Self-organizing Agile Teams
beyond the buzzword

Presenters
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Tutorial Overview
Setting the Stage
Self-organizing teams: beyond Agile
Self-organizing teams: beyond the Buzzword
Self-organizing teams: beyond the Challenges
Question/Answer and Resources

Defining Self-organizing Teams
What’s self-organizing

What’s NOT self-organizing

Setting the Stage...

What is a Team?

A goal-oriented social unit

- Shared compelling work goal
- Members are mutually accountable for achieving that goal
- Work is interdependent, requires all their skills
- Shared approach, not a rigid process
- Fewer than 10 people
- Shared history and identity
A new concept? Not really!

Different Perspectives:
Socio-Technical Systems
Organizational Theory
Complex Adaptive Systems
Knowledge Management

Socio-Technical Systems

Autonomous groups*
Tavistock group’s study of English coal miners
Learning systems that expand their decision space in response to everyday learning

Self-Managing teams**
Self-managing teams exemplar of concertive control
10-15 people
take on responsibilities of former supervisors
activities guided by vision of senior management
cross-trained individuals
motivated by peer-pressure not legal rules

**Baker, J Tightening the iron cage: concertive control in self-managing teams 1993

Organizational Theory

Four general conditions of self-organization*:
- Minimum critical specification
- Requisite variety
- Redundancy of functions
- Learning to learn

* Images of Organization, Morgan (1986)

Complex Adaptive Systems

Characteristics of Self-organizing teams*:
- Informal
- Implicit
- Transient
- Spontaneous

* Of Ants and Men, Anderson et al. (1976)
How can a software development team ...become Self-organizing?

How can a manager create the conditions ...for a team to Self-organize?
Not a problem to be solved, but polarities to be balanced.

...balancing polarities enables self-organization.

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Balancing Acts

Balancing Freedom and Responsibility
Balancing Cross-functionality and Specialization
Balancing Continuous Learning and Iteration Pressure

Polarities Exercise

Balancing Freedom & Responsibility

Collective Decision Making
- Collective estimation and planning
- Collectively deciding team norms and principles
- Self-committing to team goals

Self-Assignment
- Using story board/wall
- Taking task ownership

Self-Monitoring
- Daily standup meetings
- Information Radiators

Balancing Cross-Functionality & Specialization

Need for Specialization
- Multiple perspectives

Encouraging Cross-Functionality
- Group programming
- Rotation
Balancing Continuous Learning & Iteration Pressure

Self-Evaluation
- Retrospectives

Self-Improvement
- Pair-in-Need
- Learning Spike

Leverage Points
- Containers
- Differences
- Exchanges
- Simulation

A set of Integrated Practices

Balancing Freedom and Responsibility (BFR); Balancing Cross-functionality and Specialization (BCS); Balancing Continuous Learning and Iteration Pressure (BLP)

Balancing Acts & Self-Organization

General Principles of Self-organization (Morgan, 1986)
Specific Conditions of Self-organization (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 1986)
Balancing Acts define Concrete Practices of Self-organizing Agile teams (Hoda et al., 2010)
Beyond the Challenges...

Organizational Challenges

Middle Management Challenges

Customer Challenges
Beyond this Tutorial...

More at XP2011:
Rashina’s research presentation: Thursday, 12th May, 3:35pm
Supporting self-organizing Agile teams:
what’s senior management got to do with it?

Esther’s keynote presentation: Wednesday, 11th May, 9am
Still no silver bullets

Self-Organizing Goodies:
Rashina’s publications:
http://www.ecs.victoria.ac.nz/Main/RashinaHoda

Esther’s articles:
http://www.estherderby.com/site-map

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