Immersive Learning in the Target Dojo

Jonathan Schauer

Christopher Schwartz
a bit about us

Christopher Schwartz
Agile Coach 2 years
Scrum Master 4 years
Target 12 years

Jonathan Schauer
Agile Coach 3 years
Scrum Master 5 years
Target 6 years

Brent Nelson
Years at Target 27
DevOps Evangelist 3 years
Dojo Operations the beginning

54 years of service
341,000 team members
1,792 stores

6 HQ locations
38 distribution centers
3 data centers
our story begins with common themes ...

projects vs. products
old and new tech
AVOID RISK!
externalize engineering expertise

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culture
organization
system complexity
zombie projects consuming time, money, and people

engineers feeling devalued, frustrated

loss of agility

silos, silos, and more silos

and involves not so unique challenges...
there was work to be done and we needed to …
how we (re)built an engineering culture

- enabling, unleashing
- cultivating, growing a grassroots movement
- getting tops down alignment
- figuring out how to scale across the enterprise
internally coordinated events inspired by external conferences featuring mix of external and internal voices
# FLASHBUILD

## Purpose
- Build MVP for specific need in < 5 days
- Encourage cross-team collaboration in silo-based organization

## Makeup
- Team size based on engineers with required knowledge, skills, tools and access to complete work
- No managers (they’re invited to attend demos)

## Approach
- 2 “sprints” per day including planning, demoing, and retrospectives
- Engineer calendar cleared for duration, managers provide “air cover” to enable focus
- Engineers colocated in large conference room with food, beverages and free of distractions

## Observations
- ✔ Great for bringing engineers from different teams together, breaking down silos
- ✔ Great for achieving rapid velocity and building MVP
- ✗ Limited overall cross-training as engineering focus on tasks requiring their expertise
- ✗ Taxing on participants, limiting long-term sustainability as day-to-day work model

Learn more @ target.github.io | target flashbuilds
30-day Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>purpose</th>
<th>makeup</th>
<th>approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• build, iterate on MVP for specific need in 30+/- days</td>
<td>• team size based on engineers with required knowledge, skills, tools and access to complete work</td>
<td>• 2 sprints per week including planning, demoing, and retrospectives</td>
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<td>• enable cross-training/learning between engineers</td>
<td>• no managers (they’re invited to attend demos)</td>
<td>• engineer calendar cleared for duration, managers provide “air cover” to enable focus</td>
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- engineers colocated in large conference room with food, beverages and free of distractions

- observations
  - ✔ teams were happier, less stressed with increased time to deliver
  - ✔ improved learning opportunities to shift from I to T shaped engineers
  - ✔ increased pool of engineers advocates for Agile/DevOps work model
  - ✗ securing extended engineer time away from core team a challenge
  - ✗ engineers returned to teams that didn’t understand Agile/DevOps work model

Learn more @ target.github.io | outage resolution through automation
need, value of change was recognized

corporate alignment, top-down approach

modernize tools, methodologies

adopt Agile and DevOps

increase speed, agility

pay down tech debt

“How in the hell are we going to scale adoption of skills and culture?”
| make structural changes | • operating model  
| | • delivery model  
| | • modernization strategy  
| connect important dots | • converge internal Agile & DevOps movements  
| | • connect experts to drive learning  
| | • align priorities, maintain laser focus  
| build an internal incubator | • create space to enable colocation, visibility of work  
| | • teams work in “to be” operating, delivery models  
| develop, expand learning service offerings | • create pool of Agile and Tech coaches  
| | • invite others teams to do Challenge focused on their product, service  
| | • offer twice weekly Open Labs led by service providers  
| prioritize demand based on constraints | • work aligned with key strategic priorities  
| | • teams ready to learn, change |
how would we level up the skills of thousands of engineers?

individual training ≠ team transformation
enter the Dojo

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source: pixhdr.com
practices / services

teams focused on enablement, measurement & data visualization, deployment pipeline tools, web environments

demo lounge

initial Dojo space

space for teams to learn, #DO
create an immersive learning environment

- team collocated vs. cubed
  - sometimes for the first time

- learn power of transparency
  - backlog, WIP, blockers, spikes

hyper-sprints
- accelerate, reinforce learning
- quickly realize results

embedded coaching
- Agile and Tech coaches guide, mentor and provide assistance

tactical & practical details for each scrum pod

- x8
- x1 - 60”
- 16x
- x1
with a defined capacity, rhythm

capacity for # of concurrent Challenges

9

# of Challenges starting every 2 weeks

3

level of "hands on" embedding needed:

- high
- medium
- low
- service team
build awareness, interest, demand, doors wide open

formal, informal meetings with teams and leaders to solicit/encourage participation

use internal social media, reference tools to share information across enterprise

individual, group tours of Dojo providing overview of services and experiences

services are offered to all HQ teams; technology teams given scheduling priority
keep lightweight for smooth flow to keep movin’ forward
requests are submitted using a lightweight web form accessible to anyone at Target HQ; form is reviewed by Agile coach

a 30-minute phone consult to verify information, assess team readiness for Dojo experience
chartering is critical for success
(and to avoid getting lost on your journey)

on your
marks, get
set,
CHARTER

overview

- elevator pitch
- duration
- community

goals & measures

- how do we know we’ve arrived?

skills matrix

- do we have the skills to succeed?

working agreements

- how do we work well together?
let the journey begin ...

review charter & agreements

verify pre-work complete

setup ceremonies schedule

build backlog
along the way we might run into ...

roadblocks

multiple paths to solution

organizational changes

team conflict

moments of sheer brilliance
concluding the team’s journey in the Dojo

final demo

celebration

feedback survey

recharter

ongoing support outside of Dojo

overview

goals & measures

skills matrix

working agreements

team - time - community

how do we know we’ve arrived?

do we have the skills to succeed?

how do we work well together?
what we’ve added ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges define outcome measures based on Agile &amp; DevOps principles, practices</th>
<th>provide teams with a diagnostic tool on entry/exit from Dojo covering</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ value</td>
<td>✓ Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ stability &amp; quality</td>
<td>✓ Lean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ speed &amp; adaptability</td>
<td>✓ Agile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ happiness</td>
<td>✓ DevOps</td>
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looking back on what we’ve achieved so far …

Challenges

62 completed
11 active
24 backlog

with results that have included …

accelerating individual & team (trans)formation

leveling up technical skills across entire Challenge teams (including non-engineers)

helping teams discover power & value of MVP, CI/CD, TDD for themselves

enabling teams to build, gain, sustain velocity

celebrating as teams reduce delivery time, increase quality, stability and customer happiness

being called the “best space we have in technology” by CIO in Forbes magazine interview

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things we’ve learned so far

branding & marketing important to drive demand

expect the unexpected

befriend your landlord

communicate, celebrate success

MVPs rock!
our advice to others?

**start NOW**

it’s a journey that takes time, no need to wait

**be HUMBLE**

nothing kills learning like arrogance and condescension

**stay COOL**

be that place people *want* to be in, not the place they *have* to go to

**be VOCAL**

tell your story to *everyone* in as many ways as possible

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#make AWESOME happen