ADAPTATION

Inspect & Adapt

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Over the past few weeks I've covered several facets of adaptation, from [investment](#) to [effective remote collaboration](#) to [failing fast](#). To round out this series of articles, I wanted to touch on something that all good teams should be doing: continually assessing their work and adjusting their practices were necessary. A term that our industry has dubbed "Inspect & Adapt".

One reason many teams fail when first adopting an agile development methodology is, they discard the important ceremony of the retrospective. This end-of-sprint practice is a key component of continuous improvement. As with other areas of life though, we tend to have this meeting the first few sprints and then abandon it because "the team finished all the committed work" or "we didn't run into any obstacles so everything must be good".

The fallacy in this thinking is that we achieved success and we don't need to try and get better. Humans inherently have a hard time admitting that we are wrong, and that our ideas could be improved. There are always incremental improvements for a team (and us as humans) to make. These improvements don't need to be large scale changes. In fact, I would argue they should never be large scale. Small improvements, one at a time, are how great habits are built and how people and teams make real progress towards getting better.

Inspection allows us to identify those areas in which we can improve. Examination of practices and decisions that are made with a disconnected view and bias, allow us to identify areas for improvement. The best retrospectives are transparent, open, and honest. They can uncover process and mechanics issues but also interpersonal issues within the team. Only once issues are identified with this inspection process can the team (or the individual) adapt and address them.

Adaptation can take numerous forms. It could be simple process changes, team responsibility changes, actions that need to be taken with certain individuals, or it could be expectations being set with our teams or product owners. Regardless of how you adapt, the important thing is to keep those incremental improvements going. This prevents the stagnation described above from occurring.

The results from inspection and adaptation create an environment that produces a competitive differentiation. It empowers each person on the team to have equal influence. It creates a culture of accountability and gives autonomy to everyone on the team. All these things produce a cohesive, energized team that will result in high performance and innovation.