

Organization in Rank-conscious and Reserved East Asia on the Bumpy Track to Team Health

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World Map



Our Perceivings on Some Cultural Aspects...

- Status-conscious (Rank/Social)

- Age :

- How old are you?
- Friend

- Language : words different depending on seniority

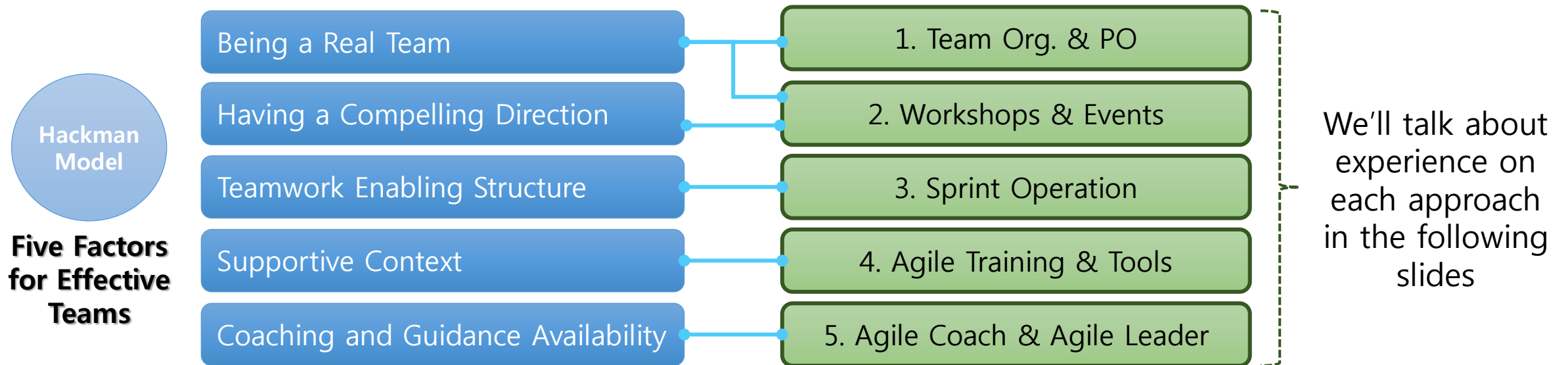
- Socially Reserved

- Shy on public scrutiny
- Questions & Answers > Discussion
- Decision > Discussion

* Not saying something is good or bad *

What makes a Great Team?

Looked into Hackman factors → Agile on selected software development teams



Onto Our Experience...

Disclaimer: Not One Rule to Rule Them All, but Our *Experience*

Starting the Agile Experience

Scrum offers a good starting point



- Cross-functional team members
- Product Owner and Scrum Master roles
- Scrum Ceremonies
- Agile support tools
- And so on...

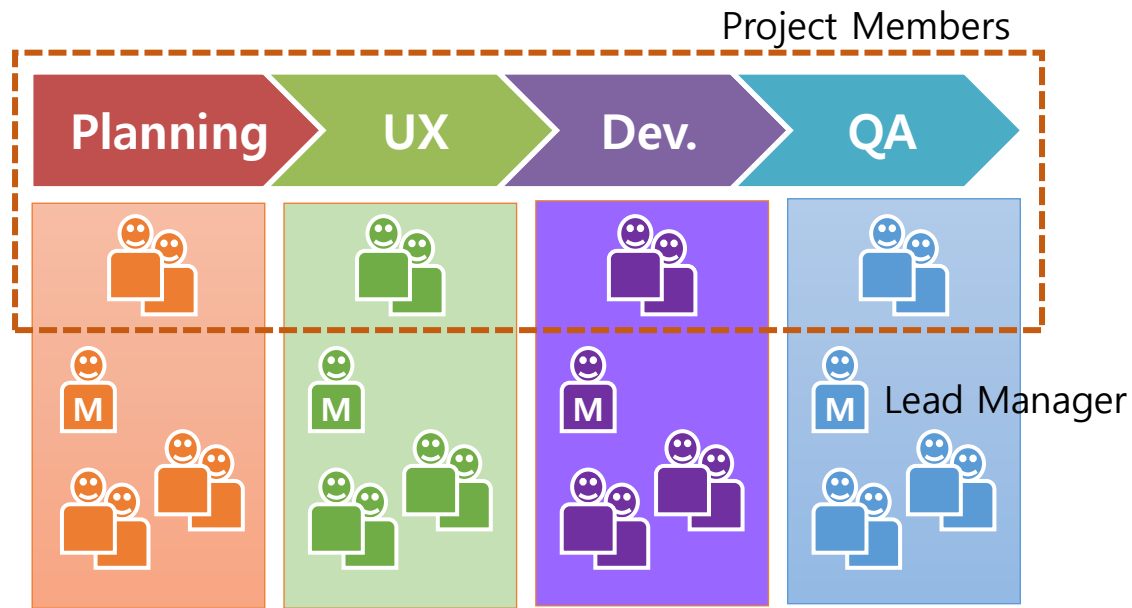
Agile Coach will face :

- No Product Owner role
- Organized into functional teams
- Members assigned to participate in a project
- Not every one in the team on the same page on Agile

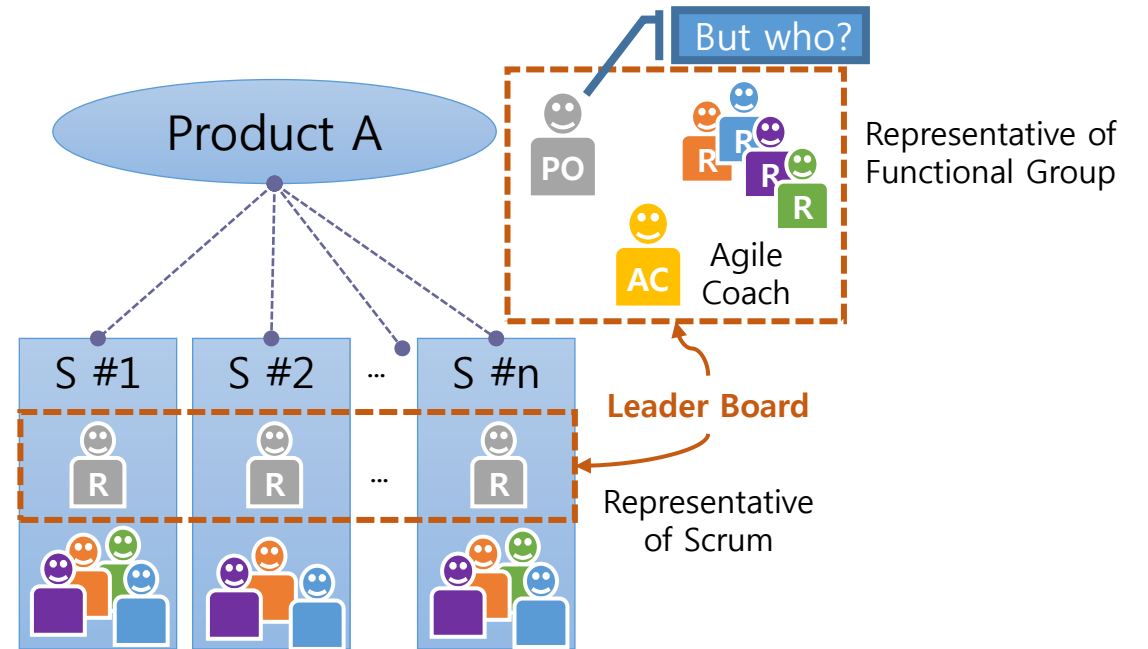
1. Team Org. & PO

- Couldn't change structure, went with team operation

Functional Organization and Process



Team Operation



- Different groups serving each function
- Interactions with other functions

- Feel of a Product Team with all functional members
- Regular collaboration in same space

1. Team Org. & PO

Helps :

- Training to Product Owners and team members to understand team operation
- Reminder and emphasis that this is how our team agree to work
- Consistent communication between the PO and the team

Challenges :

- Unable to form co-located cross-functional teams
- The Product Owner empowerment
- Individual performance evaluation

2. Workshops and Events

- Organized set of workshops and events to share viewpoints

Product Vision Workshop

- to align and contemplate the **direction of product**
- share common objectives and discuss various viewpoints

User Story Workshop

- to identify **usage scenarios**, priorities, acceptance criteria
- discuss functionalities, non-functionalities and values

Release Planning Workshop

- to establish **milestone goals** that the members collaborate towards
- PO and members discuss recent changes/findings

Half-time Locker Room

- to **look back** at how things went so far, and **pep up** the team onwards
- held after about half of the project year has passed

2. Workshops and Events

Helps :

- Have everyone participate : gets people to talk more
 - Meet up with participants prior to the event to gain consensus (value of different viewpoints)
 - ✓ Make people feel more appreciated
 - Have the functional groups take part in presenting information ('we are in it together')
- Location away from the immediate workplace
 - Agenda/Timeline notification (people need to shift work schedules)
 - Food and Beverages
- Timekeeping

3. Sprint Operations

- All the project members participated in planning, review, and retrospective
 - Even if in different locations
 - ✓ Reviews and retrospectives in a single day and planning the day after
: to emphasize the end and start of a sprint
 - ✓ Often adjusted to having the review, retrospective, and planning all in a single day
: request by the team members coming from far distances
: Pre-planning using online tools prior to the review and made adjustments after the review
 - ✓ Daily meetings by conference call
- Use the same Agile support tools
 - ※ such as Jira and Confluence, commercial Agile support tools provided by Atlassian company

3. Sprint Operations

- Expected some hustle and bustle... but many reluctant to speak out their minds openly
 - Many people conscious of status
 - ✓ Do not want to be considered impolite
 - Seem hesitant to be the troublemaker
- Sometimes, a project leader states that the team is already doing Agile activities.
 - Common practice so stated - the daily meeting.
 - However, we sometimes find an hour-long reporting session
- Planning was less involved than expected
 - few senior members of a team identified work needed to be done
 - who does what was pre-determined even before the planning meeting

- Status-conscious
- Socially reserved

3. Sprint Operations

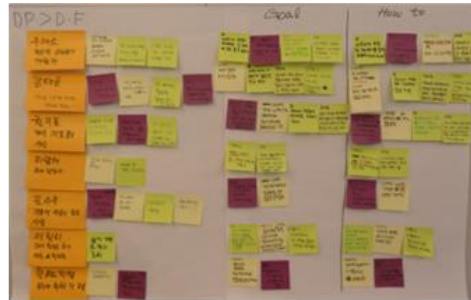
Helps :

- Mixture of Mandatory Activities & Comfortable Ambience
- Facilitate Conversations
 - Ask seniors to speak last in cases where speaking first led to nobody voicing opinions
 - Ask seniors to elaborate more when seniors seem to announce a decision crisply
 - Ask juniors if they understood what was being discussed to catalyze participation
 - Always give a chance for a participant from each functional group to voice opinions
- Have Conversations with Seniors and Juniors
 - Have personal talks to explain why the coach is doing something
 - Find ways to meet the team expectations
 - Encourage Juniors to make inquiries to understand the particulars of the tasks.
 - ✓ Sometimes juniors ventured to perform the task and identified additional related tasks

4. Agile Training & Tools

- The full-day Agile Boot Camp
 - Every member participation
 - 1st Half : Agile theory and lab sessions
 - ✓ Agile concepts, agile practices and roles
 - ✓ Agile boards and user stories
 - 2nd Half : Team building activities
 - ✓ Making team ground rules
 - ✓ Designing team activity flow

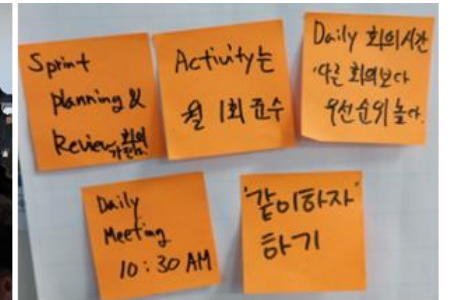
- Agile Tools : Online board
 - Distributed teams
 - Records



< Offline Board >



< Planning >



< Team Ground Rule >



< Goal Setting >



< Activity Flow >



< Voting Commitment >

4. Agile Training & Tools

Helps :

- A beneficial event that doesn't feel like "just another training session"
 - Having all the members participate together
 - Having activities discussing the actual project and team
 - Having an external agile coach as trainer/facilitator (imbues a more 'official' feel)

 Positive Feedback on the Agile Boot Camp

- ✓ "Having our actual team members made it more interesting and real"
- ✓ "A positive event that set the overall atmosphere of the project"
- ✓ "Great to have the lab sessions to understand the concepts"

- We usually use an online board, but an offline board is helpful for newly formed teams

5. Agile Coach & Agile Leader

- Agile Coach Group:

Direct Team Support

- Daily interaction with the team
- Workshops and events
- Sprint operations
- Agile Boot Camp
- Agile tool training

In-direct Team Support

- Agile training for newcomers
- Agile Leader training course
- Online community website
- Agile Newsletter & Daily Clippings
- Internal Agile Conference
- Offline Meetups

- Team Agile Leader... (a member of the team)

- provides agile support quickly within the team
- promotes Agile and supports the members within the team
- facilitates communication between PO and the team members

5. Agile Coach & Agile Leader

Helps :

- An external coach's coaching support was a great help to the team
 - Able to talk about topics that members were cautious of
- Experience sharing amongst Team Agile Leaders through various channels
- A variety of agile training to meet specific needs

Challenges :

- Full-time Agile Coach role
- Team Agile Leader :
 - who to assign the role, the responsibilities of the role, and how it differs from a manager role

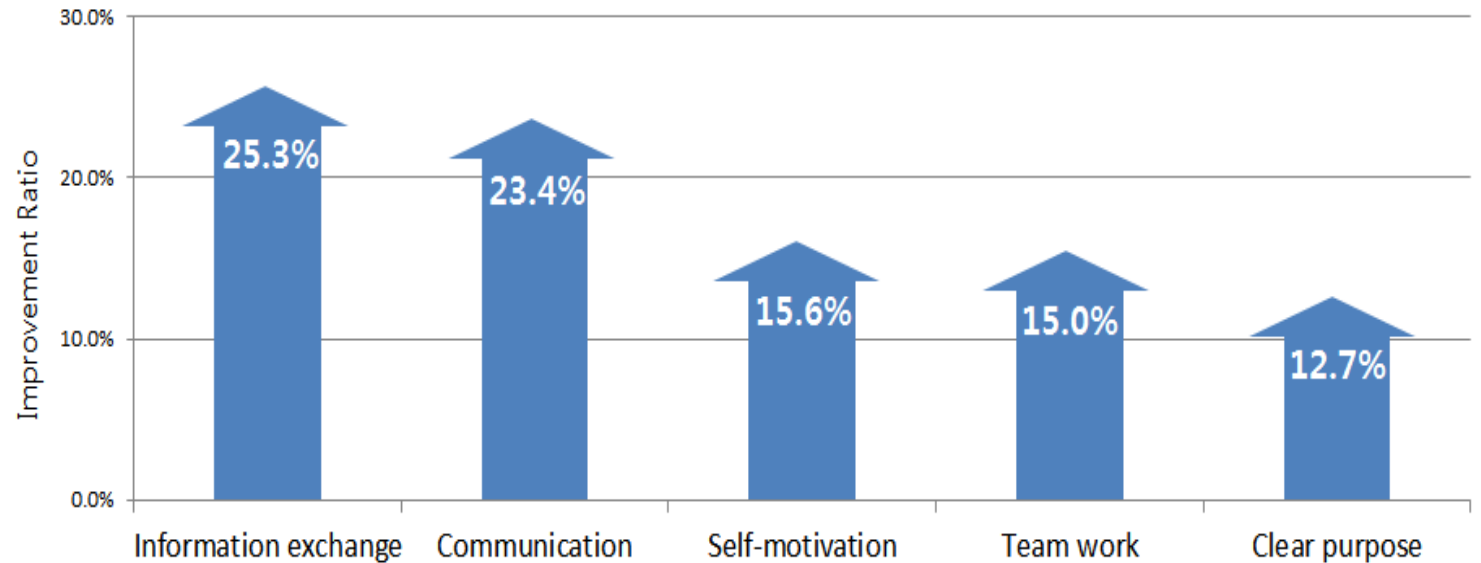
Results

What feedback did we receive?

Thankfully the teams we worked with replied that **working with us helped**

Survey on five categories before and after working with ten teams

- Increase in all five categories
- Higher in information exchange and communication
- Slightly lower in self-motivation, team work, and clear purpose



The Good

- Access to more information
- Able to divulge their thoughts and opinions more openly
- Better collaboration towards common goal

Possible Limitation

- Structure
- A matter of empowerment
- Awareness of structure and seniority

The following seems to help

If you ever find yourself in a similar situation as ours,

- Work to create a more **comfortable ambience** where people feel more at ease
- There always seems to be an **opinion leader** or two; talk and talk to win him/her over
 - May or may not be the official manager of the team
 - How that person interacts with the coach to show how much value is placed in Agile
- Agile Coach recognized as the **helper**: always keep members informed
- Show that you yourself **respect** everyone's opinion and **value** participation
 - It's not impolite; many of the juniors do put forward their opinions and like to have discussions
 - not losing face to say that you do not know something and need help from others
 - Show thanks when someone volunteers to help
- Having an **external Agile Coach** who does not directly answers to the manager
 - **Time keeping**, especially with seniors or supervisors

Thank You & The END