OpenAgile Engagement Meeting

Process Facilitator's Workbook

Recipe: Starfish Cycle Planning

Purpose: Help the team members systematically brainstorm, prioritize and finalize a Cycle Plan.

Time Needed: 20 minutes+ depending on the length of the Cycle (cannot be used for very short Cycles).

Description: the team brainstorms a list of things to plan based on five categories, selects a small number of items from the list, and then breaks them down into detailed tasks for the Cycle Plan. The result is a set of Tasks that will focus on how to improve the way that work is done. It may be necessary to have a separate exercise to convert Value Drivers into Tasks for the Cycle Plan.

Steps:

1. Begin the exercise by saying *"We are now going to create a plan for our next Cycle, keeping in mind all the things we have reflected upon, and learned."*
2. Describe the process (as follows).
3. Draw the "starfish" diagram (see below) on a flip chart or whiteboard, large enough for dozens of stickies in each section.
4. Give each participant a Sharpie and a pad of small square stickies.
5. Invite all the participants to generate as many ideas as possible for each section and to bring them up as they are writing. Consider timeboxing this step to be relatively short (e.g. 4 minutes if this exercise is 20 minutes in total). Make sure that participants are reminded that it is important that if they agree with something that they see someone else has written, to write it up on a sticky as well and add it to the chart.
6. As the facilitator, try to read the stickies as they are put up (but don't get in people's way!).
7. Once the timebox is up, invite the participants to take a minute or two to move the stickies around so that groups of similar stickies are together.
8. The "keep doing" category should just be acknowledged and agreed upon. From each of the other four categories, the team chooses at least one "idea" or "thing to do", usually based on how popular it is (# of stickies).
9. For each of the chosen "ideas" or "things to do", the team generates a list of all the tasks necessary to accomplish this in the Cycle. If something is too big to be finished in a Cycle, try to break it down into a valuable sub-components one of which can be completed in the Cycle.
10. Once the exercise is done, take digital photos of the "starfish" and the tasks that were generated for the Cycle Plan.
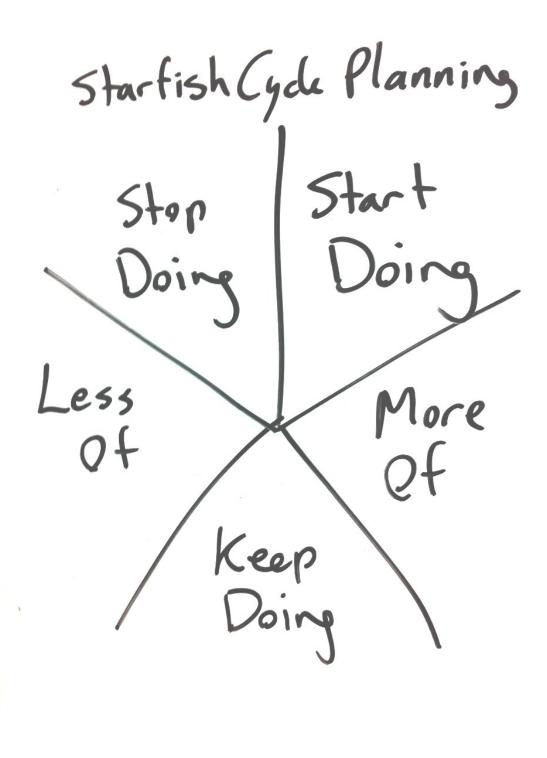
Materials and preparation.
    Flip chart or white board. Markers, digital camera.

Advanced:
–   Estimate the value of the changes in terms of time freed up, money saved, or team morale. Use these estimates to help with selecting which "ideas" to do in the Cycle.

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–   Focus this exercise on a specific aspect of the team's work, e.g. a specific skill set or an operational process.

Starfish Cycle Planning

Stop Doing

Start Doing

Less Of

More Of

Keep Doing

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