



Awesomesauce



Iron Man

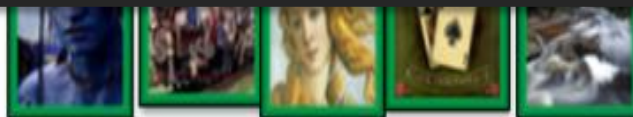


UNBOUND
DNA

ACHIEVEMENTS



Ferrari



Abstract

Agile Achievements can be used to track and celebrate both individual and team behaviors in adopting Agile values, principles and practices.

Gaddie Pitch

You know how most teams find it difficult to know what they have to do when developing in an Agile environment.

Well what Achievements do is help give clear goals about expected behaviors for teams and individuals.

In fact, Achievements can be fun and re-direct the focus away from Scrum Master or Agile Coach to enable the team to encourage better Agile behaviors.

What is an Achievement?

Unlike normal achievements that are often considered monumental milestones in a person's life the gamer's definition of an Achievement is more a small stretch goal outside of the team or individual's current behavioral norms.

Within Agile when we apply an Achievement we are commonly tracking particular Agile practices, artifacts, values or principles. Let's take a look at an example of an Achievement:



Back to the Future

Retrospectives have been held at the end of each Sprint for five Sprints in a row

We can see from this example that the Achievement name is easily recognizable as a pop culture reference, but the link to the relevant practice does not require a huge leap of the imagination. Whilst doing five Sprint Retrospectives consistently might sound like a simple and easy thing to do it does require discipline and the skipping of them is a common problem for teams. You can keep up the consistency through continuing the pop culture reference and introducing "Back to the Future II" and "Back to the Future III" Achievements, widening the number of Retrospectives held consistently and the gauging the effectiveness of them.

A critical thinker may be concerned that despite the Sprint Retrospectives being done were they actually effective? Or did the right people turn up to the Sprint Retrospective? These are important questions, but ones that could be covered off by additional Achievements if it was considered a problem for the team.

Agile Achievements can either measure the:

- Consistency of a practice
- Quality of a practice and its outcomes
- Existence of an artifact
- Adherence against values or principles

Agile Achievement categories

The focus of Agile Achievements can change based upon a number of factors:

- Team vs individually focused
- Positive vs negatively focused

- Method focus (for example Scrum vs Kanban)

Other categories may exist. You are only limited by your imagination!

Team versus individual Achievements

As teams start Achievements for the first time consider using just team focused objectives rather than individualistic focused goals. Once the team gets the hang of how the Achievements technique works then you can discuss and agree as a team whether there is value in taking the next step of looking at tracking individual Achievements. Often teams will want to make this transition for one of three reasons:

1. they are having fun and want to boast about what they are doing and how well they are doing it;
2. to compete against each other; or
3. one or two individuals are suspected to be holding the team back

An example of individual achievement would be:



Speed demon

The person has contributed to ten stories that were completed inside of the Sprint

Positive vs negative Achievements

Whilst a positively re-enforcing Achievement would be celebrating the success of a practice well played, a negatively focused Achievement would be more about attempting to “name and shame” a person into practice compliance. This is a risky thing to do and can potentially backfire on the Achievement technique implementer if

the environment is not conducive or safe to call this out. Arguably such an environment is a “smell” in itself.

An example of a negatively focused achievement would be:



I see dead walls

Less than 5 cards were moved inside of the Sprint

Scrum versus Kanban Achievements

Due to the practice differences between Scrum and Kanban you can vary the Achievements based upon which method you are using. For example, if you take into account how you measure progress, you can implement an Achievement around the appropriate measurement artifact.



The only way is up!

A Cumulative Flow Diagram has been consistently updated for each day for four weeks



Make them meet

The Burn Up Chart demonstrates that the scope cannot be achieved in the number of Sprints left. Consequently, the team have formed a new plan



Venus

A Burn Up Chart of the team’s velocity against expectations has been produced and made visible (you’ve got it!)

What does an Achievement Board look like?

An "Achievement Board" or "Trophy Board" is a gamification technique to record, celebrate and display the earning of Achievements as they relate to teams or individuals.



An Achievement Board is another big visible chart for your team's area. Generally it will be displayed as one or more A3s. On these A3s would be the achievement name (short name) and either a blank space for the Achievement token to go on or a black and white picture of the Achievement token. When the team or individual has earned the Achievement you simply place the colored Achievement token on the blank space or over the black and white copy of the image. It is a good idea to keep a key of the achievement name and the trigger or goal for reaching the achievement nearby.

Achievement boards are also great for when managers and executives walk by. Uninitiated managers to Achievements will ask questions about what the board means and it will give the team an opportunity to bring the manager onto the behavioral journey that the team or individual is on.

The usage of Achievement Boards, if they go viral within your organization, can then be used

as clout or bragging rights competitively against other teams.

Achievement Leaderboard



Dependent upon the number of achievements and implementation method, the time it takes a Scrum Master or Agile Coach to track the teams achievement progress on average it should not take longer than 10 minutes per week. Limit the number of Achievements that you want to strive towards by focusing on the problems that you are experiencing as a team. Focus only on practices that you hypothesize that greater adherence and effectiveness will make demonstrated improvements in both capability and ability to deliver outcomes with.

The examples provided above and within the Appendices are just that – examples. Setting up your own Achievement Board and defining the Achievements is a fun activity in itself and can be used as a team building activity when the team forms up for the first time.

Why would you use an Achievement technique?

The change to become more Agile is an often difficult journey.

Early adopters, frustrated with the current status quo will flock to a solution, any solution, as long as it pulls them out of the desperate

situation that they seemed to have fallen into.

Others within the team may be less than willing to try something different. The motivation for them to change is not fostered.

Through the usage of Agile Achievements you can

- use a different framework to encourage the team to try a specific Agile practice that they have never done before
- step up a team's consistency against practices
- create a safe means to be able to have a dialogue about individuals or teams not following the values, principles or practices
- create a collectively re-enforcing peer pressure environment to enable change from the team rather than directly from the Scrum Master or Agile Coach
- celebrate consistency
- have explicit policies around behavioral change
- have a means to be able to consistently measure Agile Maturity across teams within the organization
- have a tight feedback loop to compare practice expectations to actual behaviors. This aligns strongly with Agile's philosophy of 'inspect and adapt'

As always quality working software, or outcomes, that meets real customer needs is always the true north or end goal, but by creating an environment that encourages better practices you should be encouraging the focus on working software – after all the practices are

there to support the Agile manifesto and principles.

Conclusion

This article is by no means propagating Achievements as a must have practice for every Agile team. Some would argue that this detracts away from “working software”, but it is there only to encourage teams to strive to new heights. If you feel like this might be a technique that is valuable then give it a go!

About the author

Renee Troughton is an Agile Coach with over 14 years of experience in software development, coaching and organizational change. As both a Scrum Master, Agile Coach and Agile Trainer, Renee has spent many years working with teams to helping to transform behavioral change through gamification and Agile Achievements.

Renee Troughton is Director and co-founder of Unbound DNA and can be contacted at renee@unbounddna.com or through twitter at @AgileRenee.



© Unbound DNA Pty Ltd 2014

<http://www.unbounddna.com>

Appendix A: Example Positive Team Achievements

Achievement Name	Trigger
All aboard!	All core team members are on time for 10 stand-ups in a row (excluding planned leave)
Risky business	Risks have been looked at for the last 5 iterations in a row
Hot stuff!	The average team temperature check has been ≥ 8 for 4 iterations in a row
Seekers of truth	Customer feedback has been received for everyone in the team
Show and tell	The team has successfully demonstrated showcases to the customer three iterations in a row
Working on all cylinders	All planned stories for the iteration have been completed by the end of the iteration
Superheroes!	All planned stories for four iterations in a row have been completed by the end of each iteration
Under the same roof	All team members are co-located on the same floor, in the same area.
Socially bound	A social contract exists for the team
I don't mind a good game of blackjack too	All cards on the team's story wall have estimates of their size against them (planning poker'ed)
Back to the Future	Retrospectives have been held at the end of each iteration for five iterations in a row
Back to the Future II	Retrospectives have been held at the end of each iteration for ten iterations in a row
Back to the Future III	Retrospectives have been held at the end of each iteration for ten iterations in a row. Additionally, all actions raised have been raised as new stories and prioritized into the backlog or the next iteration or have been done by the next Retrospective
From Russia with love	All cards in the backlog are prioritized (MoSCoW)
Forward thinking	For four weeks in a row all new cards added in scope have been prioritized and estimated
Taking it as it comes	For four weeks in a row work is pulled from the backlog in order of priority.

	Stories don't miraculously skip upwards.
Have a say	Everyone within the retrospective participates by putting at least one post-it note up in an area for four retrospectives in a row
The Borg	10 positive team achievements have been reached (you have been assimilated)
Venus	A burn up chart of the team's velocity against expectations has been produced and made visible (you've got it!)
Yesterday's weather was rain	The team uses the velocity of the last iteration to predict what can be achieved in the next iteration. Consistently applied three times in a row
Like a G6	After five iterations the team is still on track to complete the must haves, should haves and could have scope items (you are feeling so fly!)
Make them meet	The burn up chart demonstrates that the scope cannot be achieved in the number of iterations left. This has been escalated to the steering committee and a new plan formulated
The only way is up!	A Cumulative flow diagram has been consistently updated each day for four weeks (for Kanban)
Steady flow	The Cumulative Flow Diagram has been used to identify incorrect WIP limits or resource assignments and the team has changed to even up the flow.
It's not the size but how you use it that counts	Big Visual Charts exist for the stories, risks/issues and social contract for the team
Pot of gold	The team reflects on the confidence ratings on the project's rainbow slider for four iterations in a row.
Make good	The Big Visual Charts don't use sticky or masking tape. Instead painters tape and blue tak is used. Additionally nothing is stuck to outside glass walls
Keeping it brief	For five stand-ups in a row the team has kept to the 10 minute time slot.
The empire strikes back	All stories have a clear definition of done prior to starting them for three iterations in a row. (done done done da da done da da done)
A worthwhile investment	All stories follow the INVEST principles prior to starting them for three iterations in a row

Breakdancing	All stories to be completed inside of the iteration have been broken down to something that is achievable within four working days
Once upon a time	All stories for three iterations in a row are written using the standard story format. (As an achievement writer I want to define achievements so that people can have fun whilst they learn and deliver)
Tokenizer	Tokens are being used by the whole team to represent key elements of the story – slow moving card, new, blocked, risk, urgent.
Jake Sully	Avatars are used to represent responsible ownership of the card.
I won't be outdated!	Dates of importance are represented on all relevant cards on the wall.
Dance-a-thon	The team has a means to celebrate success of completing stories, this means is used for four weeks.
Impedimentia	Blockers are addressed and resolved before the next stand-up for all stories for three stand-ups in a row.

Appendix B: Example Negative Team Achievements

Achievement Name	Trigger
I see dead walls	Less than 5 cards moved inside of the iteration (or 2 weeks for Kanban)
Only person at the show	Less than three people turn up for the showcase
Unbroken	A story has stayed in progress for four weeks
On the wrong side of the track	There has been a cost, time, scope or quality change to the project that is inconsistent with the success sliders
Red warriors	The team has completed more than 10 stories that do not have any visible indication of their priority on them (MoSCoW)
Busy bumble bees	Five actions have not been progressed from previous retrospectives
Sit-downs	One of more people sit down in the stand-up (with no valid Occupational Health & Safety excuse)
Illadin	An iteration has been started with iteration backlog stories that haven't been fully elaborated (you are not prepared!)
Hoarder	All stories for the iteration have been assigned out to team members at the start of the iteration
My GANTT chart is as big as a wall!	The story wall is split up from month to month. Work is not flowing, it is just being done in the time period that was expected of it

Appendix C: Example Positive Individual Achievements

Achievement Name	Trigger
You don't have to tell me	The person has attended every standup for the last month
Epic	The person has completed all stories associated with an epic story
The offliner	The person sidelines/takes offline five bogged down discussions
Flatlining	The person has canceled five stories as no longer being needed/important
Speed demon	The person has contributed to 10 stories that were completed inside of the iteration
Storyteller	The person has completed 25 stories
Library owner	The person has completed 50 stories
Librarian	The person has completed 100 stories
Cheesy	The person has achieved 20 positive achievements
Careful Casper	The person has raised 10 risks
Seeker	The person has asked for feedback from three people
Born Whippy	The person has not exceeded their WIP limit for four iterations
Showing off!	The person has run the showcase three times
Touchy feely	The person touches each of their in progress cards for five stand-ups in a row
Socialite!	The person has the courage and confidence to call out deviations from the team's social contract.
Two's company	The person has worked with someone else in the team, real time, to deliver a story.
Iron Maiden	The person has had the courage to call out that the direction that the project is going is misaligned with the success sliders.
It's not you, it's me	The person takes on a story that is someone else's

Appendix D: Example Negative Individual Achievements

Achievement Name	Trigger
King of the turtles	The person has five slow moving cards against their name on the wall
The feet dragger	The person, as a core team member, has skipped five stand-ups in a row
MIA	The person, as a core team member, has skipped more than ten stand-ups
The creeper	The person has increased the scope of 5 stories whilst they are inside of an iteration
Distracted juggler	The person has passed their work in progress limit (first time)
Snowed under	The person has passed their work in progress limit for two iterations in a row
Ball dropper	The person has passed their work in progress limit for four iterations in a row
Talkative	The person has spent too long talking for their turn at standups 5 times in a row
Please hold the line	The person has 8 cards in waiting/review at the same time
Marshall Invisible	The person has discussed three items in their standup that aren't visible on the wall
