Team 5 Organizational Impediments

In this exercise, your team's job is to figure out how a scrum master would diagnose and address an organizational impediment. You will do this by following the three C's approach:
- Complaint
- Cause
- Correction

Read Your Team's Scenario

Scenario Five
This scrum team creates marketing collateral, banner ads and marketing emails. The team includes writers, artists, and technologists. The team's output is low, because they are frequently blocked waiting for approvals from the head of marketing and the company's staff lawyer. They don't understand why these approvals take so long to get.

The head of marketing likes to be hands-on. They've instituted a process that requires them to sign off on all new marketing material, so they can keep an eye on quality. The head of marketing tries to attend to these approvals as quickly as possible, but they're quite busy. Sometimes things sit in their inbox for four or five days.

The company's lawyer has an assistant who acts as gatekeeper. This assistant prioritizes things based on urgency and risk. Incoming complaints and intellectual property issues are considered high priority. Approval of marketing copy is considered to be a fairly low priority. In fact, she thinks it's just annoying that the marketing team bothers them at all.

The company has recently made a well-respected member of the marketing department the product owner for this team. The PO has good relationships with influential people throughout the company.

Complaint

Complaints are the symptoms, or pain points, that alert us to the presence of an impediment. In your scenario, what complaints and pain points are people experiencing?

- too many gatekeepers in the approval process
- one of the approvers is overwhelmed and process can't move forward
- approvals take too long
- output is low
- another approver's assistant is deprioritizing approvals

- lawyer isn't as involved as they should be

Cause

The cause is the underlying reason the complaint exists. The causes of organizational impediments often include: organizational structure, policies, politics, process, powerful personalities, and/or shared technologies. A complex organizational impediment may have more than one cause. A good starting place is to identify ways that the empirical scrum pillars of transparency, inspection, and adaptation are not working effectively. In this scenario, where do you see failings of transparency, inspection, and adaptation?

- transparency: team doesn't have insight into approval process
- transparency: team doesn't know expectations of the approval process
- transparency: bureaucracy or hierarchy/org structure are not understood
- inspection/adaptation: no conversations about the current process and how we could improve

Now take your analysis deeper. One way to find root causes is by repeatedly asking 'why?' Start with a problem, then ask "Why is that so?" Take the answer you find and again ask "Why is that so?" In your scenario, what do you believe is the underlying root cause(s)?

- transparency: team doesn't know expectations of the approval process
  - why? devs/SM don't have constant contact with PO/stakeholder and build relationships
  - why? they aren't working on personal relationships
  - why? because they don't understand the expectations or the process
  - why? they're in the throes of the problem
  - why? **they're not communicating** and not understanding the process

Correction

The correction is an intervention to address the cause, and ultimately relieve the complaints. Try to come up with three possible solutions. For each possible solution, describe:
- What needs to happen
- Who should be involved
- How a scrum master would begin to implement the solution
- What problems might arise with this approach

AGILE LEARNING LABS

1. Meet with the members of the team or do a workshop/focus group to help understand agile ways of working

2. Meet with leaders to understand why this miscommunication is occuring

3. Meet with lawyer to appoint a proxy for approval/let them know their impact

4. Talk to the head of marketing and ask for more autonomy

Which of your solutions do you think is best?

Talk to the head of marketing and ask for more autonomy

Prepare To Present Your Findings

Your team will be sharing your scenario, complaints, cause(s), and your best solution with the rest of the group. Decide who will present each section. The time box for your presentation will be two minutes.

AGILE LEARNING LABS