Managing the Unmanageable: If You Are Agile, What Do Managers Do?

Ron Lichty, principal, Ron Lichty Consulting author, Managing the Unmanageable
Managing Software People & Teams
Advise Business & Engineering Leaders

• Untangling knots in software development
• Making development “hum”
• Interim VP Eng roles
MANAGING the UNMANAGEABLE

Rules, Tools, and Insights for Managing Software People and Teams

Mickey W. Mantle | Ron Lichty

http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net  <-----tools, excerpts, more rules of thumb

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* Addison Wesley (Amazon, BarnesandNoble, InformIT.com, Safari)
Managing Software People and Teams

Mickey W. Mantle
Ron Lichty

http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net  <----and pointers to video training
This Talk: the chapter we added to the video training

http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net  <-----and pointers to video training
This Talk: the chapter we added to the video training & to the 2nd Edition (Nov/Dec)

http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net <-----and pointers to video training
Study of Product Team Performance
You?

- A census of the group...
Management Training

• Isn’t it odd...
  – how long we expect programmers to have studied the art of programming
  – how little we expect managers to have studied the art of managing?
The Problem:
The Problem: Where Is the Manager?
Welcome to Agile!
the Agile Manager Squeeze

Organizational Changes
My Job Changes
Leadership Changes
Team Changes
Peer & Partner Changes

you are here

--Laura Powers, crafted for Ron’s talk to Agile Learning Labs
But There’s Still a Manager Role

• A changed manager role
Welcome to Agile!
the Agile Manager Squeeze

Agile done well represents a shift from
Managers in charge
to
Teams in charge
Welcome to Agile!
the Agile Manager Squeeze

Agile done well represents a shift from
Managers in charge
to
Teams in charge

But the rest of the organization may still think we direct things!
Rules of Thumb / Nuggets of Wisdom*

* 300 in the book  
more at http://managingtheunmanageable.net/morerulesofthumb.html

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Rules of Thumb / Nuggets of Wisdom

• **Measure twice, cut once.**

• **Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.**

• **Pair programming for half an hour during an interview will save everyone’s time.**
  – David Vydra, TestDriven.com

• **Brooks’s Law: Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later.**
  – Frederick Brooks Jr., The Mythical Man-Month
Managers and Agile

• “A common misconception is that because of this reliance on self-organizing teams, there is little or no role for leaders of agile teams. Nothing could be further from the truth.”
  --Mike Cohn, Succeeding with Agile
Managing the Unmanageable:
Rules, Tools, and Insights for Managing Software People and Teams

- What’s unique about managing programmers
- What’s unique about programmers
- Finding and hiring great programmers
- Getting new programmers started off right
- Managing people / managing a team
- Managing up, out, and yourself
- Motivating programmers and teams
- Establishing/nurturing a successful culture
- Managing successful software delivery
Managing the Unmanageable: Rules, Tools, and Insights for Managing Software People and Teams

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Agile Management Roles

• *Exercise!*
## Manager Roles in Agile

### Manager Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes with Agile</th>
<th>Instructor notes</th>
<th>Manager Responsibilities</th>
<th>expects LOTS of change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A little -&gt; a LOT</td>
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</table>

### People Management

- **Hire great programmers**
- **onboarding new hires / get them started on the team**
- **Grow skills and careers**
- **Counsel / mentor / coach**
- **Set performance objectives / Review performance and give feedback**
- **Recognize exceptional performance**
- **Manage problem employees / Fire poor performers**
- **Promote people up levels**
- **Compensate fairly**
- **Arbitrate inter-team personality conflicts**
- **Motivate your staff / build team spirit**
- **Eliminate de-motivators (see Herzberg’s Motivation & Hygiene Factors)**

### Technical management

- **Support architects in ensuring team follows architectural best practices**
- **Champion development best practices**
- **Escalate product opportunities observed by team**
- **Lead design reviews**
- **Maintain quality focus**
- **Resolve technical disputes**
- **Research new technologies**

### Project team support

- **Direct project activities**
- **Make project decisions**
- **Monitor progress**
- **Prioritize work**
- **Load balance developer tasks**
- **Maintain project schedule**
- **Identify risks, anticipate issues**
- **Triage / prioritize bugs**
- **Coach & troubleshoot team communication**
- **Reap a point of escalation: e.g., unclear rpts whiplash, "what" not "how"**
- **Provide focus: Keep everyone on the same page**
- **Balance risk-first and customer-value-first development**
- **Remove roadblocks**
- **Coach facilitators (PjMs, Scrum Masters, Product Owners, Product Mgrs)**
- **Order t-shirts, celebrate success**

### In your organization

- **Manage project portfolio**
- **Match / assign people to teams / projects**
- **Create good working conditions**
- **Ensure your reports have the tools they need**
- **Manage budgets (tools, training, staffing, etc)**
- **Plan for organizational growth / change**
- **Troubleshoot dysfunction**
- **Establish/nurture positive, motivated culture**

### The larger organization

- **Manage Up**
- **Manage Out (relationships with other departments)**
- **Protect reports from corp distractions, extraneous communication**
- **Protect reports from requirements whimsy**
- **Communicate corporate culture, messages, business objectives**
- **Champion your reports; communicate their key insights to stakeholders**
- **Manage expectations**
- **Establish metrics**
- **Manage vendors, suppliers**

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Agile Management Roles

• Familiar management roles teams still need
• Roles (and styles) that are inappropriate
  – so are deprecated
• Roles that change, sometimes dramatically
• Management roles that are new with agile
A Few Manager Roles in Agile

- Creating an Agile Culture
- Supporting Agile Values
- Empowering Self-Organization & Excellence
- Scaling Scrum
- Removing Impediments
- Counseling, Coaching and Mentoring
- Hiring and Firing
Managers and Agile

• Creating an Agile Culture
Creating an Agile Culture

- Theory Y: “enabling”, “empowering”, “developmental”, “continuous improvement” -> Servant Leadership

McGregor's X-Y Theory
Managers and Agile

• Creating an Agile Culture

Lean-Agile management is the art of leading people, not managing them...
...creating the correct environment, focusing them on the right things, and trusting them to do their work...

In Lean-Agile, the manager has two primary responsibilities:
• setting the outcomes or goals expected of the team;
• assisting the doers in creating a better process to get their jobs done...

--Alan Shalloway, Net Objectives
Leaders and Agile

• Rules of Thumb

Management sets the boundaries of what needs to be done and says to the team, I trust you to figure out how to get it done.

-- Agile Open California 2013
Leaders and Agile

• Rules of Thumb

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-- Agile Open California 2013

At Spotify we trust our people and teams to make informed decisions about the way they work and what they work on.

-- Spotify, on their agile process
Leaders and Agile

• Rules of Thumb

Trust but verify.
Delegation & Empowerment

Trust but verify.

- RONALD REAGAN
Delegation & Empowerment

Trust but verify.

- RONALD REAGAN quoting VLADIMIR LENIN
Leaders and Agile

• Rules of Thumb

Trust but verify.

- RONALD REAGAN quoting VLADIMIR LENIN

– imperative not to micromanage
– the essence of delegation
– setting expected outcomes for teams
Leaders and Agile

• Rules of Thumb

Trust but verify.

- RONALD REAGAN quoting VLADIMIR LENIN

I inspect what I expect.

- ALAN LEFKOF, Netopia CEO, quoting LOU GERSTNER
Programming Is a Team Sport
Programming Is a Team Sport

• Create a culture of communication
  – at every level
  – with everyone
    • up, down, within and across
Programming Is a Team Sport

• Create a culture of communication
  – at every level
  – with everyone
    • up, down, within and across

• “We have two ears and one mouth. Use them in this ratio.”
  — Kimberly Wiefling
Programming Is a Team Sport

You cannot overcommunicate.

-RON LICHTY
Programming Is a Team Sport

You cannot overcommunicate.

- RON LICHTY

• Virtual teams
  – There is never enough communication
  – Commit to communicate

The more distance between teammates, the more you have to formalize communication and make it explicit.

- TED YOUNG, Development Manager & Agile Coach, Guidewire
Creating an Agile Culture

• Establishing Culture

8
Establishing a Successful Programming Culture

ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED BACK IN CHAPTER 5 WAS “WHAT IS A GREAT PROGRAMMER?”

But a question more relevant to you is “WHAT IS A GREAT MANAGER OF PROGRAMMERS?” An essential and significant element of your role as a great manager is to create a nurturing and successful programming culture. For most of us, that’s a culture that supports and encourages the delivery of quality software on time and within budget by a team that developers feel proud and gratified to be a part of for a long time.

You were hired to manage, right? But even if you follow all of our earlier advice, it’s not easy. Your programmers don’t always act rationally or predictably. Some have chaotic personal lives. They don’t always get along. They can be blunt, secretive, irritable, manic, silent, impatient, petulant, abrasive...

Your organization may not care much about them (unless their irrational behavior spews beyond your department, of course). But your organization cares a lot about your ability to produce and deploy software that meets organizational goals and customer needs.

Almost any group of programmers, no matter how dysfunctional, will care, too. They care about being productive and building successful products and services.

As for you, you care even more. In addition to wanting what your developers want, and wanting to meet your organization’s expectations, you want to be a high-performing software development manager who can stretch beyond the ordinary to achieve the remarkable.

You need help. You somehow need to create internal and external expectations for greatness. You need to instill confidence that you and your team can deliver. You need a culture that supports your goals and objectives. And you need to create an environment of excellence that attracts and retains top talent and motivates stellar work.

Powerful cultures drive high-performance work in ways that no amount of personal motivation alone can achieve.

Under the right conditions, the problems of commitment, alignment, motivation, and change largely melt away.

—Jim Collins

Defining “Successful”

OK, so it may not be greatness you need to deliver. For some projects it may be functional but frequent delivery. For others, your stakeholders may open their product to be “flawless.” Some teams are formed to help validate conceptual products. Other teams are formed to keep products running as the environments they’re built within change.

You may find you have organizational goals as well as goals such as developing and retaining quality programmers, perhaps. It is essential to creating and nurturing a successful programming culture that you understand what “successful” means for your company, your organization, your project, and your team—and how to measure it.

The Programming Culture

Unless you knocked it out and inherited it, you have to create your own successful programming culture. To maintain it, even if you inherited it, you need to nurture it. These are truisms whether you and your team are developing packaged software, software as a service, embedded software, R&D software components and services, or custom applications for the firm’s employees. They are true whether you’re part of a tiny start-up, a large corporation, a nonprofit, or government. Your mission is to deliver value. And that requires managing the people and the culture.

Managers and Agile

- Creating an Agile Culture
- Supporting Agile Values
- Empowering Self-Organization & Excellence
- Scaling Scrum
- Removing Impediments
- Counseling, Coaching and Mentoring
- Hiring and Firing
Managers and Agile
Managers and Agile

• Agile Adoption curve…
## Methodology You Associate with Increased Profits

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Agile Makes Us More Profitable

• Why might that be?

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Why might that be?

• The Agile Principles begin…
  – *Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer…*
Go *beyond* the Agile Principles…

–Our highest priority is to *delight* the customer…

---

www.AgileManifesto.org

© Ron Lichty
How do we do that?

- Agile practices?
Agile Practices Do Deliver Value
Agile Practices Do Deliver Value

- Plan Daily
- Plan Weekly (or biweekly or…)
- Plan Publicly & Transparently
- Order Work Based on Customer Value
- Together define “Done”
- Relatively Size Stories
- Deliver Frequently
- Share how we’re doing
- Reflect on how to do better
Agile Practices Deliver Value

• Standups
  – Standups matter:
  – Effective, Daily Standups

--2015 Study of Product Team Performance
Agile Practices Deliver Value

• Definitions of Done
  – Definitions of Done matter:
  – Created within the team

--2016 Study of Product Team Performance
Agile Practices Do Deliver Value
Voting Machines Deliver Value, too
Voting Machines Deliver Value, too

• But no one claims voting machines are what make us a democracy
Similarly…

Agile Practices

Don’t (by themselves) Make Us Agile
Agile Values and Agile Principles Make Us Agile
Agile Values Make Us Agile

The Agile Manifesto

– We value:

• **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
• **Working software** over comprehensive documentation
• **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
• **Responding to change** over following a plan

Principles behind the Agile Manifesto

We follow these principles:

Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.

Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.

Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.

Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.

Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need.
Value the Agile Manifesto over practices

**Agile Principles Make Us Agile**

- Build projects around motivated individuals
- Trust... to get the job done
- Face-to-face conversation
- Self-organizing teams
- The team reflects, ...tunes, ...adjusts

Value the Agile Manifesto over practices

-- http://agilemanifesto.org/
Managers and Agile

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- Hiring and Firing
What Is Self-Organization?
Self-Organizing Teams

• If our self-organizing team were an acting troupe, …

What kind of acting do we do?
Self-Organizing Teams

- If our self-organizing team were an acting troupe, …
  What kind of acting do we do?
- If our self-organizing team were a music combo, …
  What kind of music do we perform?
Models: Self-Organizing Teams & Managers

- Improv & Jazz don’t give us manager models
Models: Self-Organizing Teams & Managers

• Coaching
Models: Self-Organizing Teams & Managers

• Coaching: basketball
  – Phil Jackson
    • Sacred Hoops
    • Eleven Rings
  – Steve Kerr
Projects Not Suitable for Agile?
Projects Not Suitable for Agile?

• Micromanagement
Projects Not Suitable for Agile?

- Micromanagement

- Agile calls for everyone on the team to step up
- Micromanagement causes everyone to step back
Projects Not Suitable for Agile?

- Micromanagement disrupts Agile
- Micromanagement prevents Best Teams
- Micromanagement prevents Learning
- Micromanaged teams become order-takers

- Agile calls for everyone on the team to step up
- Micromanagement causes everyone to step back

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Empowering Self-Organization & Excellence

When teams self-organize there's still plenty for managers to do... a managers job is to engineer the organization so that teams can do their best work.

--Esther Derby, co-founder, Scrum Alliance
Managers and Agile

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Scrum Teams
Scaling Scrum

• The question managers ask me most
  – *How do we scale our organization?*

• My most recent blog post:
  – http://ronlichty.blogspot.com/
Scaling to Multiple Teams

• The easy route: splitting by components
  – grouping like-minded, like-tooled, common-best-practices people together
  – easy management model
  – teams each get an attuned manager/mentor/coach

• The problem:
  – our goal: customer functionality, not components
    • customer functionality requires multiple components
    • incessant inter-team dependencies
    • costly high-bandwidth, inter-team communication
Scaling to Multiple Teams

• The easy route: splitting by components
  – grouping like-minded, like-tooled, common-best-practices people together

• The effective route: feature teams
  – our goal: customer functionality, not components
  – every team has every skillset needed to so deliver
    • teams own interface, functionality, or customer journey
  – same-skilled folks are scattered across teams
    • each set still gets an attuned manager/mentor/coach
How Teams Change in Agile

From manager-led component teams…

To self-organizing feature teams...

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Managers and Agile

• Removing Impediments
Managers and Agile

• Removing Impediments

“Managers are still needed. Not so much for their planning and controlling ability, but for the important job of interfacing on the team’s behalf with the rest of the organization.”

--Diana Larsen, co-author, Agile Retrospectives
Managers and Agile

- Removing Impediments

*Be a damper to the noise.* --Joe Kleinschmidt, CTO
Managers and Agile

• Removing Impediments

Ensure your team has slack!
(100% capacity begets bottlenecks!)
Managers and Agile

- Removing Impediments: Protect team focus!

(Guard against the waste of multitasking!)
Managers and Agile

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• Counseling, Coaching and Mentoring
Managers and Agile

• Counseling, Coaching and Mentoring

“At Spotify managers are focused on coaching, mentorship, and solving impediments rather than telling people what to do.”

-- Spotify on its agile practice
Managers and Agile

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Managers and Agile

- Hiring and Firing

Always be recruiting!

--Mickey Mantle and Ron Lichty,
Managing the Unmanageable: Rules, Tools, and Insights for Managing Software People and Teams
Managers and Agile

• Hiring and Firing

Always be recruiting!

Deal with problem employees!
How Do We Manage in an Agile World?

- Trust Our People
- Empower Self-Organization & Excellence
- Expect / Enable Truly Shared Leadership
- Model, Defend, Evangelize Agile Values
- Foster a Culture of Communication
- Encourage Teamwork and Collaboration
- Shield Teams from Politics & Distraction
- Take Care of Stuff! Take Care of Teams!
Why Do We Need Managers When We’ve Empowered Teams?

• Critical to agile transformational success
• Key roles in agile
• Key roles in creating agile culture
• Key to removing impediments
• but Agile demands that managers (like everyone else) be proactive!
  – Managers must adapt to & own these roles
  – Starts by understanding new / changed roles
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Ron Lichty Consulting

- Mentoring, coaching, training, consulting:
  - http://ronlichty.com, Ron@RonLichty.com

- The book: *Managing the Unmanageable: Rules, Tools & Insights for Managing Software People & Teams*
  - http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net <----- tools, excerpts, more rules of thumb

- The video training: *LiveLessons: Managing Software People and Teams*
  - http://ManagingTheUnmanageable.net/video.html

- The study: *The Study of Product Team Performance*
  - http://ronlichty.com/study.html

- Training: *The Agile Manager, Managing Software People and Teams, Zero to Agile in Three Days*
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