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Week 8 Café Reflection

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**3 things I learned from Sukriti's presentation about the book Simplify: How The Best Businesses Succeed**

1) Businesses can succeed by building and improving products through proposition-simplifying and price simplifying. Price simplifying focuses on producing products with the highest volume and best efficiency. This approach definitely brings profit by mass production and sales. An example is Ford's cars. On the other hand, proposition simplifying makes better quality product that is a "joy to use". It targets smaller part of the market but can eventually create a completely new mass market such as Apple (and I think Tesla is doing it now. It originally started in smaller market with high income customers but eventually is moving to the general market of electric vehicles with the Model 3 sedan and upcoming model Y SUV)

2) There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. Price simplifying produces product that cannot be imitated instantly but needs constant market research and innovation to avoid losing market share. On the other hand, proposition simplifying can result in explosive growth with little investment in customer acquisition and tend to differentiate themselves from competitors (which allow both types of firms (mass market and high end) to exist in the same market)

3) There are many traps that market leaders can fall into (i.e. Overhead trap, cannibalization, customer, complexity and skill traps). To avoid these traps, market leaders need to constantly simplifying to better their products (or even create a new one) through adopting of both price and proposition simplifying. This can be achieved by:

- develop  & manufacture new, simple product alongside with existing company

- abandon existing complex product & switch to simpler and newer one

- set up parallel completely autonomous unit to supply new simple product

- acquire new simplifying firms (usually give best chance of success)

Other questions:

I think we can see this happen in lean thinking and continuous improvement of LeSS and general Agile methodologies. The creation or merging of Requirement Areas (in LeSS Huge) is a great example of simplifying strategy. We see many big companies adopting all the 5 strategies (most common is acquiring smaller companies or merging of companies). I would like to know more specific examples of price and proposition simplifying in real companies (besides firm acquisition). The presentation has great content but could be delivered in less time. I would suggest practicing your speech and timing yourself in the future to prevent going over time limit. Other than that, great presentation!

**Measure What Matters presentation by Apoorva**

3 things I learned:

1) In order for companies to be successful, there has be alignment of everyone's effort (especially employees) with organization's goals and intents. This can be accomplished through the use of OKRs which stand for Objectives and Key Results. Objectives define goals and intents within the organization. They have to be tangible, objective and unambiguous and successful completion must provide clear value to the organization. Key results are how we can measure if our work is successful and aligned with the Objectives. They describe outcomes, not activities and must include evidence of completion.

2) Alignment can be strict (the OKRs remain the same throughout the company's hierarchy tree) or directional (align directionally with higher level goals)

3) Evaluation is based on the score from 0.0 to 1.0 with 0.0-0.3 as Fail, 0.4-0.6 as making progress but short of completion and 0.7-1.0 as success. Agile is a byproduct of OKRs. OKRs also promote employees to make their own goals and make them known (transparency) which encourages employee to self motivate and achieve higher performance.

Other questions:

Is the OKR embedded throughout LeSS processes? Is it part of the defining Definition of Done and also in Sprint Retrospectives/Review? We didn't have enough time to ask questions. Overall, great presentation with very useful information (I would definitely read this book now).

**Thinking in Systems by Snigdha**

3 things I learned:

1) Similar to what we discussed in class and from assigned readings, software and its parts are often complex system and developing it requires the use of Agile methodologies

2) To avoid problems when building systems such as system traps, we can utilize Scrum (and drawing of Scrum’s system diagram) to determine elements within the system and their connections. Second, we can continuously improve the system through continuous feedback loop using Sprint and Spring Retrospective.

3) To apply systems thinking in Agile, we can make diagrams to represent mental model, pay attention to what is important (not what is quantifiable), make feedback policies and go for the good of whole.

Other questions: I like the example of protecting intellectual property but decreasing the amount of future IP produced. If Systems thinking was applied, the security department would have invited everyone, including development teams to come up with creative solutions for protecting IP but at the same time not at the cost of producing future IP. Overall, great presentation and new, different content was delivered compared to previous presentation about the same book by Zican. I have no other questions.

**Agile Restrospectives – Making Good Teams Great presentation by Satine**

3 things I learned from Satine:

1) Retrospectives can be used in Agile frameworks or any other product development (even in non-software related companies). In order to really make good use of Agile retrospective, the improvement plans synthesized from retrospectives need to be included in the members’ daily work plan or else no one finds time to do the extra work

2) Mastering of retrospectives can lead to mastering of other reusable skills such as mind mapping. In addition, using analytical tools during retrospectives can result in understanding of technical problems, prioritization of stories/requirements, strategy planning and driving innovation.

3) For leader/facilitator of retrospective, it is advised that this role is rotated frequently. Facilitator should focus on process and structure of retrospective, attend to the needs of group dynamics to help reach the goals and remain neutral in discussions even if they have strong opinions.

Other questions: I don’t have any other questions. It would be interesting to know what are the problems team often faces during Spring retrospectives and how to avoid/solve them. (i.e. such as blaming, criticizing people who didn’t complete their assigned work/didn’t incorporate improvement plans into their daily work plan, etc.) Overall, the presentation delivered very clear and straightforward information about Agile retrospectives.