


A solution focused format of a project retrospective (the complete retrospective examples series)

 ontheagilepath.net/2016/01/a-solution-focused-format-of-a-project-retrospective-the-complete-retrospective-examples-series.html

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With this post I continue the series of [examples for retrospectives](#). It describes a solution focussed version that I recently used as a format for a project retrospective (a project that lasted 3 months and 2 teams were working together).

Focus of the retrospective was on the collaboration of both teams during the project.

Introduction

How

A brief overview on the agenda

Time

2'

Total Time

2'

Set the stage

Exercise

Satisfaction (see [Crisp's DNA Happiness Index](#)) with the teams collaboration

How

Based on the question: How satisfied are you with the collaboration of both teams during the project?

Why

Get a fast overview about satisfaction based on gut feeling.

Great input to ask further questions during the next retrospective phases.

Preparation

Headline and smilies on the wall

Objections

Works fast and provides an important overview about the satisfaction.

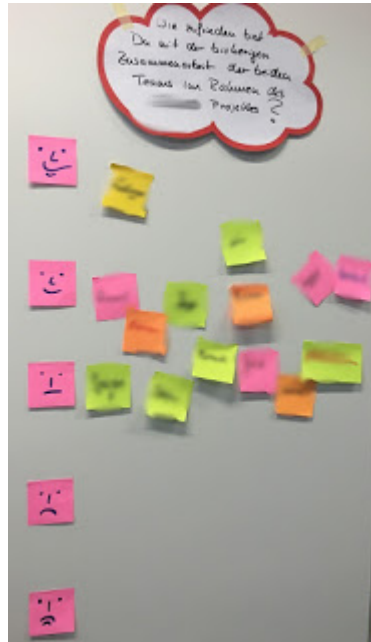
Time

3'

Total Time

5'

Example



Gather data

Exercise

Team collaboration timeline

How

Working in pairs – a pair is build by one member from every team, to already mix the input

and foster cross team collaboration. The task was to remember six significant situations from the project (can be connected to team collaboration but also loosely coupled).

Maximum 6 items per pair.

Each item had to be mapped to the timeline (roughly).

In addition every item had to be connected with a mood indicator (was it a positive event (+++), a

neutral one (ooo) or something to improve (—))

After the collection phase, the pairs had to add their items to the timeline and mood matrix on the wall and

explain it shortly to the whole group.

Why

It generates an overview and recaps the project.

As the group was about 16 participants, working in pairs and limiting the output to six items was a

way to gather the important points and avoid losing momentum.

Mapping it to a point in time during the project opens the perspective and maybe connects it with other moments.

Indicating the mood can spot different impressions by pairs and provides an input for possible improvements.

Preparation

Arrange a horizontal timeline and mark e.g. the months for orientation.

Add vertical mood indicators. I used +++, ooo, —. You could e.g. use smileies instead.

Objections

Working in pairs adds activity (one can observe the noise and engagement level).

To limit the number of items is important to keep the flow during gather data.

Time

6' to collect 6 facts

ca. 10' to collect the pairs input

Total Time

21'

Generate insights

Exercise

What went well?

How

Build groups of max. five people, again mixing teams.

Every group collects points that went really well regarding the teams' collaboration in the project.

For every point found, explain what were contributions that made this point a really positive one.

Explain your outcome to the whole group.

We arranged a space on the wall where every group pinned their results and explained it.

This way everyone can read through it and the results are accessible and highly visible during the next phases.

Why

Again groups with participants from both teams help to gather different perspectives and have some clarifications and discussions up front. In addition it fosters working together and get to

know each other even better.

The 2nd question aims for thinking more about the positive sides of this point.

While investigating, the point gets even more prominent and maybe becomes a sticky one.

Preparation

A flip chart that explains the exercise and displays the two questions.

A flip chart for every group to write down their outcomes.

Think through the exercise and clarify upfront how the room can be arranged to support the groups work:

- Where will you place the flip charts?
- How can you avoid interruptions?
- Can everyone read the questions for this exercise?
- Where will you display the groups results, so that everyone can follow the presentations and that it is accessible during the next steps in your retrospective.

Objections

Group work fosters driver for results. Everyone seemed highly engaged while discussing the

positive areas of their team work.

The 2nd question helped to get some deeper insights about the frame of a positive point

Time

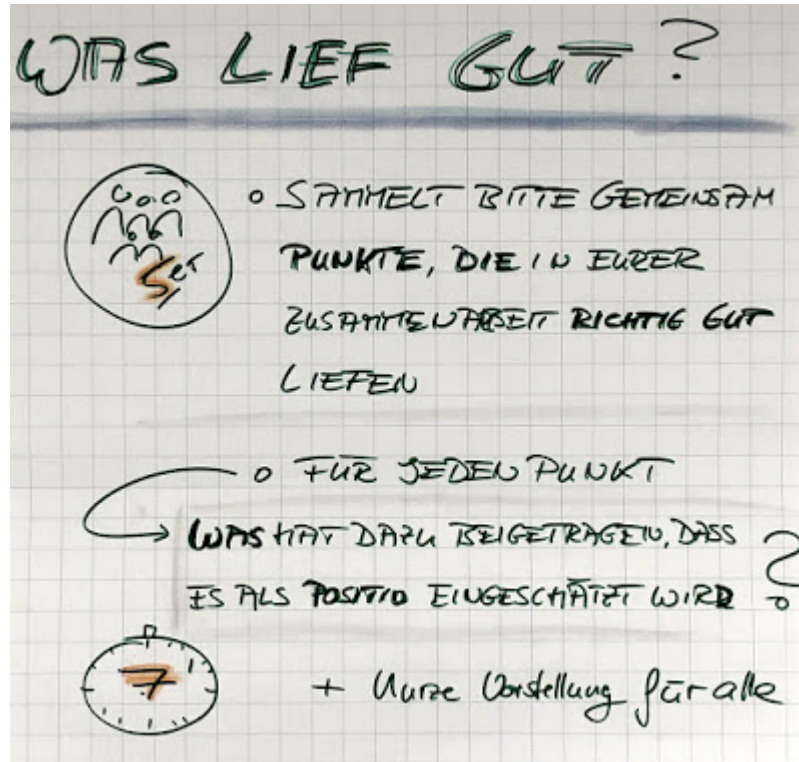
7' to collect points and answer the 2nd questions

ca. 10' to present the outcome to the whole group

Total Time

48'

Example



Generate insights (2)

Exercise

And what would you like to have happen in your collaboration?

How

Based on the questions used in The Five Minute Coach: Improve Performance Rapidly

, this entry questions should help the groups to focus on their future collaboration. Asking:

“What would you like to have happen?”, places the perspective to the outcome.

Again work in groups of max. 5 members, mixed.

In addition to the main question the group had to answer 3 supporting questions:

And when this change happens, then what happens?

And who can execute that change?

And when can you determine whether that change happened?

Why

Working in groups ... argumentation see above

Using the forward looking questions helps to focus on an outcome and not to dig deeper and deeper in problems.

Especially when working with teams, problem solving techniques are not longer the way to go. Using solution focused approaches is the better alternative.

Using the 3 supporting questions describes the outcome and adds the responsibility and time aspects too.

Preparation

A flip chart that explains the exercise and displays the 4 questions.

A flip chart plus enough paper for every group to write down their outcomes.

Like above please consider a proper room preparation

Objections

At least the german translation of the question was not that easy to grasp.

All groups described at least 1 outcome

Time

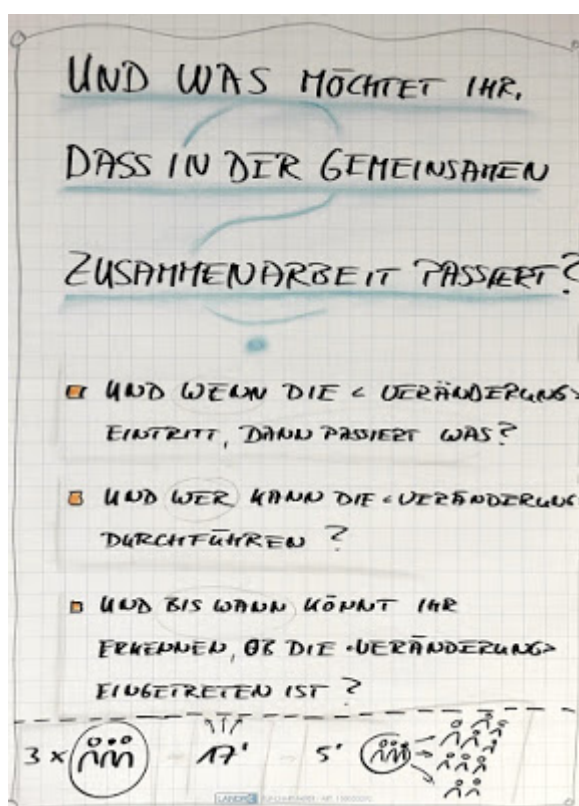
13' to collect points and answer the four questions

ca. 5' to present the outcome to the whole group

Total Time

66'

Example



Decide what to do

Exercise

Dot Voting to select the change to implement first followed by detailing that change?

How

Consolidate the proposals from every group. I wrote headlines for every proposal on a flip chart.

And combined common proposals with some notes, when we had to merge ideas.

Ask: And what change will you implement first?

Select the candidate to implement via dot voting (everyone items/2 dots and all distribute their dots on

their candidate)

Detail that change by describing necessary actions (what, who, until when).

Why

We had 5 suggestions for changes. It works best to start with one and not to get paralyzed by a choice.

Dot voting to indicate the most promising change candidate uses our great first indicator – gut feeling – that is supported by the answers on the 4 questions.

If that change will not work, you can anyway implement the next one.

Preparation

A flip chart to collect all headlines for change proposals and a flip chart to detail the change.

A pen for everyone to make their dots (if possible at the same time to avoid heavy tactical voting).

Objections

Extracting headlines is best done through the group. They have to name their headline.

For merged items there should be further comments what got merged.

Time

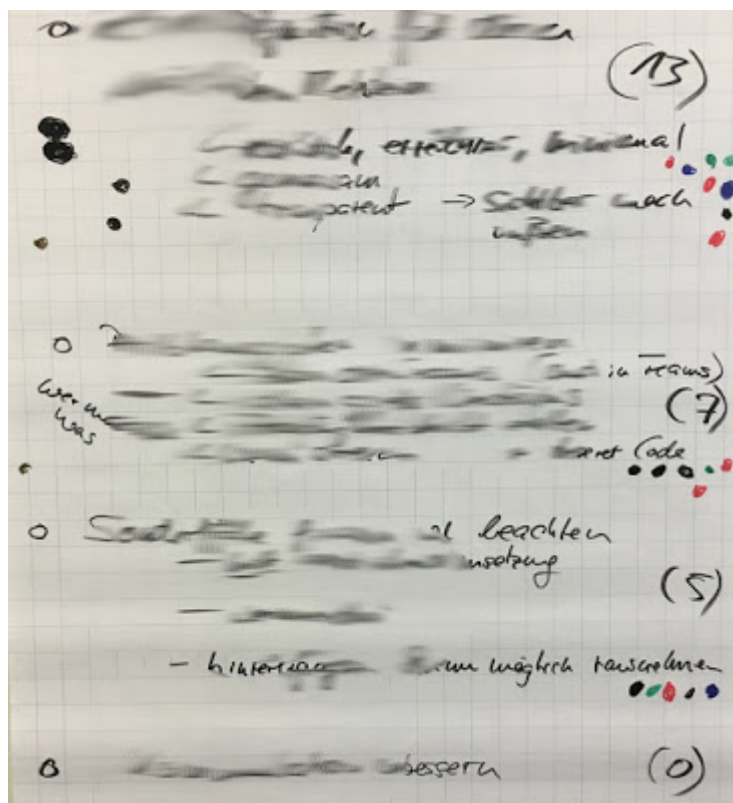
7' for headlines and merging

10' for details and concrete action items

Total Time

83'

Example



Feedforward

Exercise

Based on the question: “For the next project retrospective we should...?” everyone adds their points for things to keep, drop, what else?

How

Explain the questions and let everyone write down their items on sticky notes.

Place the keep, drop, what else points near the door so that everyone can provide their points when they leave the room

Why

Again forward focussed, people add/remove elements that will improve further retrospectives.

Having it silently and anonymous helps to figure out critical points too.

Preparation

The questions and headlines for Keep, Drop, What else...? should be visible on the wall.

Sticky notes and pens for everyone.

Objections

Great points and high engagement.

Time

7'

Total Time

90'

Example



Based on Stefan Nowaczynski's experience using solution oriented reflection instead of feedback (DE) I had the opportunity to reflect on the retrospective format using the following four guiding questions:

- With what are you satisfied the most?
- What was your most useful contribution?
- Based on that learning experience, what will you continue to do?
- Retrospective, what would you do in another way?

Great questions that really helped me to reconsider the 90'.

Please have a look on the [examples for retrospectives](#) collection for further input. If you like the description or would like to propose changes, please do not hesitate to leave your highly welcome comment.