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Coaches Values and Principles



Work in progress

Since so much of agile and lean operates through values and principles, I decided to start working on some coaching values and principles.

Values

- Help folks understand the mindset, values and principles, not just the practices
- Don't feed folks; teach them how to fish.

Principles

John Wooden (coach UCLA men's basketball team) is widely considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of sports. He lays out five basic principles of coaching which can easily be applied to our world

- Industriousness: All new skills, and all new skills require work.
- Enthusiasm: When your heart is in your work, and you're excited about a new way of doing things, it rubs off on everyone around you.
- Condition: Agile works when every team member is good at what he or she does.
- Fundamentals: Wooden writes, "the finest system cannot overcome poor execution of the fundamentals. The coach must be certain that he never permits himself to get 'carried away' by a complicated system" — and this is especially relevant for an agile coach.
- Development of team spirit: Self-organization, whole team, energized work, and empowering the team. From Wooden "The coach must use every bit of psychology at his command and use every available method to develop a fine team spirit on his squad. Teamwork and unselfishness must be encouraged at every opportunity, and each [team member] must be eager, not just willing, to sacrifice personal glory for the welfare of the team. Selfishness, envy, egotism, and criticism of each other can crush team spirit and ruin the potential of any team. The coach must be aware of this and constantly alert to prevent such traits by catching them at the source before trouble develops."

Coaching Philosophy

- Work ourselves out of a job

- Go to the “Gemba”
- Be the servant leader
- Its not “it depends” – state approach(es) as well as pros and cons
- Coach with humility
- You cannot change more than your customer wants to change
- Plan – Do – Check – Act (PDCA)
- Constantly refer to the agile, SAFe, etc mindset we want

What Does an Agile Coach Do?

Coaching is a mix of:

- Growing skills, knowledge, and confidence using just-in-time teaching within the organization’s context
- Preparing people for ceremonies, meetings, etc.
- Practicing skills side-by-side (as appropriate)
- Providing fast feedback and facilitating change
- Providing training to fill gaps in knowledge
- Facilitation to improve information sharing and decision making

A coach must be prepared to:

- Teach: Coaches provide formal and one-on-one agile training to any member of a delivery team. They craft industry knowledge to the context of an organization and team. They promote collaboration for diversity in thinking.
- Mentor: Coaches share previous professional experience in context.
- Facilitate: Guide the teams and individuals through ceremonies. Usually low touch, letting them go through the works.
- Coach: At an individual level and at a team level. Help teams and individuals to achieve high performance by embracing Lean-Agile mindset and practices.

Coaching Cycle

Typical cycle of an agile coach is 6 months. The first three months are high engagement and last three are more ad-hoc engagement - high engagement for a specific issue, but much less continuous engagement. Coaches start a client with a high engagement which tapers off as they take more responsibility for their learning.

We walk them through:

- Peak of expectation
- Trough of disillusionment
- Slope of enlightenment
- Outcome of enhanced productivity

Why Hire A Coach?

Some ideas:

- Experience. In particular, not because coaches are any smarter.
- Outsiders help bring perspective “You can't be a sage in your own village”
- Enthusiasm. Help overcome organizational inertia

Outcome from Coaches Perspective

Be a trusted advisor

Be out of that job

What We Don't Want to See

What does a coach not do?

- A coach doesn't solve problems, but rather helps the Team how they will solve the problem.
- The coach does not act as “staff augmentation.” For example, while a coach may help out in many ways as part of being a servant leader, the coach doesn't act as a secretary setting up meetings for the teams, or running team ceremonies etc.
- A coach does not take ownership of project deliverables. The Team stays accountable and responsible for meeting goals and objectives.
- A coach works him/her-self out of a job. In particular there is not room for a “If you are not part of the solution there is plenty of money to be made in prolonging the problem” attitude. If you are not helping you should stop or help find someone who can help.

Want to Know More?

- [What are the Characteristics of a Great Coach](#)
- [What Kind of Questions Should We Ask If We Are Hiring a Coach?](#)

[Learning](#), [Reference](#), [Coaching](#), [Values](#), [Principles](#), [ToDo](#)

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