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Reflection

PART 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF RETROSPECTION

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We spend a lot of time on the mechanics of our projects - the tactical day to day operations of our teams. How are user stories being groomed? How do the objectives of this sprint align with the objectives of the overall project? How does the design tie back to the set of stories being worked on? These items are all critical for the success of each sprint, as well as the project as a whole. We focus on design sessions, grooming sessions, sprint dailies and more across the dozens of projects we have running at any given time. Much of our leadership's focus is looking for commonality of approach and process, while at the same time giving the team's leeway to operate in such a manner that they can self-organize and deliver successfully.

As part of this approach, we are ever searching for continuous improvements that we can implement. One such mechanic that focuses on this goal is the end of sprint retrospective. At the conclusion of every two-week sprint, we take a moment to discuss three main questions:

1. What went well?
2. What didn't go well?
3. What improvements can we implement next sprint?

Highly effective teams hold these discussions regularly and put effort and focus on them. A sure sign of a struggling team is one that begins to skip retrospectives and deem them unnecessary. This usually indicates one of two things:

1. The team is pushing too hard and struggling to fit all the necessary deliverables into each sprint.
2. The team doesn't appreciate the value that the retrospective provides to them.

More often than not, the first item above is to blame. Sprints are fast and hectic - they are called "Sprints" for a reason. Teams tend to forget that with the surge and push of each time-boxed sprint of activity there are reasons we have each of the

identified scenarios. A lot of teams end their sprints on Friday and after two weeks of hard push they're tired and just want to call it a week. Therefore, the first thing that gets tossed is the retrospective.

As with most things in life, if an individual or team feels they cannot spend the time to reflect on how to get better, they never will. There are always things that go great in a sprint and things that are a bit rough. Most importantly, there are always small changes that should be implemented on each sprint to ensure continuous improvement.

Perhaps you are on a team that has regularly skipped retrospectives. Maybe it's time to hold one again and make the primary topic - "Why do we think we can skip these?"

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