Why Agile Needs More Cowboys

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Presenter Background

• Project Manager and Trainer
  • >25 years IT experience on utilities, defense, & finance
  • 10 years PMO Agile-to-Traditional Integration

• Agile Project Management
  • Helped create Agile method DSDM in 1994
  • 18 years agile project experience (XP, Scrum, FDD)
  • Board director of Agile Alliance and APLN
  • Author, trainer, and presenter Agile Conference 2001-12
  • Author “RMC’s PMI ACP Exam Prep” book

• Traditional Project Management
  • PMP, PRINCE2 certifications
  • PMI-ACP v5 contributor and reviewer
  • Trainer for PMI SeminarsWorld 2005-2012
  • Presenter PMI Global Congress 2004-2012
  • PMI-ACP certification designer

Agenda

Leading Agile Teams
Cowboys and Indians (Native Americans)

Would you want these people looking after your cows?

Real Cowboys

• Protect the herd
• Select lead cows
• Direct the herd into natural flows

• Organizations can seem large and at times aimless, like herds

Agenda
Leadership Practices

1. Modeling desired behaviour
2. Creating and communicating a vision
3. Enable others to act
4. Fostering Functional Accountability
5. Willingness to challenge the status quo
6. Encouraging each other

Jeffery Pinto, “Project Leadership: From Theory to Practice”

Modeling Desired Behaviour

James Kouzes and Barry Posner, 10 year study, 75,000 people asked: “What values do you look for in your leader?”

- Ambitious
- Broad-minded
- Caring
- Competent
- Cooperative
- Courageous
- Dependable
- Determined
- Fair-minded
- Forward-looking

- Honest
- Imaginative
- Independent
- Inspiring
- Intelligent
- Loyal
- Mature
- Self-controlled
- Straightforward
- Supportive

Characteristics of Admired Leaders

1. Honest
2. Forward-looking
3. Competent
4. Inspiring
Modeling Desired Behaviour

Empower the Team

Leadership Practices

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Creating and Communicating a Vision

What is it like to drive in fog?
Creating and Communicating a Vision

- Clarity and direction allows focused effort and speed
- Unites and concentrates effort
- To be effective, Vision should be
  - Worthwhile, some better state
  - A stretch, but possible
  - Visual/Imagery – connects the right and the left sides of the brain

Create a Shared Vision

Kick-Off Meeting Vision Exercise:
- Design the Product Box – Alignment Exercise
  - Mixed Teams
  - 20 minutes
  - Rules
    - Name
    - Top 3 features
    - 10-15 sub-features
    - Logo
    - Teams present
    - Timeboxed discussion of options
  - Facilitates: early collaboration, prioritization of features, timeboxes, flexing of requirements
Reinforce the Shared Vision

- Frequently re-communicate the Vision
  - Team meetings
  - Steering Committee Meetings
  - Elevator pitch
- Use different analogies and references
  - People are receptive to different ideas
  - Canvas the team for new ideas to confirm understanding

Leadership Practices

1. Modeling desired behaviour
2. Creating and communicating a vision
3. Enable others to act
   - Increase collaboration by building trust
   - Strengthen others by sharing power
4. Fostering Functional Accountability
5. Willingness to challenge the status quo
6. Encouraging each other

Creating a Learning and Sharing Environment

- Build an environment of trust and safe contribution
  - No need for CYA, → much more productive
- Set an example
  - Admit mistakes
  - Share information
- Ask searching questions
  - Do you have what you need?
  - Where do you think we are vulnerable?
  - Where are we not meeting goals?
Share Information/Power

- Shift of focus from micro-management to navigation and communication

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Share Information/Power

Leadership Practices

1. Modeling desired behaviour
2. Creating and communicating a vision
3. Enable others to act
4. Fostering Functional Accountability
   - Accepting conflict as a pathway to productivity
   - Understanding the power of people
5. Willingness to challenge the status quo
6. Encouraging each other
Team Impediments

Inattention to Details - When people do not hold one another accountable for getting essential tasks done on time, it reduces the effectiveness of the team.

Avoidance to Accountability - Due to personal biases, people tend to avoid holding one another accountable.

Lack of Commitment - Without passion and dedication, team members may not take ownership of their tasks.

Fear of Conflict - Teams that lack trust cannot engage in unfiltered debate.

Absence of Trust - Unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. Must be open about mistakes and weaknesses to build a foundation of trust.

“Five Dysfunctions of a Team” - Patrick Lencioni

The Importance of the Team

• People vs. Process
• People are by far the most distinguishing feature
• Good people with no process can produce great results
• If you do not have good people, the best process in the world will not make much difference
The Importance of the Team

People Factors >10x more significant than Tools and Process factors

Constructive Cost Model (COCOMO) for Estimation – Barry Boehm

Leadership Practices

1. Modeling desired behaviour
2. Creating and communicating a vision
3. Enable others to act
4. Fostering Functional Accountability
5. Willingness to challenge the status quo
   - Search for innovative ways to change, grow and improve
   - Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes
6. Encouraging each other

Challenging the Status Quo

Lessons Learned while still actionable
1. What went well?
2. Areas for improvement?
3. Recommendations?

- Learn
- Challenge
- Adapt
Innovation and Learning

- Bulk of suggestions come from team
- There are no dumb ideas
- Try new approaches for one iteration
- Review and assess changes
- Capitalize on successes
- Learn from mistakes

“When my employees make mistakes trying to improve something, I give them a round of applause.” - Jim Read, The Read Corporation

Leadership Practices

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6. Encouraging each other
   - Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for excellence
   - Celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community
5) Encouraging each other

- Treat staff as volunteers
- Say “Thank You”
- Celebrate achievements frequently

“Ceremonies, celebrations, and rituals are not about the event. They’re about touching the hearts and souls of every employee.” Victoria Sandvig, Charles Schwab
Encouraging Shared Leadership

Q: Which is better; a team with great leader, or a team of competent leaders?

A: A team of individuals who are competent leaders.

- Leading companies like Semco, Toyota, and W. L. Gore & Associates build winning products via Shared Leadership

Ingredients for a Successful Project

1. I know what I am expected to do and why it needs to be done
2. I want to do it
3. I have the ability to do it
4. Someone who matters to me will notice if I do it
5. I know how well I’m doing it
6. Processes help me do it
7. I have the resources to do it
8. The environment is right
9. I can do better next time

Create the core set and empower people to add what is missing


Enabling Shared Leadership
Summary / Additional Resources

- True cowboys use leadership not guns to get results
- Agile teams should be led, more than managed

Resources:
- Book: "Project Leadership: From Theory to Practice" – by Jeffery Pinto
- Email: Mike@LeadingAnswers.com
- Blog: www.LeadingAnswers.com

http://agileleadershipnetwork.org/