What’s wrong with sprint retrospectives and **how to fix them**

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In no more than two words, state your feelings about sprint retrospectives in your place of work.

Instructions

20 seconds to think what you’re going to say.
Go round the group in order.
No discussion.
Introductions
What is a sprint retrospective?
How we roll...

We will always know more than we know here.
What’s wrong with retrospectives?
Pair interviews

What’s wrong with retrospectives?

Instructions

Pair up, each person to interview the other

Interviewers, ask questions like:

Do you have sprint retrospectives?
If so, what’s unsatisfactory about yours?
If not, why don’t you?

Three minutes to interview, then we swap
Pair interviews

What’s wrong with retrospectives?
Retrospectives can be perfunctory

- Sprint Planning [X]
- Daily Stand-Ups [X]
- Sprint Review [X]
- Sprint Retrospective [ ]
Retrospectives can be unpopular

I wonder what the score is?

I could be coding!

Nothing ever changes... What's the point?

How can I get out of this?

Nothing ever changes... What's the point?
Retrospectives can be unpopular

My team are literally allergic to the word ‘Retrospective’

So call it ‘Let’s get together and improve things’
Retrospectives can be unpopular

My team talk to each other and we fix things when they come up

Great... but sounds like fire-fighting. It’s worth looking for root causes.
Retrospectives can be unpopular

My team/project is special because [reason], so we don’t do retrospectives

But if you are special, you have special problems that you need to talk about
So... do we continue ticking the box?

- Sprint Planning ✓
- Daily Stand-ups ✓
- Sprint Review ✓
- Sprint Retrospective
How we roll...

We will always know more than we know here

Inspect & adapt
Inspect & adapt
Inspect & adapt
Inspect & adapt
Inspect & adapt

START

END

TARGET

We will always know more than we know here
Retrospectives can be transformative
How do you run an effective and engaging sprint retrospective?
References

Agile Retrospectives: Making Good Teams Great
Derby and Larsen

Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers
Gray, Brown and Macanufo
How do you run an effective and engaging sprint retrospective?

Prepare well
Deliberately facilitate
Use the retrospective framework
Vary activities
Create good actions
Prepare well

Invest time
Work out what the team needs
Decide agenda
Gather people, help, snacks
Deliberately facilitate

What does good facilitation look like?
Deliberately facilitate

Set the tone
Be clear and confident
Be aware
Don’t contribute (too much)
The retrospective framework
Vary retrospective activities
Set the stage

Start
- Set the stage
- Gather data

Generate insights

Decide what to do

Close the retrospective
End
Choose a ‘Goldilocks’ goal

Too closed

Too open

Just right
Example activity
Check-in

In no more than two words, state your feelings about sprint retrospectives in your place of work

Instructions
20 seconds to think what you’re going to say
Go round the group in order
No discussion
Other activities to set the stage

Check-in variations
Focus On/Focus Off
Explorer, Shopper, Vacationer, Prisoner
Icebreakers – like ‘Desert Island’
Gather data

START

- Set the stage
- Gather data
- Generate insights
- Decide what to do
- Close the retrospective

END
Gather data

- Set the stage
- Gather data
- Generate insights
- Decide what to do
- Close the retrospective

< 1/2

> 1/2

top tip
Example activity

Pair Interviews
Other activities to gather data

Team Poll
Timeline
Short Subjects
  Mad/Sad/Glad
  Stop/Start/Continue
Learning Matrix
Like to Like card game
Generate insights

- Set the stage
- Gather data
- Generate insights
- Decide what to do
- Close the retrospective
Example activity
Mission Impossible

How do we remove all our technical debt... in a day?

How do we add our new features... without writing any code?
Mission Impossible

How could we run an effective and engaging retrospective tomorrow...

that sets a new world record for number of participants?
How could we run an effective and engaging retrospective tomorrow...

**that sets a new world record for number of participants?**

**Instructions**

In your groups, use sticky notes to share ideas

Call them out as you write them

Explicitly think about:

- people,
- goals,
- process and
- logistics
What happened when we tried it?

How do we deliver everything on our plan... in a week?
Other activities to generate insights

Fishbone diagram
Force Field Analysis
Challenge Cards
De Bono’s 6 Thinking Hats
Flip it
Anti-problem
Pre-Mortem
Decide what to do

START

SET THE STAGE

GATHER DATA

GENERATE INSIGHTS

DECIDE WHAT TO DO

CLOSE THE RETROSPECTIVE

END

○ ACTION 1
○ ACTION 2
○ ACTION 3
Brain-writing

Given what you have heard and seen today, what should you do?

Instructions

Each person has paper divided into four sections

Idea written in first section

Paper passed to next person who builds on idea
What happened when we tried it?
Other activities to decide what to do

Learning Matrix
Tree of actions
Circle of questions
Prioritize

Dot voting
£100 Test
Absolute order
Personal commitment
Create good actions

“Easier said than done”

Yeah, it’s kind of a ‘black art’. Sorry
Action creation tactics

Not sure exactly what to tackle?
Gather more data
Action creation tactics

Not sure how to make a mind-set or direction change actually happen?

Introduce an artefact or activity
Action creation tactics

Team seems unsure or noncommittal?

Measure with ‘Five-Fingered Consensus’
Action creation tactics

Minority disagree?

Ask them to “try” for a sprint
Close the retrospective

- Start
  - Set the stage
  - Gather data
- Generate insights
- Decide what to do
- Close the retrospective

○ Action 1
○ Action 2
○ Action 3
Get some feedback on the session
Get some feedback on the session

Session Feedback

Please provide feedback on this session!

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1. Visit this session on the Mobile App. Click Session Feedback.
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3. Visit the unique URL for this session located at the front and back of the room.

Thank you for providing your feedback 😊
What have we covered?
What’s wrong with sprint retrospectives?

Perfunctory
Box-ticking
Unpopular
How do you fix sprint retrospectives?

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Keep to retrospective framework
Vary activities
Create good actions
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Derby and Larsen

Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers
Gray, Brown and Macanufo

http://www.plans-for-retrospectives.com/
http://retrospectivewiki.org/
Questions

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