Mobbing to Lift Unheard Voices
Harnessing the power of many to change the world
This Session

- Philosophy
- Results
- Why does it work
- Let’s apply it to help others
- Share out of experiment results
• Mob Programming started organically at Hunter Industries in 2012
• Agile Coach Woody Zuill encouraged a software team to innovate and learn
• The team decided to try an experiment
• Huge success! Now spreading across the world!
• Not just for software teams

See Woody describing how it works here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cy64qkgTyl&t=1876s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cy64qkgTyl&t=1876s)
Philosophy

From

Farm out work to individuals, sync up later to align on progress/make decisions

To

All the people needed to complete the thing, working on the same thing, at the same time, in the same space, and using the same medium.
“When we worked separately, we got a certain amount done. When we worked together, we got a lot more done.”

“How can we be productive with 5 people at one computer?”

“High quality! In four years, introduced just one bug into production.”
One Possible Approach

HOW
1. Gather everyone needed to deliver in one place
2. Focus on one item at a time
3. One person (driver) at the keyboard at a time
4. Navigators guide the driver
5. Rotate driver on regular cadence (every X min)
6. Deliver when done
7. Start the next item

RULES
1. Be kind and considerate to others
2. Be present
Why does it work?

Focuses on:
1. **Removing** the things that destroy productivity
2. **Breaking** down artificial barriers
3. Delivering high-quality **value faster**!

“We didn't set out to solve any of these problems. We just noticed that these problems faded away with Mob Programming.”
– Woody Zuill
What destroys productivity?

1. **Communication problems** (email translations / telephone game)
2. **Decision-making problems** (need "approval" from others before releasing)
3. Meetings
4. Lack of Information
5. **Thrashing** (context switching while waiting for answers to questions or for people to be available to partner)
6. **Doing more than barely sufficient**
7. In ability to support changing requirements
8. **Tech debt / feedback on coding practices** (code reviews)
9. Politics
10. **Other distractions** (surfing internet, Facebook, etc.)
11. Merging code
12. **Changes in design** (architectural, process, product)
13. What else???
Keys to Success

1. Team willing to try

2. Kindness and consideration essential

3. Open to being vulnerable, learning from others
Where could this apply?

1. Decision Making (at whiteboard)
2. Strategic Planning
3. Workflow/Feature Discovery
4. Creating Comms or Training
5. Budgeting
6. Process Mapping
7. Team Charter/Working Agreements
8. Writing Bi-laws
9. Brainstorming
10. Where else???
Let’s use Mobbing to ideate on how to help unheard voices
Examples

Who: Refugees in America from the Congo (e.g. Abiack)
- Faced oppression and murder, escaped to US
- Struggling to find work, stuck with limited skillset
- Due to lack of housing
- May be reluctant to speak up due to past history

Why: We want to better understand the problem space and challenges people like Patrick face

What: Give refugees a safe place to celebrate their culture + access to tools (e.g., someone to help them open a bank account)
- Help understand our political structure to elevate voice

Experiment: Offer a place where resources can be given:
- Financial for tuition
- Financial for personal costs
- Career coaching
- Connecting the right opportunities for growth with on-the-job training
- Financial coaching/money management

Outcome:
Examples

Who: Entry Level
What: Start conversations by asking entry level staff first.

Why:
- Overcome fear
- Fresh Ideas
- Safe space
- Spreading of knowledge
- Empowered
- Trust Building

Experiment: Ask the entry level person on the team for their ideas first. (Encourage them) Def. The new person may choose to defer (Now open to the room)
Mobbing Experiment

Goal: Develop a one-pager based on idea of how to help unheard voices

1. Break into groups of 5
2. (5 min) Use sticky notes to brainstorm target audience and topic – help those unheard
3. (5, 3-min time segments) Mob to write a one-page proposal for who, what, why, and experiment
4. (10 min) Group share out of one-pagers
5. (10 min) Retro and key takeaways. What worked, what didn’t work? How might you use Mobbing in your context?
What

All the people needed to complete the thing, working on the same thing, at the same time, in the same space, using the same medium.
Why

Removes the things that destroy productivity

Breaks down artificial barriers

Helps deliver high-quality value faster!
Thank You!