Title: The Challenge of Effective Communication within Software Development Teams
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The practice of creating software involves much more than writing code. In fact, software engineering is primarily a human-centered discipline, in which effective communication is essential to coordinating work across large-scale, hierarchical teams. Yet, engineers with excellent soft skills are rare, and worse, the team-based communication practices required for effective software engineering are rarely taught to students. In this talk, I will discuss my observations of good and bad communication practices between software teams during my 16 years at Microsoft. I will illustrate how software development methodologies like Agile development impact inter-team communication and show how ineffective communication can hurt individuals, teams, and the products they create. My most recent research helping mixed neurotype (i.e. autistic and non-autistic) team members to more effectively work together reveals that explicit instruction and scaffolding of communication practices can help them to succeed and thrive.