Agile Leaders Recognizing and Removing Impediments
The Lineup

• What is an Impediment?
• Finding Impediments
• Managing Impediments
• Removing Impediments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Impediment</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Kids/Wife sick</td>
<td>Missing resources</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>resolution by the time we got to the airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Family not packed</td>
<td>Incomplete work</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Prepare a packing list so that we can both help with packing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Flight overbook</td>
<td>Over Production</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Resolved itself by the time we got to the airport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Overcharged for children's seats on flight</td>
<td>Defects</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Not sure this was resolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Children underfoot while packing</td>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Presents, toys, or other distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Lost call phone</td>
<td>Delay</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Went back to retrieve it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Long security lines</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Make sure accessories are charged up before the trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Needed cart for bags</td>
<td>Missing hardware</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Suffered through it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>No help in security</td>
<td>Under capacity</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Grab a cart before unloading car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>No seats at gate</td>
<td>Missing hardware</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Have Andrea there to help next time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Flight delayed</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Not a significant delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>No hertz sign in lot</td>
<td>Missing Documentation</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get a better mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Installing car seat</td>
<td>Missing hardware</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Ordered a new mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>CPAP Mask broke</td>
<td>Defects</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get a better mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Can't get reliable wireless connection</td>
<td>Missing dependencies</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Don't use cheap pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Not enough sheets on bed</td>
<td>Missing component</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Use land line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Crappy pen</td>
<td>Defects</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>3K more component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>no time for myself</td>
<td>Under capacity</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Everyone left the house for a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>nothing to do</td>
<td>Missing information</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Plan the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Eating too much</td>
<td>Over Production</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>Over Production</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>no time for myself</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>Legs very sore</td>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>No belts in gym</td>
<td>Missing component</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>missed retrospective</td>
<td>Forgotten</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>eating too much</td>
<td>Over Production</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Leg pain kept me awake last night</td>
<td>Burnout</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Clogged sinuses last night</td>
<td>Defects</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Slept on couch - couldn't deal with Genoa in bed</td>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Tired</td>
<td>Not enough time</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>missed retrospective</td>
<td>Forgotten</td>
<td>Done</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>eating too much</td>
<td>Over Production</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Get back on diet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Game: List all of the impediments you encountered on your last project.
WHAT IS AN IMPEDIMENT?
Impediment
Impediment
A Note of Caution...
People ≠ Impediments
Work ≠ Impediment
Categories
Missing dependencies

A → B → ? → D → E
Defects
Delay/Interruption
Overwork/Over Commitment
Incomplete work
Miscommunication
Lack of control or discipline
Forgotten
Distractions
Game: Categorize your Impediments
Impediment Categories

- Missing Dependencies
- Defects
- Delay/Interruption
- Overwork/Over Commitment
- Incomplete Work
- Miscommunication
- Lack of Control or Discipline
- Forgotten
- Distractions
Risks
The Risk/Impediment Lifecycle
FINDING IMPEDIMENTS
Symptoms of Impedimentia

- Nothing comes up in a standup
- Unexplained or incomplete stories
- Brief or lackluster standup
- Slow velocity
The Cure!
Context
Perspective
Complacency
Scope
Pace
Impediment Mining
Game: What else can you do to uncover impediments?
Impediment Hunting Strategies

- Context
- Perspective
- Complacency
- Scope
- Pace
- Impediment Mining
MANAGING IMPEDIMENTS

Strategies
Process

Incorporate Impediments throughout the process

Planning – What actions will we take this sprint to address impediments found last sprint?

Daily Standup – New impediments

Review – Share impediments with PO

Retrospective – Did we address our impediments this sprint? What remains?
What actions should we take to resolve them next sprint?
Risk Profile Graphs

Get a perspective on the distribution of impediments by category

- For each category, add up the number of impediments in that group
- Review with team
- Focus on reducing impediments in key categories
Issues Snake

Capture the Story of the Impediments you have overcome

- Every time you take some action to deal with an impediment put a colored sticky note on the wall
- Arrange the additional notes end to end for each new impediment
- At the end of the sprint you will have a multi-colored snake of sticky notes that tells the story of all the things that you have done to try and resolve the impediment.
Agile Risk Board

This integrates the traditional risk management approach with an information radiator that is visible and tracked by the team. I found this on Jean Paul Grosjean’s blog⁴.

Create a board with different sections to capture different risk management strategies:

- Accepting
- Mitigating
- Containing
- Avoiding
- Open issues
Impediments Burn Down Charts

Make progress on your impediments visible to the team on a day to day basis

For each impediment:
- Give it a size (in hours)
- Add up the total number of hours for the sprint
- Each day, track the time remaining on the impediments
Scaling

Escalate organizational Impediments to Scrum of Scrums

- The Scrum of Scrums is where teams get together to discuss cross team issues that are related to coordination and collaboration between teams.
- Some of the conversation is about status, and some of it is all about raising the kinds of issues that can’t be resolved by just one team.
- Usually there is a discussion and a working group of volunteers pulls together to address the issue across the teams.
Impediment Management Strategies

• Use Process
• Tracking
• Issues Snake
• Agile Risk Board
• Impediments Burn Down Charts
• Scaling
Who is Responsible?
Strategies

REMOVING IMPEDIMENTS
Who is responsible for Impediments?
Be Audacious!
Clearly State the Problem

Use the 5 W’s

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.
-Rudyard Kipling

A good problem statement is:
- Focused on only one Problem.
- One or two sentences long.
- Does not suggest a Solution.
Use Root Cause Analysis

- Fishbone (Ishikawa) Diagrams
- Dependency Diagrams
Brainstorming

- Unstructured Brainstorming
- Structured Methods
  - DeBono’s 6 Hats
Setup an Experiment

- More is better
- Collect data
Define a Measure of Success

• How will you know if the proposed experiment works?
• Time box your efforts
• Think small
Review Results

• What worked? What didn’t?
• What did you learn?
Modify Plans

• Incorporate what you learned and **Keep Trying!**
Strategies for Removing Impediments

- Be Audacious
- Clearly State the Problem
- Use Brainstorming
- Setup an Experiment
- Define a Measure of Success
- Review Results
- Modify Your Plans
We Need New Roles

There are three different levels of impediment management required of a good scrum master/team leader:

1. The Tracker
2. The Remover
3. The Anticipator

*From Mike Cottmeyer, “Your are the Impediment”*
SUMMARY
What Were We Talking About?

• What is an Impediment?
• Finding Impediments
• Managing Impediments
• Removing Impediments
The Little Book of Impediments

https://www.facebook.com/ImpedimentsBook
https://leanpub.com/ImpedimentsBook

“[a] funny, engaging, gritty realistic take, mercifully devoid of fancy”
Resources

Internet
• Agile Risk Management  
  http://www.leadingagile.com/category/risk/
• Creating Risk Profile Graphs  
• Agile Issue Management for Projects and Programmes  
• It’s a Delivery Thing – Agile Risk Management  
  http://itsadeliverything.com/management
• Managing Risk on Agile Projects with the Risk Burndown Chart  
• Cause Effect Diagrams  

Books
• The Little Book of Talent by Daniel Coyle
• Project Management: A Systems Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling by Harold Kerzner
• Agile Software Development with Scrum by Ken Schwaber and Mike Beedle
• Agile Project Management with Scrum by Ken Schwaber
• Problem Solving 101: A Simple Book for Smart People by Ken Watanabe
• Fearless Change: Patterns for Introducing New Ideas by Mary Lynn Manns and Linda Rising
Contact

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