Scrabbling To Find A Good Agile Game? Which Should Be Uno On Your List?

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Why Agile needs games

• We’re already changing the rules…
  • The Agile Manifesto = **new victory conditions**
  • Agile practices define the “**mechanics**” needed to reach those new objectives

• And we’re **already** playing games…  
  • Planning Poker

• But we still face **challenges** that start with “the rules of the game”
Keynote about using games to solve problems
Games can make Agile more successful

Occasional amusement → Regular activity
Games can make Agile more successful

• Need to know…
  • **What** game to use
  • **Why** it’s going to accomplish something better
  • **When** you’re going to use it
  • **Who** will be involved
  • **How** you will use the results
Before we begin…

• On the sheets we provided…
  • In the first part of the page, write down an Agile challenge you face that you think a game might help you address
  • Don’t worry about the rest of the page, just the first question
  • We’ll use your challenges in a group exercise at the end
The story of a newly Agile team

- **THE CRAZY MONKEYS**
- Building a **mobile app** for a credit card company
- **Multiple business units** will be involved
- Must collaborate with other teams, including back end systems
Not everyone loves the new Agile rules.

People outside the team are not sure about self-organization.
  • “The project manager must be the Scrum Master.”

Even some team members are uncomfortable.
  • “How will my manager know what I’m doing?”
Preaching isn’t the answer

It’s just the way you do Agile

Sayest thou!
So let’s take a different approach

FORSOOTH!

Time for an actual game!

< 5 minutes
CHALLENGE: Deeper learning

- **Praxis** makes perfect (experiential learning)
- **Words** don’t always suffice
- Practice with **no consequences**
- Hear and respond to **objections**
- Identify reasons why you may need to **adjust** the Agile practice, or the approach to adopting it
## Education is one of several challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALIGNMENT</strong></td>
<td>Different people or groups achieve common understanding and direction.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>Express a convincing point of view.</td>
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<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td>Increase the efficacy of lessons, often through simulated experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IDEATION</strong></td>
<td>Generate ideas or options that you might otherwise have missed.</td>
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<td><strong>INSIGHT</strong></td>
<td>Getting to the heart of what other people (often customers) want or need.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICS</strong></td>
<td>Build bridges between citizens and government, or between opponents.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRODUCTIVITY</strong></td>
<td>Improving work output at the individual, team, or organization level.</td>
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TYPE OF GAME: Innovation games

- Simple
- Short
- Need only simple office supplies
- No winner
- Goal = create different interactions

...And many more!
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>INNOVATION GAME</th>
<th>SIMULATION</th>
<th>ROLE-PLAYING</th>
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We just filled in one solution box

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The team, six months later
The team, six months later

• It’s still hard to work with the customers
  • Massive backlog
  • Business is unclear about priorities
  • Bitter arguments over contents of first release
  • Strong suspicion that competing business units are overloading the backlog

• The team is often stuck being diplomat mediating among these factions
CHALLENGE: Customer insight

- Help customers **articulate** their needs better
- Understand **individual** customers (personas)
- Understand how software can provide **value** (stories, epics)
- Define the **core value** of the software
- Understand customer **organizations**
- **Change the conversation** with the customers from negotiation to collaboration
So let’s take a different approach

FORSOOTH!

Time for an actual game!
Product Box

• Divide into groups of 2-3
• Create a product box for one of the following:…
  • Microsoft Office (no words)
  • Google (the company)
  • Democracy
• Just create the front of the box
The team, six months later

- How the team used Product Box
  - Invited customers from **all four groups** to the exercise
  - Divided the customers into **teams of 2**, each had representatives from different groups
  - Did the exercise **once**, showed the results
  - **Mixed** everyone up, did the exercise again
  - Showed the results of this “**second draft**”
  - **Filtered** out stories from the first release that did not fit this **vision**
  - **Prioritized** what was left, based on this vision
A game is an experience generator

What experience are they having?
What is your experience today?

And now we turn to the 243rd highly important requirement...
What makes this experience different?

• Different **constraints**
• Customer **responsible** for explanation
• Think in terms of **value**
• **Enjoyable**
• Customer agreement to accept these change behavior ("**magic circle**")
Feel free to customize the experience
We always need to playtest

• Are we producing the **right** experience?
• What mechanics should we **tweak**?
• Are we **explaining** the game clearly?
• Do we need more **facilitation**?
• Do we need more **practice**?
• Etc.
The team, six months later

- One of the senior developers is worried about **technical debt**
  - Getting **harder** to write new code
  - **Rushed** through development and testing during first few sprints
  - A **prototype** has turned into a permanent fixture
  - **Fear** about taking time to reduce or prevent technical debt
CHALLENGE: Productivity

• We could **collaborate** better as a team
• We are **not aware** of all the ways we can improve
• We’re **not honest** with ourselves or each other
• Some people **dominate** discussions of improvement
• We **don’t know** whether changes will do any good
• Experiments can be **expensive**
The team, six months later

• The team plays Dice Of Debt
• A **short game** that shows the value of addressing technical debt
  • What happens if we do nothing?
  • How much do short-term investments pay off?
  • How the team used it
• Convince themselves of the need to deal with TD
• Convince managers of the need
TYPE OF GAME: Simulation

• Attempt to **model** reality
• A **credible** model with as little complexity as possible
• More **rules** than innovation games
• Pre-defined, limited set of actions ("**moves**")
• **Quantifiable** results
Two strategies for Dice Of Debt

- **“Do the hard things first” strategy**
- **“See how it goes” strategy**

- You can use the same game to address different challenges
- Games generate data that you don’t have, at a relatively low cost
The team, one year later

- **Security** and privacy issues cut across multiple teams
- Security audit revealed **real risks**
- **Unsure** how much prevention is possible
- **No plan** for how multiple teams will respond to a breach
The team, one year later

- The teams play out a security nightmare
- Product managers and security team define the scenario
- Participants divide into teams
  - Development teams, Ops, executive management, security, customer-facing groups
  - Deliberately mix up membership (not everyone on the same team as in real life)
  - Also a “red team” representing the attackers
- Play out the simulated security breach
- Act on lessons learned
  - New backlog items
  - Increased team-level security expertise
  - Process changes needed to prevent mistakes made in the simulation
TYPE OF GAME: Role-playing

- Referees/umpires define the scenario
- Players take on roles, join teams
  - May not be the same as in real life
- Teams get information from referees, discussions with other teams
- Free-form, “anything can be attempted”
- Referees adjudicate the results, may introduce new elements to the story
The team, one year later

- Security initiative reveals need to share learning across teams
  - Security improvement isn’t a one-time event
- Some teams already using Speed Boat to define retrospective items
  - Propellers and anchors
- Use the online version of Speed Boat to create a common repository of learning
Massive online retrospectives
Games are now a team practice

**REGULAR GAMES**
- PRODUCT BOX
  - What is the goal of the release?

**AD HOC GAMES**
- KANBAN PIZZA
  - Dev and Ops give Kanban a go

**SPEED BOAT**
- Cross-team retrospective

**ROLE-PLAYING**
- Are we ready to handle a major security problem?

**CUSTOM SIMULATION**
- Test strategies for Agile at scale
Which game should I choose?
EXERCISE: Agile game mad-lib

• At each table...

⚠️ 1. Pick one person’s challenge

2. Describe your challenge
   • What’s not working? What rules do you need to disrupt?

♠️♦️♣️ 3. Identify the type of game you might choose
   • Innovation game, simulation, role-playing

４. Select a specific game that would help
   • One of the examples (see other sheet)
   • A game that you know, but isn’t listed
   • A game you might invent from scratch
Resources

• Tasty Cupcakes
  • http://tastycupcakes.org/

• Serious Games At Work
  • http://www.seriousgamesatwork.org/

• Innovation Games platform
  • http://www.innovationgames.com/
If you have more questions, I’ll be around

• Technical Debt presentation, including Dice Of Debt
  • Thursday @ 10:45 AM

• Find me lurking around the conference
  • And play a game!

• Find me online

• Contribute to a worthy gaming cause
  • http://www.refugeemegagame.com

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