There are an incredible number of ways to organize a team and build a software engineering product. This paper will discuss the insights gained from reading the book Six Memos for the Next Millennium by Italo Calvino in order to reveal the meaning of these messages. Each chapter of the book presents a separate memo, and the aim of the paper is to draw a connection between the takeaway from the memo into alignment with the process of software engineering.

Its first memo addresses the Lightness principle and its significance for the coming millennium. With the examples presented by the Italo Calvino when discussing Lightness, the meaning of this word is revealed in multiple ways. The organization of the team for software engineering must be viewed in relation to the Lightness memo at this point.

Keeping the team from being overburdening with too much weight is the first and foremost idea to consider. The author provides an example from Kafka’s story about a Bucket, the message of which is:

“In fact, the fuller it is, the less it will be able to fly.”

This interpretation of lightness is actually strictly related to the team organizing. Team members are more likely to achieve success if their area and focus of work is reduced. Teams that are overloaded in all senses have a less likely chance of success.

In addition, when organizing a team structure, it is crucial to give every member some moderate degree of independence or freedom in their actions.

“he feels the need to allow atoms to make unpredictable deviations from the straight line, thereby ensuring freedom both to atoms and to human beings.”

The implementation of this organizational structure can also be achieved by approving and praising the individuality of each team member. This idea is communicated through the story of a poet Guido Cavalcanti, who is not popular with the group of other elegant people, because “his mysterious philosophy is suspected of impiety”. The poet later leaped over one of great tombs for making rid himself of the company.

“the sudden agile leap of the poet-philosopher who raises himself above the weight of the world, showing that with all his gravity he has the secret of lightness”

The idea is fundamentally counter to the rigid structure of a team with a strict hierarchy that leaves no room for deviation, which can be compared to a Weight term.

“there is an essential parity between everything that exists, as opposed to any sort of hierarchy of powers or values”

At the same time, It is also important to be aware that too much discretionary power can also be destructive. It is basically not the kind of Lightness people should be striving for. It is because the roles and responsibilities of each team member must be defined and clearly stated, otherwise they can become vague and vaguer.

“Lightness for me goes with precision and determination, not with vagueness...”

In order to properly set up a team, the areas of responsibility of each team member must be crystal clear, yet it is also recommended to provide a certain amount of flexibility during the process.

In terms of team communication, the next important takeaway is that face-to-face communication should be preferred to online communication. This is explained by the non-verbal communication bringing more meaning to the words.This idea is communicated on the example of Don Quixote scene and the effect of its image on the consciousness of readers.

Some literary inventions are impressed on our memories by their verbal implications rather than by their actual words.”

As such, the Lightness principle is interpreted in the opposite sense of the Weight. When building teams with Lightness, it is important to control the load of the team, provide each team member a determined responsibility, while still enjoying a degree of freedom.

Quickness and process of software building

The next memo author presents is the quickness memo. It is important to consider the link between the Quickness and the process to follow in software engineering. “The relativity of time” is everywhere. In this book, the author considers the horse to be

“an emblem of speed, even speed of mind”

The importance of quickness is illustrated in the relationship between the physical speed and the speed of the mind. According to Italo Calvino the most pleasant and remarkable in the physical speed of the horse is the

“vivacity, the energy, the strength, the sheer of life”

This idea can be applied to the importance of the Quickness in the process of software engineering. Quickness will allow bring more and more energy to the team, which in turn will provide a better motivation to work further. These principles can be applied by making quick but reasonable decisions when building a process or making decisions, as author does not think that

“quickness is a value in itself"

On the example of Galileo, the quickness is actually compared to racing, because

“Discoursing is like coursing"

It means that decisions and reasoning should not take a lot of time when when building the software, as this may result in loosing the racing game. At the same time, quick decisions must not be unreasoned.

“Speed of thought" is a skill that needs to be developed and practiced for the successful and fast process of software engineering

Moreover, when it is possible to save the time and complete the process faster without lose in the quality, this opportunity should be taken. Because, as Italo Calvino states,

“the more time we save, the more we can afford to lose"

Thus it is important to optimise the process when possible, probably by using suitable tools and software. This will provide a risk resolving time in case of any unpredicted issue.

The main lesson that can be learned for software building and for teams is “hurry slowly".

Although the process should be optimized as much as it can, each step of the process must be logically reasonable and practical. Otherwise, quickness itself might provide more harm.

Being quick will not only enhance and speed up the process of software building, but also uplift the team working on it. Because quickness is what brings “inner energy” when applied. It will allow members to observe the progress, which in turn brings more vitality and energy to work.