


What about your retrospective action items – use the active learning cycle or PLAN – DO – CHECK – ACT board

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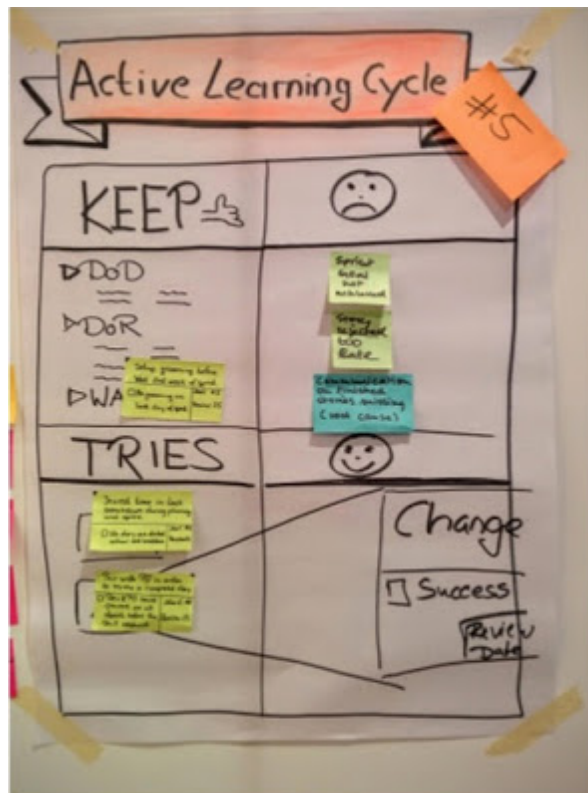
Retrospectives are established as the standard way for continuous improvement reflection in Scrum and ScrumBan environments. Having the meetings itself optimized it's still a question how to best ensure that action items resulting from the retrospective really get done.

With this post I share 2 formats that can provide a solution – the active learning cycle and the Plan-Do-Check-Act board.

The active learning cycle

Some weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend a presentation about the Active Learning Cycle done by Ray Hausmann and Stefan Süring. It roughly works like this (please have a look on the following picture too):

- summarize your current working agreements (WA), definition of done (DOD) and definition of ready (DOR) in the *KEEP* column
- run your retrospective – 5 phases (record on the right columns)- and create new entries in the *TRIES* column. For every action item add success criteria and a review date



Source: Continuous improvement – The active learning cycle presentation

The active learning cycle – Plan – Do – Check –Act is embedded in your retrospective this way:

#1 Check

Review your *TRIES* column entries in the beginning of the retrospective. Check every entry that passed the defined review date for fulfillment of the success criteria.

#2 Act

If the entry can be considered as a success embed it in your working agreements or DOR/DOD.

Otherwise decide for adjusting or skipping the entry.

Sidenote:

Assumption is that outcomes from retrospectives mostly change your process and are rarely topics that can be written as tasks or stories. Maybe you added all action items as tasks on your board (like I did in the past) and noticed that it feels strange according to all other tasks. They don't share the same workflow.

This becomes especially a problem when switching to more flow based approaches like ScrumBan as these kind of tickets stay for longer period to get implemented and monitored.

#3 Do

Execute and run your *TRIES* during the iteration/sprint/period until next retrospective.

#4 Plan

Part of your retrospective is to generate insights and derive new tries with success criteria and a review date.

What is the benefit of using the active learning cycle?

Using this cycle keeps the focus on embedding the planned improvements actively with your WA, DOD or DOR (where they belong too).

Defining review dates and success criteria immediately helps to focus and measure that something gets achieved.

The suggested chart makes retrospective outcomes highly visible in your team area. The flip chart should be highly available in your team (especially in all ceremonies to reflect more often on your agreements).

The Plan-Do-Check/Study-Adjust Board

Another way to derive action items and visualize the improvement workflow is the *Plan-Do-Check/Study-Adjust* Board.

That board is actively embedded in your iteration. During the iteration the team collects items to discuss in the next retrospective in the *PLAN* column.

Items collected and reflected in your next retrospective result in action items. These action items are added to your *DO* column. Best combined with success criteria and the info since when it's on the board or using a defined review date (see the description for the active learning cycle above).

As soon as an item is implemented you move it to the *CHECK/STUDY* column to ask the team to verify the implementation.

If it works you move it to *DONE* otherwise to the *ADJUST* column. For the adjustments you add an information what to adjust.



Latest at the beginning of your following retrospective you cleanup the board – best in the beginning of the retrospective.

What is the benefit of using the Plan-Do-Check/Study-Adjust board?

The status of items is highly visible in the team. Collecting topics to discuss enable an early overview and moves us towards retrospectives on demand. As soon as some items appear in PLAN you can ask the team for running a retrospective.

In addition I suggest still using a fixed appointment for running retrospectives at least every 2-3 weeks depending on your iteration length.

How do you embed action items from your retrospective in your iteration? I invite you to share your insights via your comment 😊