From Agile Coach & Trainer, to CEO, Should I Follow My Own $%*!@ Advice?

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Review a real life transformation...

...combined with interactive decision point analyses...

...so that you can receive practical takeaways.
Us

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- Agile coach, consultant, and Certified Scrum Trainer.
- 32 years of software development experience.
- 15 years of agile / lean experience.
Traditional, plan-driven, software firm led for 25 years by a command and control CEO.
The goal is to increase profit and customer value by improving the culture, people, process and software quality.
Agile is not a goal.

An agile transformation is a means to improve culture, people, process and quality to grow profits and customer value.
Describe the differences between A and B.

A. Positional, legitimate and formal authority

B. Referential, expert and personal power
As the CEO of the organization and the agile expert, Anthony could use his formal, positional authority, or he can use personal power.
As compared to an agile coach, should Anthony, as CEO, use more or less positional authority?

- More
- [x] Less
APPROACH

Why?
Use positional authority sparingly to create empowerment and respect.
Day 1 – First day as CEO.
DAY 1

You are introduced.

What do you say?

Why?
Announced that we will be agile, and talked about culture and servant leadership.
But...
Did not present a plan to achieve agility.
Because...
The goal was to set a clear vision and create concrete expectations.
Presenting your detailed plan may make you look competent and decisive, but...
...setting a vision and letting your team emerge on a plan helps your organization become competent.
And...
Creating a waterfall plan to go agile doesn’t make sense.
Use an agile approach to grow agile.
Day 3 – The first agile ceremony was introduced.
DAY 3

What was the first ceremony introduced?

☐ Backlog Refinement
☐ Sprint Planning
☐ Daily Stand Up
☐ Review
☐ Retrospective
Started with an all-staff Retrospective on Day 3.
And...
We believed that a retrospective would give the staff a voice and uncover what they thought should be changed.
Start, Stop, Continue
Use a Retrospective as the first ceremony.

This shows decisive leadership while fostering bottom up emergent change.
Large projects were approaching and we needed a roadmap.
In the past, a technical lead did all of the estimating.
So...
Week 2 – Whole team relative estimation was introduced.
A team approach would create a backlog quickly.
And...
Create empowerment, cross-talk, and shared accountability.
Estimates are the first stage of commitment; let teams create estimates so they own them.
There is also an important technical benefit that can be gained from whole team estimation, what is it?
Diversity of role and thought often leads to better solutions.
Use whole team estimation to create a holistic decisions on what and how to build.
Next, we ordered white boards to setup team spaces.
As an agile coach, Anthony had significant experience in setting up team boards.
Week 4 – White boards arrived en masse.
How should Anthony approach the setup of team boards?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visualize Existing Process</th>
<th>Hands On</th>
<th>Hands Off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the Process</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Didn’t dictate; gave hints.
- Volunteer committee modeled the existing workflow as a Kanban Board.
- The team refines the workflow continually.
29 Feet of Board
Stating the obvious again...

The more positional power you have, the less frequently you should use it.

Allow the teams to grow...
...but

Let them grow within constraints.
From a process change standpoint, manage from the present forward instead of the future backward (Paraphrasing Dave Snowden).
By Week 6, we had team boards, a team room with visible artifacts, and a product backlog.

Now what?
Week 6 – Time to add another Scrum ceremony.
WEEK 6

What was the next Scrum ceremony introduced?

- [ ] Backlog Refinement
- [x] Sprint Planning
- [ ] Daily Stand Up
- [ ] Review
- [ ] Retrospective
Sprint Planning.
We believed that it was time to put the various pieces together and attempt to deliver value inside a Sprint.
But...
We delivered a whopping 6 points of value in our first two week Sprint.
But...this is how we do Sprint Planning now.
Sprint Planning Today
Add ceremonies slowly, expect them to be imperfect, and improve them over time.
By Month 2, it was time to move to the next level.
Month 2 – Fundamental agile training occurred.
MONTH 2

Who participated in this training?
- Development Staff
- Management
- Support Staff
- Admin Staff
Attendance was broad based with every available role.
And...
We had fun. People learned.
We believed that expanding attendance creates multiple footholds in an organization that ultimately enable faster transformation.
Even Accounting and Sales
If you want a holistic agile adoption, have a holistic organizational training, and make it fun!
Fun leads to engagement...
Jill and Logan on fun...
And, more fun...
Random Standup Activities...
The blindfolded, human knot...
Make work fun.
By Month 3, we were sprinting and a majority of the personnel were trained.

(Backlog Refinement, Sprint Planning, Standups, Retro)

Now what?
Month 3 – Time to add another Scrum Ceremony.
MONTH 3

What was the next Scrum Ceremony introduced?

- [x] Backlog Refinement
- [ ] Scrum of Scrum
- [ ] Sprint Review
Sprint Reviews.
And...
It was horrible. Burdensome. The team didn’t think the product was complete enough.
So...
What should we do to counteract the concern that we couldn’t get enough ready for the Sprint Review?
We went to one Sprint Review per week instead of one Review at the end of a two week Sprint.
We then went to even more frequent Sprint Reviews.
If expectations for the Sprint Review deliverables are too high, have them more frequently to create realistic expectations.
It took several weeks, but it started to click.
We ultimately changed our mindset.

From: “We don’t have enough to present!”

To: “We can present this much.”
Now, according to Nate...
Nate
Attendance is strong with valuable feedback. But, two a week is a bit too much...
Early on, err on the side of too frequent feedback. 

Adjust your formal feedback loops as informal collaboration increases.
By Month 4, we were making progress in Sprints.
But...
Teamwork and quality were less than desired. We had 7 teams of 1 person versus 1 team of 7 people.
So...
We directed an experiment in the next sprint.
Month 4 – big change in engineering happened.
MONTH 4

What engineering change was prescribed?

- Behavior Driven Development
- Test Driven Development
- Pair Programming
- Sustainable Pace
Pair Programming.
We believed that pair programming would increase teamwork, cross-training, and code quality.
And, what Derrick said...
Derrick
And, what Matt said...
Matt
Start Pair Programming before implementing Test Driven Development and other practices like refactoring.
Intense collaboration is expensive but reduces risk (single threaded dependencies) by growing learning.
Now, let’s hear from a few team members...
Question: When will we be done?

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There is no Finish Line
1. Agile isn’t a goal, use it to improve culture, people and process to grow profits and value.
2. Use personal power; let teams make decisions within constraints.
3. Use retros as the first ceremony to foster bottom up, emergent change.
4. Let teams create estimates so they own them and can propose better solutions.
5. Manage process change from the present forward.
6. Add ceremonies slowly, improve them always.

7. Have holistic training early.

8. Have lots of fun.

9. Start with frequent, structured, collaboration early; adjust as ad-hoc collaboration, and pairing, grows.

10. Use agile to grow agile; remember you are never done.
Be emergent
Be imperfect
Be personal
Have fun
Let go
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