Quality, Culture, and Process: Coming Together to find Success

Heather M. Wilcox
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About Me....

• Former Anthropologist
• In 1994, thought “Maybe this computer thing might go somewhere....”
• 26 years and 8 companies later – still doing the thing!
• Current gig: Staff Engineer, Quality Control Team - NWEA
Origins of Enlightenment

- RCA on Data Quality Errors
- Result: “Hurry Culture”
- Was driving us to cut corners to get things done in time.
- New Question: Is this the culture we want or should it be something different? Both answers can be correct.
What is Culture

Culture describes the way a group chooses to interact both within its membership and externally. It drives the determination of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors as well as expectations and customs. Cultural norms can vary widely and are wholly dependent upon the society in which they are constructed.
Kinds of Dev Cultures

- “Hurry Up”
- “Careful” or “NASA”
- “Better than Average”
- “Innovate or Die”
- “Purist”
- These are just examples – There are as many cultures as there are adjectives.
Finding Your Culture

• In an established team, introspection is key.
• What does your company value?
• What does your team value?
• What gets rewarded? Speed? Quality? Innovation?
Put a Name On It

• Name should reflect the culture
• Should be realistic and honest
• Can act as a reminder of a place you don’t want to revisit.
• If you don’t like the culture you have, create an aspirational name for the culture you do want and use that as a guide.
Embrace or Replace?

- Did you find what you were expecting?
- Good surprise or bad surprise?
- Does your culture mesh with team goals?
- Consider your product
If You Love It, Protect It

• It’s not easy but it’s worth it
• Ensure that incoming work is culturally appropriate
• Empower your team
• Negotiate when things get ugly with Business
Why Charter?

- First and Foremost: Content stolen from Diana Larsen – I wish I was this cool....
- It forces the team to figure out what’s important and how they want to work with each other.
- Can align a team with the rest of the company and can help a company build a mission and vision that the teams can follow.
- Refreshes teams that have become stale or have wandered from the mission.
How to Charter/Recharter

- Purpose – What the team wants to do
  - Vision: A future ideal state
  - Mission: The what and how
  - Mission Tests: Proof that “it’s happening”

- Alignment – How the team wants to work together
  - Shared Values – Values that the team wants to uphold
  - Simple rules – Short rules that support the values
  - Working Agreements – Statements that describe how the team wants to carry out their daily business
Aligning Tools, Processes and Teams

- Tools should support your culture
  - “Put your money where your culture is.”
- Processes should also be appropriate
  - If fast is important, CI/CD is the way
  - Quality Software = Quality processes
- Marketing, Support, Sales, HR, and IT need to be on board too!
Finding Success

• Apparently, the sun is vital?
• Releases
• Quality
• Customer Satisfaction
• Employee retention
Thank You!!!!

• To You, for coming to listen!
• My Editors, for their thoughtful input.
• My husband, who puts up with my shenanigans!
Questions?