

Change Agent Dreamin'

By Bob Schatz

When you are driving change in an organization, you often start with a strong vision of where you want to be. The picture that is etched in your mind is very real. It has to be. This is the picture that you will have to paint for everyone impacted by the change that you see. Your ability to describe this picture from the perspective of the people you are dealing with is a special skill. Successfully doing this helps the vision stick. Momentum builds as others join the march. You learn how to communicate this vision in many different mediums so it can be consumed by others. When you're in an intense period of change this vision consumes your thinking. It is very powerful and energizing.

As you begin to execute changes based on this vision, you experience positive and negative feedback. Some

changes turn out exactly as you had imagined, others fail miserably. This feedback loop is critical in helping to mold and shape the changes and the vision for the benefit of the people involved in the change.

Much like the iterations we plan and execute for our projects, we assess and reprioritize based on the results we see in execution. At the end of a very long day, we hold a mini-review in our heads, in the quiet of our homes (or the comfort of a few drinks!) where we focus on the mental comparison of the planned change and the daily observed results.



Often this review is not even a conscious activity. Everyone has a typical time or environment when some of their best ideas are born. For me, it's between the time I fall asleep and finish shaving in the morning. I keep a stack of index cards on my nightstand and, strangely enough, in the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. It seems like when I'm in this zone, my brain is processing all of the input data I've received and the readings I've completed and comparing it to the vision I'm carrying. What emerge are ideas for changes and adjustments that are in

tune with the organization I'm working with.

It's a very strange feeling, having these ideas appear unbidden in my mind. I write each one down on an index card immediately. Sometimes the writing is difficult to decipher (still learning how to write in complete darkness), but the thought is nonetheless captured. I take my ideas (once I've figured out what they were) back to work with me. The next night, I repeat the process again.

I'm not the only one who does this. At Primavera, when we were going through the early periods of intense change, the mornings would be full of more than a few of us running around in the morning trying to communicate what ideas we'd had overnight that we needed to implement to get to the next level. It was extremely entertaining and energizing, but exhausting.

The switch to agile methodologies is a big change for many individuals and organizations, and it carries with it a vision and the inevitable collision of that vision and reality. When applying agile values and principles for the first time, we often have a vision that has been cleansed of all the issues and obstacles.

When the obstacles start coming fast and furious, agile methodologies force us to deal with them quickly. There is no way to prepare anyone for the stress that this brings. The experience will be different for everyone. As a visionary leader in an organization, it is my responsibility to help people through that transition. I try to harness their intense

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had the waterfall illusion of success ingrained in her mind yet. Additionally, the organization had been given Ken Schwaber's book, *Agile Project Management with Scrum*, and Casey had a good grasp of the information and the intent; basically, she got it.

After I gave her some coaching on what this experience was going to be from the ScrumMaster perspective, she was eager to begin (maybe she wasn't listening to the warnings!). As we started the pilot project's first sprint, Casey began to experience the conflict between her vision and the actual experience. After the first week, as she faced challenges and worked hard to make adjustments, she told us about a dream she had. I thought it exhibited well what new

leaders go through in their drive to get things right. Here is Casey's dream about the apprehension of leading the first Sprint Review as she describes it:

The first thing I remember is standing in a sea of people at the Von Braun Center in town. I had seats on the floor but it wasn't the front row... which I think is strange because I am the ScrumMaster (I had closer seats at the Paul McCartney concert I attended last year in Atlanta)... Anyway,

energy and commitment and focus it. I guess it's like being the product owner for the vision.

In a recent consulting engagement I had the opportunity to work with a new ScrumMaster, Casey Hott at NASA in Huntsville, Alabama. Casey was selected to be the ScrumMaster for a Scrum pilot project. Casey was a good candidate because she was new to a project management role and hadn't

everybody is in their designated seat and is standing up, I guess because the meeting is about to start. I'm looking around and I'm seeing all these people I graduated with from high school. I didn't like most of them so that was a bummer. I'm pretty sure my parents were somewhere up in the balcony.

Everyone is talking among themselves, waiting for the meeting to start when all of a sudden, the band starts up. Yes, there was a band at this Sprint Review. It is no surprise, since I am a HUGE Beatles fan, that the band begins playing Beatles' songs. The first song (and the only song I remember them playing) was none other than "Help!" The last thing I remember in my dream is joining in with another former high school classmate singing the chorus "Help! I need somebody. Help! Not just anybody. Help! I need someone... HELP!!" I then woke up and realized it was time to get ready for work...another bummer.

Anyone who has been in this role

can probably say they've had a similar dream. Alone in a sea of people, looking for acceptance, calling out for help.

A ScrumMaster, or any agile leader, is responsible for making every day, every iteration, and every release as smooth as possible; for coordinating and ensuring collaboration between all the parties. You have to balance doing

so much that nobody learns anything, and doing so little that people can't see the value in your role. You have to work to remove difficult obstacles, and deal with issues at every level of the organization.

It is a role in which you must find personal satisfaction in providing a good environment for the team and guiding them to be successful. A good leader never rests, and always dreams of new ways to make things better.

Literally. 



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