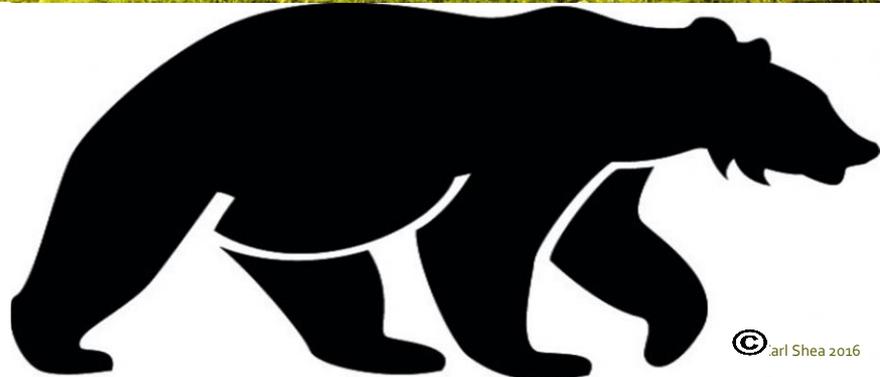# Retrospectives – The Basics

The Agile Bear Coaching Series
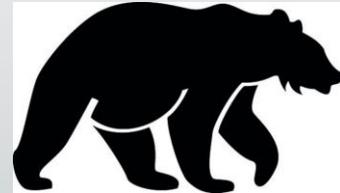
Thursday, September 29, 2016

Enterprise Agile Coach: Carl G. Shea

Contents
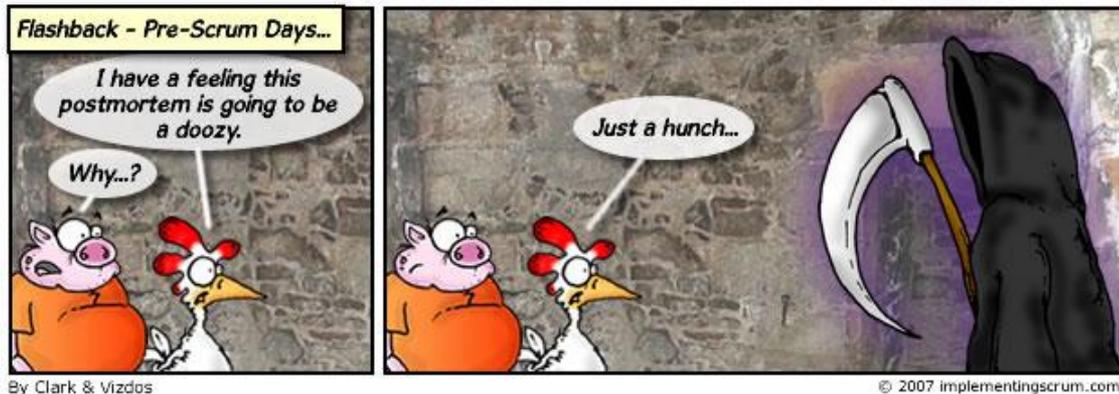
What are Retrospectives?

Retrospectives help teams examine what went right and what went wrong on a project. Traditionally, retrospectives "post-mortems" are completed at the project close--too late to help.

- All things in agile follow the Plan-Do-Check-Adapt (PDCA) loop.

- Agile retrospectives are iterative and incremental, also following the PDCA concept.

- Scrum has a planned retrospective at the end of every sprint.

- Retrospectives can be held at any point that a team feels there is an impediment that is blocking the team.

- Can be used at all levels, including program and portfolio.
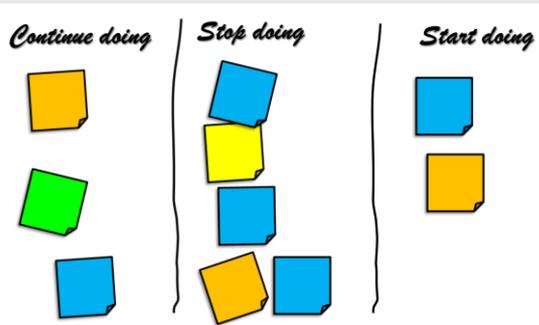
WHY?
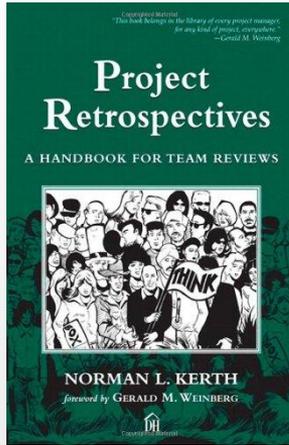
"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available and the situation at hand"
~Norman Kerth

To Help Teams to:
- Solve Problems
- Improve Themselves
- Become Agile and Lean
- Make existing processes more Agile
- Increase the value of doing Agile
- Reduce resistance to change
- Course corrections
- Great Teambuilding exercise
- Opportunity to talk about the Tough stuff
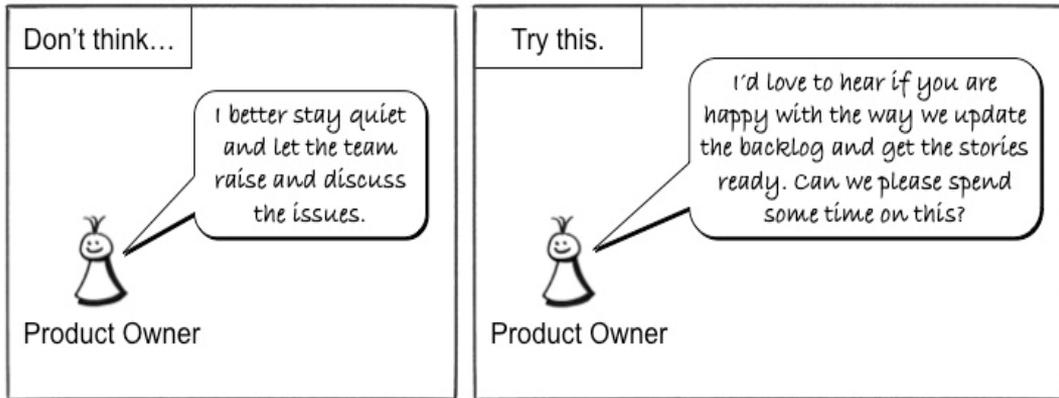
Retrospective Life Cycle

Potentially Shippable Increment

Close Retrospective

Decide What To Do

Sprint

Inspect and Adapt Methods and Teamwork

Generate Insights

Build Product

Experiments & Improvements

Gather Data
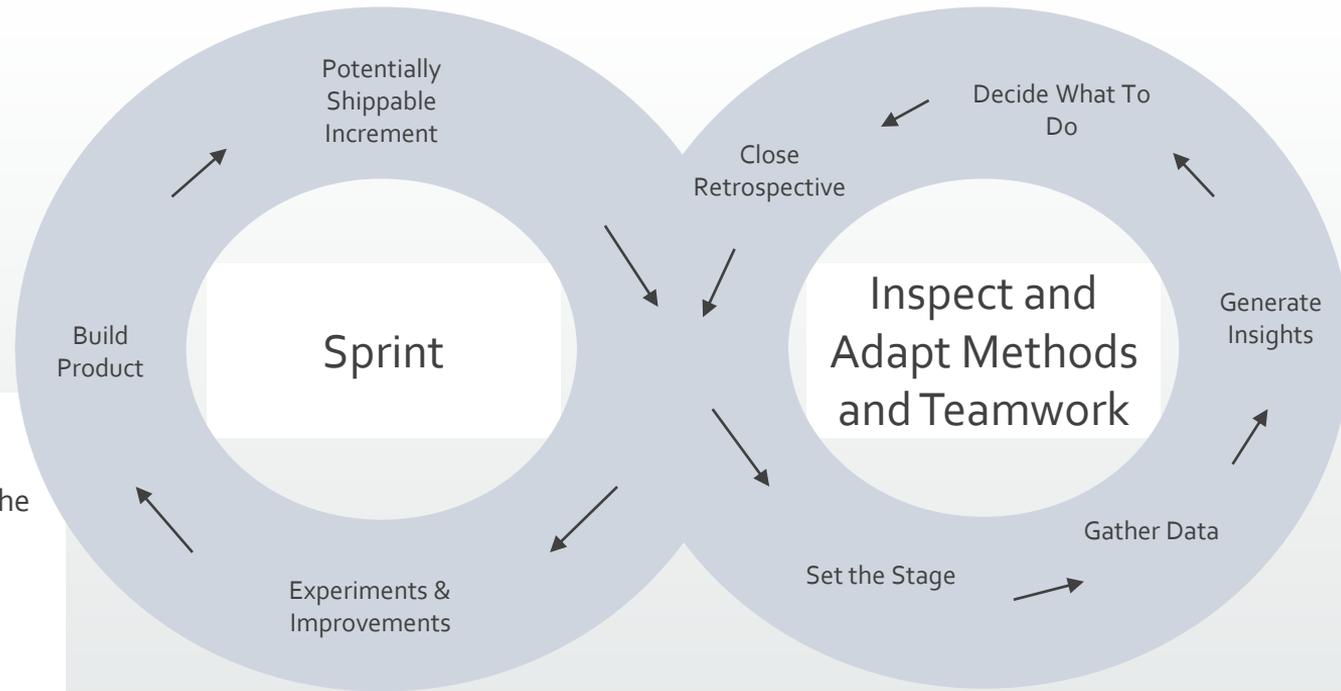
Set the Stage

Retrospectives

Set the Stage
- Get Everyone to speak, Agree on the rules, Create A Safe Space

Gather Data
- Feelings are legitimate data

Generate Insights
- Why? Begin Discussing how to do things differently

Decide what to do
- Commit to 1-3 experiments

Close the retrospective
- Review the retrospective itself. Capture the information, celebrate as a team.

Adapted from: Agile Retrospectives, Making Good Teams Great ~ Ester Derby and Diana Larsen

Setting the Stage - Preparing

1. Prepare agenda
   - WIIFM/Purpose
   - Team Agreement (meeting)
   - Gathering Data
   - Generating Insights
   - Deciding on what to do
   - Close
2. Identify space
3. Identify resources
   - Flip Charts
   - Post-Its
   - Colored dots
   - White board markers
4. Send meeting invites

Activity	Time
Set the Stage	10
Gather Data	20
Generate Insights	15
Decide What to Do	5
Closing	10

Who Should Attend
1. All Scrum Team Members
2. ScrumMaster as facilitator
3. NO One that is a manager/Boss
4. Don't include uninvited external stakeholders
5. PO/PM may be invited if the team agrees

It's not about finding a culprit, it's about finding a solution.

Setting the Stage - Preparing

- Power Start the Meeting:

1. Open with a review of the agenda

2. Describe the purpose of the meeting – often it will follow a basic question like: "We have been experiencing high-post Sprint defects – Lets explore this as a team"

3. Review the team's meeting version of their team agreements. Ask – is there something we need to change before we start our retrospective?

4. Remind everyone of the basic rules of an agile retrospective:
   - ✓ We want to hear all voices
   - ✓ Don't make it personal – Don't take it personal
   - ✓ Identify why, but focus on solution
   - ✓ Remind the team of their conflict management team agreement
   - ✓ Open for questions and Ideas

Gathering Data

- There are 2 key things we want to identify;

  1. What do we want to keep doing
  2. What do we need to stop doing (did not work).

- Best approach to ensure we get all voices heard – allow for 5 minutes of silent brain storming.

- Have everyone write as many of the keep doing and stop doing items on post-its – one per post-it

- At the end of the brain storming session have everyone place their post-its on the board and spend 10 minutes discussing, deduping and grouping the ideas.

- Then spend 2 minutes dot voting on the top 2 impacting ideas for what did not work. (give everyone 2 votes each)

- Have a 5 minute discussion to ensure we all understand the top two.

  - Capture all ideas, but we are going to focus on the top two this retrospective.

Generating Insights

- The main idea for retrospectives is to create transparency to issues and finding valid solutions as a team to improve.

- Once the team has identified two key negative impacting ideas, the next step is to generate some ideas to solve the issue.

- Again the best way to ensure diversity and to hear all voices is to utilize a 5 minute brainstorming approach.

- Each team member puts their solution ideas on a post-its – one idea per post-it.

- At the end of the brain storming session have everyone place their post-its on the board and spend 10 minutes discussing, deduping and grouping the ideas.

**It's not about airing everything, it's
about getting the top insights.**

Deciding what to do

Once we have our board ready with multiple ideas of what to do, we now need to decide on what we will do.

- Then spend 2 minutes dot voting on the top 2-3 top ideas for how we will solve for what did not work. (give everyone 2 votes each)
- The items with the most dots are the improvements we will work on during the next sprint
- Now quickly (no more than 2 minutes) make sure we have owners to follow through with the improvements

It's not about talk, it's about action.

Closing the Retrospective

- Now that we have our few improvements to work on and they have owners to help with the follow-through, we need to close the retrospective.

- Fist of 5 commitment to the selected improvements

- Close with celebrating each other -
  - ✓ Each person call out other team members who have done something that we are grateful for – this is mandatory, we need to learn to be grateful for each other
  - ✓ As a team close the meeting with a team cheer!

It's not about feeling good, it's about following through.

| Major Reservations can't support | Major Reservations Need more discussion | Some Reservations Need more discussion | I am committed and will support it | I am completely committed and will support it |

Great Teams are Adaptive in Retrospectives

- **A**ct on improvements

- **D**iverge before they converge

- **A**ccount for follow through

- **P**robe for understanding

- **T**ry something new

- **I**nvolve everyone

- **V**isualize data not people

- **E**xpose the elephant in the room

"THE SECRET OF CHANGE IS TO FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT ON BUILDING THE NEW."

— SOCRATES

Try running a retrospective on the last retrospective to find ways to make the next one better

Potential Questions Examples

AGILE MANIFESTO

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

- How well have we lived up to the values of Scrum?

- How well are we living up to the values of Agile?

- How well do we adhere to the principles of Agile?

- What assumption did the team make this past sprint that might not be true?

- If you knew there would be no consequences to your actions, what would you do?

- How close is "Done" to "Done-Done" for this team? How could we close the gap and thus reduce our overall cycle time and produce higher quality?
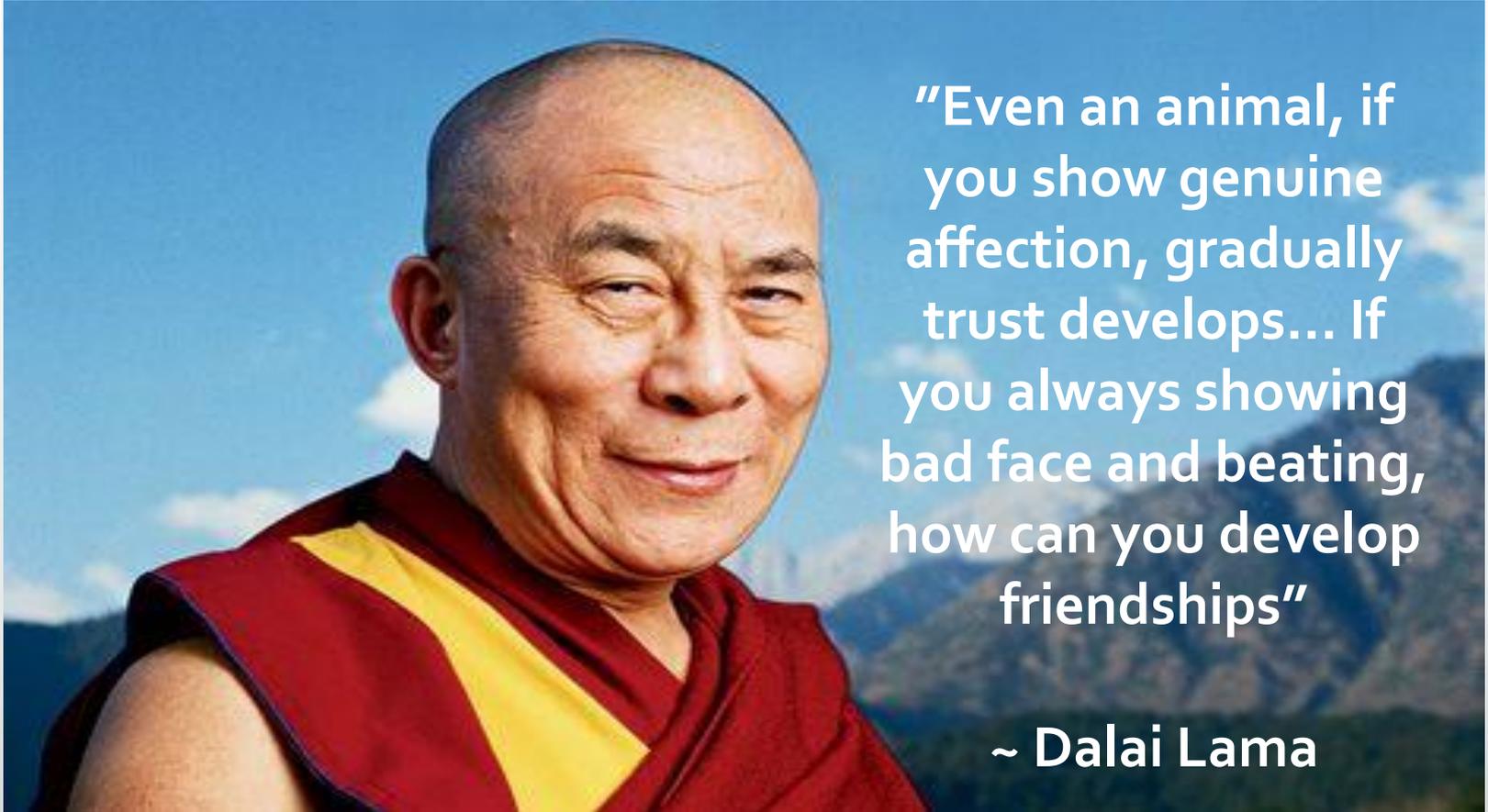
"Even an animal, if you show genuine affection, gradually trust develops... If you always showing bad face and beating, how can you develop friendships"

~ Dalai Lama

To Busy to Improve?
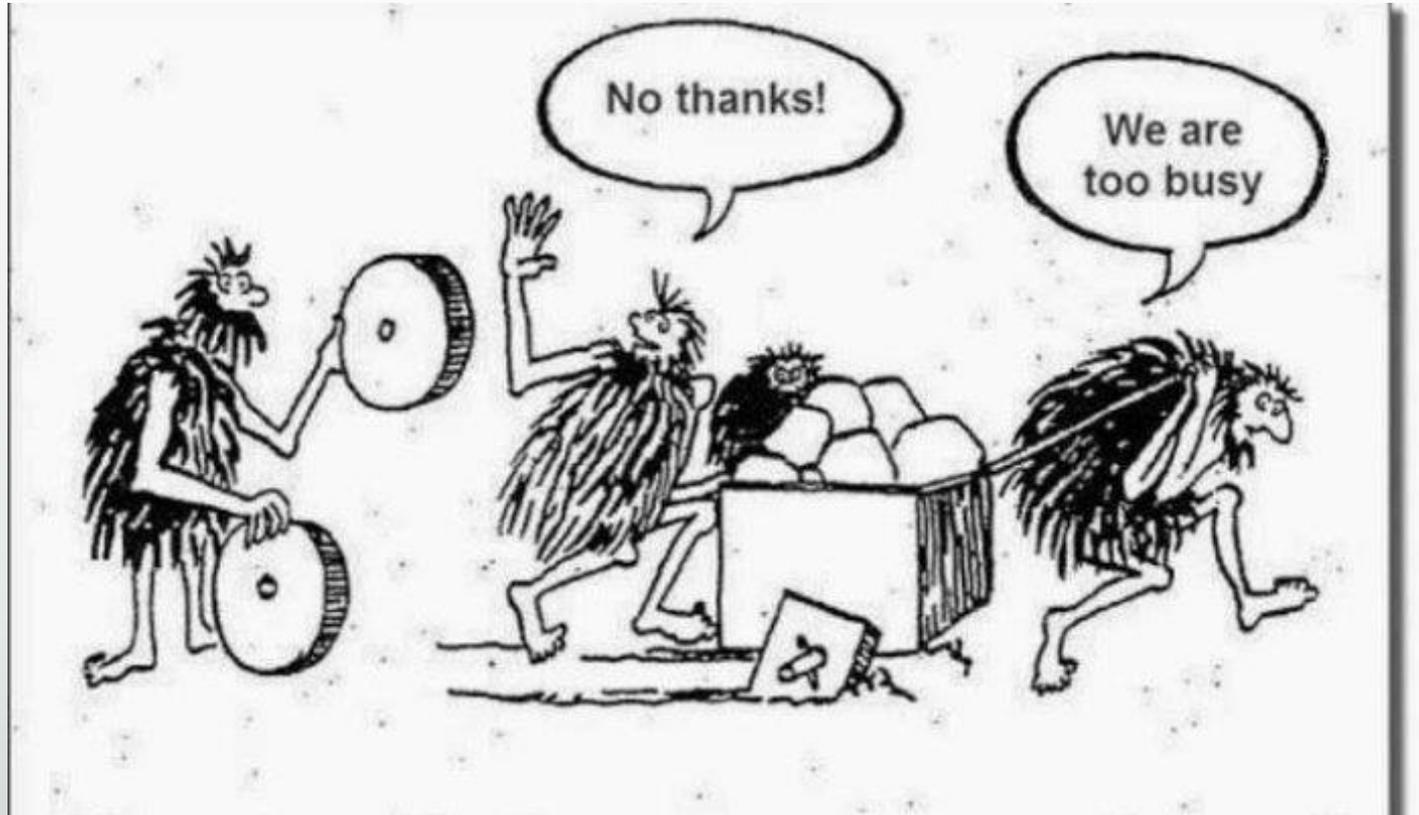
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