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Changing Perception

PART 6: RELEASE FEAR

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Last week I wrote about the most important thing that IT teams can do to change the perception within their organization - Delivering. Building confidence takes predictability, transparency, and communication. All these things are naught without the effective delivery of value to the organization. So even as our teams master all these items, there are still elements that can prevent us from delivering value effectively.

At Clientek, we are lucky enough to be trusted with hard, complex projects on behalf of our customers and many of these projects result in huge amounts of value to their organizations. While we strive to deliver early and often - pushing value into the hands of the end-user as quickly as possible, these projects still tend to be quite large; some of them being multi-year efforts with dozens of releases.

One of the biggest things we have seen with our customers over the years is what we refer to as "Release Fear". Because

of the importance of these projects and the large investment made by the organization, it is understandable that the stakeholders, product owners, and development teams all feel a sense of urgency as well as the pressure to deliver perfection.

Often teams are reluctant to show in-progress work to the stakeholders for fear they will disapprove of the output or request significant changes. Heightened expectations from executive sponsors can also be misinterpreted as the product must be 100% complete, fully polished and end-user ready before it can ever be shown.

This can lead teams to hide away their progress, instead preferring to simply give status with weekly written or verbal updates to the stakeholders. Months can pass without anyone seeing the results of the investment they are making.

Understandably, the fear of disapproval for the work being done can be damaging to a team's momentum and egos.

Expectations on what you are showing and your progress within the release cycle must be clearly communicated.

I would leverage though, that you can build trust quicker and garner better feedback if you get in front of your stakeholders more often to show your progress. Further, we strongly believe that you should begin deploying product to the end-user as quickly as possible - even if it is only one function at a time. Getting those releases out the door will not only prove out the end-to-end release strategy but allow users to start taking advantage of the functionalities and provide your team valuable input and feedback.

We need to stop being afraid to release our work into the wild. Instead, embrace it and learn from the valuable feedback that you get. It will go a long way in changing the perception of your teams.

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