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How Do I Raise Awareness of Transformation Problems?

Or “We are mid-transformation. What problems do we expect to see?”

Premise

OK, so not the greatest name as their really isn't a “mid-transformation”; it just keeps on going. But the idea was to say “it seems like we are doing so well - what could possibly go wrong” and realize the this is a time of large danger and people go on auto mode and we are not yet sustaining based practices let alone overall mindset.

An approach I've used is to do a facilitated workshop session aimed at working this issue.

Learning Outcomes

- Develop sensitivity for some of the issues seem in previous transformations so we can intercede as possible
- Determine if there is something we need to worry about right now

Materials

Printout of items that coaches have seen in the past (see below)

Facilitation

- Table-by-table. Review items that coaches have seen in the past? Which ones have you seen? Debrief each table.
- Table-by-table. What other items do you think might be an issue? Debrief each table.
- Room. Gather up the items talked about at each of the tables. Dot vote on which ones are a concern right now.
- Room. Take top few. Law of two feet to determine plan (if any) to address. Debrief.
- Room. Capture actions, next steps, clarity
- Room. Fist of five on result on result

A List of Smells

Smells coaches came up with:

- Direct backsliding to old ways of working and thinking
- People using agile terminology while still working in old ways
- Key impediments that we have identified again and again are not progressing
- People that were early in the transformation not seeing the learning from those who started later
- Management worrying about their status at the expense of the common objective
- Inability to bring on new people to the new way resulting in confusion and regression
- Stagnation of learning – no one going out to learn more
- Systems in place encourage “follow the plan” approach instead of option seeking, innovation approach
- All capacity allocated to features ignoring technical debt, learning, and innovation
- Inability to change to flow based optimization of value delivery (focus on utilization and cost accounting)
- Inability to establish new roles as something valuable to the organization
- Non-IT organizations not adapting to new approach and mindset
- The statement from management is “but we’re agile” actually means “do what I say and meet all your other commitments as well”
- Not respecting the “Team” – people trying to identify people to work something instead of bringing work to the team
- Inability to move from “we must do everything” to “this is best use of our capacity” thinking
- Constantly investing in new capabilities at the expense of existing quality, reliability and other issues
- Not creating real, stable, high performing teams
- Agile ceremonies turning into status meetings instead of working meetings
- Focusing too much on expected results at the expense of establishing fast feedback loops
- Different agendas mean that alignment statements are meaningless

Note: if you are running this workshop session, you will want to tailor these to suite your environment. Examples I've seen include:

- Cannot seat Teams together
- Wrong mix of people on the Teams (mixing oil and water)
- Inability to do Agile mentor-ship by leadership
- Focus on “expected result” instead of “fast feedback”
- No DevOpsSec
- Losing common sense in the face of the new ceremonies etc.
- Not filling named roles
- Misuse of “agile”
- Inability to see tangible results
- Non-agile Teams (hiding behind ceremonies)
- Hybrid organizational friction, especially with Projects
- Burn-out risk as people now assume two roles / jobs

- Lack of understanding of other Teams value (cross-organization)
- No real road-map - only see current quarter

Want to Know More

- [What Kinds of Problems Do you Typically See As The Organization Transforms to Agile / Lean?](#)

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