

Time for a Checkup: 5 Dimensions of Agile Team Health

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Agenda

- Why Retrospectives?
 - Obstacles
- 5 Dimensions of Agile Team Health
 - Typical Process
- Strategic Retrospectives – AgilityHealth Radar

Why Retrospectives?

- Retrospectives are part of most methodologies, even though there are many different terms (e.g. post-implementation reviews or postmortems).
- Each methodology focuses on different nuances. Agile more aggressively embraces retrospectives than waterfall or iterative frameworks.
- Retrospectives in Agile reflect the adoption of the principle of *kaizen* (Japanese for improvement [continuous improvement]):
 - Discover what will make the team or organization deliver more value.
 - Retrospectives occur when change can actually be applied to the project to impact the current delivery.
- Brian Wernham, *Agile Project Management for Government*, noted the UK DirectGov project used retrospectives to mold how teams worked in order to maximize delivery productivity.

Obstacles – Ritualization

- Ritualization can dramatically affect the value of retrospectives.
- Downward spiral of disillusionment that will inevitably end with the abandonment of the technique.
- Two typical reasons that cause ritualization:
 - The process becomes more important than (or at least as important as) the results.
 - Overcommitted teams who don't have time to reflect.
 - Boredom (wake me up when it's over). The “Works Well” and “Needs Improvement” format gets really old quickly. The retrospective will usually be fulfilled so that the team can start planning the next sprint or iteration.
- The Scrum Master or coach needs to help the team address the root cause of the problem.
- All Scrum Masters should know at least **nine** techniques for retrospectives.

Obstacles – Culture

- Retrospectives are a tool that the team uses to identify what they can do better, BUT the basic process can all go wrong:
 - Making people feel safe.
 - Generating ideas and solutions so the team can decide on what it thinks will make the most significant improvement.
 - Puts the team in charge of how it works.
- If the retrospective process is focused on increasing the team's capacity, rather than trying to generate lessons learned for the next project, then non-obvious impediments can easily be missed.
- There are many different techniques for executing retrospectives; many teams find 1-2 techniques they like, and then they ride that horse until it collapses.
- Lean thinking removes processes that don't add value!

Why Retrospectives?

While many retrospective techniques posit the questions “**What worked well?**” and “**What did not work?**,” the real reason to do any retrospective is to identify, agree on and plan for what can be done better.

DCG agilityhealthSM Radar

5 Dimensions of Agile Team Health

Culture

Foundation

Clarity

Performance

Leadership

TeamHealth Assessments – Dimensions



Typical Process

- Set Up (<20 minutes for a 2 week sprint):
 - First, create a safe atmosphere (review Norm Kerth's *Prime Directive* with the team).
 - Ground the team by focusing on the current sprint's results (for example, review the Burn-Down Chart or have the team develop an annotated sprint timeline).
- Idea Generation (<30 minutes for a 2 week sprint):
 - Encourage the team to dig in and capture the details.
 - For retrospectives focused on process or flow, use sticky notes to brainstorm, followed by mute mapping to group (affinity diagraming).
 - For team or personnel issues, use storytelling. For example, have subsets of the team describe a fictional scenario based on real-life problems and how they would solve the problem.
 - Consider direct discussion as an alternative.
- Insight Development:
 - Once the idea generation step is completed, the team should review the data and come to a consensus about what it means. One method of analysis is to look for patterns and to determine if there are trends in this stage. The goal is to recognize if there is a problem so you can start to resolve it.
- Identify An Improvement Objective (<30 minutes for a 2 week sprint)
- Wrap-up: Spend 5-10 minutes reviewing the session so that the next retrospective will be even more effective.

Typical Process

Identifying an Improvement Objective

- A team may have identified a number of ideas for improving its productivity.
- Focus on the top 1-2 actionable “big wins.”
- The rationale for not fixing everything:
 - The time needed to fix a problem will come from the team’s capacity to deliver business value (there is only so much capacity that the team has at its disposal).
 - If the remaining issues are really problems, the team can decide to address them during the next iteration.
 - Too many changes at once makes it hard to track cause and effect.
- This continuous, incremental process improvement is one reason team productivity, aka velocity, typically increases from iteration to iteration. After the team selects the issue (or issues) to be tackled, have the team members add it to the next sprint backlog so that it gets addressed.

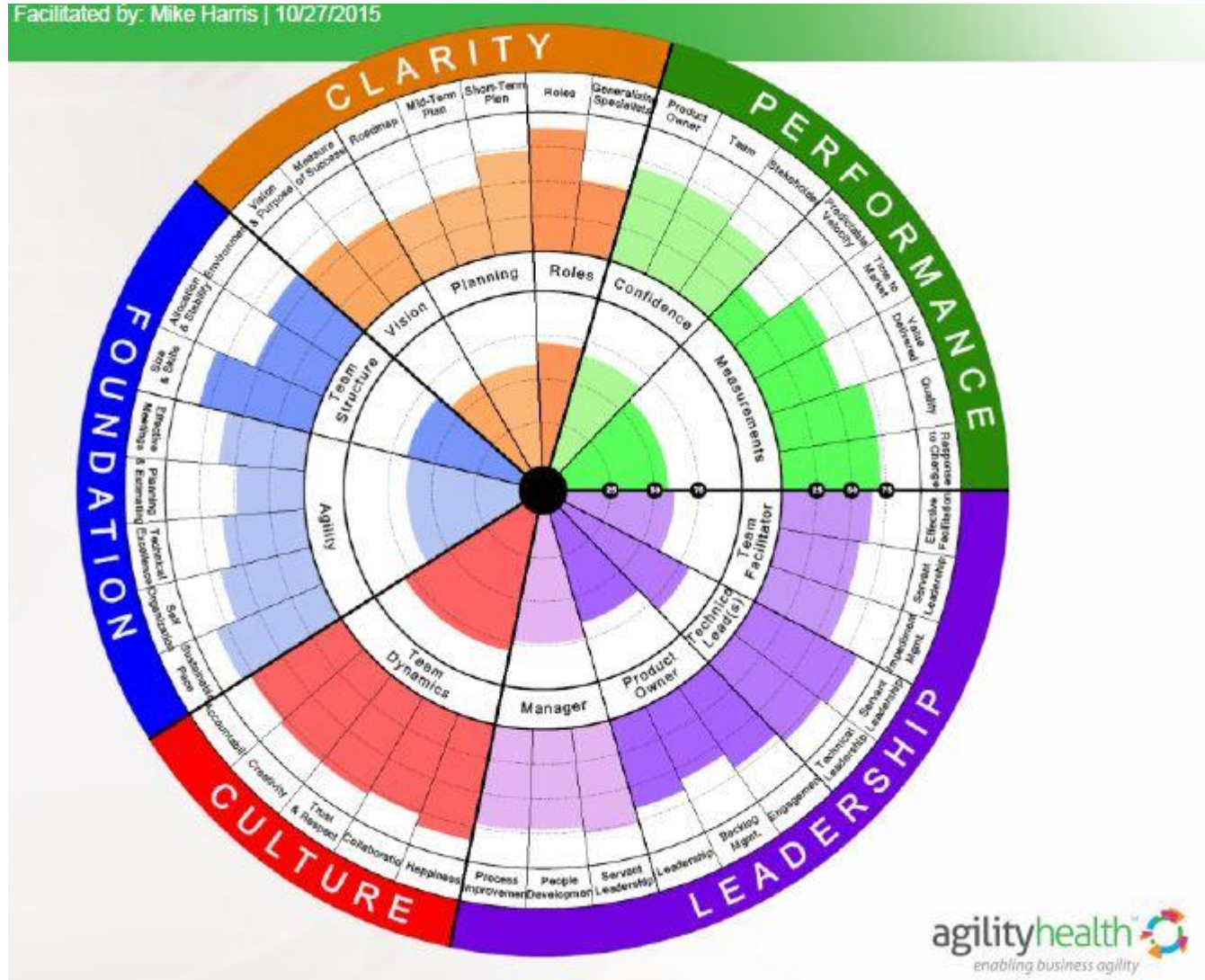
Strategic Retrospectives

- Traditional process tends to be “tactical” – thorns and roses from the just-finished sprint.
- Need to “reboot” the tactical retrospectives with a quarterly strategic perspective.
- Value of Visualization:
 - One powerful radar that tells the whole story.
 - Visualize your team’s growth quarter by quarter.
 - Visually see team consensus and divergence.
 - Visualize the “Hard Metrics” alongside the qualitative ones.
- Rollup “organizational” issues across teams.
- Optimize team performance.

Strategic Retrospectives

- Three-hour facilitated workshop that focuses on the top areas that affect team performance and health:
 - **Step One:** Facilitator works with team to complete the 360 TeamHealth Radar, covering the 5 key dimensions of a healthy Agile team: Clarity, Performance, Leadership, Culture, Foundation.
 - **Step Two:** The instructor will engage the team in a healthy and open discussion around analyzing its radar results and reviewing its Strengths, Improvements and Top Impediments to Growth. The final output is a Team Growth Plan with key outcomes the team wants to achieve within the next few months.
- The real value from this workshop is the open and honest conversations that help the team get past any current roadblocks and develop a clear plan of action for getting its performance and health to the next level
- **BUT the information is the property of the team!**
- Repeat this strategic retrospective each quarter as a refresh on the “per sprint/iteration” retrospectives.

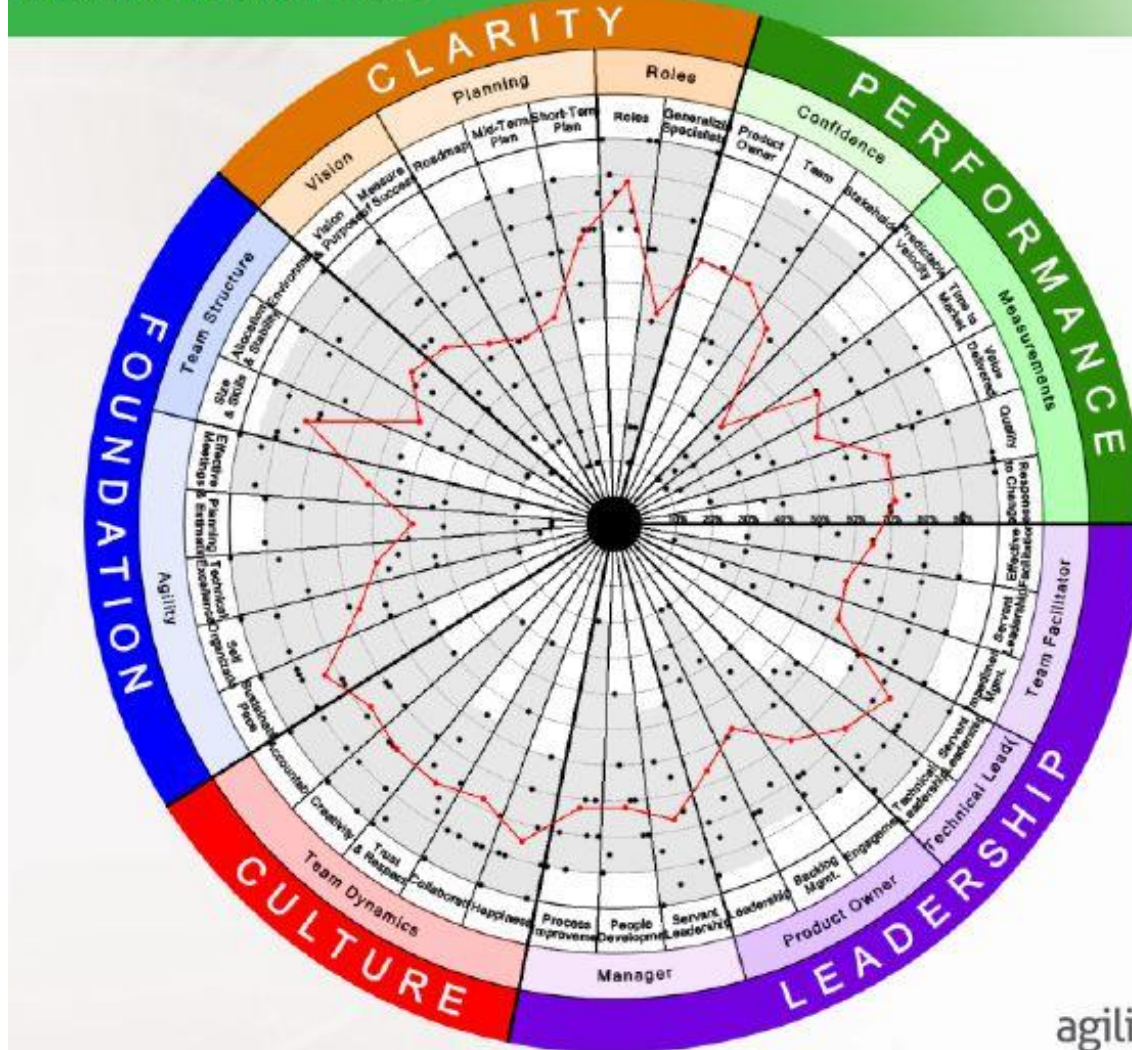
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Team Assessments – Detail and Diversity

Facilitated by: Mike Harris | 10/27/2015



Sample Questions – Measurements

- A healthy team tracks, measures and communicates, with high visibility, the key metrics that demonstrate its success and highlights growth areas. If you're not sure, select N/A.

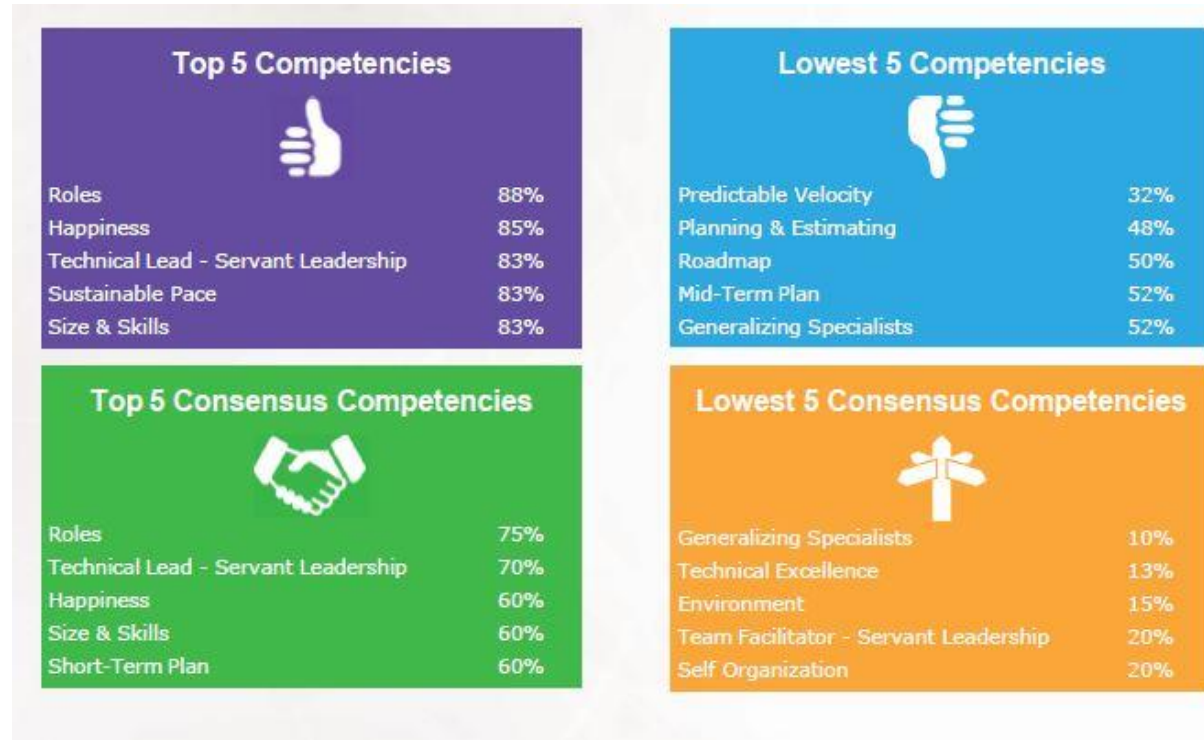
To what extent do you agree with the statements below:

1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 10 = *Strongly Agree*

- Our team tracks actual velocity versus our target velocity and it is consistently within 10% of our goal. Meaning, if we target to complete 50 points, we deliver 45+ points.
- Our team's average velocity over the past several iterations can be used for future planning. We are becoming predictable in our delivery.
- Our team delivers value frequently (or as frequently as desired by our customer) and has significantly reduced lead time.
- ...

Report

- AHR Charts

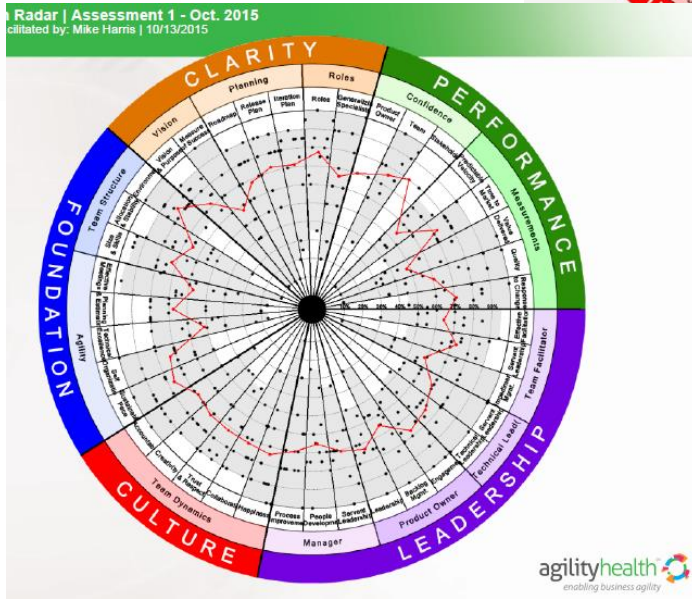
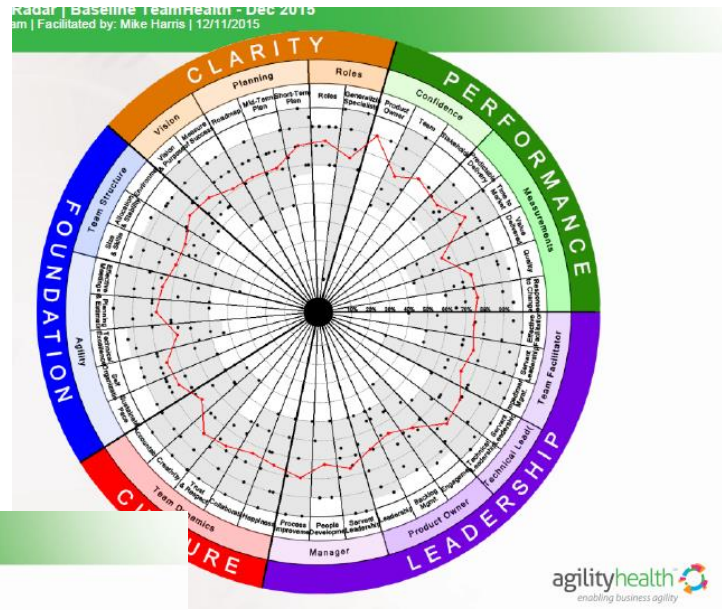
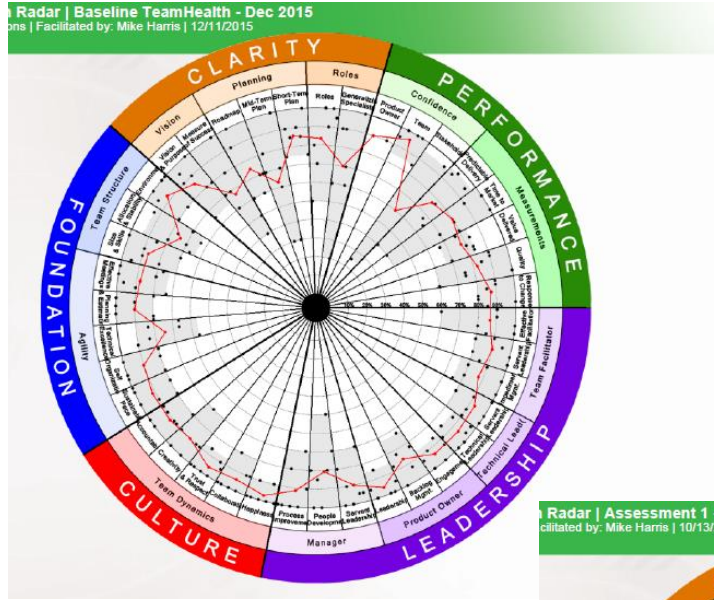


- Notes by 5 key dimensions and for last 3 questions:
 - Strengths, Improvements, Impediments
- Growth Plan

Growth Plan

Growth Plan						
Category	Title	Owner	Status	Target Date	Priority	Size
Team	Communicating Changes in the Roadmap					
Description	Team are not clear on mid- and long-term plans. Mid- and long-term things change quickly and that needs to be communicated quickly at iteration boundaries.					
Team	Improve velocity predictability					
Description	Variable size of inputs? Continue to break down use cases into smaller chunks Variable preparation of inputs - not enough info? Variable execution? Releases too large?					
Team	Don't have automated functional testing					
Description	Using selenium for data set up recently (last 2 days). Have some training. Don't have test scripts for functional testing yet. MTM is used to capture test scripts but they are executed manually but tightly integrated with TFS which was not upgraded.					
Team	Limited ability to self-organize					
Description	May be simply unclear. Not sure what team can change and what they cant. Varies across teams and maybe functions (e.g. tasking)? Is it a function of the visibility of this team?					
Organizational	Imposed deadlines					
Description	Externally imposed deadlines generated different approaches from each team. Need to find creative ways to push back on clients. Get clients input on backlog prioritization? Showcases for clients through iterations. 					

Case Studies



To Summarize

- Traditional process tends to be “tactical” – thorns and roses from the just-finished sprint.
- Need to “reboot” the tactical retrospectives with a quarterly strategic perspective.
- Value of Visualization.
- The real value from this workshop is the open and honest conversations to help the team get past any current roadblocks and develop a clear plan of action for getting its performance and health to the next level.
- The takeaway is an actionable growth plan that can be used as an agenda for tactical retrospectives between the strategic retrospectives.
- **DCG can do one free AHR TeamHealth Assessment Pilot per company!**

Contact Us

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