

Foreword

On my birthdays, I look back and reflect on my life. How have things gone? Where did I think I would be thirty years ago, ten years ago, one year ago? Where am I now? How could I do things better, and what things that I rue should I just resolve so I can get past them? Am I the type of person I hoped to be, and is the impact I have on others what I would hope for? If not, what might I do differently in the upcoming year(s)? Have I used the strength and intelligence that I have wisely?

This is my retrospective. I look back and assess. I consider. Taking everything into account, I try to set a better course for the upcoming year. I'm really glad that nobody is keeping score, even me, because I don't know how well I'm doing overall. I guess it depends on philosophies that keep changing and on circumstances that bring more variability than I ever expected. Who could have predicted what my children would be like?

Maybe if I had clearer goals and more frequent birthdays, the retrospectives would work better. I'll bet that if I had Esther and Diana at my more frequent birthdays, things would work out better. An outside facilitator with techniques like they spell out in this book would provide new insights and help formulate more concrete next steps.

I've been using iterative, incremental (a.k.a. Agile) processes formally for eleven years; my drink of choice is called Scrum. The goals are very clear in Scrum. They are established for a project and then reset for every iteration. Since these iterations are every thirty days, there isn't a lot of wandering. Since the domain is building software, not just life in general, it is also easier to tell whether progress is in the right direction or needs adjusting. Because Scrum is a team activity, the group reflection is particularly helpful. Everyone chips in, and the surprises are manifold.

Edward Yourdon described the long, terrible progress through a project in *Death March* (Prentice Hall, 1997). A problem with these projects is that there are no birthdays and no regular points for reflection and readjustment.

The natural rhythm of the iterative delivery of software in Agile projects provides such a break point. These are chances for the team to improve what it is doing and how they feel about what they are doing. What an opportunity. Read Esther and Diana's book and see how it works.

▶ **Ken Schwaber**

Scrum Author and Evangelist

Scrum Alliance