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Values and Principles

Most agile thinking, while it has a lot of specific practices you can use, is based on values and principles.

This is good because, as Jim Highsmith says “Without concrete practices, principles are sterile; but without principles, practices have no life, no character, no heart. Great products arise from great teams — teams who are principled, who have character, who have heart, who have persistence, and who have courage.”

In fact most agile practitioners would argue that, while you can get results from doing various practices, and you may end up better than you were before, the reality is that to really make your agile implementation work, you need to apply these principles and ideas to your context.

There is a downside to this approach. A lot of the advise you will get from agile practitioners will start with “It depends …” which, if you are just starting out really is not a great deal of use. Worse some advice is so obscure as to be useless (e.g. “do whatever is right”).

But to me it is important to understand these values and principles as, as you start implementing agile practices, you will find that some things just do not work well (or at all) in your context. The way to address these issues is to go back to the original principles and use these to adapt practices to your context.

By Approach

The following pages show the values and principles each are thinks of as most important.

- Agile Values and Principles
- Scrum Values and Principles
- XP Values and Principles
- Lean Values and Principles
- Kanban Values and Principles
- SAFe Values and Principles
- DevOps Values and Principles

To many understanding and using these values and principles is the difference between “doing agile” and “being agile”.

Too Much?

For many of the longtime agilists, all the various flavors of agile, all the different practices has meant that we have moved away from the relative simplisity we had when we first started agile. To use a software

term, agile has become “over-decorated”. There has been a discussion about getting back to the basics. But what are those basics.

As you do more and more coaching you find yourself emphasizing 3 or 4 ideas over and over again. These ideas were captured by Alistair Cockburn in The Heart of Agile:

- Collaborate: closely with others to generate and develop better starting ideas. Communicate often to smooth transitions.
- Deliver: small probes initially to learn how the world really works. Expand deliveries as you learn to predict and influence outcomes.
- Reflect: periodically, along the way. Think about what you've learned in your collaboration and from your deliveries.
- Improve: the direction of your ideas, their technical implementation, and your internal processes.

While not practice specific, if you keep these in mind as you try to work in an increasing agile fashion, you can expect to do well.

On Coaching

As I worked on these pages it occurred to me that I needed to make sure I understood what it meant to be a Coach. I started to work on Coaching Values and Principles as a result.

Learning, Reference, Basics, FirstSprint, Values, Principles

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