Sprint Retrospective(II)

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Identify Insights

- Once a shared context has been established, the participants can thoughtfully examine, understand, and interpret the data to identify process improvement insights.
- <u>Insights are our ideas or perceptions of things that can be improved</u>.
- Doing this effectively requires a system-level (bigger-picture) focus. Focusing on just one aspect (having a more localized view) might cause teams to miss the bigger picture. A system-level focus also helps teams move past the superficial and identify the root causes of issues.
- The participants should start by mining the shared context data.

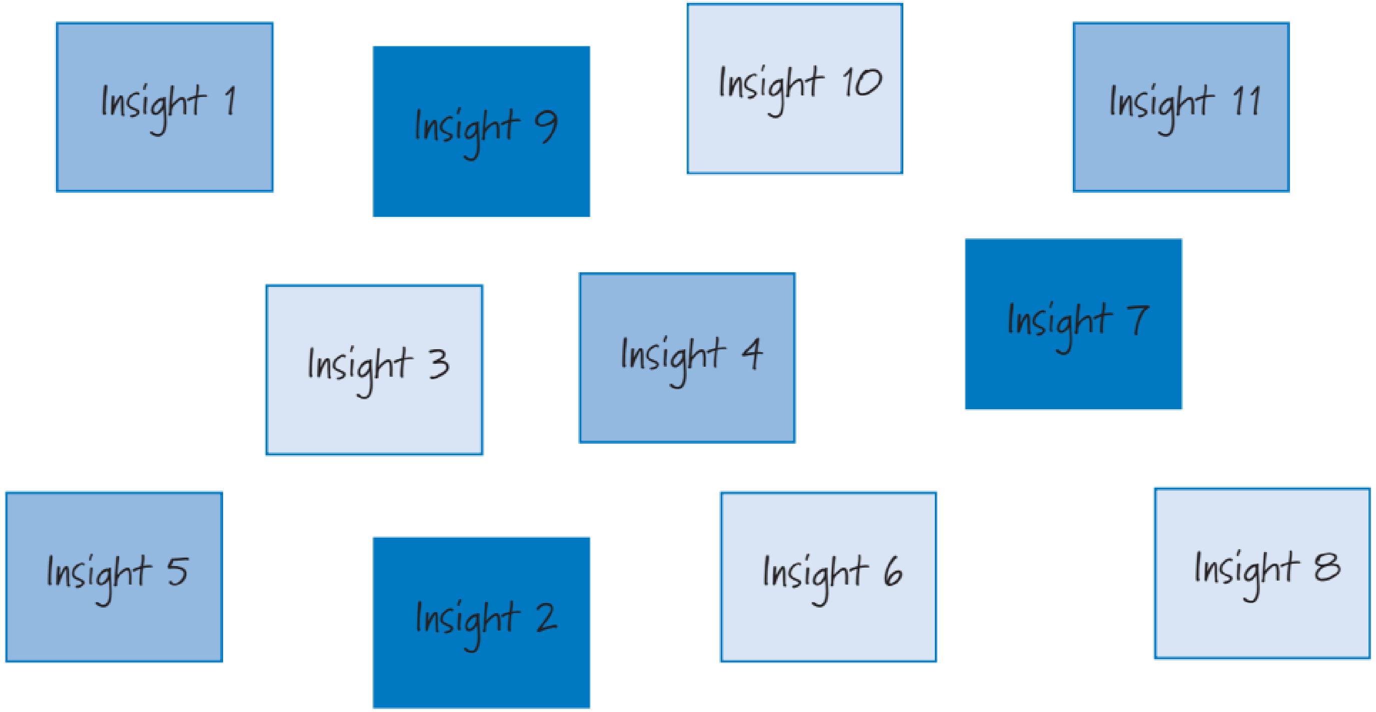

FIGURE 22.8 Retrospective insight card wall

Identify insights

- Frequently participants are asked to brainstorm insights and then capture them on cards and place them on a shared wall or other surface so that everyone can see them.
- Another source for insights might be the team’s insight backlog, a prioritized list of previously generated insights that have not yet been acted upon. If such a backlog exists, mine it to see which insights the participants would like to include and consider during the current retrospective.
- Any existing insights should be represented by cards and placed on the wall alongside the new insights. Once the cards have been placed on the wall, the participants will need to organize them. To do this, many teams choose an to cluster the insights into meaningful groupings to indicate similar or duplicate cards.

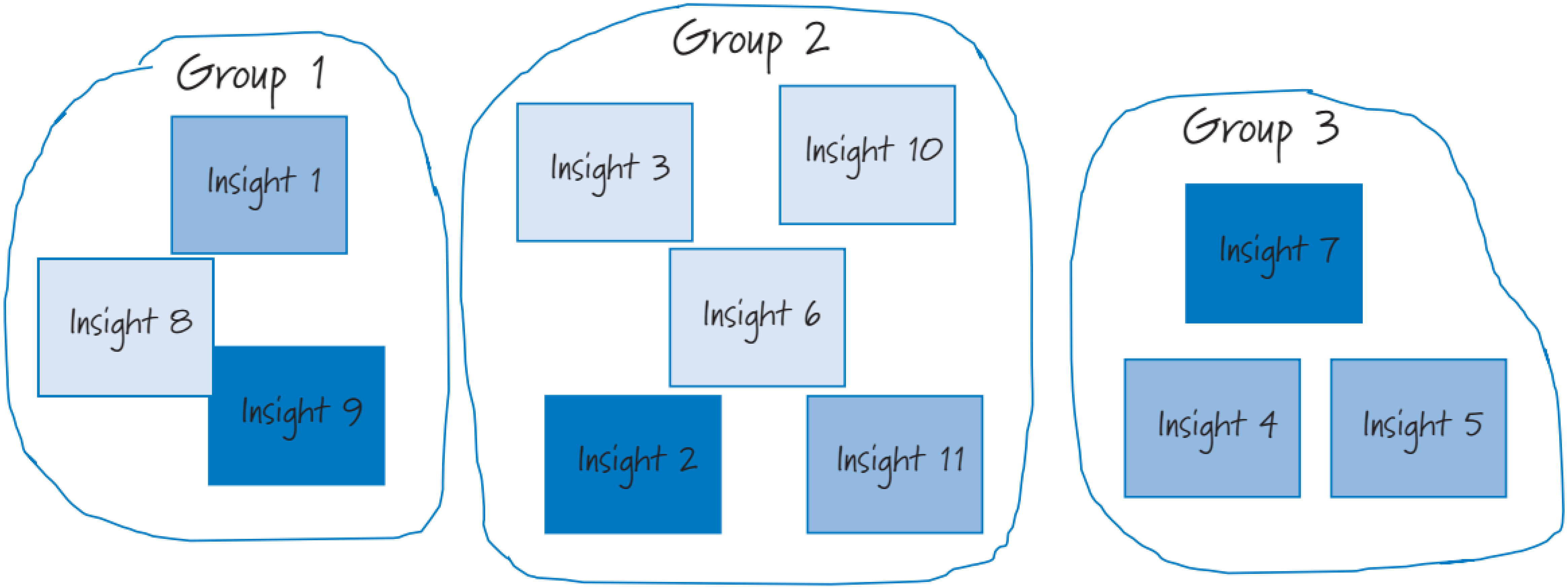

FIGURE 22.9 Insight cards clustered into similarity groups

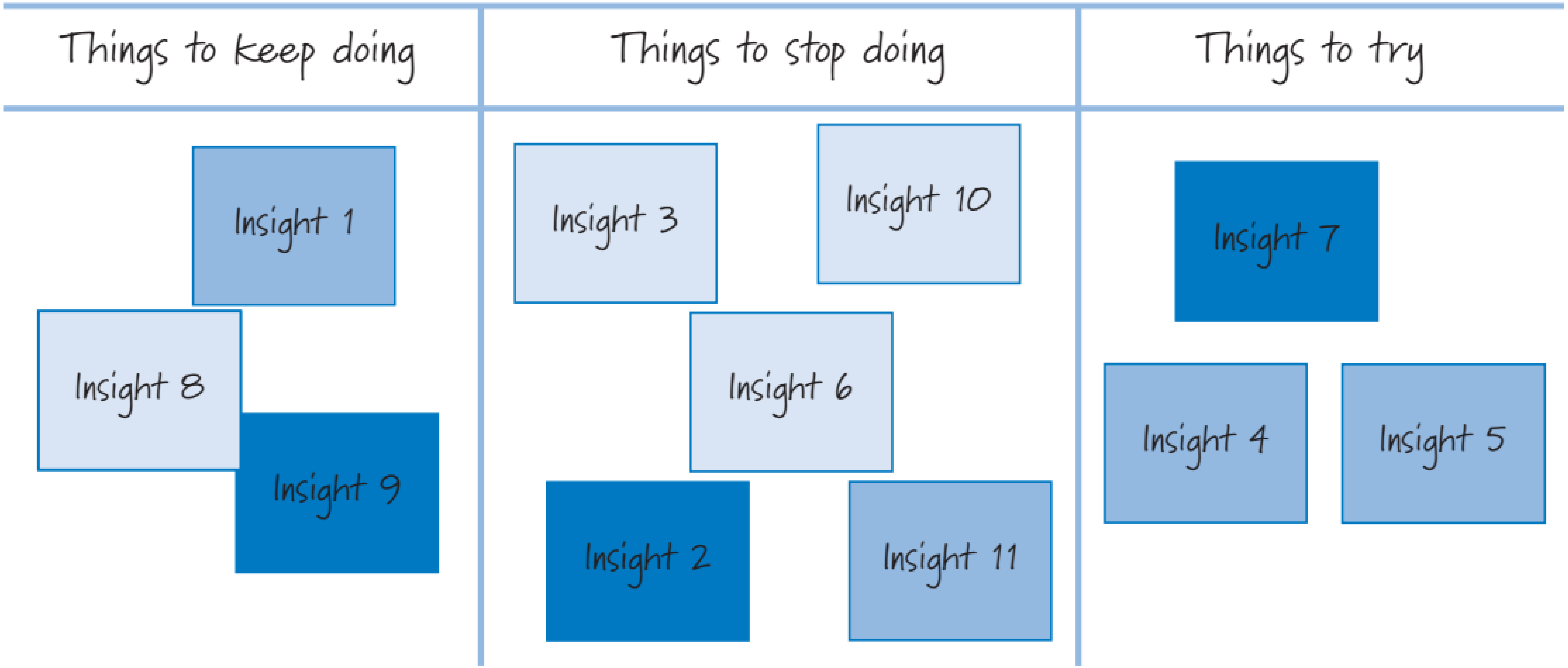

FIGURE 22.10 Insight cards placed into predetermined groups

Mining insights

- After creating a shared context and mining the data for insights, the participants should have identified many areas for improvement in their use of Scrum and, by extension, the way they work together to deliver value.
- Some of these insights might lead to deeper discussions among the participants to better understand underlying causes, or important patterns or relationships. When all the insights have been discussed and organized on the wall, it’s time to determine what to do with all of the information.

determine Actions

- To extract long-term value from these insights we need to move from discussing them to taking demonstrable actions to leverage them.
- The participants should also take time to review what happened to the improvement actions from the last retrospective. If those actions have not been completed (or even started), the participants need to know why before they start addressing new insights.
- They might choose to carry forward previous actions or prioritize them against the new insights they have just identified.

Selecting Insights

- It is important to realize that retrospectives frequently identify many more improvement insights than the Scrum team and organization can digest and act on in a short period of time. So, the participants first need to determine which improvement insights to act on immediately and which can be deferred. Many teams have the participants prioritize the insights based on what they believe is most important or where they are most energetic about seeing improvement.
- Exactly how many insights should the participants select to work on? Well, that depends on how much capacity the participants are able to dedicate to the insights and over what period of time. Typically the period of time is the next sprint.

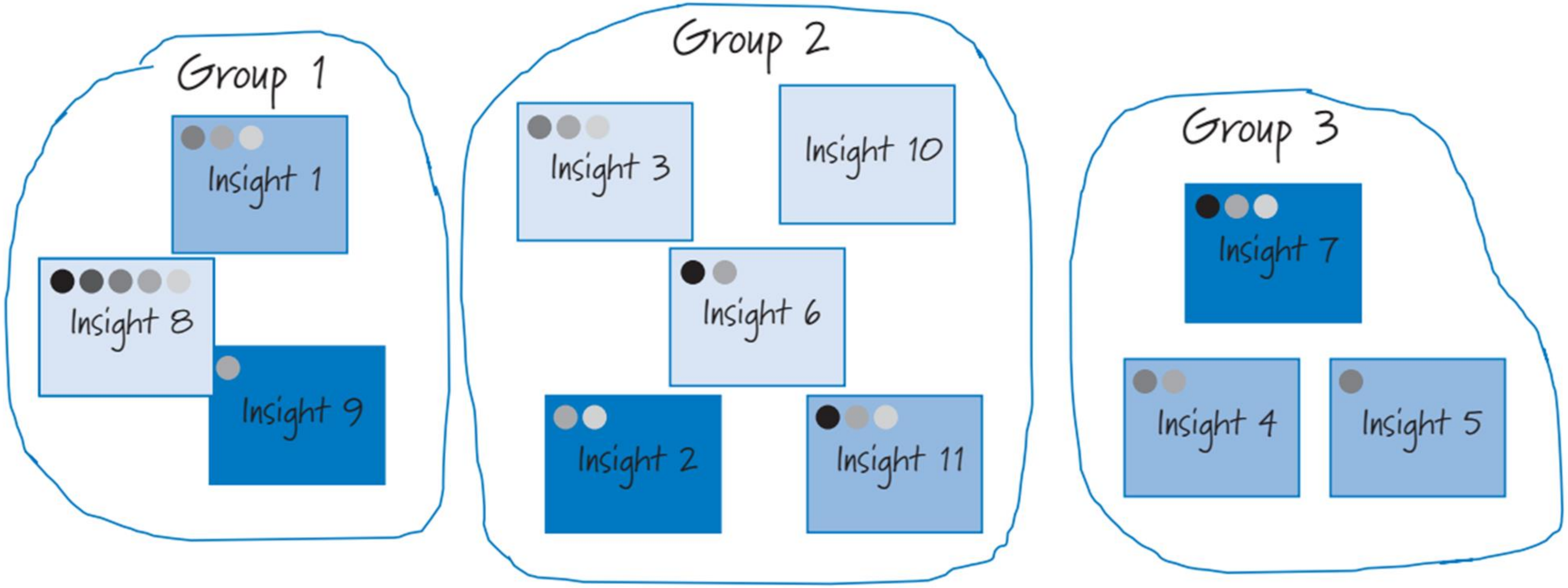

FIGURE 22.11 Example of dot voting

Selecting insight

- The participants must also determine how much capacity they can dedicate to addressing insights during the next sprint. If the team plans to dedicate time in the next sprint to actions from the previous retrospective, it will clearly affect the team's capacity for new actions identified in this retrospective.
- Spending time working on insights, old and new, leaves less time for working on features. So, how much time should the team allocate today to address insights that can provide a larger payoff later? Answering that question really requires input from the product owner.
- If the Scrum team doesn't specifically allocate time to work on improvement insights, a likely outcome is that insights won't get worked on.

Decide on Actions

- Once we know the available capacity to work on insights, the participants can get a rough idea of which of the high-priority insights can be immediately addressed.
- At this point we have prioritized our insights and have some idea of the capacity we have to work on them. However, we get no measurable value from the retrospective until we define concrete, actionable steps to leverage our insights and improve the Scrum process.
- Most actions will take the form of specific tasks that one or more Scrum team members will perform during the upcoming sprint.
- Team be sure that working on a particular insight is doable within the available capacity:

Decide on Actions(Cnt’d)

- Not all insights require specific task-level work. For example, an insight like “Be respectful to one another and show up to the daily scrum on time” should require little (if any) task-level work by the team. While there is a real action, “People should actually make the effort to show up on time,” it will not reduce the team’s capacity.
- Sometimes the actions represent impediments that the ScrumMaster might own but someone else in the organization has to resolve.

Determine actions

- When determining the proper actions, we need to remember that it might not be possible to immediately address the insight. Instead, we might need to *explore* the insight before we can actually make an improvement. In such cases the proper action might be to investigate and collect data during the next sprint so that we can better understand the problem.
- For example, the insight might be “We’re puzzled by why two components that are fully tested and have their own automated test suites fail when they are combined into a cross-component automated test suite where each component is still individually executed.” At this point there isn’t a specific action the Scrum team members can take to address this insight because they really don’t understand what is going wrong.
- However, the team can create an action for specific team members to explore this issue in the next sprint, and the team can determine how much capacity to allocate

Insight Backlog

- Many teams create an *insight backlog* (sometimes called an *improvement backlog*) to hold any issues that are identified during a retrospective but cannot be worked on immediately.
- The idea is that at the next sprint retrospective the participants can choose to use the insights in the backlog as candidates to be prioritized against new insights when determining where to focus time in the next sprint.
- Of course, the insight backlog should be groomed periodically to ensure that its contents remain valuable insights.
- Other teams simply discard any insights that they choose not to work on in the next sprint. The thinking is that if an insight is truly important, it will be identified again at the next retrospective.

Close the Retrospective

- Once the final improvement actions have been determined, the participants close out the retrospective.
- Many close by recapping what actions the team has decided to take based on what the participants learned. This might be as simple as describing each committed action item and who is going to work on it.
- Closing is also a good time to appreciate people and their participation. Each participant should say a few kind words of appreciation regarding the contributions made by others. Be sure to also recognize any non–Scrum team members who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in the retrospective.
- Finally, it's a good idea to spend a few minutes asking the team for suggestions to improve the team's approach to performing a retrospective.

Follow Through

- To ensure that what happens in the sprint retrospective does *not* just stay in the sprint retrospective, the participants should follow up on the actions they chose to complete. Some actions (such as that everyone shows up on time for daily meetings) need only to be reiterated and reinforced by the team members and the ScrumMaster.
- Others will need to be addressed during the forthcoming sprint-planning activity. Frequently the easiest way to handle the improvement actions is to populate the sprint backlog with tasks corresponding to each action prior to bringing in new features. The team's available capacity to work on new features would then be adjusted downward by the estimated time these improvement tasks will take.
- One approach that does *not* work is to have an "improvement plan" for the team that is separate from the work it will do each sprint. This two-pronged approach will almost always lead to the improvement plan being subordinate to the typical feature driven sprint plan. To ensure that the improvement actions do take place, don't separate; integrate!

Reference

1- K. S. Rubin, “Essential Scrum, A Practical guide to the most popular agile process,” 2013.