Welcome to “Telling Our Stories” at Agile 2009

Agile is a refreshing concept that is changing the way people think about software development. There are numerous books, articles, and consultants all telling us about the benefits of agile, how to be agile, and how to transform ourselves into the new millennia’s agile software organization. So what really happens when all those wonderful agile concepts you hear and read about land in your environment? An environment that is probably nothing like the nice tidy examples presented in those books, articles, and reported by the consultants? This is where “Telling Our Stories” fills the gap: real practitioners telling their real experiences on real agile projects.

An experience report is the story behind a lesson learned, some hard won bit of knowledge that may apply to you. An experience report captures the story of a real agile project, summarizing what happened on the project and the key learning points. These reports allow practitioners to share their practical advice and guidance with other teams. An experience report is not a shameless advertisement for the author or their company. It is not a story about how they believe events should have unfolded, rather it’s about how they did unfold. Neither is it advocacy for a favorite agile method or tool.

This year like many years in the past hundreds of experience report proposals were submitted, but less than 65 were accepted. All have some wonderful hard won lesson to share. There are stories about transitioning to agile, off shoring with agile, agile in regulated environments. You will definitely find something of interest. I apologize for this shameless bias and exploiting my privilege as stage producer, but I am quite fond of Arline Sutherland’s “Scrum in Church” report, a delightful and refreshing paper from a non techie.

While some of the accepted experience reports were submitted by seasoned authors, for many this is the first time they have formally shared their day to day real life experiences in the form of a published paper. To help them clearly tell their story, our committee worked as “shepherds” guiding the authors, listening to their stories, and reviewing their work. Many of the authors agreed this process significantly increased the quality of their submission.

Many volunteers worked very hard to make this process work and I thank all the members of the “Telling Our Stories” committee for their effort. I want to extend a special thanks to a few people who put in an extra effort to make this happen. First my thanks to Geoff Hewson for serving as co-producer. Next, my thanks to Linda Rising and Rebecca Wirfs-Brock for shepherding the shepherds and providing a security blanket for our first time shepherds. To James Bond (yes that is his real name) for taking the initiative and stepping up when he saw things falling through the cracks. My thanks to Linsley Meadows and British Telecom for setting up and hosting our weekly heartbeat teleconference. A special thanks to Jeff Sutherland who on short notice, worked his personal network to find a few additional shepherds for us. My thanks to Johanna Rothman for twisting my arm and encouraging me to become the Agile 2009 experience report stage producer. Finally, my thanks to the authors for sharing their stories with us. Thank you everyone.

Steve Adolph
Experience report chair