Hire Great People for Agile Teams (or any team) Using Interview Games

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Objective

In this 100% hands-on & play-based workshop at Agile2017, you will experience a different way to interview people to join agile teams. Rather than engaging in arbitrary questions and discussion facilitated via a contextually rich resume (how most job interviews are conducted), you will participate in human-to-human interactions to assess how the interviewers and candidate actually work together in a team setting. A series of up to 6 activities (time permitting) will be presented to simulate a job interview for a agile team member to learn about the candidate's background, past experience, skill level, career goals and most importantly, their ability to work well with other members of the team / organization that they are considering to join.

Workshop Setup

At your table decide who will support the following roles:
- 1 Person will be the Candidate
    - The candidate will need to inform the table what kind of a job they are applying for, so others can play along.
- 2-3 People to be the Interviewers
- Others will function as Observers
- Interviewers and Observers may change roles between interview activities – this is recommended to allow all to participate actively in some capacity.

Real-Life vs. Workshop Disclaimer - The activities included in this workshop / interview process are designed to flow together to enable mutual learning and preliminary mental model formation between the candidate and the interviewers. When these methods are used in real life, different interviewers are used for different activities; however, the candidate remains consistent through all activities. It is possible to change the candidate in a workshop setting; however, some role-play may be required to keep the intent of the activities aligned.

Activity 1 – Warmup: Story Time (Mechanism: Story Cubes)

Humans communicate and build trust by telling stories (a trending idea within the agile community) so rather than asking questions about the candidates resume – let's invite the candidate to tell true stories about their past experiences and how those experiences impacted them, what did they learn, how did they grow, etc. Using story cubes will inject metaphor to force critical thought for both interviewee and interviewers to enable better understanding via clean language – aka: this cube represents this to me because …

- **Candidate:** Roll the story cubes, and then use the cubes to tell an honest story about your prior experiences.

- **Interviewers:** Listen to the story as it is told, and when it is finished, ask questions to learn more based upon what you heard.

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

- After telling a story and discussing as a group, roll the dice again and tell another story as time allows.

- A chime will signal the end of story telling time.

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Activity 2 – Career Assessment: Career Forecast (Mechanism: Agile Job Cards)

A high percentage of employees exhibit low engagement in their job as the activities of their job are poorly aligned to what the employee desires to do. Rather than basing the job interview on an arbitrary listing of equally ranked work activities, let's engage with candidates to learn which type of activities bring them the most joy vs. activities they would prefer to avoid (think: TPS reports).

- **Interviewers:** Create a canvas (or just use the table) with the following labels on Post-It notes to allow the candidate to arrange the job cards by their preference:
    - Most desired / Happy Face (Top of the canvas)
    - Least desired / TPS Reports (Bottom of the canvas)
    - Not Desired / Trash Can (Somewhere to the side)

- **Candidate:** You'll have about ~8 minutes to review the job cards (there are 48 of them – things that various roles on agile teams do) and rank by relative preference – if there are items not relevant for what you want to do, throw them out – if there is something you really want to do that is not included, use a Post-It note to write it in. If the job on a card is not clear, ask the interviewers to clarify what the job is so that you can prioritize appropriately.

- At the candidate's preference, this activity can be conversational and/or the candidate can work through the cards and describe their ranking at the end of time.

- **Interviewers & Candidates** should LISTEN for additional prompts that may be given during the exercise.

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

Observations / Notes:

Activity 3 – Career Vision: Dream Job (Mechanism: Drawing)

Mob Drawing is a fun activity that simulates real life collaboration of working together as a team. The interviewers and candidate will work together to create a visual depiction (drawing) of the candidate's ideal day at work (or week at work) – the candidate and interviewers will decide if they are focusing on "day" vs. "week" before beginning.

Drawing Prompts:

- Each person drawing should use a different color marker.

- The candidate will begin the drawing for 30 seconds.

- Every 30 seconds when the chime sounds, the person drawing will change – the candidate will direct others on what to draw to complete a picture of their dream day or week at work.

- Candidates and interviewers will go through several rotations so everyone has a chance to draw a few times; however, the candidate is responsible for providing direction as to what to draw to others at all times.

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

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Activity 4 – Risks & Advocacy: Sailboat (Mechanism: Drawing + Writing)
Now that we've learned a little bit about the candidate and the candidate has learned a little bit about the interviewers and the job, let's use that knowledge to assess how both would actually work together using the Sailboat metaphor popular with agile team retrospectives. Using the Sailboat, candidates will share the types of support & advocacy (wind) they would need to be successful in their "dream job" – interviewers can respond to these. Interviewers will share risks and/or concerns (anchors) that could impact the candidate's ability to achieve their dream job if invited to join the organization.

- **Interviewers:** Create a Sailboat canvas with a waterline in the middle, a boat, an island as a destination to the right, and anything else you wish to add.

- **Candidate:** Reflect, write and share support and advocacy necessary to enable you to be successful – post these on the canvas above the water (wind for the sail).

- **Interviewers:** Reflect, write and share risks / concerns you have regarding the candidate's ability to be successful with their dream job – post these below the water line (anchors that could slow/sink the ship).

- **Interviewers & Candidates:** Reflect on discussion / activities thus far, and silently write items for several minutes – when prompted, place your items on the canvas, then share and discuss.

- **Tip:** As items are discussed, it is recommended to add additional notes to the canvas to highlight / capture discussion with the candidate to best support them joining and/or how the candidate would address concerns / risks noted – adding these notes helps with the HR required documentation most organizations have to provide some interview notes / data (here's a picture of what we discussed).

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

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Activity 5 – Feedback & Improvement: Teamwork (Mechanism: Physical Simulation / Jenga Block)
High performing teams are formed over time and through the practice of reflecting objectively on working together (even when things do not go well) to identify ways to improve. In this simulation, the interviewers and candidate will work together to perform work under specific instructions for a short period of time. Once the work is performed, the candidate and interviewers will hold a retrospective to identify ways to improve their performance working together.

- **Interviewers & Candidates:** The room facilitator will provide specific instructions for the simulation portion of this exercise – listen carefully.

- Following the simulation, the interviewers and candidate will hold a quick retrospective to discuss ways to improve how they worked together.

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

Observations / Notes:

Activity 6 – Appreciation & Learning: Gifts (Mechanism: Story Cubes)
Let's end our interview process the same way it began only changing the roles. Using story cubes, the interviewers will roll the story cubes and using the cubes displayed, share a story that reflects appreciation for and/or items they have learned about the candidate. The candidate will receive this feedback and have a chance to respond to feedback and to correct or support statements made by the interviewers regarding what they have learned about the candidate.

- **Interviewers:** Roll the story cubes, and then use the cubes to tell a story to provide appreciation to the candidate and share what you have learned about them through the interview process.

- **Candidate:** Listen to the story as it is told, and offer feedback / supporting statements based upon what the interviewers share they have learned about you.

- **Observers:** Keep notes on what you observe (anything that seems interesting or cool is a good observation) – what do you like about the method – how did the interviewee and interviewers engage each other?

Observations / Notes: