



Retrospective

Retrospectives

Overview and Techniques for Scrum Retrospectives



Retrospectives

The Importance of Retro

- High-level guidance
- Investment in Continuous Improvement

5 Phases of the Retro

- Additional Considerations

Common Techniques

- Ways to explore “What Went Well? What Didn’t?”

Resources



Why is Retro important?

At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

- The above is a core principle of the Agile Manifesto

Retrospectives provide the team with an opportunity to “Inspect and Adapt” on its process or dynamics.

- With short delivery cadence of iterations, Retros are the chance to:
 - Review what went well and what didn't in the last cycle
 - Identify areas for improvement or enhancing team practices
 - Remove major impediments faced during the iteration



Investment in Continuous Improvement

The concept of Continuous Improvement pre-dates Agile

- Toyota, in its *Toyota Way*, emphasizes ideas such as:
 - Kaizen (Continuous Improvement) - We improve our business operations continuously, always driving for innovation and evolution
 - Teamwork - We stimulate personal and professional growth, share the opportunities of development and maximize individual and team performance

Retros allow for incrementally enhancing productivity

- With 2 week Sprints, in a year a team would have 26 opportunities to invest in strengthening its process
 - While not all improvements will yield positive results,
 - If half of the improvements had even a 1% 'productivity' increase, that would be a 13%!
- Retros afford the team the space to improve process, gain efficiency, increase quality and/or up its performance

[The Toyota Way](#) - Wikipedia entry

Guidelines for the Retro

From the Scrum Guide

- Occurs at the end of Sprint – 3 hours for a 1-month Sprint (proportional for shorter Sprints)
- Purpose:
 - Inspect how the last Sprint went with regards to people, relationships, process, and tools
 - Identify and order the major items that went well and potential improvements
 - Create a plan for implementing improvements to the way the Scrum Team does its work
- Attended by entire Scrum Team – Product Owner, Development Team and Scrum Master
 - Only those involved in the delivery attend Retro. No managers or stakeholders for the Sprint Retro
- Scrum Master responsibilities:
 - Ensures that Retro takes place and purpose is understood.
 - Retro is kept to its expected timebox
 - Holds accountability over the Scrum process and the team's commitment to improve

The Scrum Guide by Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber

Guidelines for the Retro

Communicate

- Ensure that everyone has opportunity to participate
 - Surveys, dot-voting, and general conversation are ways to get all team members engaged
- Keep focus on the process, don't blame or overly reward individuals

Keep it fresh

- Try various Retrospective techniques
- Hold the Retro in a space other than the team's home base
- Have the team physically move around with activities
- Consider having another Scrum Master or Coach facilitate the Retro

Celebrate

- Recognize accomplishments during the iteration
- Review short-comings and share appreciations



Guidelines for the Retro

When to Retrospect

- In Scrum, the team holds a Retro at the end of each Sprint
- The opportunity to retrospect can happen at any time, especially addressing major obstacles

Retrospectives can be held

- At the completion of a single Epic or feature
- At the end of a full release
 - All team members involved in the collective work should participate in Retros. Managers, extended team members can be included
 - For Release-level Retros, consider having separate retrospectives for teams and managers
- Same rules apply:
 - Everyone has a voice
 - A limited set of improvements is committed to



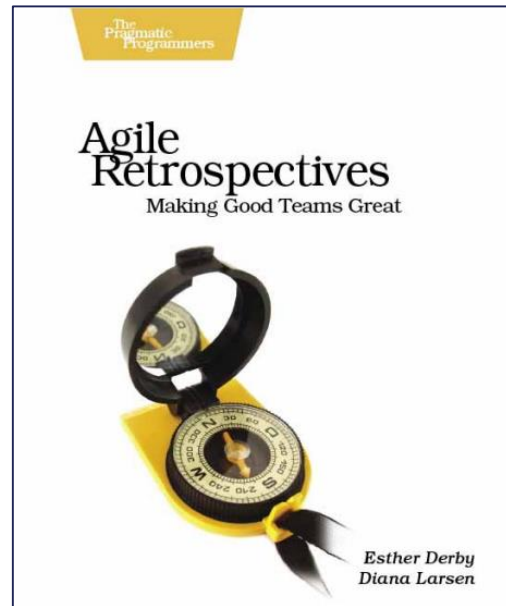
Phases of a Retro

Derby and Larsen's Agile Retrospectives describe the following as a template for Retros:

- Set the Stage
 - Create the environment for everyone on the team to speak courageously, freely and openly
- Gather Data
 - Review of metrics, other data points, and team feedback
- Generate Insights
 - Exploration and creation of ideas
- Decide What to Do
 - Create the action plan for the top item(s) for improvement
- Close the Retro
 - Reinforce the commitment, share appreciations

For each Phases of a Retro, there are a variety of techniques that can be applied

Agile Retrospectives – Making Good Teams Great – Esther Derby and Diana Larsen

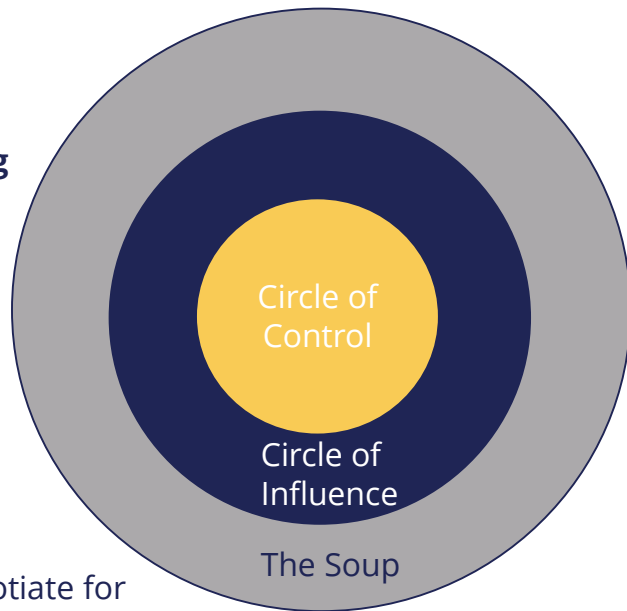


Retro Considerations – Circles and Soup

Another technique from Diana Larsen is a framework for identifying issues and the degrees of empowerment for a team

Technique

- Draw a series of 3 concentric circles on a whiteboard or flipchart
- Place stickies in the appropriate zone
 - Inner: Circle of Control is for items of the team's direct ownership
 - This best represents the issues the team can commit to
 - Middle: Circle of Influence is where the team may influence or negotiate for change. The team can still allocate owners to follow up on items here
 - Outer: The Soup is for those things that are entirely out of the team's control
 - Items here are ones the team can't commit to, but these can and should be escalated
- A Circles and Soup space may be kept as an visualization tool during the Sprint or on-going



Retro Considerations – Happiness Metric / Satisfaction Surveys

A number of Agilists have committed to a Happiness Metric, which assesses the happiness or morale of the team on a regular basis.

- A common format is to use a survey tool which asks each team member to use a 1 – 5 scale (low to high) with sample items such as:
 - Your personal contribution to your team
 - Your team as a whole
 - Collaboration on your team
 - Collaboration with other teams
 - State of backlog
 - Outside of work (used as benchmark)

Benefits

- These surveys are an effective way to gather data prior to the Retro itself
- With remote and distributed teams, surveys allow for all participants to share
- Additional free-text questions focused on “What would you change during the sprint?” can also create early insights

Retro Considerations– Action Items

Retros often become a place where teams vent

- To use the old saying – Actions speak louder than words
- While some venting is natural and normal, the team should focus on their area of control – What can they change or improve for themselves.

Commit to Improvements

- But limit to a small handful of ideas – in short, what can be delivered in a Sprint
- The 2017 revision to the Scrum Guide states:
 - “To ensure continuous improvement, it includes at least one high priority way in which the team works, identified in the previous Retrospective meeting.”
 - Add a User Story to each Sprint that focuses on delivering Continuous Improvement
 - Treat the Continuous Improvement Story like any other one: Once committed to, the team will strive to complete it during the Sprint.

[The Scrum Guide](#) by Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber

Common Techniques

Set-up

- Have a whiteboard, flipcharts or an online collaboration tool available.
- Sticky notes and markers or online equivalent
- Use the space to have everyone as equals. For virtual participants, ensure that audio/visual connection is at the optimal level available

Consensus approaches

- Dot-Voting – a nearly standard approach in Agile practices for decision-making
 - Assign X number of votes per person (often 3 votes)
 - People allocate their votes on potential action items. All votes can go to a single option or be distributed across multiple items
 - The highest voted item becomes the prioritized action
- Roman Vote
 - Thumbs Up – Yes, or Continue
 - Flat Palm – Agnostic, Could go either way
 - Thumbs Down – No, or Stop

Common Techniques

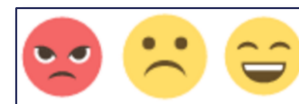
Stop Start Continue

- Mark out the board with 3 columns for Stop Start and Continue
 - Invite the team to place sticky notes in the columns based on the experiences of the Sprint
 - Options for going through the exercise include having 1 person at a time post or walk through each category



Mad Sad Glad (Wish-We-Had)

- Similar to Stop Start Continue, set up columns per the categories
 - “Wish-We-Had” is an additional option
 - As above, the team indicates the frustrations, disappointments or celebrations of the last iteration.



For either technique, discuss the items and vote on appropriate action items

Common Techniques

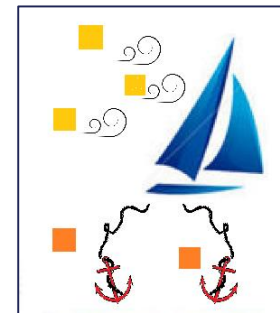
4 L's

- Create categories on the board for Liked, Lacked, Learned, Longed For
 - These will be the buckets where the team will place sticky notes on the points of interest
 - Explore ways to leverage items in Liked or Learned, or to strengthen those in Lacked or Longed For

Liked	Lacked
Learned	Longed For

Sailboat / Speedboat

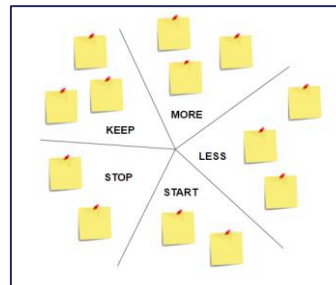
- On the board, use an image of a sailboat. Using stickies, have the team indicate:
 - Positive contributing factors as wind.
 - Anchors to represent things that get in the team's way.
- Same idea, different imagery: Speedboat, using propellers (boosters) and rocks (blockers)



Common Techniques

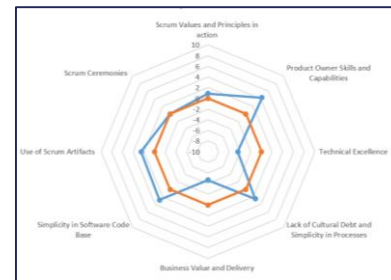
Starfish

- Create a star-shaped diagram with each of the 5 areas representing:
 - Keep / More / Less / Start / Stop
 - As with previous techniques, have the team use stickies to add to the categories



Values Assessment

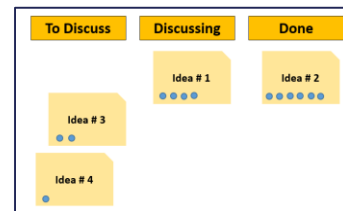
- Invite the team to rate themselves on core concepts such as
 - The Agile Manifesto Values and Principles
 - The Scrum Guide practices or Scrum Values
 - Seven Wastes of Software Development
 - Spotify Health Model ([link](#))
- Online tools or spreadsheets can be used to graph the results.
- This may be a technique to run on a regular basis to see changes or trends over time
- Identify strengths and weaker areas. Explore why some items are strong and ask how to shore up the lower-ranked areas



Common Techniques

Lean Coffee

- Lean Coffee is an idea-generating practice where the team
 - Individually creates topics for discussion on stickies (timeboxed to 5 min)
 - Dot-Votes and prioritizes topics
 - Topics are arranged in a Kanban board with columns for To Discuss, Discussing, and Done
 - Move the first topic to the Discussing column and – yes – discuss!
 - Talk is timeboxed for 5 min, followed by Roman voting to continue or move to the next item. For continuing, the timebox decreases by a minute each pass through.
 - Once the decision is made to move on, move that item to Done and draw the next item into Discussing
 - Allocate 10 minutes for conclusion and generation of action items



Fun Ideas

- Consider using themes around holidays or special occasions
- Use narratives for the iteration.
 - Rory's Story Cubes or Mad Libs can be used as references or 'starters'



Resources

Books

- Agile Retrospectives – Esther Derby & Diana Larsen
 - The canonical reference for Retrospectives
- Coaching Agile Teams – Lyssa Adkins
 - Minor content on Retros, but excellent in general on facilitation

Online Tools

- [Retromat](#) – a web-based tool offering different techniques for Retro phases
- [RetrospectiveWiki](#) – contains a collection of Retro techniques, along with additional tips
- [Retrium](#) and [ScatterSpoke](#) – solutions for distributed Retros
- Online collaborative whiteboards – many options are available





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