

# Agile retrospectives



CODERS  
tuscany user group

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Everybody wants to improve



No organization no party



# Post-mortems & lessons learned help



## **Drawbacks**

- Only after the end of the project
- No focus on team and team issues
- Post-mortems omit successes
- Lessons learned are useless for different projects or situations



# But a retrospective is way better

Meeting to inspect and adapt methods and teamwork after an increment of work

Safe place for the team to communicate constructively sharing feedback

Sole opportunity to examine how people work and how they are working together

Time the team dedicate to think and learn: improvement doesn't happen by hoping

Provides insights applicable now, to the current team and business problem



# Goals

Inspect how the team is doing: people, relationships, processes, practices and tools

Identify, group and order the major items that went well and potential improvements

Raise the visibility of issues and discuss them before they build up to a crisis

Devise an actionable plan for improvements to be enacted before next retrospective

Learning from experience, building on what works, gaining perspective and deciding what to change


Build trust and participation  
creating a safe environment

改善

KAIZEN



# The retrospective prime directive

The image shows the USS Enterprise (NCC-1701) in space, with the Earth visible in the background. The ship is a large, dark, saucer-shaped vessel with a prominent nacelle and a glowing orange light at the bottom right. The Earth is a large, curved, blue and white sphere on the left side of the frame.

Regardless of what we discover,  
we understand and truly believe  
that everyone did the best job  
they could, given what they knew  
at the time, their skills and  
abilities, the resources available,  
and the situation at hand

# Smells

- Blamestorming
- Wait for the retro
- Back to the future
- Offline retrospective
- Retrospective in the team room
- Only a few participants
- Everybody is happy
- Reporting to management
- Nobody talks about elephant
- Facilitator doesn't facilitate
- Looking for silver bullets
- Too short retro





Something we can do to make tomorrow have more value?

Think silently . . . .  
look back on the day  
put it on a post it  
. . . . . 2 minutes . . . How many can you write?

Ah haa  
moments

Uh Ohh  
moments

Things that  
make you  
Scratch your brain

2 minutes . write as many as you can

now . . . post your notes  
do you see clusters?

Here's how the  
Idea Marketplace  
works . . . .

→ Decide what to do  
if you have a good idea.  
Make a sign  
about what we should  
do differently  
tomorrow . . . .

Take your  
Sign to a corner  
of the room . . . .

Do others agree with  
your good idea? . . . . If so . . . . They'll come stand by your sign.

# Retrospective

in 15 minutes

IDEA MARKETPLACE

## Mini retrospectives



# Full-fledged retrospectives

The background image shows a miniature scene with several LEGO minifigures sitting around a table made of grey and blue LEGO bricks. On the table are several yellow and green sticky notes. In the background, a whiteboard is visible with handwritten text: 'Born down', 'Improvements', 'Do it! Done', and 'Open bugs'. The scene is lit with warm, indoor lighting.

## **SET THE STAGE (5%)**

Get prepared to be more trusting and likely to participate

## **GATHER DATA (30 - 50%)**

Create a shared picture of what happened

Focus on looking for both positive and negative events

Expand everyone's perspective

## **GENERATE INSIGHTS (20 - 30%)**

Identify strengths and issues

Look at causes and effects and think about them analytically

Group and prioritize the generated data

## **DECIDE WHAT TO DO (15 - 20%)**

Pick the top 2 or 3 items where improvement is desired

Discuss the executable action items that address top issues

The team makes a vote on their ability and desire to commit to execution of each action item

## **CLOSE THE RETROSPECTIVE (10%)**

Reiterate actions and follow-ups, appreciate contributions and identify ways to make the next retrospective better



# Activities quick reference matrix (I)

Phase	Activity	Iteration	Release (or Longer Iteration)	End of Project
<b>Set the Stage</b>	Check-in	✓		
	Focus On/Focus Off	✓	✓	
	ESVP		✓	✓
	Working Agreements	✓	✓	✓
	Temperature Reading		✓	✓
	Satisfaction Histogram	✓	✓	✓
<b>Gather Data</b>	Time Line and Variations		✓	✓
	Triple Nickels	✓	✓	✓
	Color-Code Dots		✓	✓
	Mad, Sad, Glad	✓	✓	✓
	Locate Strengths		✓	✓
	Satisfaction Histogram	✓		
	Team Radar	✓	✓	✓
	Like to Like	✓	✓	✓
	Brainstorming/Filtering	✓	✓	✓
	Force Field Analysis		✓	✓
<b>Generate Insights</b>	5 Whys	✓	✓	✓
	Fishbone	✓	✓	✓
	Patterns and Shifts	✓	✓	✓
	Prioritize with Dots	✓	✓	✓
	Report Out and Synthesis	✓	✓	✓
	Identify Themes		✓	✓
	Learning Matrix	✓		



# Activities quick reference matrix (II)

Phase	Activity	Iteration	Release (or Longer Iteration)	End of Project
<b>Decide What to Do</b>	The Retrospective Planning Game		✓	✓
	SMART Goals	✓	✓	✓
	Circle of Questions	✓	✓	✓
	Short Subjects	✓		
	Triple Nickels	✓	✓	✓
	Force Field Analysis		✓	✓
<b>Close the Retrospective</b>	+/-Delta	✓	✓	✓
	Appreciations	✓	✓	✓
	Temperature Reading	✓	✓	✓
	Helped, Hindered, Hypothesis	✓	✓	✓
	ROTI	✓	✓	✓
	Satisfaction Histogram	✓	✓	✓
	Team Radar	✓	✓	✓
	Learning Matrix	✓	✓	✓
	Short Subjects	✓	✓	✓

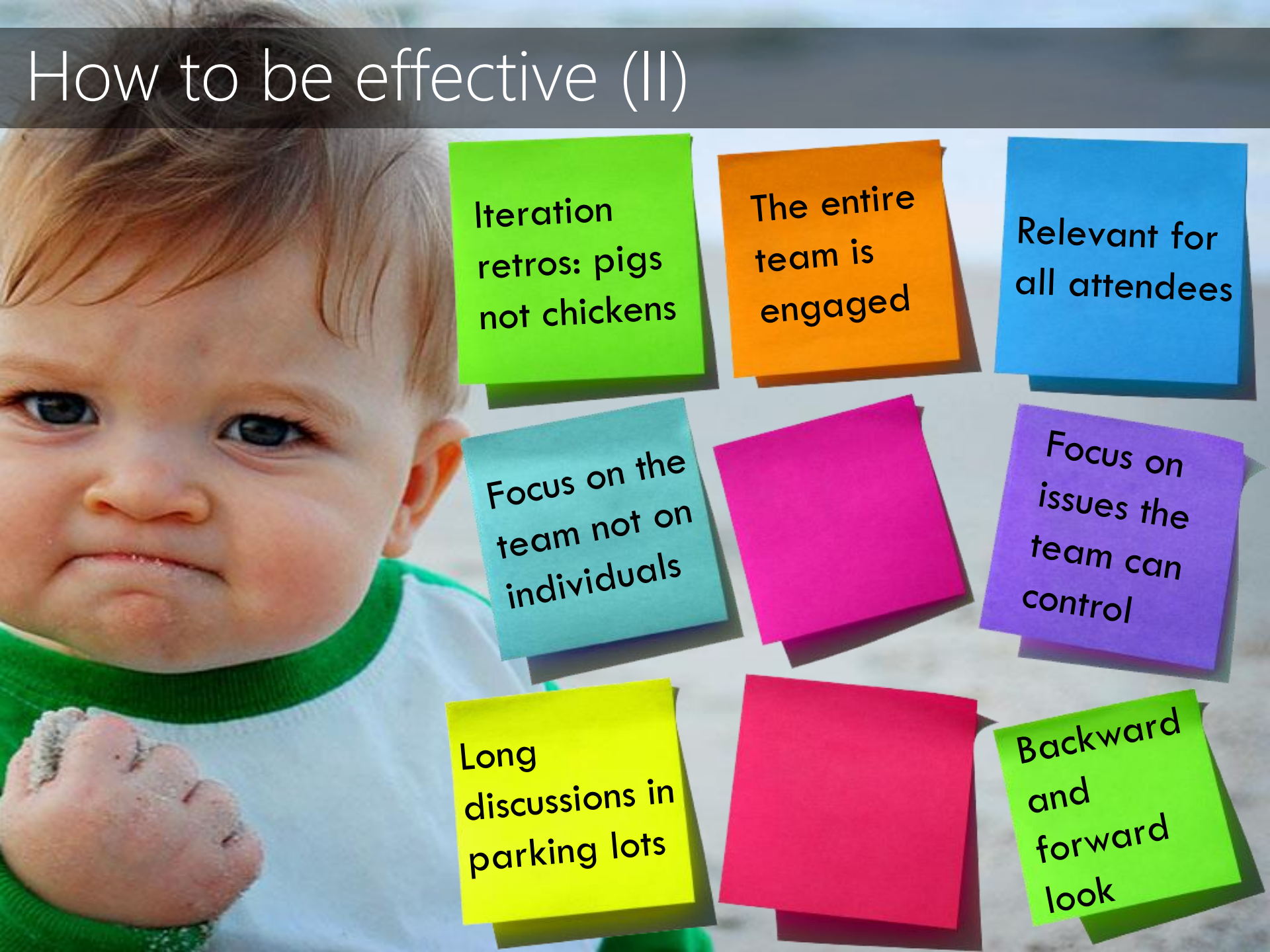
# How to be effective (I)

- No tables
- Rotate the facilitator role
- Vary the technique
- Be organized
- Be respectful
- Listen actively
- Do not interrupt
- Build a safe environment
- Open and honest communication
- Encourage diversity of views
- Clarify and summarize
- Ask questions
- Manage group dynamics
- Appreciate successes





# How to be effective (II)



Iteration  
retros: pigs  
not chickens

The entire  
team is  
engaged

Relevant for  
all attendees

Focus on the  
team not on  
individuals

Focus on  
issues the  
team can  
control

Long  
discussions in  
parking lots

Backward  
and  
forward  
look



# How to be effective (III)



**Review previous commitments**

**Shortlist only top insights**

**Real commitments, not weasel words**

# Gloger's ball point game (I)

## Structure of the game

- 2 min preparation time
- 5 iterations:
  - estimation
  - 2 min play
  - 1 min to discuss how to improve the process

## Rules of the game

- One big team
- 20+ balls
- 2 minutes play
- Team members must touch each ball at least once
- Balls must have air-time
- No balls to direct neighbors (left or right)
- Start point = end point

## Goal

Getting as many balls through the team as possible



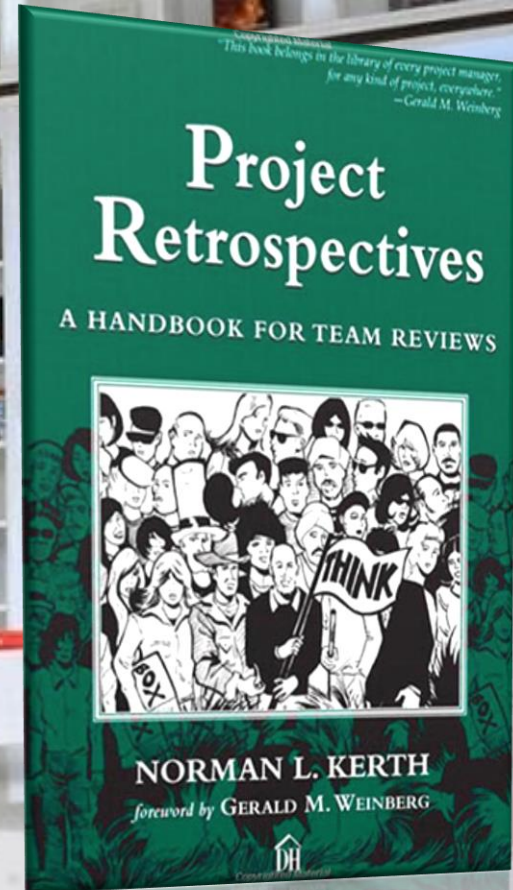
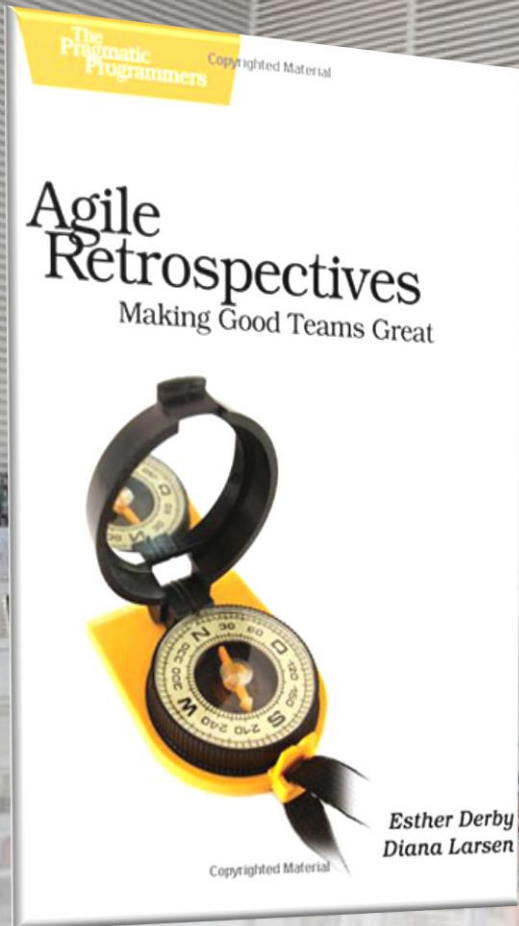
# Gloger's ball point game (II)

## Debrief

- Share your thoughts about what happened
- What iteration felt the best? What made that one feel best and why?
- Systems natural velocity can be improved significantly only changing the process
- Deming PDCA cycle - The scientific method - Inspect and adapt
- Theory of constraints
- Experiments sometimes fail
- Waste
- Pull systems maximize flow and increase performance
- Rhythm (daily meetings, iteration, releases)
- Flow if: doable challenge, meaningful work, no disturbance during iterations
- The power of retrospectives vs. thorough planning
- The power of face to face communications
- Heroes
- Whole team and leadership
- Stretch goals increase performance, impossible goals decrease it
- How does this apply to your development team?



# Books



# Links

[The Scrum primer](#)

[The Scrum Guide](#)

[Retrospectives.com](#)

[Beyond post-mortems and lessons learned](#)

[Agile in practice: retrospectives after iterations \(video\)](#)

[Agile retrospectives: Making good teams great! \(video\)](#)

[Patterns for iteration retrospectives](#)

[60 second Scrum better retrospectives \(video\)](#)

[How to improve your Scrum sprint retrospective? \(video\)](#)

[Effective retrospectives](#)

[Learning Scrum through the ball point game](#)

[Ball Point Game \(video\)](#)

[Tasty cupcakes: fuel for invention and learning](#)



Let's share our thoughts

