Background
The inspiration for “Incentivize Us Properly Please” comes from coaching teams where I encountered a few common challenges:

- Decisions on activities and programs to motivate teams were being made by leadership with minimal or no discussion with team members about the types of incentives that would be most beneficial to team.

- Observations that incentive programs put in place by leadership often did not have a good mix of incentive types (extrinsic, intrinsic, learning, environmental) and were not reflective of updated research and science on what motivates people.

- Awareness that many teams have limited knowledge on the variety of creative incentive programs that effectively motivate self-managing agile teams and have been successfully implemented elsewhere.

Rather than put together a presentation to discuss options for incentives and motivation, I decided to design a game intended to facilitate conversations and learning about incentives that can be used for training and coaching within agile teams and to facilitate dialogue between agile teams and the leadership that supports them.

Effective incentive programs for agile teams vary from team to team since the “people” on each agile team are unique. “Incentivize Us Properly Please” provides a fast and highly interactive means to establish a team consensus on how best to motivate the unique people on each team. It should be expected that different teams will identify different combinations of incentives that provide the most benefit to that team – this in turn can create a challenge for leadership which needs to determine how best to accommodate the unique incentive needs of each team.

“Incentive Us Properly Please” can be used as a multi-team activity to add transparency to the different incentives provided to teams by leadership, and also to promote transparent prioritization and decision-making when it isn’t possible for leadership to support all incentives that a team may desire.

Workshop Objectives
- Learn about incentive and motivation systems relevant for agile teams through an interactive game
- Experience a team simulation that will reveal incentive preferences of team members
- Demonstrate use of a round-robin discussion to establish team consensus
- Debrief and discuss the criteria and logic used to select incentives used within the simulation

Workshop Outcomes
- Participants will leave with 60+ ideas for programs and activities to incentivize and motivate agile teams while collaborating with other Agile2014 attendees.
Participants will experience an interactive workshop that teaches teams about incentives and allows a team to identify what would best motivate them in about 60 minutes.

**Workshop Flow (as presented at Agile2014)**

**Stage 1 - Incentive Science & Theory**
Participants complete a worksheet taking notes to detail the pros/cons of the 5 types of incentives featured in the game (individual extrinsic, individual intrinsic, team / environment, learning & innovation), and summarize the factors that go into a balanced incentive system for a team.

**Stage 2 – Team Simulation**
Participants will form teams and using a deck of 64 incentive cards and a round-robin discussion format establish team consensus on how the team would like to be incentivized through the different stages and challenges of a simulated project. The simulation controls the number of incentives a team can implement; however, teams that design a well-balanced incentive system may gain the benefit of addition budget for incentive programs (example: if a team is able to innovate and deliver a new and unique product/feature, profits may go up, which provides more budget for team incentives).

**Stage 3 – Simulation Debrief & Learning Log**
Participants discuss the outcome of the simulation by reviewing the scoring grid, the incentives selected in each round, and the logic by which incentives for each round were agreed upon. Key learnings and take-aways from the simulation are recorded on a learning log worksheet.

**Picks & Plugs for those interested in “Incentivize Us Properly Please”**

- **CONNECT** - Connect with me on Twitter (@theagilefactor) or via Email to continue the discussion on ideas, activities, and references about how to best motivate the “people” on self-managing agile teams – connect with me if you’d like to get the template to print the Incentive Cards.

- **THIS AGILE LIFE** - If you’re at Agile2014, you should listen to ThisAgileLife (www.thisagilelife.com - @thisagilelife) - a podcast about what it is like to be agile in the real world – each weekly episode of ThisAgileLife is like a little agile conference that you can listen to for inspiration, practical advice and new ideas every week for FREE – no trip to Orlando required.

- **AGILE GAMES** - Want to learn more about using agile games and simulations for agile team and project activities, think about attending a future AgileGames conference (www.agilegamesnewengland.com - @agilenewengland) - thanks to all the members of the agile games community that inspired many of the ideas incorporated into this workshop.

- **ASYNCHRONY** – The hip agile development company in St. Louis, Missouri (www.asynchrony.com - @asynchrony) that’s allowed me to spend the last decade helping teams and big Enterprises improve how they deliver software using agile & lean techniques through a game-based agile training and coaching curriculum.
Game Play Guide

Worksheet - Types of Incentives (completed by participants)

**Extrinsic Incentives:**

**Intrinsic Incentives:**

**Environment & Team Incentives:**

**Learning Incentives:**

**Innovation Incentives:**
Game Play Setup

Incentivize Us Properly Please

Incentive Bank
The Incentive Bank holds the stack of shuffled incentive cards that have yet to be played in each round – cards are stacked with the incentive name and description face down. If all cards are withdrawn from the bank during a round, play continues with the cards already on the board. At the end of each round, cards are shuffled and returned to the bank for the start of the next round.

Player’s Hand
Each player may have up to 3 cards in their hand at any point in time – cards in the player’s hand are only visible to the player until played. When a player plays a card in their hand AND there are still cards in the Incentive Bank, the player may draw a card from the bank to replenish their hand back to 3 cards at the end of their turn.

Incentive Slots
Incentives for each round are determined by placing cards in the available Incentive Slots. The facilitator will tell you how many slots are available for each round. Slots available for play are depicted with a numbered card shown numbered side UP – slots that are NOT available are shown with the number side down. The facilitator will provide prompts to open/close slots by flipping them between the rounds of the game.
Parking Lot
During round-robin game play, players may wish to play a card in their hand; however, no Incentive Slots are available. In this case, the player may bump an incentive currently in an Incentive Slot to the Parking Lot so they can play their desired card. Once a card is in the Parking Lot, it can be returned to an Incentive Slot by swapping it with a card on the board, OR it can be discarded to the Incentive Incinerator.

Incentive Incinerator
The Incentive Incinerator is where incentives that the team does not find value or benefit in go to die for the remainder of the current round. Players may play a card from their hand directly to the incinerator if they believe it will provide no value to the team. Players may also choose to discard a card from the parking lot to the incinerator as their turn. Discarded cards are displayed FACE UP (incentive description shown) and cards discarded are out of play for the remainder of that round.

Incentive Budget
When team consensus regarding the cards to fill the Incentive Slots for the round is reached (or time expires), the Incentive Budget available is determined by rolling dice. The facilitator will provide prompts regarding how many dice are to be rolled for each round. One the dice are rolled, the team determines which incentives they can support from those within the Incentive Slots. Incentives that cannot be played due to lack of budget should be flipped over. The number of dice rolled may change from round to round based upon factors in the game that the facilitator will call out.

Card Movement and Flow
During each round of game play, incentive cards move through the following flow:
• All cards are shuffled and start in the deck in the Incentive Bank at the beginning of the round
• All players are dealt 3 cards to begin the round
• Players play 1 card per turn adding a card to an available slot (bumping a card to the parking if needed) OR discarding a card from their hand directly to the incinerator
• Cards in the incentive slots may be bumped to the Parking Lot
• Cards in the Parking Lot may be swapped with another card in an Incentive Slot on the game board OR discarded into the Incentive Incinerator
• Cards that are sent to the Incentive Incinerator cannot be brought back into play

Game Play - One Card Round Robin With WHY
Game play should progress quickly in a round-robin manner in accordance with the following rules:
• Each player may only make ONE CARD PLAY PER TURN or PASS
• After playing their ONE CARD, the player must explain WHY they played as they did
• Other players should LISTEN to the explanation but there is NO DISCUSSION
• Players that do not agree need to wait for their next turn, then they can make their ONE CARD PLAY and explain their reason WHY to the group
Incentivize Us Properly Please
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Player “Cheat Sheet” for Each Round

**Step 1**
Facilitator presents “Round Scenario & Context” – *Players Listen Carefully.*

**Step 2**
Deal 3 Incentive Cards to all players to begin the round – players should have 3 cards in their hand at all times until the Incentive bank is empty.

**Step 3**
Time-boxed Round-Robin to select incentives for the current round.

**Allowed Plays (7 available to choose from):**
- Play an incentive card from your hand onto an available incentive slot, then draw a new incentive card to replenish your hand from the incentive bank.
- Play an incentive card from your hand bumping a card in an incentive slot into the parking lot, then draw a new incentive card to replenish your hand from the incentive bank.
- Change the priority of the cards in the incentive slots on the board.
- Swap a card in an incentive slot with a card in the parking lot.
- Discard a card in the parking lot from the round.
- Discard a card in your hand from the round, then draw a new incentive card for your hand.
- Pass – make no changes to the board to signify you agree with what is represented by the cards as shown.

*After you play your ONE CARD, explain WHY you did what you did* (explanation should be concise) – *there should be NO questions, comments, or reactions from other players* (keep those poker faces on). Players that do not agree with the movement of the played card should wait for their turn, and then they can play a card of their choice and voice their opinion during their turn.

**Step 4**
Roll Dice to determine the budget available for incentive programs.

**Step 5**
Determine which incentives will be implemented – flip over incentive cards that cannot be implemented due to insufficient budget.

**Step 6**
Score the round using scoring grid.

**Step 7**
Facilitator shares the outcome of the round and changes that impact the next round. The number of Incentive Slots or number of dice to roll to determine your budget may change based upon the decision made during the round – *Players Listen Carefully.*
Team Simulation Learning Objectives

• Effective incentive systems & programs for self-managing teams should encompass a mix of extrinsic, intrinsic, team, learning and innovation rewards.

• Preference should be given to intrinsic rewards over extrinsic rewards.

• Incentives should be mixed between rewards that benefit individuals and rewards that benefit the team and/or organization.

• Many options for low cost incentives & rewards exist that can provide significant benefits to individuals - challenge team members to identify incentives that provide value but can be implemented regardless of budget available.

• Incentive & reward offerings to teams should be assessed and changed from time to time to ensure programs offered meet the changing needs of the people on each team - one-size fits all incentive programs (same offerings to all people/teams) rarely provide the best outcomes.

• Gain awareness of 64+ ideas for incentives that may provide value to self-managing agile teams.

Team Simulation Prompts

Round 1 - A new project begins (week 1 of 12)
A new project kicks off - team members on the project have not worked with each other before. The project will deliver a new app in 12 weeks - all are confident there is sufficient time to complete the features required for the first release of the new app.

Round 2 - Things are going well (week 3 of 12)
The project is going well and the team is getting along. The team’s velocity shows they are on track to complete the required features for the new app before the end of week 12.

Round 3 - The newness has worn off (week 6 of 12)
Team members comment the “newness” of the project has worn off and the project is starting to seem more like “work”. There has been a slight decrease in velocity; however, the team is still on track to finish nearly all of features needed for the app release.

Round 4 - A trade show opportunity (week 8 of 12)
There is an opportunity to demo the app at a trade show in 2 weeks if the team can complete an additional feature (not in the original backlog) within the next 2 weeks for demo at the trade show. Demonstrating the app at the trade show will help create buzz for a successful launch.

Round 5 - Death march to the end (week 10 of 12)
The frenzy to implement the new feature for the trade show reduced the team’s velocity and multiple features are now at risk of not making the launch of the app in 2 weeks. Team members just want the project to “be over” so they can move onto something new.
Simulation Debrief Questions

- What logic was used in each round to determine an appropriate mix of incentives to request?

- What did your team learn about the benefits gained by mixing incentive offerings and types throughout the simulation?

- Did your team decide to repeat any incentives between rounds? If incentives were repeated, which were repeated and why did the team decide to repeat those incentives?

- How did your team do with the round-robin discussion? Were there any noticeable differences of opinions between players that were not resolved during each round - if there were significant differences, what triggered them? For differences of opinion that were experienced, how was consensus achieved?

- What consideration or strategy did your team adopt to decide how to allocate available budget?

- Can you recall a situation where your team elected to not play a low-cost incentive, but then your team didn't have enough budget to implement the higher cost requested incentives - how did this impact the team?

- Review the scoring sheet, was your team able to achieve a good mix of incentive types throughout the game - was the team able to make good use of the budget available throughout the game? What strategies or decision criteria were decided by the team to ensure the budget was used as it was?

- How did your team evaluate that all team members were on board with the team decisions being made throughout the simulation, including: which incentives to play, which incentives to allocate available budget to?

- Were there any incentives or rewards in the simulation that you had questions about, or that you thought would be especially helpful to a real team?

- Did comments during the simulation and game play spur the idea for any new incentives / rewards for teams?

- Outside the simulation, how much communication does your team have with leadership about the incentives / rewards that are offered to the team? Do you feel there is sufficient communication between teams and leadership to make good decisions regarding incentives / rewards?
Learning and “Ah-Ha” Worksheet

Conference Mash-Up – Try depicting what you learned with a sketch

Learning #1

Learning #2

Learning #3