



**T1**

Test Transformation  
Thursday, May 3rd, 2018  
9:45 AM

# Leave Behind Us vs. Them: Transforming a Product Team

Presented by:

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MakeMusic

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# Jason Wick

## MakeMusic

Jason Wick has more than a decade of software experience as an engineering manager, QA manager, team lead, automation engineer, audio tester, and manual tester. After working in a variety of fields from video games to music software, Jason has dramatically shifted his perspective on the role of QA inside a team in the last couple of years. Jason lives in Colorado and works at MakeMusic.

# Leave Behind *Us Versus Them*: Transforming a Product Team

STAREAST 2018  
Orlando, FL  
May 3, 2018

**Jason Wick**



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## Introduction

**Who** Me and my team

**What** My team's evolution

**When** January 2017 to now

**Where** MakeMusic in Boulder, Colorado

**Why** Epiphanies in the experience



# What We Had



# State of Affairs

- **Team Structure**  
12 individuals reporting out to 5 managers
- **Competing Interests**  
Testers, Devs, CI, PO, Documentation
- **Product Direction**  
??



## What We'd Like



## Structural Changes

### Before

12 people to 5 managers

Unempowered scrum master

Test/CI/Documentation spread across teams

### After

Dev/Test report to me

I lead all team's ceremonies

Test/CI/Docu make our team their top priority



# What's the Next Move?

- **Get to know one another**
- **Listen**
- **Synthesize and communicate back**



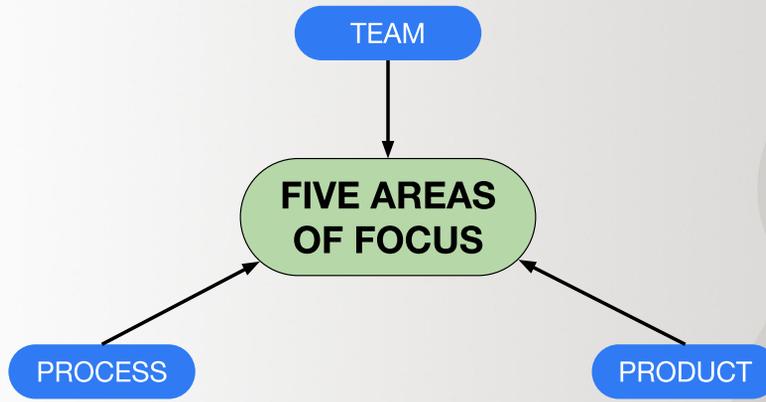
# Communicating Back



- **Addressing Past and Present**
  - Acknowledges team concerns
  - Team feels heard
- **Addressing Future**
  - Something to focus on together
  - Opportunities



# Our Immediate Focus



# Actions Toward ... Progress?

1. **Team Ceremonies**
2. **Sprints Versus Kanban**
3. **Five Areas of Focus**
4. **Double Down on 1-on-1s**
5. **Power of Retrospectives**



# Progress: Team Ceremonies

- **Stand-Up, Planning/Grooming, Retrospective**
  - Influence and coaching
  - Build habits
  - Opportunities for individuals
- **Daily Stand-Up is Great Place For...**
  - Experimentation (it occurs daily)
  - Quick feedback



# Progress: Sprints Versus Kanban



# Progress: ~~Sprints~~ Versus Kanban

- **Kanban!**
- **De-emphasize:**
  - Sizing, estimates, capacity, sprint commitments
- **Emphasize:**
  - Flow, breaking down work
- **JIRA**
  - A/B sprint and kanban boards



# Progress: Five Areas of Focus

## Some examples...

<b>Communication</b>	Include remote team members using a persistent Zoom Room
<b>Team Workflow</b>	Creation of a Process Improvement Task Force
<b>Deprecations</b>	4-week team swarm



# Progress: 1-on-1s



- **Incoming**
  - Get the real story
  - Hear hopes and goals
- **Outgoing**
  - Request manager feedback
  - Champion team goals



# Progress: Power of Retros

## Retrospectives as vehicles for vulnerability and trust

- Roles
- Guess Who?
- In My Shoes
- Lean Coffee



## Next Level

“The **Team Operating Agreement** (TOA) is an agreement among project team members to ensure that they work together to meet the expectations of each other and the organization....”

- **Learning Tree International**

<https://blog.learningtree.com/how-to-get-your-project-team-to-work-together-the-team-operating-agreement/>



## Why Team Operating Agreements?

- **Guidelines to Help Product Team Work Effectively**
  - Team shares them
  - Refer to them
- **Team Creates Them**
  - Personally invested
- **Commitment Together**
  - Public declaration



# The Hardest Part?

## UNCOVERING THEM!



# Our Process



## Operating Agreements

1. Establish buckets
2. Brainstorm lists within buckets
3. Break into small groups and groom lists
4. Team upvote most important
5. Discuss wording and meaning
6. Agree
7. Revisit and reinforce



# Keeping Them Relevant

## Operating Agreements



Make visible (printouts, Slack)



Assess follow through continually (retros)



Reference in conversations (1-on-1s, team)



# Learnings



- We built trust, healthy conflict, and commitment and are now working on holding each other accountable
- The path to self organization is difficult
  - Hierarchies
  - Risk aversion
- Group and Team is not the same thing!



## Resources

“The Five Dysfunctions of a Team” - *Patrick Lencioni*

“The Ideal Team Player” - *Patrick Lencioni*

“The Insider” - *Harvard Business Review Newsletter*

“Management Tip of the Day” - *HBR Daily Email*

“Software Lead Weekly” - *Weekly Newsletter*

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