Agile Leadership Patterns
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Agenda

● Introductions
● Chaos Theory, Agility, Pattern Languages
● Agile Base Patterns
● Are We Agile? (Or Is It Agile?)
Introductions: Dan Greening

• Current
  • Certified Scrum Coach
  • CS PhD (parallel complex adaptive systems)

• Former
  • Citrix Online Agile Program Office Director
  • Skype head of agile coaching
  • Startup veteran
  • IBM Research nerd

Introductions: You

Show of hands

• Level of Agile experience?
• Existing challenges with agile?
• Are you using Lean Startup, XP, Kanban, Scrum, GTD, Inbox Zero?
Chaos Creates Opportunities

Everyone’s ability to predict the future degrades exponentially with time
So create a company that exploits this chaos better than competitors

Agility Defined

Agile organizations can

- Sense
- Adapt
- Create

faster than their chaotic economies change
Agile Base Patterns: A journey

1: Plans can’t guarantee success ...

- Forces
...therefore, **measure economic progress**

- Identify desired outcomes
- Identify relevant metrics
- Create a forecasting discipline
- Embrace objectivity
- Evolve metrics over time

**Measure Economic Progress**

- Careful KPIs
  - Source: tps:hk
- Goal flow: Strategy to Tactics to Operations
  - Source: tps:hk
- ROI
- Forecasting
Result (measure economic progress)

- Coherent mission, vision and goals
- Handful of evolving metrics
- Learn from both failure and success
- Forecast better

Are we agile now?

2: Reacting is not enough to succeed...

- Complacency lulls us
- Loss of control scares us
- Can easily measure operational work
- Uncertainty confuses
... therefore, **adaptively experiment**

- Improvement experiments (Retrospection)
- Evolution vs Revolution: greedy vs optimal
- Brainstorm
- Test a hypothesis!
- Control the experiment!
- Beware controlling variability (and creativity)

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**Scrum Retrospection Redefined**

- Assemble economic progress history
- Validate hypothesis of the last experiment
- Brainstorm and identify process changes
- Hypothesize how new process affects metrics
- Commit to process rules for the next experiment

**What does the ScrumMaster do in Scrum?**
Experiment for Improvement

Adaptively Experiment for Improvement

- Retrospect First
- Hypothesis creation
- Control the Environment
- Review
- Hypothesis testing
- Celebrate Low-Cost Failure
- Full Cycle Experimentation

Results (Adaptively Experiment)

- Hyperproductive teams  [jako2009]
- Organizations “disrupt themselves”

Are we agile now?
3: Planning worsens delay…

- Non-fungible assets
- Detailed planning
- Sunk cost fallacy
- Congestion (slide)
- Cognition (slide)
Cognition

- Most valuable now: creative time and attention
- $7 \pm 2$ maximum ordered concepts
- Late day decisions suck
- Lack of sleep degrades creativity
- Interruptions degrade creativity

...therefore, limit work-in-process

- $\leq 7$ items in Sprint Backlogs
- Geometric Product Backlogs
- Inbox Zero
- Collaborative focus
- Value Stream Optimization
- Incremental work
Limit work-in-process

- Rapidly deliver small increments of value
- Possibility of rapid feedback
- Cancellable work (sunk cost is low)
- Learn faster than chaotic economy changes

Are we agile?
4: People create delay by avoiding responsibility...

- No problem claiming responsibility for success
- Insufficient agency limits responsibility
- Persistence is a function of self-perception, not objective agency
- Deny→Blame→Justify→Guilt→Obligation→Quit→Responsibility
- People can learn new skills

...therefore, embrace collective responsibility

- Provide autonomy, understanding, authority
  - Information radiators
- Teach the Responsibility Process
- Tit-for-Tat trust building
- Collaborative root cause mapping
- Redefine *accountable*: knows what’s happening
Collective Responsibility

- Collaborative problem solving
- Increased teaching and learning
- Greater elasticity

How does this affect our agility?
External factors limit our agility...

• Dependency delays
• Dependency quality
• Handoff interference

...therefore, solve systemic problems

• Leaders: Build collaborative teams of peers
  • Avery, *Team-building is an individual skill*
• Ritualize and celebrate problem solving
• Big room planning
• Convert bosses to (not just support) agile
• Change structural systems:
  hiring, comp, review…
Solve Systemic Problems

Agile Base Patterns

Measure economic progress
- Well-chosen key performance indicators
- Propagated wisely down the hierarchy

Adaptively experiment for improvement
- Use the KPIs to sense, adapt and create
- Process changes tried frequently

Limit work-in-process
- To maximize the success of high profit efforts
- Reserving powder for things you might invent
Agile Base Patterns 
sustained and expansive agile

Embrace collective responsibility
• Every person feels personally responsible for team and company results

Solve systemic problems
• Broad authority to explore problems impeding agility
• There is a well-understood and respected process

Is Scrum Agile?

Adaptively experiment
Embrace collective responsibility
Measure economic progress
Limit work in progress
Solve problems systemically
Agile Is Fragile

Natural evolution can degrade or destroy agile
- Adopting departmental silos blindly
- Control-centric manager job descriptions and performance management
- Variance control (Six Sigma) can destroy creativity
- Executives who don’t understand agile squelch agile
- Accountability/blame cultures creating fear

Conclusion: Agile is Fragile

- Walmart
- Yahoo
- Others

Why?
- Bottom-up agility is extremely vulnerable
Non-agile executives

- Fighting fires all the time
  - Strategic work (more valuable long-term) gets deferred
- Don’t collaborate on strategic work
  - Doesn’t get done if one person busy
- Don’t run short-term experiments on strategy
  - Recruiting, Business development, Performance management, Product portfolio, marketing

Answer: Top-Down Agile

Executives use agile to manage their

- Strategic activities
- Marketing
- Recruiting practices
- Sales processes
- Contract review
- Product Management and Engineering

… from the CEO on down
What is the value of agility?

- Faster, more profitable strategic decisions
- Faster, more profitable delivery
- Better solutions
  - measurement and adaption during strategy development and tactical deployment
- More organizational focus
- How much is that worth?

Corporate Exploration

How does your company?

- Measure economic progress?
- Adaptively experiment for improvement?
- Limit work-in-process?
- Embrace collective responsibility?
- Solve systemic problems?
Senex Rex
Organizational Agility Research

Making organizations agile and antifragile

http://senexrex.com/blog
Emerging book content

Senex Rex mindmap (available from Dan)
All known patterns from all agile practices

Coaching and Training on request
Dan Greening, PhD, Certified Scrum Coach

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