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# How Do I Set The Expectations of My People So They Motivated to Improve?

One of the base principles of Agile is that as a leader you provide ambitious goals to the people doing the work and then support them in achieving those goals. [The influential HBR article](#) calls this principle “built-in instability”:

“Top management creates an element of tension in the project team by giving it great freedom to carry out a project of strategic importance to the company and by setting very challenging requirements.”

Leaders provide the goal, the “what” and “why”. Teams figure out the “how.”

It is therefore pretty funny when one of the leading Agile thinkers, Ron Jeffries, writes a blog article called [“How to Impose Agile?”](#). This is a tongue-in-cheek title for a thought experiment about how he’d “impose” Agile on his organization - what would he do if he was the boss and knew that Agile works, but didn’t want be perceived as “not Agile” by dictating to his people “go Agile.”

The blog post is instructive in that it lays out the challenging business goals that he needs as a leader, framing it as “what we need our people to achieve.” Interestingly the framing is such that adoption of Agile practices and mindset is natural.

But let’s step back for a moment. If I were to ask you what you really need for your organization to be successful I could imagine you’d list out characteristics like:

- Do it right: A happy customer; quality deliverables
- Do it fast: Respond quickly
- Do it on time: Be able to make and meet commitments

Converting this into a statement for your delivery Team you would say:

“What I need is running, tested, ship-able solution, built according to an evolving view of customer and solution, on a regular basis (say every week or two).”

- The “evolving view of customer and solution” speaks to happy customer
- The “running, tested, ship-able” speaks to quality
- The “on a regular basis” speaks to meeting commitments and being able to respond quickly

Now you probably should expect there to be a fair amount of push back on this statement. This is normal and, while it might not help you right at this minute, just know that every Team that ever moved to Agile did not see how it was possible when they first started. That is where Agile practices and mindset come in. They provide a good tool-set that you and your Team can use to help them to achieve this business goal.

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