7 Attitudes of Highly Successful Agile Teams
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You've assembled your Agile team, trained them on Agile principles, given them the best Agile tools, and let them run with it. They have grown as a team, executed their development iterations well, and delivered working software every few weeks. They are now ready to advance to a higher level of performance.

If you're outside the self-organizing Agile team but can influence them as a manager or other stakeholder, it's better to coach them, set expectations, and make suggestions rather than dictate the exact improvement path. And while the team is ultimately responsible for drawing conclusions from past performance, trying new things, and moving itself down the continuous improvement road, encouraging these attitudes and behaviors of highly successful Agile teams will help them reach a new plateau:

1. **Fostering an atmosphere of trust and honesty.** Trusting relationships and honest communication enable effective risk management, early detection of issues, and faster team learning. It's hard to make accurate estimations of effort and team progress without trust and honesty.
2. **Encouraging team members to ask for help.** The team is responsible for meeting its commitments but can't reassign someone to help another in trouble if the need is unknown. Likewise, team members may not ask for help without knowing they will be rescued.
3. **Accepting mistakes without playing the blame game.** When developing software iteratively, it's important to prototype and fail fast if needed. Large-scale success is often built on a foundation of many small failures. Acknowledge failures and mistakes, learn from them, and move on.
4. **Building a sense of safety and family.** Members of nurturing families feel respected, supported, and protected. Team member performance improves in a similar environment (i.e., one that respects, supports, and respects them).
5. **Promoting spontaneity**, which enables the creativity that the team needs to solve difficult problems. To promote spontaneity, leave some solutions and activities unplanned, encourage open-ended discussions (e.g., during sprint retrospectives), and schedule time for brainstorming when facing non-trivial issues.
6. **Understanding that everyone works for each other.** Successful Agile teams have no room for egos or hierarchy. Respect the unique perspective and potential contributions that each person brings to the team.
7. **Allowing work to be fun.** The best Agile teams enjoy working and spending time with each other. This is typically the result of following the other six habits!

Once your Agile team masters the fundamentals, tweaking the softer, people-side of the work environment can improve the interpersonal "chemistry" and enable higher performance. The results can be amazing!

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About the Author: Mike McEwen (PMP, CSM) is a servant-leader who forms amazing teams and helps them deliver award-winning technology solutions to commercial, non-profit, and government customers.