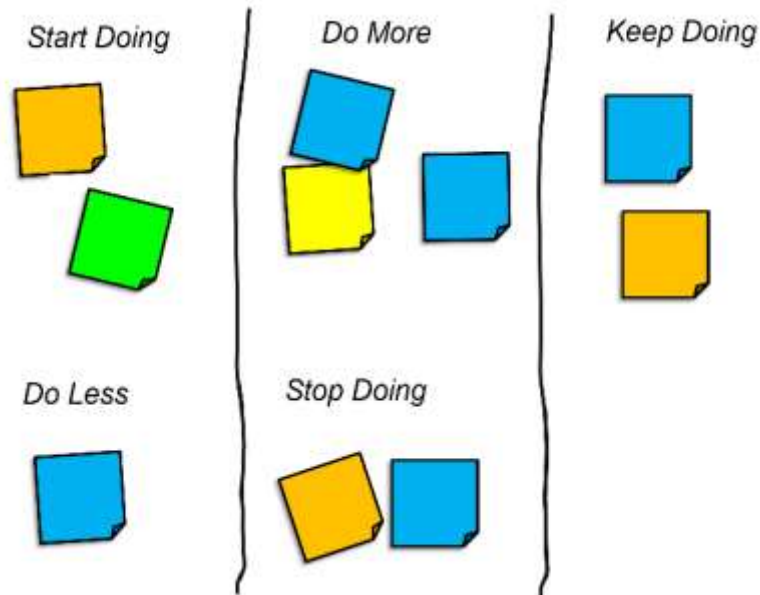


Starfish Retrospective Technique

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In this article I would like to share with you an effective technique to conduct team retrospective meeting. I assume that some of you know it already. Yet, I thought it was worth sharing it with the *Agile* community for those who don't.

One of the most important meetings of Agile team is the retrospective meeting. Retrospective meeting allows the team to continuously improve the way it works. At every end of sprint/iteration/time box the *Agile* team reviews the last retrospective summary and asks itself the following questions:

- What went well during the last sprint/iteration/time box? (+)
- What went wrong during the last sprint/iteration/time box? (Δ)
- What can we do differently in order to improve?

Usually this meeting is fairly effective at the beginning of the *Agile* adoption. However, after leading and participating in a few *Agile* adoption processes I saw that in some cases, after a while, the team tends to go back to its comfort zone. The team is documenting the points that

were raised in the retrospective meeting, does nothing during the following sprint/iteration/time box and raises the same points in the following retrospective meeting. One of the main reasons for this situation is that the above questions are too general and therefore the discussion is not deep enough. Since we'd like to encourage the *Agile* team to constantly look for improvements and have an effective discussion I would like to share with you a technique which works very well for me (in most cases...). This technique is called: "Starfish Technique".

Based on this technique the meeting should be held as follows:

Agile team members are asked to identify issues/points the team should:

- **Start doing** - Activities or ideas that a team wants to bring into the game.
- **Do more** - Activities on which a team should focus more and/or perform more often.
- **Keep doing** - Good activities or practices that team members want to keep.
- **Do less** - Activities where the effort required to perform them is much bigger than the benefit.
- **Stop doing** - Activities that do not bring value to a team or to a customer. Activities that bring waste into the process.

The team members write down points they identify based on the above titles. Then, every team member, in his turn, presents the points he/she identified and put a note under the relevant title. **At this point no discussion is held.** Obviously, not all points can be resolved immediately. Hence, upon conclusion of this round a discussion is held in order to identify the most significant points to be resolved in the next sprint/iteration/time box (voting is also an option). Once these problems are identified a detailed discussion is held in order to define a specific solution and action items. Some of the action items may be translated to user stories for the next sprint/iteration/time box.

Good luck!!

Tip: everybody knows what went wrong. Hence, it is always better to start with the positive points. It makes the team think...