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**6-2: Journal Entry: Communication Practices and Project Management Tools**

With agile, communication is king. There is not another way to effectively employ the approaches offered within the agile philosophy than to have clear, open, and critically honest communication. When the customer changes a spec, the team needs to know the new needs with a new or updated user story. If the development team hits a snag, they need to communicate that to the Scrum Master and Product Owner as soon as possible so that roadblock can be cleared, and work can continue. There are a few ways to “communicate”, but all rely on trust. Is what is being communicated reliable and does the receiver believe it?

I think the best way to develop that trust is face-to-face communication. It may be a more difficult way to communicate, but it removes ambiguity. There are no questions of “what did they mean?” as might happen in an email. The interaction requires attention, unlike a Zoom meeting where a person might miss a point because they’re focusing on another email or their dog. Although, the ability to visually communicate remotely is immeasurably better than older methods. It does allow some aspects of face-to-face communication and in a one-on-one situation, this can be almost as good as being in the room.

When trying to communicate with the company face-to-face would be a bit laborious. An information radiator would be a good choice here. The list could be posted on a whiteboard or in these days of more technology, a large screen. This could be displayed near the meeting room so anyone walking by could take in the information: status of the backlog, time remaining in the sprint, and other related data about the project.

Our team is all remote for this week. We understandably could not meet face-to-face and had to rely on our discussion board for communication. Everyone gave their status in the team and asked directed questions to each of the other team members. Each in turn gave a response to those questions clearly and in a reasonable time. While I’m not sure that we employed any specific practices in this one week task, we did manage to have good interactions, and I believe everyone felt as if they were part of the team.

Agile project management tools such as Jira create a centralized location for data related to the current project. Here, something such as the Dashboard aggregates all the information and can be looked at by all stakeholders to see where the project is and what issues might be impeding it. The backlog management feature will help the team keep track of the status of the backlog and allow the product owner to make adjustments easily and clearly for the team. Jira also has a feature rich communication feature that allows the team to have discussions and comment on any of the tasks, keeping the communication centralized so no one is left out of the loop. While a tool like Jira can provide a strong backbone for managing a project in an agile approach, success ultimately depends on the team working and communicating well together.