Origins of Teams: Darwinian Observations in the Wild

Blake Nyquist – Wade Wachs
Liquid Web, Inc.

bit.ly/agile14darwin
Agenda

- Introduction
- Brief History
- Stories
- What’s Next?
- Questions
“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”
Introduction

Wade Wachs
- Joined in 2013
- QA Manager
- Industry experience
- @WadeWachs
Introduction

Katia Wachs

- Born July 3rd, 2014
- 8 pounds (~3.63kg)
- 21 inches (~53cm)
Introduction

Blake Nyquist

- Joined in 2012
- Program Manager
- Recovering developer
- @blanyq
Introduction

Liquid Web

- Started in 1997
- Heroic Support
- We are the tubes!
- #lolinternets
Brief History

“It is necessary to look forward to a harvest, however distant that may be...”
Brief History

Antediluvian Period

- First developer in 2001
- Fast changing
- Ad Hoc Method™
Brief History

The Storm

- Grew to 5 devs
- Clear direction
- Constant conversation
Brief History

Post Flood

- Increased demand
- Team grew
- Backlog exploded
Stories

“At each period of growth all the growing twigs have tried to branch out on all sides, and to overtop and kill the surrounding twigs…”
Stories: Phoenix Operation

Challenges
- Overnight doubling
- Left alone
- No cultural learnings

Response
- Video conferencing
- Sent team lead
- Embrace the distance
Stories: Ready Alpha Squadron

Challenges
- 1.5 projects/engineer
- Long waits
- Amorphous blob

Response
- Added iterations
- Focus on finishing
- Visualize the work
- Squad model
Stories: Managing Up

Challenges

- $goodDeveloper != $goodLeader;
- No feedback
- Lots of history

Response

- Do nothing
- Some talking
- Greener pastures
What’s Next?

“It is always advisable to perceive clearly our ignorance.”
It’s gotta be the system!

- Russell Ackoff
- Product of interactions
- Enlightenment
Open prioritization

- Jimdo case study by Arne Roock*
- Have team buy-in
- Approaching rollout

Relationship Building

- More conversations
- Restore reputation
- This **IS** good for the company
Change is constant

- Evolution is important
- Sometimes it fails
- Darwin approved
- What’s your history? Share it.
Thanks! Questions?

@blanyq – @WadeWachs

bit.ly/agile14darwin