

## Purpose and Agenda

### Purpose

The iteration retrospective is used by Agile teams to reflect on the iteration just completed and to derive new ideas to improve the team's process. This helps instill the concept of relentless improvement—one of the SAFe Core Values—in the individuals and the team. It also helps ensure that every iteration yields some small improvements. The team's scrum master or team coach typically facilitates the iteration retrospective.

### Agenda

#### *[Five minutes]* **Introduce the goals, retrospective format, and any specific questions**

Remind everyone that the goal of the iteration retrospective is to reflect on how the team did to identify small, continual improvements that the team can own.

Iteration retrospectives can have different formats:

- **Individual** – Individually write sticky notes and then find patterns as a group
- **Appreciation** – Note whether someone has helped you or helped the team
- **Conceptual** – Choose one word to describe the iteration
- **Rating** – Rate the iteration on a scale of one to five, and then brainstorm how to make the next one a five
- **Simple** – Open a discussion and record the results under three headings: what went well, what didn't, and actions/do better next time

#### *[10 minutes]* **Timebox team member thoughts**

Ask team members to write their thoughts down and add them to the chart paper or tool being used for the retrospective. At the nine-minute mark, ask team members if they need more time or to wrap up their final thoughts.

#### *[10-15 minutes]* **Review thoughts**

Have team members share the thoughts they added or have the facilitator read team additions out so everyone can consider each idea.

#### *[Five minutes]* **Brainstorm actions and improvement items**

The team may have already added some items in the "do better next time" category, but they may have more thoughts after hearing everyone's ideas.

#### *[Five minutes]* **Vote and close up discussion**

Hold a team vote on action items and "do better next time" suggestions to select or prioritize which item(s) to add to the team backlog.

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### Tools and technology

- ☐ If you are planning a specific theme or goal, be sure to gather your images, set up your tools, and prepare any other props to support this early.
- ☐ Consider giving your team a heads-up if there will be a theme so they can jot down notes and thoughts before coming to the retrospective.

If any technology tools will be used during the retrospective, make sure you

- ☐ have them set up and tested before the event. Plan to support any team members who have not used this tool before the event, so they are comfortable participating fully.

### Prepare inputs

The team will supply the inputs to this meeting. A facilitator's job is to make it easy, comfortable, and non-judgmental for the team to share what went well, any things that didn't go well, and their thoughts on ways to improve. Have a plan for how the upcoming retrospective will be used, and how you will lead the team through it so that their job to add input and ideas at each stage is clear.

### Expected outcomes

- ☐ The retrospective facilitator and the team product owner (PO) should gain one or two improvement stories to add to the backlog. Follow up with the PO to make sure they have what they need to add these stories for refinement.
- ☐ Offer your team a mechanism to give feedback on the techniques, themes, and questions used at the retrospective so that you can continually improve how you facilitate this event for the team.

### Post-event actions

- ☐ Make sure you and PO discuss who will own action items that were detailed in the retrospective.
- ☐ Find a way to track improvement items the team has suggested and agreed upon. What happens after the retro? How many action items are completed? What is their effect?
- ☐ Help the team come up with ways to measure the success of improvement items they put into place.
- ☐ For issues or concerns that rise to the ART level, work with the PO to share these with the Release Train Engineer (RTE).

## Tips and Tricks

### Facilitating remotely

**Share what tool will be used ahead of time** so everyone can download or update their tool.

**Teams may benefit from receiving pre-work** so they can focus on sharing via the tool and remote meeting. Consider asking them to think about or write down their answers to questions ahead of time.

**Consider having a working agreement for everyone to join the meeting with video on** so the team is sharing more personally.

**While facilitating, use background music and/or a visible countdown timer** for timeboxed portions of the meeting to keep everyone on track.

### Using this meeting creatively

**Teams can choose to rotate responsibility for facilitating the retrospective.** The person facilitating takes charge of deciding and delivering the format and specific questions. This keeps the retrospective fresh for all team members.

**Changing the type and format of the retrospective** (see above: Individual, Appreciation, Conceptual, Rating, Simple) helps the team continuously engage in this repeated event.

**It can be fun to have different themes for your retrospective.** This can include using references to pop culture (e.g., a superhero movie could be used for a "simple" format retrospective: heroes, villains, ways to win).

**Ask everyone to use this sentence frame when naming actions** to keep them focused on improvement items the team can own: "Our team can \_\_\_\_\_ next iteration."

**A traditional format asks "what went well/what didn't/improvement items,"** but teams can examine more than three questions, match the prompts to themes, and can use this time to be creative in exploring new ways of gathering feedback and improvement items.

Use iteration retrospectives as an opportunity to try new tools with your team, especially tools that are lightweight and take little onboarding.

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## Overcoming Challenges

Let's face it; not everything goes perfectly all the time. In a fast-paced business environment, change is the only constant. It can be difficult to move your team forward when disagreements or conflicts occur. Below are some common areas where scrum masters or team coaches can succeed in the face of adversity.

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### POTENTIAL ISSUES

**The team is focused on improvement items out of their control.**

#### Ways to overcome:

- As the facilitator, you can offer to raise this issue to the organization. You can also ask the team to brainstorm if there is some action they can still take as a team that would contribute improvements.

**The team is very focused on negatives, issues, and what didn't go well.**

#### Ways to overcome:

- Hold a separate brainstorm about what did go well, appreciations for others on the team, and vote on things to keep doing so the team can recognize each other's contributions and the team wins they have had.