When Good Trains, Teams, and People Backslide—Recognizing and Fixing Anti-Patterns

Lightning Talk
Stephen D. Poe
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Projects have "technical debt" that has to be cleaned up

Agile transformations have "organizational debt" & "business process debt" to clean up
SAFe & Agile require change

- Changing
  - Process
  - Organizational Culture
  - Individual Mindset

- Changing how an organization works
- Changing decades of individual’s habits

How long to establish a habit?

- “21 days” – for a simple activity
- 84-254 days – for more complex activities or for some people
**Anti-Patterns**

- **An anti-pattern**
  - Is a common response to a recurring problem that is usually ineffective and risks being highly counterproductive

- **What anti-patterns are**
  - Old ways of thinking and acting
  - Old habits

- **Why we have them**
  - Because it’s how we have been working for years
  - It’s comfortable

- **What we can do to correct them**
  1. *First, we must acknowledge that we will fall back into anti-patterns time and time again*
  2. *We must be vigilant to look for and recognize when we drop back into anti-patterns*
  3. *We must then correct the anti-pattern behavior*
Why Do We Slip Back?

- Pressure
- Overloads
- Stress
- New circumstances
- Unfamiliarity
- Uncertainty

We find ourselves, once again, in this familiar place that we fought hard to change. It's discouraging. Heartbreaking. Full of self-doubt. It's also scary...what if we never make it?
Anti-Pattern Examples

• Elimination of slack
  – “The Train must spend 110% of their time on product development!”

• Command & control
  – “We don’t have time for the Team to figure out how to do it. I’ll just assign everything!”

• Loss of WIP limits
  – We need to get everything started now so we can finish on time!

• What anti-patterns have you seen?
Fixing Anti-Patterns

• How to fix an anti-pattern?
  – Identify what anti-pattern have they fallen into
    ▪ Why did they fall into it?
  – What SAFe/Agile principals, processes, or procedures
    ▪ Did they stop using and replace with the anti-pattern?
    ▪ Which should they be using?
  – Coach them on that SAFe/Agile process or procedure – refresh and reinforce their training and new habits
Self-Reliance

• Agile is making Teams self-reliant and self-supporting
• How do you teach your Train & Teams to:
  – Fix them themselves?
• “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”
In Conclusion

- Everyone on the Train – both program and Team levels - needs to learn to:
  - Observe
  - Recognize when Trains, Teams, and people fall back into anti-patterns
  - Work on correcting anti-patterns

- Observe the ocean
- Recognize the wave
- Fix the problem

Before you wipeout