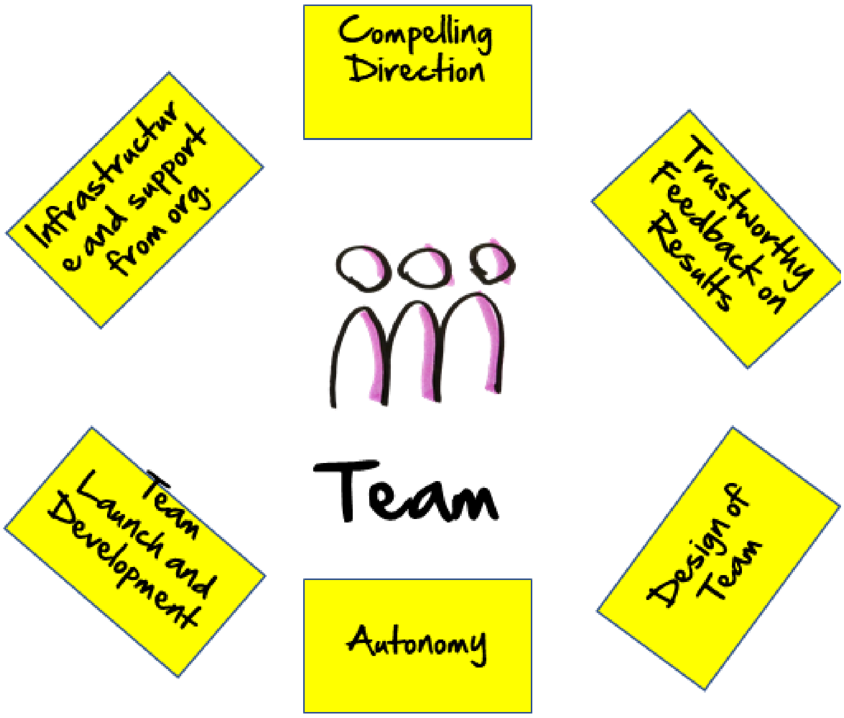
What is a successful team?

Before we go into describing how to create a successful team, let's agree what we mean with "a successful team". Below you can see a proposed definition from Richard Hackman. A successful team:

- actively shape stakeholder expectations and then exceed them
- grow as team, becoming more and more capable of taking on greater challenges together
- grow as individuals, increasing individual skills, both soft and hard

Relative weight of these bullets differs depending on the purpose of the team. For a team that will work together a lot over a long time, all bullets are important. If you are interested in a team like that, this booklet may be for you!

The Framework

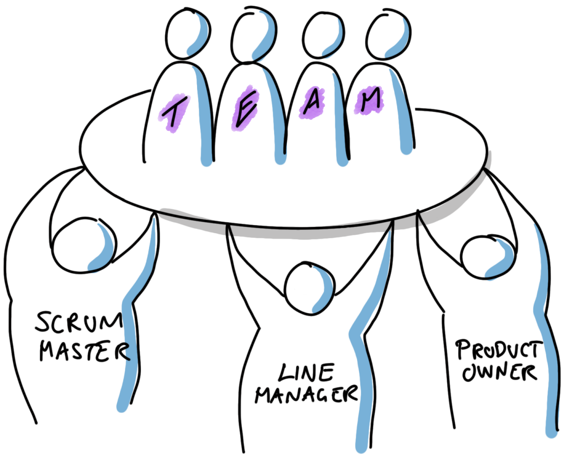


Above you can see a visualization of a framework that has been proven useful for us when thinking about how next we best can help a team on their journey.

The six areas shown with the yellow postits above is a slightly different way of viewing the five conditions that well renowned team researcher Richard Hackman uses to discuss team performance in his work[3].

Hackman states that evaluating a teams environment and setup, using these areas, can explain 90% of the variation you see in team performance! This is great news since it also means that by focusing on these areas, by improving the working conditions of your teams step by step, you can have a huge impact on the performance of the teams that you care about!

How to use this framework



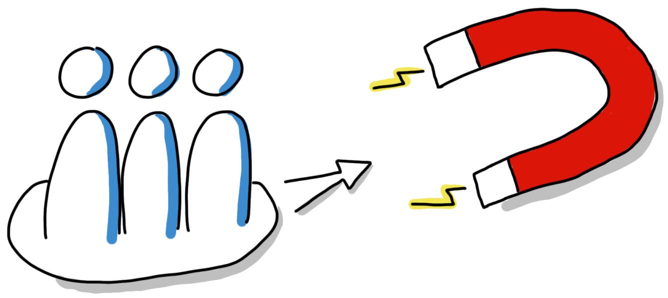
Here is one suggestion on how to use the framework:

- Identify the leaders that most closely care about/can influence the conditions of performance for a team. In a classic agile context this may be the Product Owner, Scrum Master and Line Manager of the team.
- Schedule regular get-togethers of these leaders.
- At these gatherings, use the framework to systematically examine the working conditions of your team. What is in place already? What would be a next step to enable even greater team performance within each area?
- Pick at least one area where you would like to make an improvement, plan and execute an experiment to make the improvement. The exercises later in this paper can be useful to make some of these improvements.
- Repeat.

In the next sections we will examine each of the conditions/areas one by one. This is for you to use as a reference when you evaluate the conditions for each team and think about next steps as descibed above.

The Six Key Areas

Compelling Direction



This is the most important of the various factors you should consider when thinking about what conditions you can help create for your teams. It is one out of five factors identified by Hackman as enabling team performance. Wheelan found that this was one out of three factors that really mattered when examining effective team interventions. In the Google Aristotele research [4], three out of five key conditions found to affect performance, was goal related.

Thus, a team need somewhere to go, a direction that they feel compelled to travel together in!

A team may have many different types of goals that serves to set this compelling direction. They can be:

- Product development related
- Organizational development related
- Team related
- Individual related

Creating and processing these goals is one of the very first steps to help any team reach high performance. In the second part of this booklet there are many exercises to help you do this in a good way.

What we are looking for is a direction that:

- Requires the whole team to work together. If the team does not need to work together to reach the goals, there is no need for a team. If you give goals to teams that individuals can reach individually, you should not expect teamwork to emerge.
- Is conceived by the team as quite challenging, but possible.
- Will fuel the intrinsic motivation in the individual team members.

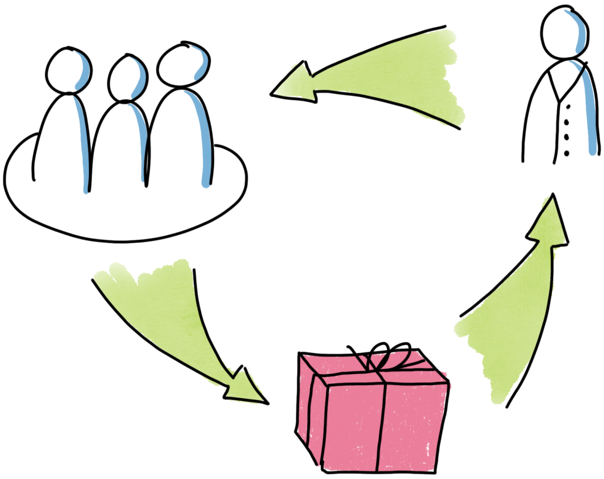
Some techniques that are useful in this context

- Impact mapping
- Value Proposition Canvas
- Business Model Canvas
- Sprint Goals
- Helping the team to be close to and empathize with the people that will benefit from the solution/service they are delivering. In a Scrum context this may be reached by encouraging close collaboration between team and stakeholder and avoiding go-between behavior from roles such as Product Owners.

Related exercises from part 2

- *Individual Goals*
- *Organizational Goals for Teams*
- *Product Goals for Teams*
- *Team Vision*

Timely and Trustworthy Feedback



This is also one of the top three important aspects to consider when trying to create the conditions for team performance.

I once worked with a team that seemed to have a pretty good time at work, but when it came to the work itself, I felt that their hearts were not really in it. At the end of sprints they shipped whatever they had without worrying so much if what they shipped was of sufficient quality, if it really worked or if it was of value.

Now this team were a part of a larger organization and did not have all the equipment they needed to test if what they had created actually worked or not. At the end of sprints they simple shipped stuff off to another team that would test it. So I asked them, "how long does it take before you get feedback from the test team?". The answer I got was that "It can take up to 18 months!"

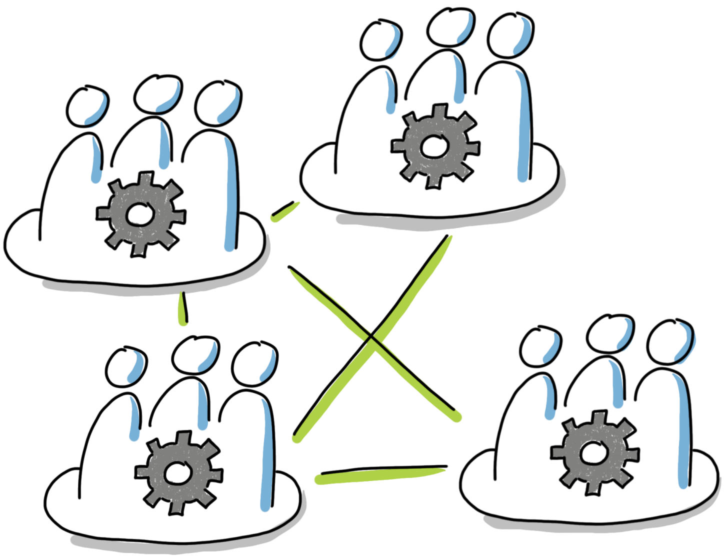
Clearly waiting so long for feedback on what you are doing is not the most inspiring working environment. Basically, you get the feeling nobody cares what you do and that it doesn't matter anyway. What looked like disengaged, somewhat irresponsible, individuals was merely a logical result of setting up an environment that created that behavior!

Some techniques to address this condition

- Create real potentially releasable increments of your product/service as frequent as possible. At least every sprint.

- Slicing stories vertically so that even each releasable increment is created in many smaller steps, each giving technical feedback about working integrations etc.
- Making sure teams have frequent stakeholder, customer and end-user contact. In Scrum this can be during Sprints and at Sprint Reviews.
- Techniques such as impact mapping from the compelling direction section that makes sure the team actually know what the purpose of the work is. Without that, any measure of progress is less meaningful.

Clear and Significant Autonomy



Here is a pattern I keep running into when I work with aspiring agile organizations:

After some initial agile training, teams assume that they now are self-managing and happily set out to decide various things. Shortly after, their initiatives will be shot down by managers that still have the perception that whatever was decided is still their responsibility, not the teams'. The teams then realizes that all this talk about agile and empowerment was all BS. They understand that nothing has really changed and swiftly return to their previous level of disengaged compliance. The organization fails to be more agile since agility really depends on the engagement and initiative from each individual.

So, what we need is for teams to know what they can decide and what not. Don Reinertsen stated it well when he said that people should not walk into invisible electric fences.

Note, it needs to be a significant amount of things that teams can decide. People in general enjoy if they can have a say in HOW the work that they do should be performed. Also, the people doing the work probably have some skills and knowledge about the work, so also from that point of view it seems reasonable that they can decide how to do things.

I find defining key decision areas as suggested by Don Reinertsen and using the delegation level approach from Jürgen Appello useful techniques.

Some techniques to address this condition

- Delegation poker and delegation boards.
- Agile Leadership training for involved managers. Especially focus on need for decentralization and how to, step by step, restore the motivation and initiative that was destroyed by the classic hierarchical management model.

Related exercises from part 2

- *Clarifying Team Mandate*

Design of Team

This is also one of the top aspects to consider when trying to create the conditions for team performance.

Behavioural Styles

Perhaps one of the most popular beliefs about teams is that considering personalities or behavioural styles of team members are useful when designing and developing teams. There seems to be no evidence of this belief. Google in their Aristotle study examined this and found the mix of personalities to have no impact on team performance. Richard Hackman debunks this belief also. His work emphasizes that with the right conditions, a team will able to work through difficulties caused individual differences. Not to mention that most common tools to work with personality styles actually have little more predictive power than horoscopes. But no need to get into that since the framework covered here has actual scientific backing and it does not rely on any tools to classify personalities.

What matters then when you design a team? Let's have a look at what the research says in the following sections!

Team Size and Clear Boundaries

Let's say that you have some really interesting but very challenging work coming up. You have created a plan as a team, and you notice that as you are about to get started you feel energized and that you were actually looking forward to it. A week into the project one of your teammates is suddenly missing and you find out he is taking a month off at the Bahamas and it seems that chances of meeting your goals are now close to zero. Most people will have a very hard time to keep contributing at their fullest potential in a situation like that. Why would you give it your best shot when the people that are jointly responsible clearly does not?

Indeed, as pointed out by Christopher Avery[5]: The motivation of a complete team is usually set by the least invested/motivated team member. The least inspired person tends to drag everyone else down to the same low level of engagement. Hackman also mentions the related phenomena of "Social Loafing", someone "free riding" along and not contributing their share of the work.

A common cause for this problem is the habit in many organizations of assigning people part time to several teams, or to set things up so that teams are dependent on external experts with no commitment to the team.

The way to prevent this is to set clear boundaries for the team. A team need to know who is on the team and who is not. Who can I count on when going gets tough and who may have other priorities?

Basically, to get this working in a software development context, we need teams with full time team members. To make this easier to achieve, you may want to consider keeping teams intact and letting existing teams take on whatever projects/work that comes up rather than starting up a new team for each new project.

To avoid "Social Loafing", also try to make the team as small as possible. If a team have barely enough people to manage finish their task, the likelihood of anyone "free riding" decreases. Coordination is also much easier than on a large team. If a handful of persons can get the job done, this is a good size to aim for.

Interdependence

Surprising to some, the ideal in an agile team may not be that everyone is able to perform every task. From a teamwork perspective it is actually better if people have different skills, so that they will actually have to work together to accomplish the team goals.

This also aligns nicely with the idea of “T-shaped” people. We want people that have deep expertise in some area. This is what enables us to create products with great performance. Only relying on experts tend to take too long though. There will be lots of waiting times as they pass work between each other, and the opportunity may be gone as we finally manage to get the product out the door. If instead people are experts, but also are willing to help out with things that they do not master so well every now and then, we can achieve speed in development also.

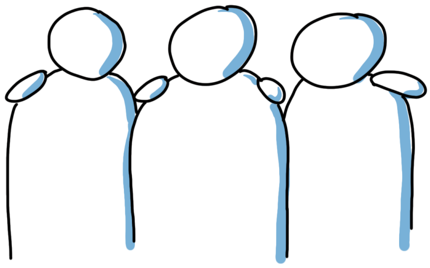
The way to get this working is to assign sufficiently big things to teams so that a multitude of skills is needed to perform the work. Ideally teams should not just “implement requirements”. They should have the greater task of creatively striving to solve some customer problems, or to optimize value to customers in some area. Stability over time Team development models usually include some kind of phases, such as “Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing” by Bruce Tuckman, or the phases 1-4 as defined by Susan Wheelan. They indicate that it takes a bit of time to get a new team going. In the beginning the team will be struggling with everyone finding their roles and ways working together. As you sort that out the team will eventually be able to deliver more value than what the team members were able to do if they had been working as individuals. This can easily take 6 months or even a year.

So, you may want to consider keeping teams together for longer times. To make this possible, think about assigning projects/work to existing teams rather than forming a new team for each new endeavor.

Some techniques to address this condition

- Team self-selection
- Move from project teams to stable teams with full time team members
- Assigning larger, value/effect based, goals to teams, see compelling directions chapter

Activities for Teambuilding



Perhaps the most common activities for team building are going bowling and then continuing with dinner & drinks. Or perhaps solving a puzzle such as an “Escape room”, trying to instill teamwork by doing something completely different than regular work. This can be fun and all, but these activities probably fall into the category of 5/9 activities that produce no measurable improvement in teamwork according to Susan Wheelan. So feel free to keep offering fun stuff like this to employees, but do not count of this as the foundation for team building.

What works then?

Well, some of the activities from previous sections, such as processing and agreeing on direction/goals on product-, organization, team and individual levels are major team building activities. The team cannot self-manage if they do not feel the direction is motivating. Also, team members will only contribute to their full potential when they feel the direction is compelling.

An agile team also needs to learn some new skills in order to be self-managing/self-organizing. Especially they need to learn how to:

- Quickly make good enough decisions as a team
- Solve problems as a team
- Navigate conflict as a team

Having some of these skills is of help since teams also need to decide

- Ground rules for working together

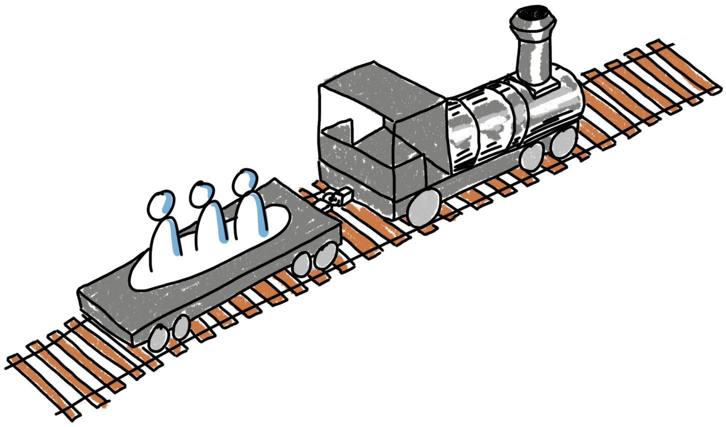
- Specific ways of working that all team members at least agree to. (Consent decision making is enough here, not consensus)

In the Google Aristotele team-research they found “Emotional Safety” (aka trust) to be the best predictor of team performance. Emotional safety basically means that you can show up as your full self at work. You can be yourself and do not have to put on a mask or protective armor because you know that nobody will try to hurt you. This is probably factors that most team building activities tries to address with various social off-work social activities. Maybe that even helps a little, but by using job focused specific activities, some listed below, this can be taken to a completely different level.

Related exercises from part 2

- *Individual Goals*
- *Organizational Goals for Teams*
- *Product Goals for Teams*
- *Team Vision*
- *Ground Rules & Decision Making*
- *Journey Lines*
- *Roles-and-Expectations*
- *Appreciation Cards*
- *Balancing Team- and Individual work*
- *Market of skills*
- *Repairing Broken Agreements*

Infrastructure and support



Here are some ideas on question you can ask to check the level of infrastructure and support you currently have for your teams:

- Do they have easy access to all information they could use to maximize the value of their work?
- Do they have the tooling they need and is tool-performance top class?
- Do they have the personnel and physical space needed?
- When there is tooling or infrastructure problems, how quickly can the team get help?
- When the team discover a need for learning, can they quickly get the resources needed to do so?
- Do the reward system of the company encourage teamwork or individual hero behavior?
- Do the organizational design foster collaboration between groups and departments?
- When the organizational design creates conflict between organizational parts, do managers have the sophisticated political and interpersonal skills, persistence, inventiveness and sense of timing to help resolve this?

References

[1] Why Teams Don’t Work, Diane Coutu, Harvard Business Review May 2009

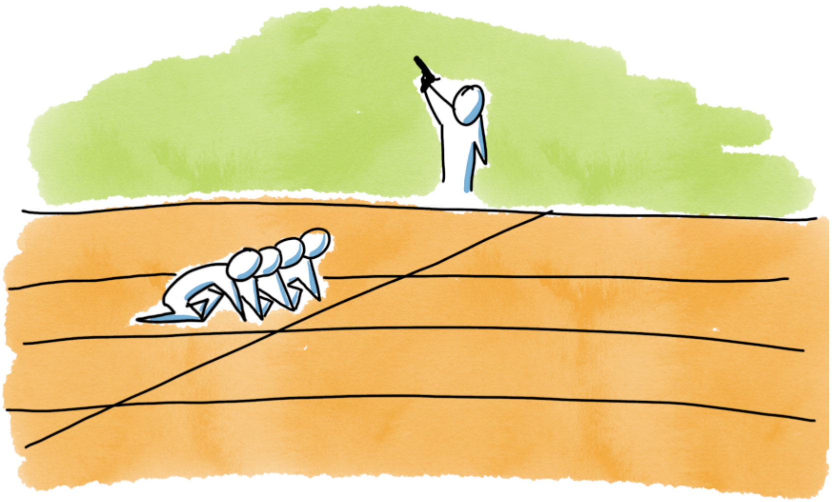
[2] Creating Effective Teams, Susan A. Wheelan

[3] Leading Teams, J. Richard Hackman, Harvard Business Review Press; 1 edition (July 15, 2002)

[4] The five keys to a successful Google team, Julia Rozovsky

[5] Teamwork is an individual skill, Christopher Avery

Team-Start Example



Purpose

- Supporting a team in their team formation/team development process.
- Lay the foundation needed for a Scrum Master to be able to coach the team as a team.

Time required

Start with at least one day 9-16

There is more material than that, make plans on how to cover the rest either as a day 2 or as several more smaller sessions

Preparations

- Check that the team set up is good enough to make it meaningful to start working with team development. E.g.
  - The team needs to have a compelling goal,
  - suitable skills to be able to reach the goal.
  - It should not be too big etc.
- Create buy in from the team and each team member for the workshop if needed. We want a team that is motivated to participate
- Book some prep-sessions with some line manager and a product manager/PO. They need to present the goals from organization/product point of view. Expect at least 1+2 hours prep with some days in between to create attractive visions
- Book a room, preferably offsite. Best layout is if all tables can be removed and just use a circle of chairs. Some space to hang material is needed on walls.
- Send out invite to team, PO, line manager with purpose & overview agenda at least 1 week before
- Get materials
  - Flip chart paper
  - Whiteboard markers to draw "Journeylines"
  - Postits
  - Markers for posits
  - Print handouts for "repairing broken agreements" and "Individual goals"
- Prepare a visual agenda with postits on a flipchart paper. Create it like a kanban board, with "ideas", "doing" and "done" columns that you can use to keep track of the flow of discussions and exercises during the day.

Agenda

Connect

The purpose of the "connect" session is

- Get everyone started talking, interacting rather than passively listening
- Get everyone thinking about what they already know and think about the subject of the session.

We want this to start right away in the morning to avoid people settling into "listening mode". Thus: Keep your welcomes etc very short (< 1 minute!) and get started with some connect activities almost immediately. Pairwise activities are best since then everyone needs to participate

Example:

Hi, welcome to this day with our team! We have prepared a lot of interesting exercises and I hope you all will find this both useful and fun for our team! Before we get into the agenda etc in a few minute, I would like us all to get started with some warm-up activities.

- Could you all pair up with someone and discuss for a minute: *
- *Is there a difference between a team and any group of people What is it?*

  Let them talk for 5 minutes for so until they get going, then interrupt them and collect some ideas from the pairs. Then give then another warm-up question

- *Before we start on trying to build a really great team, we should agree on what that is. How would anyone be able to see that we successfully have created a really great team?*

Let them talk for 5 minutes and then collect some answers. It will be a mix on actions to take how to achieve greatness and how to actually see that greatness have been achieved.

Never mind! Show the the definition from Richard Hackman and ask them to compare with their own discussions:

- Exceed stakeholder expectations
- Grow and be more capable as a team over time
- Each individual should learn, grow and find the work worthwhile and satisfying

Ok, what we will work on today is designed to help us achieve this. Let's look at the agenda:

Agenda

- Cover the purpose of the day and agenda quickly, just main topics
- Cover times, breaks, practicalities. Try to split the session up in 25+5 min sessions of 50+10 depending on team/group size. For a normal size team 25 min work+5 min break is good (This is called the "*pomodoro technique*"). If several teams are starting at the same workshop it may be challenging getting everyone in and out of the room every half hour so in those cases perhaps 50+10 is better.

Ground Rules & Decision making

Time required, 5-15 min See *separate facilitation guide*

Psychological Safety

- In the Aristotele research project at Google they identified basic psychological safety as a key enabler for team performance.
- You can see the same conclusions in the works of others, e.g. Trust is the first step in the "5 dysfunctions of a team" model by Patrick Lencioni.
- In the works of Susan Wheelan the first phases of team development has a lot to do with being accepted by the team.

The *Journey Lines* exercise is a really good way to address this and other goals for new and old teams. Time required is about 2h, depending on team size.

For a team that has been working together, *Appreciation Cards* is another really nice way to start a session focused on team development. Time required is < 30 min.

Use both exercises, but perhaps not in the same session!

Product Goals

Time required, typically: 30 min - 2h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Organizational goals

Time required, typically: 30 min - 1h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Team-vision

Time required, typically 1h

See *separate facilitation guide*

Working agreements

Facilitate making a few team agreements on how to work together. Start with some individual reflections and then use "fist of five" to quickly refine some proposals and make consent decision. Document on a flipchart.

One working agreement that you probably want to explore with your team is how and when to work as individuals and how and when to work as a team. Check out the guide on '*Balancing Team- and Individual work*' for a good way to do that.

Individual goals

Time required, typically 1,5h

See *separate facilitation guide*

A similar but slightly simpler exercise is "Market of Skills" Time required: 30-60 min See *separate facilitation guide*:

Team skills

- Team formation theory

  A team move through different phases. See for example the forming, storming, norming, performing theory by Bruce Tuckman or the more recent work by Susan Wheelan. Quickly show the team this and help them realize that this will happen.Especially that the first honeymoon period will be followed by a period of conflict and that this is a good thing that will enable the team to grow if navigated properly.

- Repair broken agreement

  Time required, typically 30 min

  See *separate facilitation guide*

- Making decisions

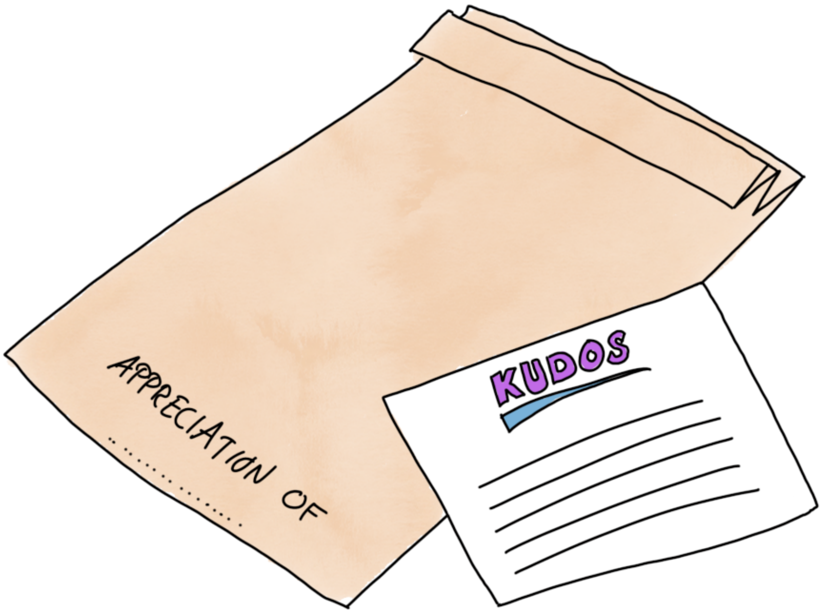
  In this guide your team can practise consent decision making using "fist of five" in the beginning of the day and during working agreements section.

  You may want to mention that for "way of working" decisions, consent decision making is often required - i.e. all team members have to agree to follow the agreement. If not you will get low buy in. In other situations other decision making methods are better suited. E.g. majority vote, individuals decide, at least two members agree etc. The team should strive to define **how** decisions are made before they try to decide something.

- Problem solving

  Teams need to learn systematic problem solving to enable good decision making. This is needed both to solve technical problems in a better way than basing it on opinions. It is also needed to solve many way of working problems in larger organizations.The A3 method and/or cause effect diagrams is one good technique that often is valuable for both these problems. This is best practised on some real problems in a separate session. Set aside 2 hours for that and invite a set of stakeholders that can contribute a diverse set of views on some difficult problem.

Appreciation Cards



Time required

< 30 minutes for a typical team.

Materials Required

- One A4 paper per person.
- One pen per person.

Purpose

- Enhance basic psychological safety in team by showing that team-mates accept and appreciate each other as is.

- Strengthen a sense of belonging in team.
- Prepare for difficult conversations.

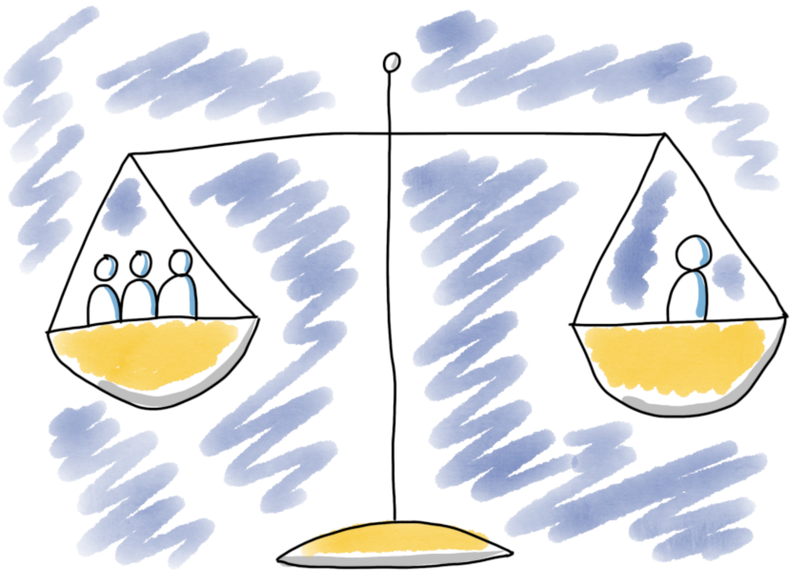
How

1. Put the participants in a circle or similar formation. We need to be able to pass papers around in an ordered way.
2. Each person writes their name in the middle of the paper, folds it in the middle and passes it one step clockwise.
3. Tell everyone to just read the name on the paper they received and then write down what they appreciate most with this person. Wherever, in whatever direction you want. Max 2 min per note.
4. Pass the papers around until you get your own paper back.

Important, you should not read what others have written, just the name before you write your appreciations on a card.

When you get your paper back you can do whatever you like with it, except telling someone else what is on it. The paper is only for the person receiving it.

Balancing Team- and Individual work



Purpose

- Create a shared view in team when it comes to advantages, disadvantages, and personal preferences when it comes to working closely as a team and when working individually.
- Create some tools that will enable the team to get the benefits of and avoid the drawbacks of both ways of working.
- Enable and inspire each team member to take responsibility for wellbeing of all other team members.

Time required

35-50 minutes

Materials Required

- 8 flip chart papers, board markers.
- Tape.
- Post-Its and some other small notes/papers.

Preparations

- Make sure a basic level of psychological safety exists in team before doing this.
- Tape a big cross on the floor.
- Put small notes/Post-Its at the ends of the tape: team/individual, +(positive)/-(negative)
- Prepare your agenda so that the spirit in the room is good when we start. You may want to do an energizer? This fits nicely as a follow-up to "Journey Lines" or "Me Map".

How

Explain that:

- The goal of the exercise is to explore and to get to know our various experiences and thoughts around working individually and working as a team.
- There is no right and wrong, just different experiences and thoughts.
- The goal is not to get everyone to think that 100% close team collaboration is the one and only true solution.

Intro/Warm up

Explain the two axes: positive, negative, working as a team and working individually. Invite the participants to walk around on the grid and try to recall some of their own experiences from the various quadrants. Give them 2 minutes in silence to do this. The purpose is to start recalling memories and to focus. When you give them these instructions - walk around in the grid (show by example is more effective than explaining)

Exploration Pros and Cons

In this section we will explore pros and cons of first individual work and then team work. We will start with positive - individual. People that appreciate individual work may feel more uncomfortable in an agile context. By doing it first we show and acknowledge the validity and importance of everyone's views/experiences.

- On a flip chart write "Positive - Individual" as header.
- Get everyone to stand in the positive - individual quadrant.

- Ask one of the team members to take notes on the flip chart as all team members share their experiences of the positive aspects of working individually.
- When done, save the flip chart paper somewhere visible. On the wall/floor or whatever works in the room you use.

Repeat this process in this order (new flip chart paper for each):

- Negative - Individual work.
- Positive - Team work.
- Negative - Team work.

Reflection, what way off working is best?

Facilitate a quick reflection/discussion:

- Is team work always the best approach for all types of work?

The conclusion could be along the lines of "We need to be smart and pick a way of working that will maximize the positive sides of both way of working."

Ask the team if they agree with this statement.

Warning signals and actions

"Let's think about how to achieve this in practice!" - On a new flip chart paper write "Individual work - warning signs". Ask the team - "How can we see if we are on our way into the negative aspects of individual work?"

Let a team member take notes as the team shares their ideas on this.

When some warning signals have been collected, switch to collecting actions.

"What actions would we take when we notice these signs - to get back into one of the positive quadrants"

Again, let a team member do the note taking as team members make suggestions.

Repeat for team-work

Reflection, who is responsible?

Ask the question

- Who is responsible for us being in the positive? Ideally this would be the responsibility of all team members.

Current preferences

"We are all humans, and we may have our preferences for how we want to work. This may change from week to week, day to day etc, depending on how many things such as life in general."

"Let's end with exploring where you feel the most at home right now on the grid. If you have a preference: stand on the team individual axis to show what it is" (Do it yourself when explaining)

Conclusions

Ok, thank you all for sharing your experiences and creating all these nice posters!

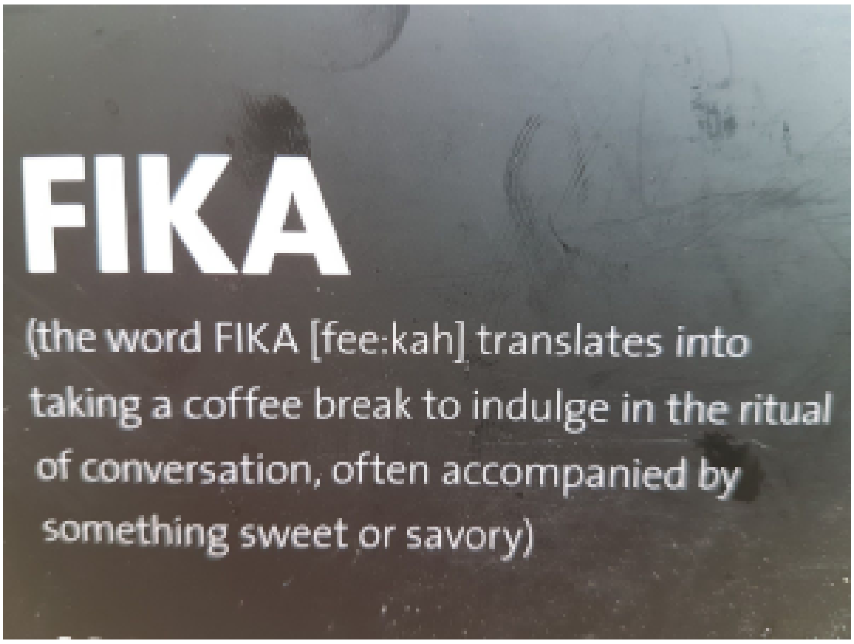
Facilitate a wrap-up for the team. The purpose is to get buy in for any next steps and to celebrate and reinforce any insights or learnings.

Ending on a positive note is also good!

Here are some possible questions you could ask them to discuss e.g., in pairs (pick one or two):

- What was most interesting or valuable for you about this exercise/workshop?
- What do you think our team can gain from looking for these warning signs/taking action?
- What is needed for us to follow through on this and not having it fade away?
- What else do we need to do to get the benefits we have been talking about?
- How do you think paying attention to this can increase the well-being in our team?

Build trust with simple questions



Purpose

Let a team learn more about each other when it comes to personal history. This will build trust within the team.

Source

This exercise is described in the book “Five Dysfunctions of a Team” by Patrick Lencioni.

Lack of trust is the first dysfunction which you need to overcome in order to deal with the other four dysfunctions.

Time required

- 30 minutes or more

Preparations

- None

Facilitating

The idea is that if people start to reveal innocent details from their childhood, other people start to realize that they are real human beings, not just work robots.

In order to get this going you could be in a more relaxed place than the normal working area.

A perfect spot would be by the coffee machine or round a lunch table. Preferably together with some Swedish fika.

Let people answer these questions in pairs or in larger groups. Note! Make sure people have the possibility to pass if they feel uncomfortable with any of the questions.

- Where were you born?
- How many siblings do you have?
- Unique experience during your childhood?
- What were you longing for during your childhood that you never got?
- Favourite hobby?
- What was your first job?
- What is your most odd job?

See next chapter for some ideas on variations on this exercise

Variations

- Create a quiz with the answers to some of these questions. E.g., “Who was born in Norway”. Hand the quiz out. Give the team the assignment to rotate and try to fill out the answers to the quiz by interviewing each other

- If you are at an offsite, use the quiz approach just as above, but give them the day/weekend or whatever your timeframe is to complete it.

- Arrange a speed-dating session with the purpose of learning as much as possible about each other. Propose the questions as topics for conversation. Perhaps do a quiz after the session for fun.

Clarifying Team Mandates

Purpose

- Encouraging more initiative and responsibility taking in a team
- Clarifying a team's mandate when it comes to making decisions in various areas.
- Clarifying expectations on a team when it comes to taking responsibility for various areas.

Time required

- 60 minutes

Preparations

- *Print* or *buy* some delegation cards, one set per session participant: team + manager(s)

- Prepare a list of areas where you think clarification of mandate will be useful. The areas can be obtained from people responsible for things today, such as line managers, product managers, product owners etc. They can also be obtained from the team as areas where they would like to have (increased) influence or clarify responsibilities. In the example section below, you can see some suggestions on areas used in a real team setting.

How

- Introduce the reason for/purpose of the session. Common examples:

  - "We want to move mandate to self-organizing autonomous teams to get faster better decisions". If teams have had basic agile training, you can connect this to the central idea in agile transformations: decentralization to achieve organizational agility.
  - Make it clear how a team now is expected to take greater responsibility and that they have the mandate to do so
  - Also, clarify boundaries of team mandate so that teams do not misunderstand, unnecessarily overstep boundaries and "walk into invisible electric fences".

- Hand out a set of delegation cards to each participant. Introduce the cards: E.g. delegation is not black and white. Mandate can be moved to a team step by step while they get more used to/skilled at making various decisions.

- Walk through the areas you prepared one by one. For each step:

  - Have each participant pick the level of delegation that they would prefer for the area without showing the others
  - Show the cards to each other and have a discussion. If needed, facilitate decision making. *5 finger voting* can be a useful technique here.
  - Document decision on mandate. In the next section you can see one example on how this was done. The green mark is the desire to delegate from the manager. The happy face is what the team agreed to/wanted.

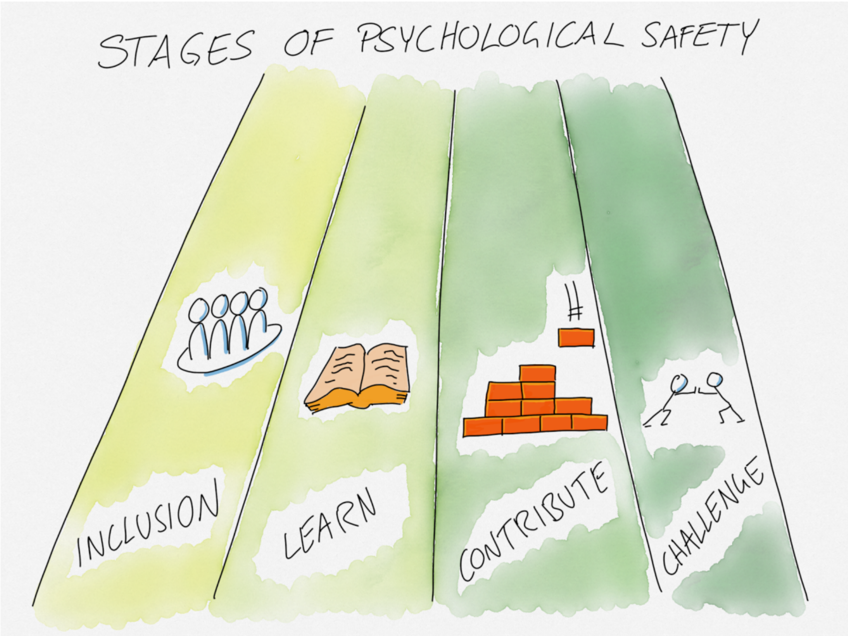
Example

#	Delegation area	Tell	Sell	Consult	Agree	Advise	Inquire	Delegate
1	Analysis of business, product and technology requirements							
2	Planning, implementation and delivery of work packages							
3	Conduct reviews and receive feedback on output and performance							
4	Ways of working and methods for development work							
5	Evaluation, improvement and follow-up of ways of working							
6	Selection of tools for development work (within policy and budget)							
7	Work coordination and usage of resources in the team							
8	Competence development for the team (expertise and broaden)							
9	Usage of adequate support and knowledge from organization							
10	Team constellations and team leader appointments							
11	Recruitment of new team members or replacement recruitments							
12	Overall direction, strategy and targets							
13	Budget and cost levels, purchase of material							

This is the documentation after one session where a development manager wanted to clarify team mandates. The green mark is what the development manager wanted; the happy face is what the team wanted/agreed to.

Note that in all but one case, the team did not yet agree to take on the responsibility desired by the manager. In just one case the team did not get the level of mandate they wanted.

Four stages of psychological safety



Purpose

- Improving the psychological safety in the group.

Possible learning points

- Identify what each individual needs to feel more safe in the group.

Duration

- 60-90 min

Material

- Masking tape
- PostIt notes and sharpies.

Preparation

Print the document with the descriptions of the four stages for everyone.

Print the document with the examples but don't mix the two documents.

Write down the four names of the stages on four large sticky notes or printer papers, one name on each note/paper: - Inclusion safety - Learner safety - Contributor safety - Challenger safety

Read through the descriptions so you have a good understanding of each stage of development of psychological safety.

Divide the room into four areas using masking tape and place a note with the name of a stage in each area. The areas should be placed after each other so that the individuals can move from "Inclusion safety" to "Learner safety" to "Contributor safety" to "Challenger safety" without jumping through any of the other areas.

How

Introduce the exercise by saying that psychological safety isn't on or off but is developed slowly over time and through stages. You will not be in only one stage at a time. You will however have to build safety in the early stages before you can be safe in the later stages.

In pairs, talk about what high psychological safety can lead to.

Change paris and let the participants read the descriptions of the four stages. In these pairs, discuss your view on the stages. Examples of questions to discuss: - What does that mean to you? - How do they differ? - Do you feel that you have this safety? - How does this relate to where you are working now? - …

Let everyone move in the room and place themselves on the scale with the four stages you created on the floor.

Pair up with someone standing close (form new pairs) and talk about: - What do you need to move up the scale?

After the discussion, read the examples and discuss (same pairs): - What would you request from your colleagues to help you move up the scale and feel more safe?

With the whole group share the requests you feel comfortable with, identified in the last step.

Form the last set of pairs (hopefully another new person to talk to) and help each other find one action you can take each to meet the requests from your colleagues.

Definitions

Inclusion Safety

Can you be your authentic self on your team? Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. In this stage worth precedes worthiness. All you have to do to qualify for inclusion safety is be human and harmless. When you have inclusion safety you can bring your whole self to work. When you don't, superiority and hierarchy dominate your company culture. Barriers are maintained and reinforced. You might be officially on a team, but you won't feel part of the team without inclusion safety.

Learner Safety

Do you have the space to grow? Learning and growing is a fundamental need that needs to be satisfied in order for innovation to flourish in an organization. In this stage, fear is detached from mistakes, and mistakes are rewarded as part of the learning process. But to qualify for learner safety you have to engage in the learning process, it won't happen organically. When you have learner safety in your organization, learning is encouraged and celebrated. Learners are protected. When you don't, mistakes are hidden and punished. Your team executes more than they innovate.

Contributor Safety

Can you create value for your team? Contributor safety satisfies the basic human need to make a difference and offer meaningful contributions. When we create contributor safety for others, we empower them with autonomy, guidance, and encouragement in exchange for effort and results. When you have contributor safety in your organization your team thrives under outcome accountability. Roles are clearly defined, but people are encouraged to think outside of their roles. Small wins are celebrated. When you don't, autonomy is given with little to no guidance, and team members may feel like benchwarmers.

Challenger Safety

Do you feel like you can be candid about change? Challenger safety satisfies the basic human need to make things better. When we create challenger safety, we give air cover (protection) in exchange for candor. Challenger safety gives team members a voice to speak up when there is an opportunity to improve. People can disagree productively. When you don't have challenger safety teams fall silent and people are punished for their bravery and candor.

Examples

Inclusion Safety Examples

Give people space to talk.

Don’t immediately respond with your own story or perspective. Keep your colleagues talking and encourage them to share more. The more validation they feel when sharing something personal, the more likely they will be to engage again in the future. This can create a more meaningful relationship for both of you.

Express curiosity.

If someone looks, speaks, eats, or acts differently than you, show curiosity. Phrases like “Can you tell me about…”, “I noticed that…”, or “Would you teach me…”, are all ways to express curiosity. Sincere curiosity is disarming and helps people feel that you’re genuinely interested in who they are and how they do things.

Verbally acknowledge and actively respect boundaries.

It can be difficult to set boundaries, but our needs are part of our authentic selves. Identify the needs of your team members. Let each person know that you’re aware of their boundaries and communicate what you will do to respect them. Set an expectation of maintaining boundaries in your team culture.

Learner Safety Examples

Value honesty over correct answers.

Work is inherently performance-based. For some people, admitting that they don't know is equated with admitting that they cannot perform. Honesty will move the needle forward a whole lot faster than pretending to have the answers. Choose to value your colleague's honesty over their perceived inability to contribute.

Don't assume competency.

What might feel obvious to you may not be for someone who's new to a task. It's hard to strike the balance between over-explaining and avoiding assumptions. Asking questions such as "Have you done something similar to this before?" or "Are you already familiar with this concept?" takes the pressure off of your team member to feign experience and understanding. Once you establish where they're at, pick up where they left off and fill in the gaps.

Identify what was learned.

Mistakes are most valuable when you can determine what was learned from them. Verbalize what new information you now have as a result of the mistake. Make your colleagues believe in the underlying benefits of their mistake.

Contributor Safety Examples

Ask permission before you give feedback.

Sometimes it's as simple as that! Asking for permission can diffuse some of the emotional risks associated with giving feedback. Try "Hey, may I give you some feedback?" If you get a yes, you're more likely to be met with gratitude and sincerity.

Encourage equal participation.

Let your team know that you expect their input. If someone isn't participating, kindly ask them if they have thoughts. Ask specific questions if they need direction.

Make expectations the bookends of your meeting.

In meetings where tasks are being assigned and discussed, begin with the anticipated expectations of both the meeting and the tasks at hand. At the end of the meeting, reiterate what was discussed and make the necessary edits to the initial

Challenger Safety Examples

Ask for the bad news.

You'll be surprised what people are willing to call out when they're asked specifically for the bad news in tandem with the good news. They will highlight problems that, when solved, will pay dividends for your team. It will show your colleagues that you embrace all aspects of the innovation process.

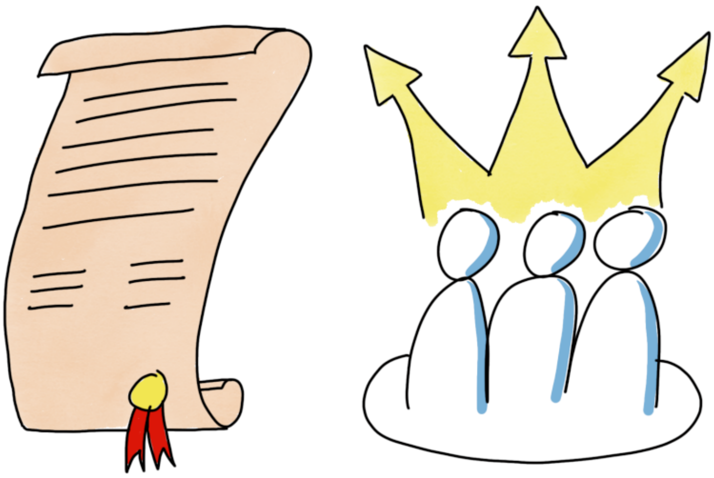
Assign dissent.

If you've found yourself in an echo chamber or knee-deep in groupthink, ask a colleague to play devil's advocate. Give them permission to disagree, even if they don't think something needs to be re-examined. Ask questions like: "What are we missing here?" or "Could this be done differently?"

Show gratitude for the opportunity to learn and improve.

Bravery is a noble characteristic, one that shouldn't be shut down. Even if you feel embarrassed by the mistake, don't let that guide your reaction to their bravery. They want the best for you and for your organization, otherwise, they wouldn't have mentioned the mistake in the first place. Be open and honest, not guarded and cold. Expect the same reaction from them.

Ground Rules & Decision Making



Time required

Typically, 5-15 minutes

Materials Required

- Something big & visible to write decided ground rules on, like a flipchart paper

Purpose

- This is a workshop facilitation technique to be used at the start of a workshop to help the participant focus on the task at hand and also to commit to work together in the best possible way

- It also serves as a tutorial for the important “fist of five” decision making technique that all teams probably should master

How

Part 1: Intro

One more thing before we get started on today’s topics. We will all be investing a whole day working on this, and we all have other things we could do instead. So, it’s is very important that we make sure we get as much value of this day as possible. Agreed?

So, what I would like us to do now is to agree, in a simple way, on a few ground rules for today on how we will work together to make this day the best possible. Let’s start with a quick pairwise discussion on what would be the most important ground rules for us to have a really productive and enjoyable day today? 3 minutes…

Give them a few minutes.

Ok, we will now try to make some decisions on rules that we can all agree to. Since there are quite a few people here it may not be so easy, but this is actually a really important skill to learn when working in an agile team. A team need to be able to take a lot of decisions, making sure there is buy in from everyone and it can not take huge amounts of time.

There is a really nice technique to deal with this that is called “fist of five”, or “five finger voting”

When you do five finger voting we do not start with discussing a topic forever, instead we quickly move into voting on a concrete proposal instead. Each person can vote from 0-5 by holding up that number of fingers.

With your fingers, show them the most important votes:

3: I can live with this, or I accept it

4: Good idea!

5: Best idea ever I will really support this!

2: I have something I want to say before we make the decision

- Ask if someone can propose a ground rule for today that will help make the day really valuable. When someone suggests something, facilitate decision making.
- If everyone votes 3 or more, it is decided. Celebrate how quick that was! With so many persons! Write it on the flipchart and repeat the procedure for some more proposals until someone votes less than 3

- If one or more persons votes less than three, ask one of them if they can enhance the proposal so that it may get more support. Then facilitate a new round of voting around the new proposal. Repeat until something that the group can accept is reached. Kill any discussions, and focus them on the flow of moving from proposal-vote, proposal-vote, …
- If you want to get an interesting vote, ground rules for phones and laptops on tables can sometimes trigger some good and useful voting rounds
  - If someone starts with suggesting no phones during the day, people will object until it usually ends up with that calls can be made on breaks, you can have the phone on silent and leave to answer family emergency calls etc
  - Once all participants (about 40) had laptops open at the start of a workshop. After some voting the rule accepted was: "If you close email, slack, turn off internet etc" then the others would trust you to "Only take notes" ;-) Nobody used their laptops during the day… ;-)

After a while just quit the exercise, make some points: - It is important to limit unproductive speaking and unstructured discussions if we are to be making quick decisions as a team. It takes to much time if everyone wants to speak and just repeat the point and explain why they agree. Really tough facilitation is needed, e.g using "fist of five"

- The technique quickly brings up any differences and lets us focus on resolving them.
- By this technique you get "consent". This means people accept the group decision. This is not the same as unanimous decisions. People may have other ideas, but after being heard it is usually possible to get consent anyway. The power of this is increased buy in.
- Buy in is not equally important for all decisions. For way of working issues it is though. All need to consent for any way of working decision to be effective
- For other types of decision you can use other methods e.g. majority voting. But you need to decide on decision method before you start.

Individual Goals

Time required

Typically, 1.5 hours

Materials Required

- Assorted Posit-its
- Markers
- Flipchart papers

Purpose

- This is a team-start/team development exercise.

- Decentralization, self-organization and agile development relies heavily on highly motivated individuals. This exercise is designed to help the team-work in a way that is supporting individuals' motivators.
- It also helps the team to distribute work better since each person's preferences gets known to the team
- For a team we usually cover goals from several perspectives:
  - Organization
  - Product
  - Team
  - **Individual <- Covered in this guide**

How

Part 1: Intro

- Why are you here, in this team?

Have you thought about this question? -) Maybe some of you are here because your boss told you so ;-) . . . but it is actually much better if we can work together to create some really good conditions so that everyone is here just because they really want to!

So, in this session we will work a bit on your individual goals both so that you can find some and so that the team can help you fulfil them!'

- Show the question written on top of a sample flip chart, like the one on the first page.

Part 2: Pairwise coaching

So, we will do this exercise in three steps, for the first two we will work in pairs, so

- *First could you all pair up with someone… Wait until they have…*
- *Now get one flipchart each and fill it out like my example*

Wait…

- *The next 15 minutes, one person per pair will fill in the top of his/her poster. It can actually be hard to find some good answers to this question by yourself, so that's why we will be working in pairs. One person will fill out the top of the poster and the other will be the "coach"!*
- *The responsibility of the coach is not to make suggestions, but to ask questions to help the other person explore their own thoughts and organize them.*

The last section contains some suggestions on questions a coach can ask. Print them out so that all coaches can have one. Let them have some time to study it before you start.

Then let them go for 15 minutes and then ask them to switch.

Part 3: Team support of individual motivators

Next

1. Let each person describe their poster, to the team.

2. As they speak, let the team take notes on how they (as a team and individuals) can support the person in reaching what they need/want.
3. Collect team suggestions at the bottom of each flipchart paper.
4. Facilitate the discussion so that actions are clear and next step for each support action is set.
5. Facilitate decision making, state the suggestions and let the team consent using “fist of five” voting for example.

Coaching question examples

- What was a time when you really enjoyed work?
- What about that did you enjoy?
- What else…?
- What are some of the things you enjoy at work?
- How did that feel when you… <achieved something>?
- What was another time when you had that feeling?
- Can you remember a time when you felt really satisfied/excited/happy?
- Say something more about that…?
- What makes you feel alive?
- What motivates you?
- What are your interests?
- What about the work we are doing makes you excited?
- What would you like to learn?
- What else would make you really happy about having been in this team?
- What else would you like to experience on this team?
- I hear that you really enjoy <…>
- <…> seems important to you.

Journey Lines

Purpose

- Let a team get started on their path toward more self-management.
- Let a team learn more about each other's when it comes to
  - working history,
  - skills,
  - what each person enjoys doing and not.
- Deepen the level of communication by having other team members confirm that they have seen each other and appreciates each other's skills and experiences.
- Usually this brings in also some conversations on a more personal nature. This enhances the basic emotional safety on the team. "It is ok to be human rather than being a professional robot at work". (This aspect was found by Google to be the most important predictor of team success).

Source

This exercise is very well described in Lyssa Adkins' book "Coaching Agile Teams". She attributes it to Tichy N 2002, "The Cycle of Leadership: How Great Leaders Teach Their Companies to Win".

Time required

- 5 minutes intro
- 10 minutes for each person to prepare
- After that about 1 hour per 5 persons in the team
- 10 minutes wrap up (optional)

Preparations

- Get materials
  - Flip chart paper
  - Whiteboard markers to draw "Journey Lines"
  - Post-its
  - Markers for posits
  - A timer to keep track of time boxes for presentations
  - Paper tissues (it can sometimes be emotional)

Intro

Example

In most agile setups these days we have this concept with self-managed teams. How many have heard about that? (Hands up).

One thing that self-management means is that that the team, not a project manager or team leader, decides how to work together, who does what etc.

To be able to do this is good for us to know a bit more about each other's experience and what each of us we enjoy working on and not, so that is the purpose of this next exercise.

This is how it will work:

- *Step one is 10 minutes. In those ten minutes I would like you all to take one of these flipchart papers and create a short presentation of your journeys through your working lifes.* <Show them your pre-created example>. *When the line goes up it means you enjoyed it, when it goes down, not so* *much. Feel free to include more personal events also if you want, because life at work and off work usually has an impact on each other.*

- *Then we will start working through the presentations, person by person.*
  - *For each person we will first get a presentation of the line. While listening, the rest of the team makes notes about what you find interesting, defining, or useful about the person presenting. After that each team member goes to the poster one by one and presents their observations as they put them on the poster.* <Show them what you mean by doing it as you explain>.

Ok, let's take 10 minutes to prepare some posters.

When they are done, move on to next section…

Facilitating the flow

If you want to, think about if there is one person in the team that you think may be more comfortable being open with problems/issues/feelings with the team and ask that person to go first. If someone sets a personal tone first it make the exercise even better. You could also do this yourself if you want.

If you think it will be needed, keep a timer running to manage some time boxes. Especially some people can go on for quite a while when presenting.

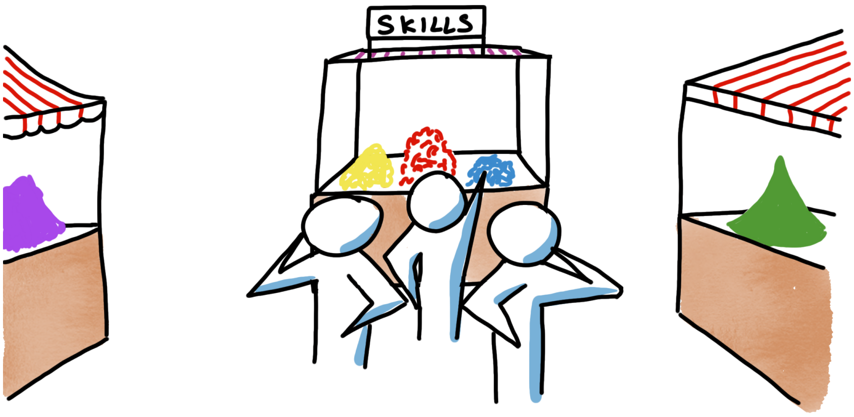
In your own comments, focus on seeing the whole person rather than commenting only on the professional skills-related part.

You can also comment from the point of the agile coach/Scrum Master, i.e., if the person enjoys working in teams, close to customer, fast feedback, fast decisions etc, comment that this is a match with what the team will be asked to do.

Wrap up (optional)

If you do this exercise stand alone, i.e. not part of a longer session then this wrap up might be useful. After every person has presented their "Journey Line", invite everyone to think about what they will bring from this session. If they want, they can also share it with the others.

Market of skills



Purpose

- Make skills the team have visible to entire team.
- Increase the sharing of skills among team members

Possible learning points

- By making our skills visible to others we can learn from each other better.

Duration

- 30-60 min

Material

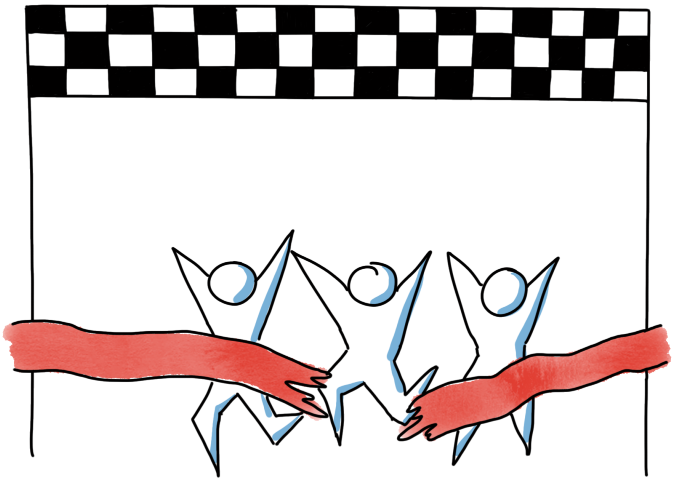
- One A3 paper for every participant.
- Pens in different colors (not necessary but definitely a bonus) and sharpies.

How

- Invite each person to create their own poster. Show a template of how the poster can look like. It shall contain this: (10-15 min)

  - Name
  - Self portrait
  - Interest or ability (that are unknown to others, could be related to professional or private life)
  - Personal goal (could be private or professional)
  - My top skill that will help us to reach our goal
  - Skills that I can share with others (sell)
  - Skills I would like to learn (buy)
- Invite each person to present their poster. (1-3 min/person)
- Invite the group of people to self-organize to agree on one buy and one sell transaction per person. What to buy, what to sell and how to take the next steps together. (10 min)

Organizational Goals for Teams



Time required

Typically 30 min - 1 hours, depending on how unfamiliar/unclear the vision and goals are to the team.

Materials Required

- Orange & green positits
- Markers

Purpose

This is a teamstart/team development exercise. The purpose of it is for the team to get to know their purpose more in detail, for them to process it, discuss it, understand it and internalize it. Having a clear, compelling purpose is the most important factor when it comes to how a team performs. With no shared goal there will be no team. In the context where we work, we usually use self organizing teams. For a team we usually cover goals from several perspectives:

- **Line Organization <- covered in this guide**
- Product
- Team
- Individual

Preparations

Book some prep-sessions with a line manager responsible for the teams. They need to present the organizational/way of working vision/goals at the session. Expect at least 1+2 hours prep with some days in between to create attractive visions/a compelling direction from organization point of view.

The purpose of the line manager participating in this session is:

- Explain reasons for agile improvement efforts/agile transformation in a way that energizes the team.
- Explain what the team is expected to do as an agile team, except to develop product. This is usually:
  - Own their own ways of working and continuously improve it, i.e. they need to be experts on agile ways of working in addition to experts in programming/UX/test etc.
  - Work more closely and as a team instead of as individuals. Broaden skills, focus on team goals and help out in areas where you don't have super skills, but makes sense to meet the team goal.
  - Refine and improve skills in communication, decision making, problem solving and conflict management to be able to reach a truly well functioning self organizing team level.
  - Learn new skills in your area related to how to perform it with agile tools and techniques (i.e. test driven development, refactoring, Lean UX, Agile testing etc).
  - Take end to end responsibility including requirements, testing and deployment.
  - Synchronize directly with other teams rather than relying on other to do this.
  - …

The vision regarding on why we are trying to get more agile and how we want the teams to develop needs to be high intensity, emotional, personal.

Some ideas on how to reach that in the prep session is below:

- Avoid powerpoints. Human to human communication is most often best done without it.

- A personal story is one of the most effective ways of communicating a vision. This comes from 100 000 years of human history telling around campfires before we invented more elaborate writing, so it is a uniquely tested and effective way to convey information and motivate/energize others.
- Wording and expressions should be personal and use emotion. Words like proud, excited, sad etc are good to use. We do not want dry “professional” language.
- Good stories around way of working may origin from examples. Ask the Line manager what are some examples where we work as best in this organization. Look for examples where we already work close as a cross functional team with a clear purpose, high authority to make decisions, close to the customer, short feedback cycles to deliver maximum value e.g.
- Sometimes various “task forces” appears as an example. This is quite similar to what we want to achieve with agile teams, clear goals, all the right people, high authority to make decisions, no bureaucracy. But also point out that we want to do it with sustainable pace and high quality.
- Maybe the vision can be summarized in a few keywords (max 3-5) and/or a small picture. Encourage live-drawing the vision/picture.
- Thinking about the “receiver” is always good, what is in it for the team, for the individuals. Emphasize these aspects.

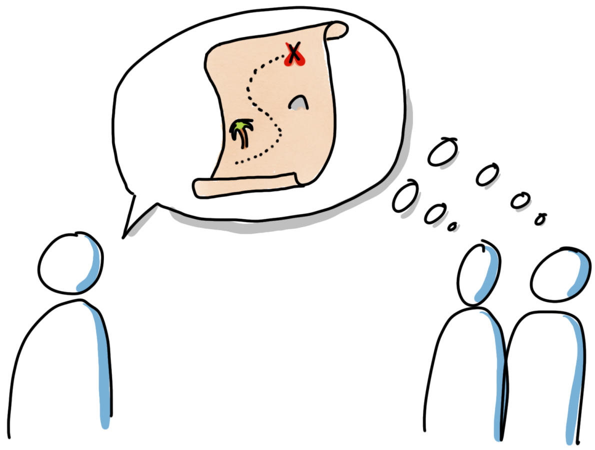
How

As an agile team you are also a very important part of our agile transformation. The type of agile teams we are trying to grow and develop now probably also are quite different than teams you have been in the past. Maybe even even if they have been called “Scrum teams”. So we have today out line manager to explain and discuss what it is that the organization wants to achieve in terms of way of working and how that affects your team.

While talking you all will write some comments on orange and green positits. Green postits for clear goals directions that you hear. Orange for items you feel could be more clear or that you would like to discuss.

- Let the Line Manager do the presentation. After, collect all clear/unclear postits on some flipcharts. Facilitate a summary of the green ones and a discussion/clarification of orange ones together with the line manager.
- Save the physical results for use in later retrospectives and other sessions.

Product Goals for Teams



Time required

Typically, 30 min - 2 hours, depending on how unfamiliar/unclear the vision and goals are to the team

Materials Required

- Orange & green Posi-its
- Markers

Purpose

This is a team start/team development exercise. The purpose of it is for the team to get to know their purpose more in detail, for them to process it, discuss it, understand it, and internalize it.

Having a clear and compelling purpose is the most important factor when it comes to how a team performs. With no shared goal there will no team.

For a team we usually cover goals from several perspectives:

- Organization
- **Product ← covered in this guide**
- Team
- Individual

Preparations

Book some prep-sessions with some product manager/PO that is most relevant for the team. They need to present the vision/goals from product point of view. Expect at least 1+2 hours prep with some days in between to create attractive visions/a compelling direction from product point of view.

The purpose of the PO participating in this session is: - To present long term (and medium term) goals in a way so that the team understands context, actually knows what to do, what is important and why it is important. - The above is needed to enable the team to make good decentralized decisions.

- To energize and motivate the team by describing the purpose in a way that is attractive to them.

During this prep session, focus on how the goal/vision can be made attractive to the team.

Here are some suggestions on how to do that:

- Avoid PowerPoints. Human to human communication is most often best done without it.
- A personal story is one of the most effective ways of communicating a vision. This comes from 100 000 years of human history telling around campfires before we invented more elaborate writing, so it is a uniquely tested and effective way to convey information and motivate/energize others.
- The best ways in general to formulate a direction/goal is to focus on what good will we do in the world. Whose life will be better by our efforts. This could also be formulated using stories about current (bad) situations from a human point of view.
- The story is ideally end user/stakeholder/purpose centric but can be about "how come the PO wanted to work with this?" or "What makes him/her excited about the possibilities".
- Wording and expressions should be personal and use emotion. Words like proud, excited, sad etc are good to use. We do not want dry "professional" language.

- A story could also be imaginary, about the future. There is one example that I remember vividly, among other things the message included: “Think about next summer at the convention, I would like us to be called upon the stage to receive the reward for most innovative solution in the healthcare business”. In this example I remember that the product manager also were very emotional speaking about the hard works spent on a bit boring stuff during the year and how they finally was time to focus forward and on innovation. I also remember that her story started out with her walking outside in the morning. Crispness of the air and other details was included in good storyteller fashion. It was hugely successful as a vision and people kept coming back to it to make sure they stayed on target: “Is this the best way for us to win that reward next year”

How

- *The purpose of the next session is for you to discuss the long goals and direction of the team with our PO/PM. And to create your own summary of it.*
- *Btw, let’s do a quick pairwise discussion: “Why would it makes sense for you all to know about the goals on a higher level and not only get task by task in the sprint planning?” - 2 minutes pairwise discussion*
- Debrief by asking a few pairs. Make sure answers include that self-organized teams need to understand the context and purpose to make good everyday decisions.
- It is actually also not so uncommon for people/projects to actually not know the goal of projects and thereby waste a lot of time. I know one project that spent 6 months on porting a UI to Silverlight while the purpose of the project had nothing to do with that.
- *Our PO will now present his/her ideas. While talking you all will write some comments on orange and green Post-its. Green Post-its for clear goals/directions that you hear. Orange for items you feel could be more clear or that you would like to discuss.*
- Let the PO do the presentation. After, collect all clear/unclear Post-its on some flipcharts. Facilitate a summary of the green ones and a discussion/clarification of orange ones together with the PO/PM.
- Save the physical results for use in later retrospectives and other sessions.

Team Agreement

Purpose

- Set the stage for working as a team.

Possible learning points

- Clear rules of engagement within the team makes it easier to address and handle conflicts when they arrise.

Duration

- 30-60 min

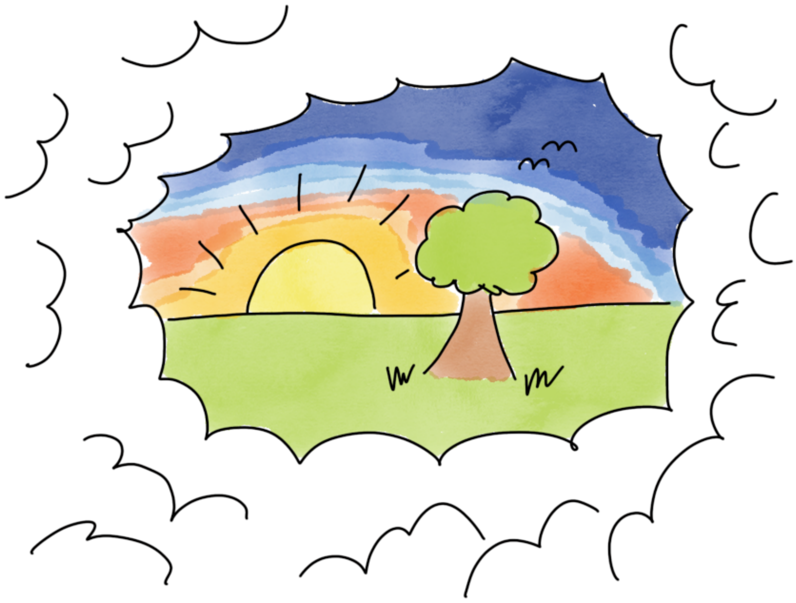
Material

- One flipchart sheet
- PostIt notes and sharpies.
- Note paper

How

- Each individual answers to the question “How would I like to be treated at work?” by writing short answers on PostIt notes (one item on each note)
- Take turns to present one PostIt per person and put it up on the flipchart. If someone else has the same item, once the presenter has finished talking, they put their note on top of, or close by the presenter’s PostIt. The individuals with the copies will then present another note with another topic.
- As a group, try to group up similar topics by putting them close together, but not on top of each other.
- In small groups (pairs) try to identify what values the different notes and groups of notes represent (a note with “I like it when people let me finish presenting my idea before they comment” might represent the value “Respect”).
- Each small group (or pair) presents the values they have identified for each group of notes (eliminate duplicates in the same way as above).
- Use “fist to five” to identify which values all members of the team can buy in to.
- Note down the values the team buys in to and use the information on the other PostIts to descibe how to live these values on the format “We value… by acting…” (for example: We Respect each other by listening and letting others finish before we comment)

Team Vision



Time required

Typically 1 hour

Materials Required

- Assorted post-its
- Markers
- Coloured markers
- Flipchart papers
- Whiteboard, or even better a longer piece of paper/portable whiteboard plastic to put on the wall for the vision story
- Possibly some music playing device loaded with really soft instrumental music

Purpose

This is a teamstart/team development exercise. The purpose of it is for the team to start defining themselves as a team by creating a shared team vision on what team they want this to be

For a team we usually cover goals from several perspectives:

- Organization
- Product
- **Team <- Covered in this guide**
- Individual

How

Intro

Now we have dealt with some of the goals from the organisation and product management.

The next few session will be about you and your team and what you want it to be. So, if we want this to be really great team experience, maybe one of the best in your career so far, then probably we should should spend some time to get everyone's input on what that really great team experience would look like!

If you agree on what you are aiming at it increases the chance that you get there, does it make sense?

Warmup -> pairwise

Ok, as a warmup, I want you all first quietly think about a really great experience that you have had in a team. It could be at work or in a sports team etc, any team. Make a few notes on what happened and also start thinking about what made it so great. Next step will be to talk in pairs, but lets get started individually first for a few minutes. What was the best team you have been on, what made it so great?

Start a timer to avoid interrupting them before they even get started. Give them 4-5 minutes. If you want to avoid the silence, consider playing some really soft instrumental music.

The reason why we want them to create their new team vision based on experience rather than on empty slogans is to anchor it more deeply by having it, again, be based on personal stories

Some people think better when they get some individual time first, having people write quietly is designed to make it easier for them. After 4-5 minutes, if everyone seems to have gotten started, interrupt them and then ask them to form pairs and share what they came to think of.

I have also done this jumping directly inte pairwise discussion and I think that worked nicely too, although in theory the quiet writing start is probably better.

Subgroups -> keywords

After a few minutes of pairwise sharing, start collecting results, if the team is bigger than 6 persons, keep working with subgroups of 3-4 persons. Ask each subgroup to write down some keywords from their stories - if this was the best team you ever worked on - how would you describe it

Subgroups -> visualizations

Sometimes in the past we have asked teams to create a mission statement, like "we are brave and innovative and always work together with customer" - which may be a nice summary of what you have discussed, but perhaps a bit dry and not so inspiring, so today we will create two other representations of your team vision. To start with I would like each subgroup to illustrate with a small drawing using the coloured markers on a flipchart what you think the vision for your team should be. So, take 15 minutes to visualize what you came up with and then you will get to present it to the other subgroup.

Hand out coloured markers and flipchart papers and start a timer

Make them present it to each other, facilitate som discussions about similarities and differences in the subgroups visualizations. Are there any areas that need decision making or can all team members consent to the team vision as visualised. Facilitate discussions and any decision making.

Whole team -> Vision story

Ok, the idea with this is to help you discuss and agree on what a really great team would be for you, something that you can tell stories to your grandchildren about when you are sitting in your rocking-chair on your porch.

Which brings us to the final exercise for this topic. Now lets see if we can bring this great visionary drawings into our everyday work here. We will do it by creating something we call a "vision story". The purpose of a vision story is to make this even more hands on and easy to remember. The brain is actually uniquely good at remembering stories since this is how all human knowledge was probably passed on around campfires until we learned more advanced writing.

So the next step is to create a story that you can use later when when talk to each other and plan your work and when you notice that you deviate from your visions. Then you can always refer to your story. "Team… we are not doing it like we said!"

So, we will do this in two parts

- *Pick something that you could work on as a team that would make it possible to include all or most parts from your visionary drawings. It could be a product goal or something you know is coming up in the backlog*

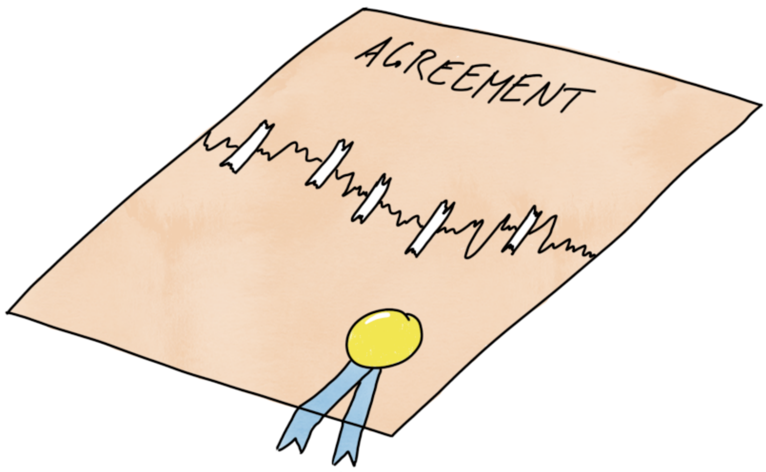
- *Create a story timeline here showing how you complete the work as a team, behaving exactly according to your amazing team vision! You can use text and small pictures, anyway you like!*

In 15 minutes I would like to see and hear your story!

Listen to their story, ask them if it covers the vision drawings? If not, can it be tweaked to include all? Then ask then are you going to to do this, in this way for real? Facilitate decision making.

When all is done, celebrate by a round of high fives or something! When you have done this task in this way you will never forget you ambitious team vision!

Repairing Broken Agreements



Time required:

30 min

Purpose:

- Motivating teams to make agreements and to hold each other accountable for what has has been agreed
- After the sessions, the participants shall have the courage to bring up a broken agreement and the skills to repair it
- When teams practise this technique, it increases the basic emotional safety in the team which makes it a lot easier to develop as a team

Preparations

- Print Role studies from next sections for everyone. Each person should get either the “Chris” or “Sam” version.
- Ask a co-trainer or someone in the session if they can demonstrate the technique with you as show a bit further below. Go through it with them, explain what you will bring up and why it would have seem like the correct thing to do from their point of view at the time.

How

(The session below has been designed with the 4c learning approach from “Training from back of the room concept”)

Connect: Did anyone experience that a team member did not really behave in a way that you think is ok in your team, but you did let it go because you though that bringing it up would be uncomfortable or lead to conflict?

Concept

To start with, if someone’s behaviour is ok or not is a subjective matter. Someone might think it is perfectly ok to eat a dripping taco while they are borrowing your keyboard, and might not understand why you come running yelling for no reason….

Thus, when you are in a team, it is a good idea to have a conversation to try to set a few rules that the team agrees with. It can be about quality, how closely to work together, times, roles and meetings etc. Not too many are needed, 6-7 may be enough. This is an important part when building a team.

If you are doing this as part of a team start session that includes also making working agreements, point out here that we will do that later, but this exercise is not about that part.

So, what should you do then if someone does not stick to what has been agreed? Who will bring it up? Actually one rule that needs to be in every teams working agreements is that when someone notices that another member don’t stick to the team agreements, that person needs to bring it up right away and repair the agreement. This is since when an agreement has been broken it does not really exist anymore and there is a big risk of “*broken window syndrome*” kicking in.

To prevent this from happening in your team each of you will now get to practise bringing something uncomfortable up with a colleague and repairing a broken agreement, but we will do it in a perfectly safe way using some made up cases that you will get to role play.

Here is the template that I want you to try out when you do this, it is from Christopher Avery who is a very skilled coach.

Example

- *First show using an example, you may have prepared someone in the class to do this or do it with a co-facilitator. If you know the script the other person barely needs any preparation at all.*

  You: *Sam, I had a look in the ocde and it seemed to me that you checked a lot of code in last night without any tests, was that so?*

  Sam: *Yeah, that's right. There was a crises and I had to etc etc*

  You: *Ah. I see. It makes me a bit worried now that we get code without automatic tests into the system. Our team rule to not check anything in without tests have been really great for me. I have felt much more comfortable changing things and we do not get disturbed so much by trouble reports. I'm afraid if we start slipping ere with the testing we will soon be back where we started. What do you think about this rule of never to check in without tests?*

  Sam: *I think it has been good. I was super stressed out yesterday and did not have time, that is all.*

  You: *Do you think we need to change our rule to cover high stress situations better?*

  Sam: *Nah, I think it is probably best if we keep it like it is. I will add the tests now and will take it a bit more easy the next time. Perhaps we could pair program more in those situations to help us not take shortcuts when we are stressed out.*

  You: *Great! Let's keep up our high quality! <shake hands>*

What do you think? Can you bring something uncomfortable up in this way?

Template

Show the participants the template below. Write it on a template and show that this is what you just demonstrated:

1. Bring up what you noticed, check if the other person agrees with what you noticed?
2. Tell the other person what the agreement means to you and why you want to keep it.
3. Ask the other person about their view on the agreement
4. Ask if the agreement needs to be changed to work for the other person
5. Make a decision about a new agreement or decide to keep the old one.

Concrete practise

Now each of you will get to practice this technique. I will give you a script with some made up cases and role studies. One of you will play Sam, one will play Chris.

In the first case Sam will bring up a broken agreement with Chris and in the second case Chis will bring something up with Sam.

Try to use the template that I showed you.

Hand out the *cases*, (assign each person to be either Sam or Chris)

let them do it, ask some debriefing questions and encourage them,. That sounded great! Lots of conflict in the rool and everyone survived! How did that feel. What did you learn?

What will you take away from this exercise?

Conclusion

Make a note on how and when you could use this technique back at work. How could you introduce it to others?

Role study for person playing “Sam”

Case 1: Sprint planning

Background:

The rule in your team is that people should strive to participate in sprint planning sessions. You created this rule because you wanted the perspective of everyone during planning. Chris did not appear in the latest session and you had troubles getting to a good plan.

Assignment:

Initiate a discussion with Chris about the broken agreement. Use Christopher Avery’s technique for repairing broken agreements:

1. Bring up what you noticed, check if the other person agrees with what you noticed?
2. Tell the other person what the agreement means to you and why you want to keep it.
3. Ask the other person about their view on the agreement
4. Ask if the agreement needs to be changed to work for the other person
5. Make a decision about a new agreement or decide to keep the old one.

Case 2: Working from home

Background:

Your company allows for a mix of remote and in-office work. For you, working from home is a great way to focus better. Especially on fridays when there are few other meetings this is great! You still check messages but sometimes puts them on mute when you really need to focus on something.

Role study for person playing “Chris”

Case 1: Sprint planning

Background:

Your dentist appointment was during the sprint planning so you could not participate. You already knew most of what you would be working on so it was no big deal.

Case 2: Working from home

Background:

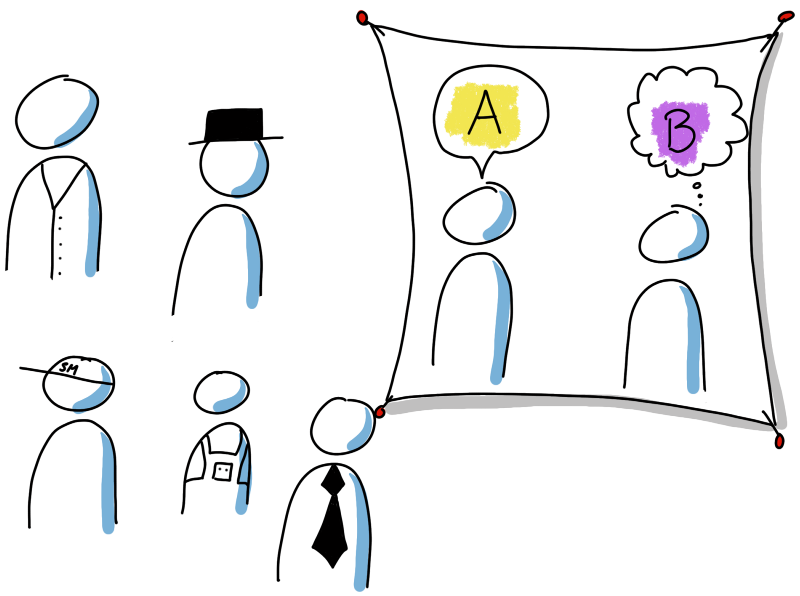
Your company allows for a mix of remote and in-office work. Your team has agreed to try to get together in the office at least on Tuesdays and Fridays. Sam emails you for the third Friday in a row: “I will be working from home today, I can be reached by mail and over communicator”. You feel that the benefits of in-office work is decreased when Sam is still remote and sometimes he is not even responding that fast.

Assignment:

Initiate a discussion with Sam about the situation. Use Christopher Avery’s technique for repairing broken agreements:

1. Bring up what you noticed, check if the other person agrees with what you noticed?
2. Tell the other person what the agreement means to you and why you want to keep it.
3. Ask the other person about their view on the agreement
4. Ask if the agreement needs to be changed to work for the other person
5. Make a decision about a new agreement or decide to keep the old one.

Roles and Expectations



Purpose

- Clarify the different roles and expectations on the role (the one in the role and the others).

Possible learning points

- By clarifying the roles we understand our activities and responsibilities better and can work better together with fewer assumptions about who is doing what.

Duration

- 30-60 min

Material

- One flipchart sheet or A3 paper for every participating role.
- Postit notes (at least two different colors) and sharpies.

How

- Create a flipchart as a template with the sentence "As a I do … and I am responsible for…"
  1. Invite each role to create their own poster (flipchart or A3). If more than one person has the same role (e.g. developer) they should create one poster together. (10-15 min)
  2. Invite each role to present the role. (1-3 min/role)
  3. Invite the others to give feedback. They should have postit notes in two different colors.

They write down the things they don't agree to or don't understand on one color of the postit notes. The other color is for things they lack in the role description. Put up the postit notes on the poster. No comments yet. Repeat this and the previous step for all roles. (1-3 min/role)

4. Invite each role to reflect on the feedback they have received and be prepared for a group discussion. (5 min)
5. Invite each role to respond to the feedback and have a group discussion about unclear and missing things. Repeat for all roles. (10-20 min)