

Signs your Team may be Faking it...

By Laura Valentine

# ALMOST AGILE

# The Journey (Ours)

## ◎ Goal

- Share my Story

## ◎ Core Assumptions

- Basic Knowledge of Agile & Scrum
- Everyone has Good Intentions
- Support from Management
- Broad Cast of Characters



# The Journey (Mine)

- ◎ Ready, Set, We're going Agile! (2x-ish)
  - Round 1 – Wagile?
  - Round 2 – What's a Scrum Master?!
  - Round 3 – Agile or Bust!
  
- ◎ My Perspective
  - Scrum Master POV on Scrum
  - On-going Journey – Ups & Downs

# Initial Cut-over – Signs

## ⦿ Ceremonies

- Meeting Mapping
- Selective Adoption from Day One

## ⦿ Roles

- ~~Project Scrum Manager Masters Rule!~~
- Dedicated (ish) Product Owners

# Cutover – Course Correct

- ⦿ Ban Meeting Mapping
  - Acknowledge the Change
  - Start a new series of meetings
- ⦿ Avoid Selective Adoption
  - Aim for core Scrum Ceremonies (No more, no less!)
  - Wait to “Make it your Own”
- ⦿ Embrace New Roles (& Names?)
  - Agile Training / Certification
  - Working Agreements

# Charting the Course - Signs

- ⦿ Change direction at ANY time
  - “Isn’t that why we went Agile!”
- ⦿ Scope Creep (Avalanche?)
- ⦿ Project Deadlines with Hard Dates



# Charting - Course Correct

## ⦿ Direction Change / Scope Creep

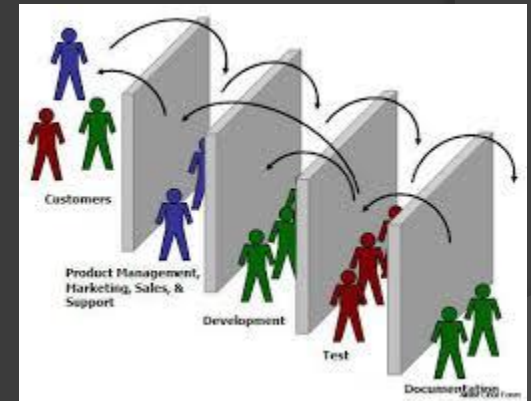
- Prevention
  - Focus on tangible Story Outcome/Artifacts
  - Limit ambiguity
- Mitigation
  - Take an equivalent Story out
  - Limit Work In Progress (WIP)

## ⦿ Dealing with Project Deadlines

- Projected *Scope* of stories completed by said Date
- OR
- Projected *# of Sprints* needed to complete an Epic

# Team Dynamics - Signs

- ◎ Team Members are 100% Allocated (except for...)
  - Secret Projects, Prod Support, Book Tour
- ◎ Full Stack Team!
  - ...and Queued Tasks by Role
- ◎ Watch out for the mini Waterfall





# Team Dynamics – Course Correct

- ◎ 100% Allocation
  - Honest conversation to adjust/factor in time
  - Working Agreements
  - NO secret projects
- ◎ Full Stack / Mini Waterfall
  - NO queues!!!! Challenge the team to try different Tasks
  - Limit Work In Progress (WIP)
- ◎ Address any Fear of Failure
  - Wonder Why
  - Emphasize Team in Success & Failure
  - Step up & Lead by example (Take the Twos!)



# Communication is Key - Signs

- ⦿ Formal Meeting (Overload?)
  - Meet Early, Meet Often, Repeat
- ⦿ Daily ~~Status~~ Stand Up Meeting
  - “It all started in second grade...”

# Communication – Course Correct

- ◎ Formal Meeting Overload
  - What if... you skipped it?
  - Help the Team make the break
  - Send them to ME!
- ◎ Daily Stand Up Meeting
  - Literally Stand Up (& take the chairs)
  - Leverage a Parking Lot for Call outs

# Equal Voice - Signs

◎ Every one has an Equal voice!  
...as long as they:

- Don't disagree with Ted
- Can talk the loudest
- Have the most seniority

# Equal Voice – Course Correct

- ⦿ Internally
  - Assume good intentions & Wonder Why
- ⦿ Prep Work
  - Engage individuals to support the whole team
  - Provide positive feedback & support
- ⦿ In the Meeting
  - Provide space to give people the floor
  - Leverage a Parking Lot

# Who doesn't love Tasking?! – Signs

- Everyone knows what to do
- Tasks/Tasking is a waste of time!
- Oh yeah - that task is done so you can go ahead & close it
- Assign the task to my queue
- I re-assigned my task to him for completion
- I don't know how to do that! You know how to do this task soooo much better...
- That's her story, not mine
- That's not my role

# Tasking – Course Correct

- ◎ Task Creation - Everyone knows what to do
  - Take a poll of the rest of the Team
  - Emphasize - It's more about the discussion
- ◎ Task Management - That task is done... Or IS it?
  - Never close a Task!
  - NO assigning a Task to someone else!
- ◎ Stories are owned by the Team
  - Assign it to a single entity
    - “Unassigned”, Squad Lead, etc.

# Tasking – Course Correct

Mindset - Not my role / Don't know how

- ⦿ Wonder Why
  - Fear of Failure / Fear of getting “Type Cast”
  - Lack of Interest
- ⦿ Clarify Expectations
  - What does “Task Ownership” mean?
  - Focus on Growth & supporting the Team to avoid SPoF
  - Challenge the Team to Innovate for repetitive Tasks
- ⦿ Have an honest conversation
  - Focus on Areas of Expertise – No Specialists
  - Practice makes perfect... 😊
  - Future Goals



# Working with Waterfall - Signs

- Well... umm... the use of Waterfall
- Anything labelled BRD, SDS, or TSD
- Detailed Plans covering Months to Years
- Requests for a Set Scope by a Set Date

# Waterfall – Course Correct

- ⦿ Highlight Agile Strengths
  - Working Software
  - Customer Collaboration
  - Responding to Change
- ⦿ Leverage Agile Concepts, but avoid Agile terms

# Google - Project Aristotle

- What is by far the #1 sign in predicting whether a team is high performing?



# Psychological safety

- ① #1 Sign in predicting whether a team is high performing is the answer to:

**Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?**

- ② *Who* is on a team matters less than how the team members interact, structure their work, and view their contributions

# Psych Safety – Course Correct

- ⦿ Lead by Example
  - Practice what you Preach!
  - Acknowledge *your* Failures
  - Push *your* Comfort Zone (Late night Leaders!)
- ⦿ Provide & Expect to get Authentic Feedback
- ⦿ Stand by Your Team!
  - Mistakes will Happen

# Most Importantly...

- ① Focus on any signs of Success
- ① Emphasize what's going right daily!
- ① Highlight the wins
- ① Seek & celebrate the “Trys”

# Almost Agile - Wrap Up

A minute (or two?) to learn,  
a lifetime to master

Questions?

# SBI Feedback Model

## ⦿ Situation

- Chose & describe a specific instance (Situation)

## ⦿ Behavior

- Describe the action (Behavior) observed

## ⦿ Impact

- Describe how *you* were impacted by the Behavior



# Five key dynamics of Successful teams

## 1. **Psychological safety**

- Can we take risks on this team without feeling insecure or embarrassed?

## 2. **Dependability**

- Can we count on each other to do high quality work on time?

## 3. **Structure & clarity**

- Are goals, roles, and execution plans on our team clear?

## 4. **Meaning of work**

- Are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?

## 5. **Impact of work**

- Do we fundamentally believe that the work we're doing matters?

# Agile Manifesto Value Statement

Individuals & Interactions	OVER	Process & Tools
Working Software	OVER	Comprehensive Documentation
Customer Collaboration	OVER	Contract Negotiation
Responding to Change	OVER	Following a Plan