IT news

Software development team: in search of ideal size

🔖 IT news
2 years ago

Size does matter after all
Rammstein

Efficiency is the Holy Grail of any manager. Every COO, project manager, head of department and other executives strive for maximum productivity and the best results. The impact of the team size on the overall performance is obvious, but what lies within?

Ringelmann effect

First known attempt to understand that was made by the French engineer Maximilien Ringelmann. He carried out a set of rope pulling test competitions, where he discovered what is now known as Ringelmann Effect. In simple words, it sounds like this: the size of a team is in inverse ratio to its productivity. He suggested that the decrease is determined by difficulties in coordination. The more members the team has, the worse cooperation and teamwork is. Primitive systems are one of the most sustainable, due to simplicity of their components interaction. It works for biological systems just as well as for groups of people.

Social loafing

The other social phenomenon that affects cooperation within the groups is "social loafing". Discovered in 1981 by Harkin & Latané, also known as "motivation loss", it showed the significant decrease in exerted effort people make when they work in groups compared to single work. Social loafing is based on the "free-rider" theory and "sucker effect". This theory is as simple as the previous one: an individual makes less efforts to avoid doing the work of a fellow group member.

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What does it give?

Sport teams use different number of players, but on average not more than fifteen. SWAT team element, for example, consists of five soldiers. Members of small teams are more devoted to others and everyone's success. There are a lot of approaches towards managing huge software development teams. However they are neither perfect nor cost-efficient, and greatly depend on human factor. IT development teams have the same three problems: human resources management, lowered performance caused by poor interpersonal communication, and motivational shortcomings.

What to do:

Divide and collaborate

If you have a big team - split it in few autonomous units. Then divide a complex task into convenient parts and assign them among the units. You'll need only one extra person to coordinate the output of each group.

Use the Köhler effect

This is the phenomenon controversial to Ringelmann effect, that manifests itself in a harder work of a person that becomes a member of a group. In this way you can stimulate less-capable employees to perform better and improve their software development (http://ddi-dev.com) skills.

Urgency is your best friend

Most people are lazy. Deadlines and a little stress sometimes could do really amazing things. And if you add some gamification to the working process and a kind of competition, your team could achieve enormous results.

We would be happy to answer any questions about optimizing the development of your team and to give you free advisory support.

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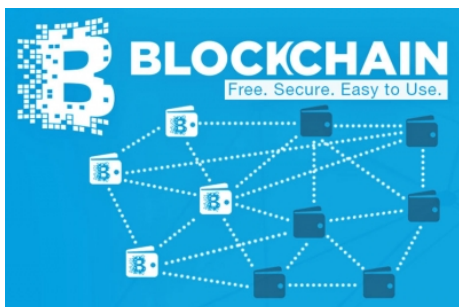# YOU WILL ALSO BE INTERESTED

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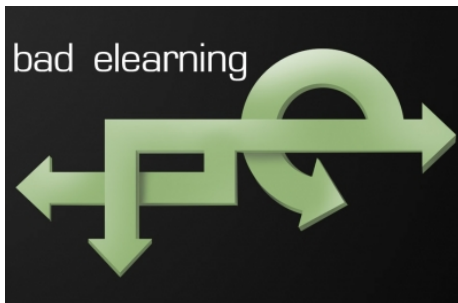14 Startups that boomed in 2017 (/blog/it-news/14-startups-boomed-2017/)

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