

# 50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE

## YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



### #1 THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

#### **Retrospective Prime Directive**

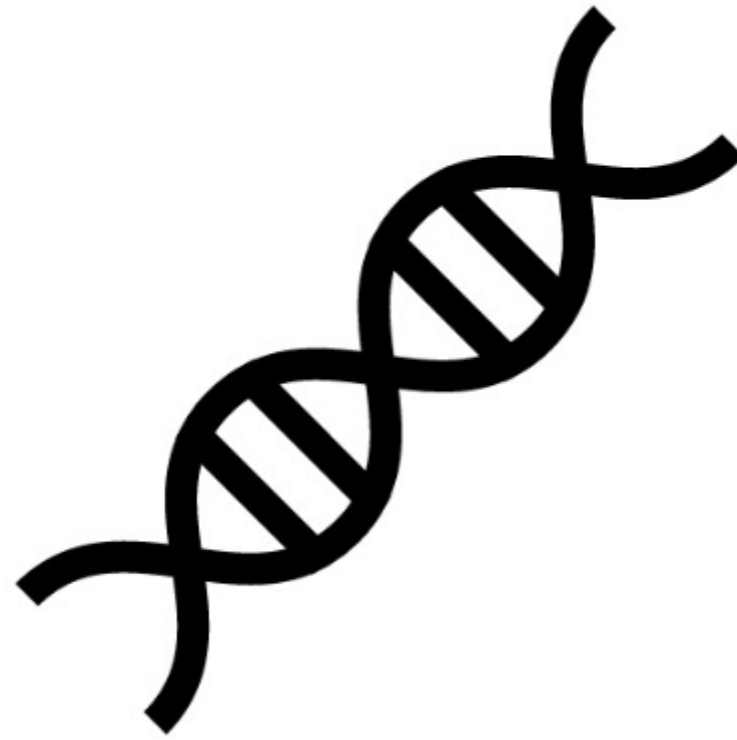
Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand.

# **50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**

**YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**



**CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION**



**DIFFICULTY - LOW**

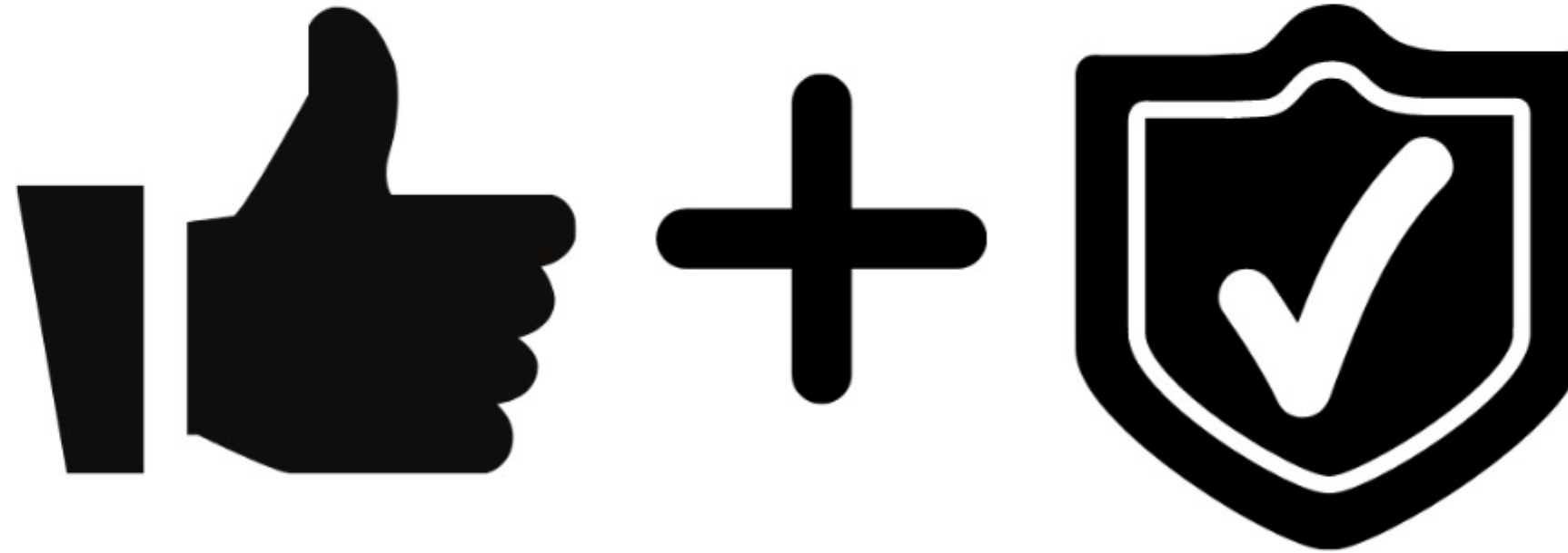
**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM**

# 50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE

YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



**GESET**



**DIFFICULTY - LOW**

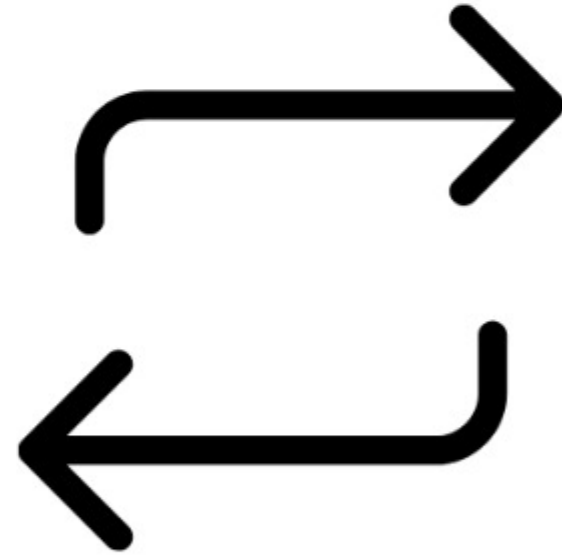
**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM**

# 50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE

## YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



### #29 FLEX THE FORMAT



**DIFFICULTY - LOW**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM**

# 50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE

YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



**#27 F#\*K THE FORMAT**



**DIFFICULTY - HIGH**

**PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- HIGH**

**WORKSHOP**  
**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
 Levelling up your continuous improvement game




**Chris Stone**

Agile Alliance | Agile ORLANDO JULY 24-28 2023

WWW.AGILEALLIANCE.ORG/AGILE2023

Hello, I'm **Chris**

Working preferences: Bursts of intense energy, then a good break not a 9-5 guy.

Comms preferences: Video calls, LinkedIn, WhatsApp

Things I do: Speaker, trainer, podcast host, Creator, writer, disruptor

Things I need: Uninterrupted time to focus, Challenge, Variety

Things I love: Adventures in foreign lands, Helping people learn, Lifting heavy things, My Maine Coon Celeste

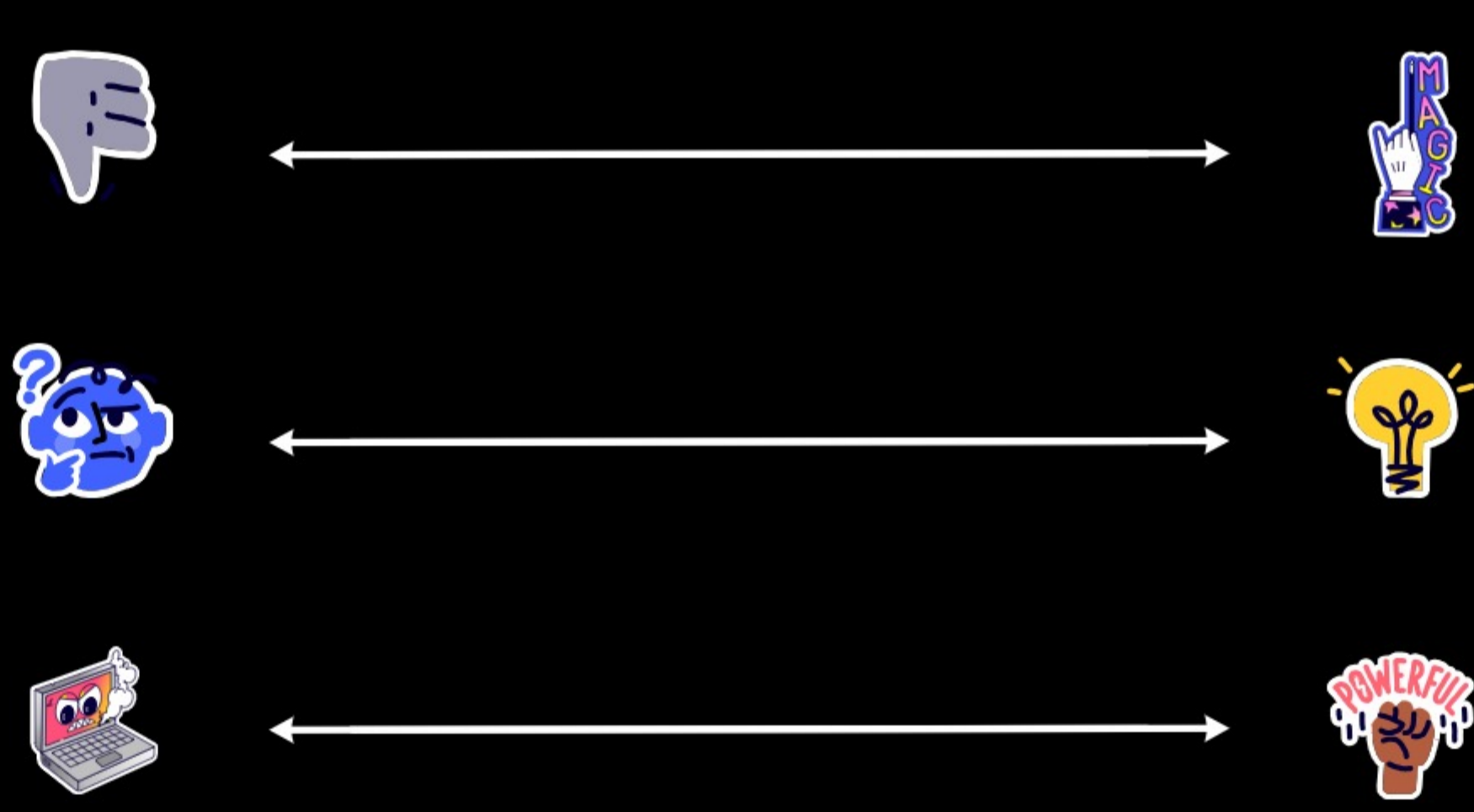
Quotes: The key to agility is continuous improvement. We spend a third of our lives working, we need to be able to have fun in the process.

Things I struggle with: Too much WIP, Repetitive tasks, mental health



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# Retrospectives are...



Team Name:  Retro Date:

"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand." 45 mins

**Actions / Experiments**  
Identify 3-5 things to try in the next few weeks.

<p><b>We are the champions..</b> What kudos do we want to give? What successes should we celebrate?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>I want to break free!</b> What is shackling us / holding us back? What challenges do we face?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	<p>Next Retro date</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p>Ideas for next retro format..</p> <p><input type="text"/></p> <p><b>virtually agile</b></p>
<p><b>Under pressure</b> What's causing us unnecessary stress? What's putting us under pressure?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Don't stop me now!</b> What are we doing well? What should we keep doing?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	
<p><b>Another one bites the dust..</b> What previous retro actions did we crush? What bugs / stories did we complete?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>One vision</b> What's our team vision for the next iteration? What's our goal?</p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	

## Choose your own adventure



**The Foundations**



**Facilitation**



**Formats**



**Finishing Up**



# Feedback as ROTI

(Return On Time Invested)

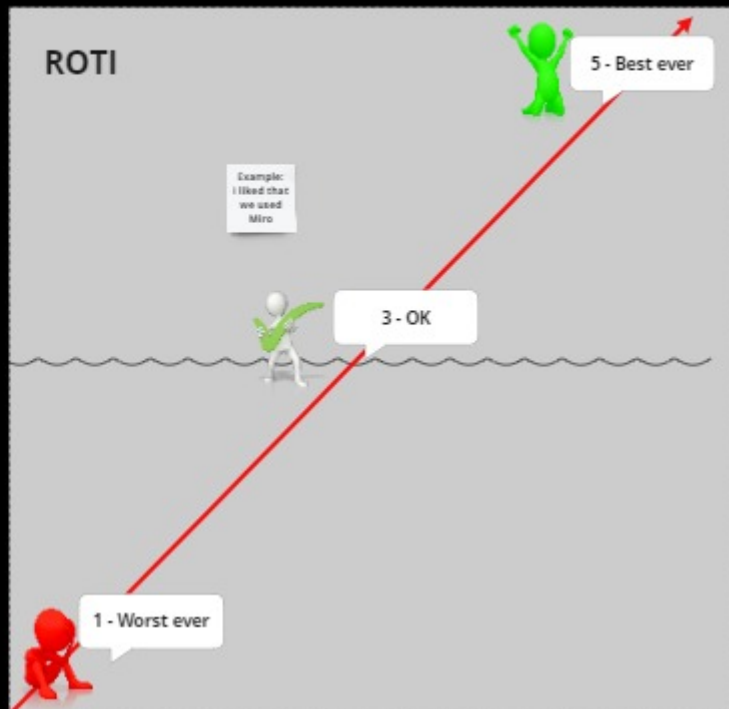
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## Explore Retro Templates

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- Food Retros
- New Retros
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- Medical Retros
- Christmas Retros

Scrumopoly Retros by Dave Westgarth

The Agile Estimation Game

The Retro Arcade by Steven Sampson Jones

Disney Retros by Steven Sampson Jones

Marvelous Retros by Steven Sampson Jones

Journey Retros

"THE KEY TO AGILITY IS CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT."

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meetup.com/virtually-agile

#OPENTOWORK

Chris Stone (He/Him)

The Virtual Agile Coach

Talks about #agile, #remoteworking, #retrospectives, #businessagility, and #continuousimprovement

Basingstoke, England, United Kingdom · [Contact info](#)

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Virtually Agile

University of Portsmouth

### The Retrospective Playbook - The Format Plays: Levelling up your Continuous Improvement Game Kindle Edition

by Chris Stone (Author) Format: Kindle Edition

See all formats and editions

Kindle Edition £4.49

Read with Our Free App

- The key to agility is continuous improvement
- The key to continuous improvement is retrospection
- At the heart of retrospection are people & interactions

This ebook shares a collection of 'Plays' to enable those interactions with your teams. They will be tools at your disposal, a series of weapons in your arsenal for creating an environment for continuous improvement. These can be employed and experimented with.

Read more

Not for sale	Language	File size	Publication date	File size	Page flip
158 pages	English	On Kindle Scribe	29 Jun. 2023	8415 KB	Enabled

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

#1 THE PRIME DIRECTIVE

**Retrospective Prime Directive:**  
No blame or names. Identify the situation and what you can learn from it. Do not dwell on who is at fault. Do not assign blame. Do not punish. Do not reward. Do not make excuses. Do not make excuses for anyone else. Do not make excuses for yourself.

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CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - PREMIUM

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

GESET

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - PREMIUM

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SOLOSPECTION

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

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YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A LITTLE LESS CONVERSATION,  
A LITTLE MORE ACTION

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

As, no matter what treasure we be searching for, we be bound to  
sleep in our sea-beds' hearts that all ye scallywags did the best  
work ye could, given what ye knew in that moment, yer talents an'  
craftiness, the beauty at yer disposal, an' the circumstances that  
surrounded ye, me hearties.

**Norm Kerth**

Set the context for unconditional positive regard.

**Fist of five - Every meeting**

What could there have been more or less of? How could this meeting have added more value?

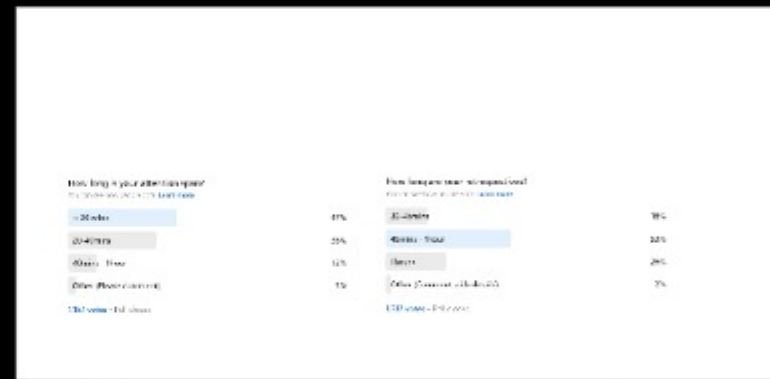
"Good enough for now. Safe enough to try".

"Imperfect action is better perfect inaction"

How long are our retros?



How long is your attention span?

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DON'T REINVENT

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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STALE QUESTIONS?  
STALE ANSWERS

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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BATTLESHIPS

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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ZERO DAYS

**SAFETY FIRST**  
DAYS SINCE LAST FAILURE

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

THE FAILURE FEST

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - HIGH

A slight change in language can yield very different results.

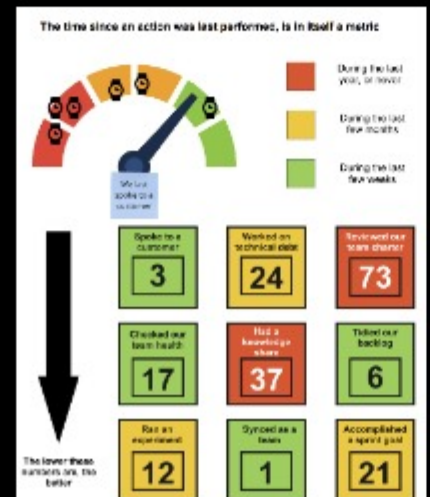
We're too busy to change..  
Retrospectives won't work for us..  
Retros don't add value, things never change



Don't let teams build process debt



**DSL Metrics (Days since last)**



What does failure mean to you?



Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) use code 7198 9796

- Hi, my name is Chris and I failed
- Everyone celebrates your failure, cheering and clapping
- Explain your failure
- Explain what you learned from it



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**#20 EMBRACING SILENCE**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

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**#26 FKH THE FORMAT**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**#29 FLEX THE FORMAT**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
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**#27 F&P:IL THE FORMAT**

DIFFICULTY - HIGH  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- HIGH

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**#30 FACILITATION FLUX**

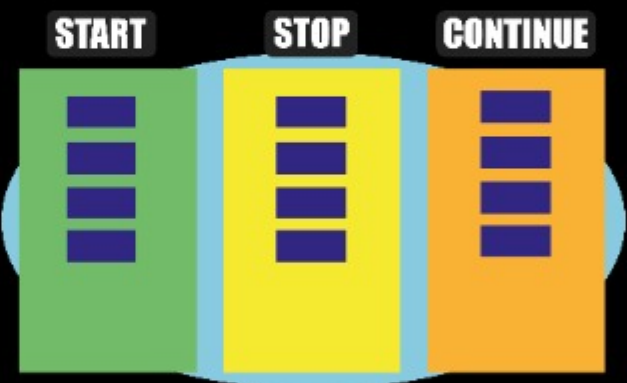
DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

How does silence feel during a retro?

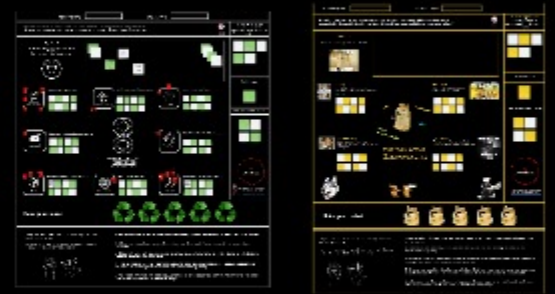


**PRINCIPLES**

- NO SPEAKING
- GO WITH THE FLOW
- 50 minutes, ends @20:00pm GMT
- RESPECT EACH OTHER & HAVE FUN



If the retro results in actionable improvements, the format doesn't matter.



Sometimes all you need is an open & honest conversation and a fancy format can be distracting.

I used the Home Alone retro for 2 teams today. The 1st team loved. However, the very first card added to the "Keep the change ya filthy animal" section was "Retro board". I honestly never saw this coming and it took me off-guard. The team member who added it stated that he had topics that he wanted to discuss and it was frustrating having to map his ideas to the sections.



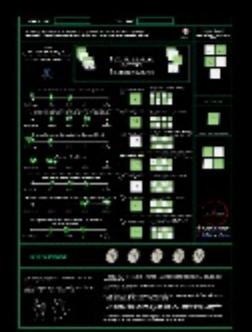
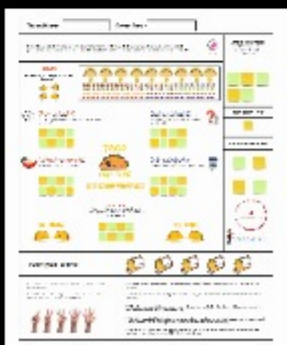
Each facilitator brings their own stance and style

Build facilitation capability into multiple people within a team. Less reliant upon the 'Scrum Master' to facilitate continuous improvement.

Silence is your ally.

Ferguson, He suggests asking yourself three questions before you speak.

- Does this need to be said?
- Does this need to be said by me?
- Does this need to be said now?



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**POLAR BEARS!**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

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**DIVERGE, CONVERGE**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

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**ESCAPE THE ENVIRONMENT**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- MEDIUM

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**DEALERS CHOICE**

DIFFICULTY - EASY  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT- EASY

Your workflow, sliced with the world

Icebreaker Community Templates | Miroverse

Leading our engagement? Learn more

just a living in a They look the going

US Maps	Visual questions	What's ahead?	Who's who?	Heart, who's important?	What's been you?	Integrated autonomy
Design elements	Apprentice workshop	Discovery and action-taking	Empire prototyping	Showing together	Open space	Critical vicarities
L.A.A.I	T&T	Diff & show	Helping leadership	Design decisions	Generative relationships	Geometry
Separate networking	USX solutions	25-30 crowdworking	Conversation with	Quality interaction	Agreement/unity work	Paradox
Why's	Take something	Who's who?	User experience follow	Social network building	Single advantage	Psychic to practice
0 why's						

In this sentence by the the time you are done reading you will have already skipped over the double "the".



Walk & Talk



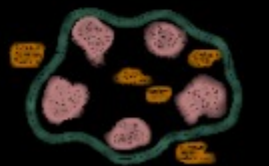
Guest Facilitators

How does it feel when you're in a meeting and one person calls people out one by one to share?

Last to speak, nominates next to speak.

Build a shared responsibility for facilitating group involvement

Allowing people to get their thoughts down individually before sharing with the group can help allow quieter voices to get their views heard and avoid dominance hierarchies.



Pair Ceremonies

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**FUTURESECTION**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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**ASYNCLBA**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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**FIELD OF DREAMS**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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**MAGICAL MICRO-CULTURES**

DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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**#31 MIX THE MEDIUMS**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

“Any way you want it” – Journey II  
“What one change would you have in the next iteration if you could have it any way you wanted?”  
“Where would you most like to see change?”

“One vision” – Ocean II  
“What’s our main vision for the next iteration?”  
“What’s our goal as a team?”

- What might a newspaper headline say about us in 2 weeks time?  
- What successes will we have had if we achieved our iteration goals?  
- What’s our vision for the next iteration? How did we deliver it?  
- What risks / impediments are we going to face next? How did we mitigate them?

**Synchronous communication**

Takes place in real-time

**Asynchronous communication**

Takes place in your time



1. Choose your retrospective tool
2. Communicate Participation Expectations
3. Set a Timer to Keep the Meeting Moving
4. Create Discussion Thread for Retrospective Topics
5. Agree a Clear Process for Distributing Tasks

“I really appreciate your retrospective materials, particularly this one as I’m 15 mins away from opening my fast...”

“The Diwali retro you posted the other week went down a storm. The move from a ‘normal’ retro made it so much easier to get quieter people engaged”.

“I’m glad to let you know that I facilitated Diwali retrospective yesterday and it was well received”

The team was happy to see the creativity”

**If your last iteration were a yoga pose, what would it be and why?**

**Grab an item from your desk and describe why it represented your last iteration.**

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**GAMIFIED RETROS**

DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

**TETRIS**

**ACTIONS**

**RANDOM NUMBER GENERATOR**

**SCORE**

16

**50 SHADES OF RETROSPECTIVE**  
YOUR GUIDE TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**THE WORLDS WORST RETRO**

DIFFICULTY - EASY  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

Imagine your favourite drink ever.. Hold it high!  
**Cheers!**

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**RETROCEPTION**



DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

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**START SMALL**



DIFFICULTY - MEDIUM  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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**ACTIONABLE ACTIONS**



DIFFICULTY - HARD  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW

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**ACTION AVOIDANCE**



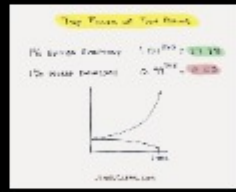
DIFFICULTY - HARD  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - MEDIUM

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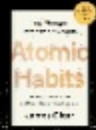
**CREATIVE CONSENSUS**



DIFFICULTY - LOW  
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY REQUIREMENT - LOW



- It's on the leading R, visible
- Prioritized alongside other work
- Has an owner
- Within the teams sphere of influence to change

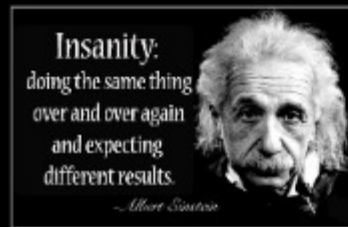


The Goal	Status & Checklist
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...
...	...

Who recognises the below behaviour?



Taking no action is in itself, a decision.

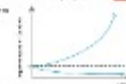


Trust the team to decide on the most important areas to address



Creative dot voting

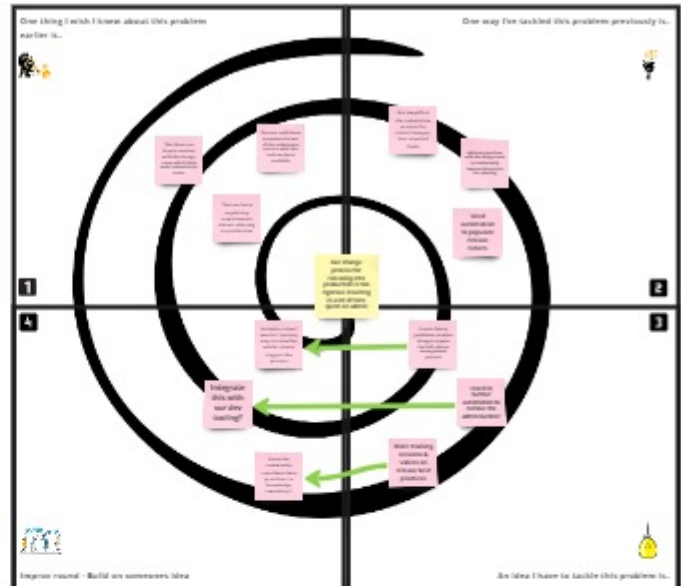
**Find those 1% of improvements with the Marginal Gains Gauntlet**



**virtually agile**

Use these to get things out of the soup.

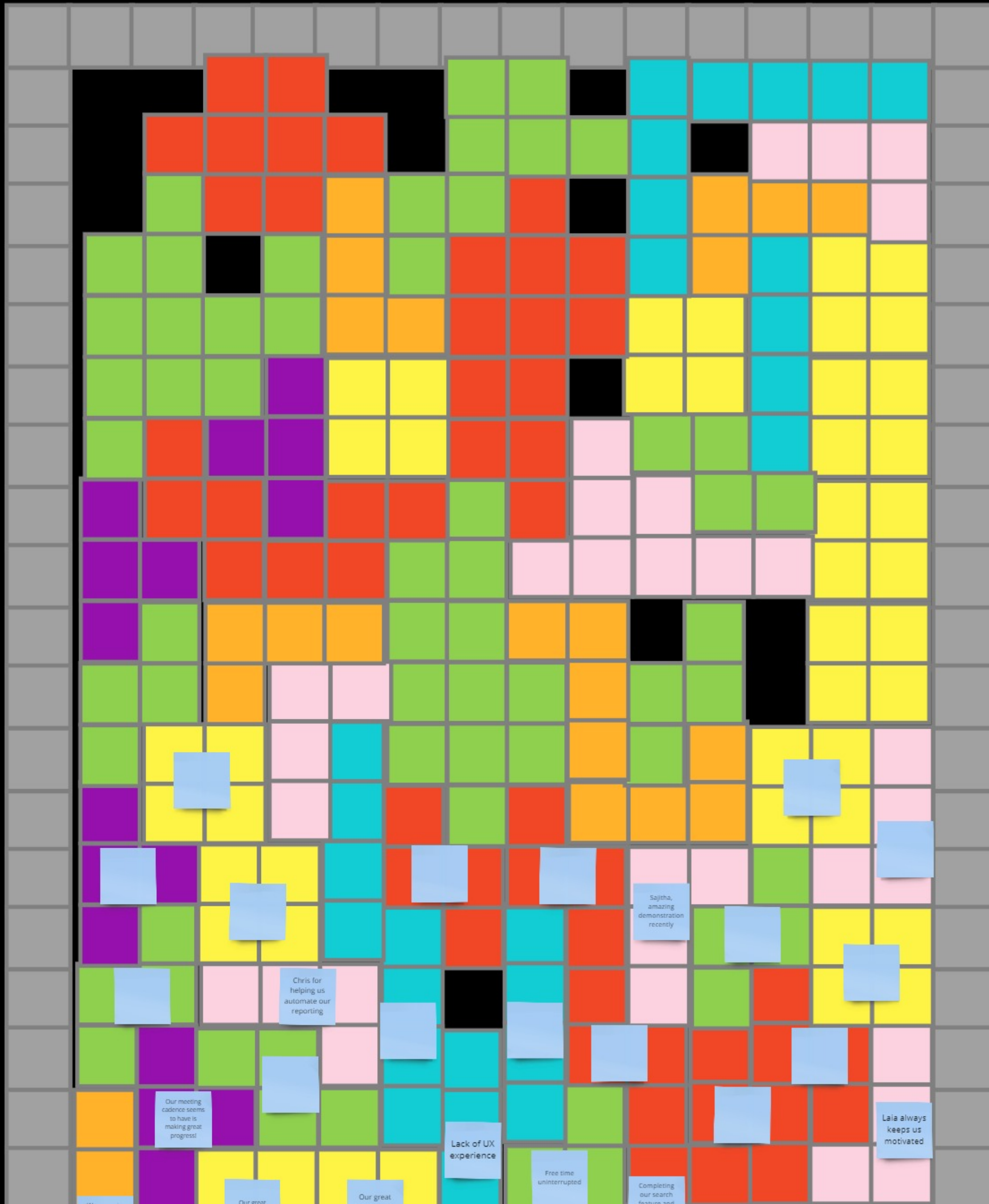
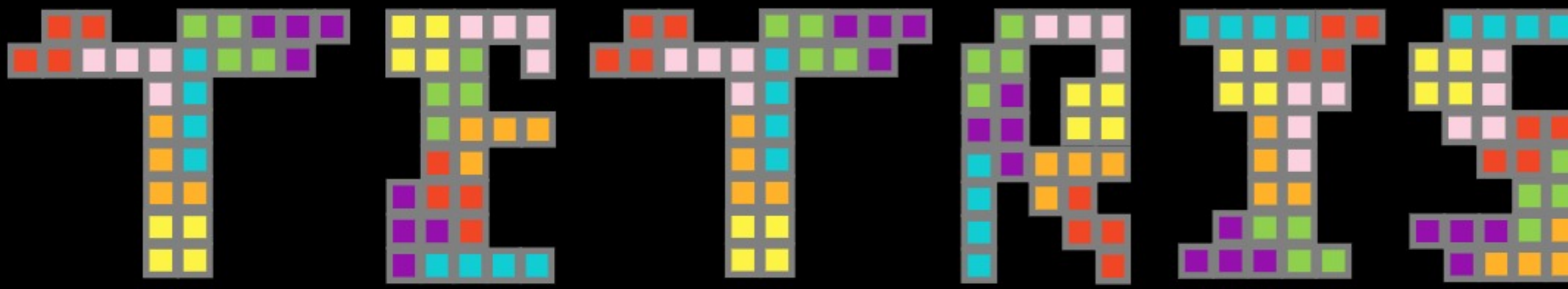
**Impediment Cyclone**



**How to use it**

- Start with an impediment in the centre of the cyclone. Work through the sections clockwise as a group.
- Taking each section at a time, allow for silent divergence, enabling people to collect their thoughts on post-its.
- Converge back together and address any surprises, trends or points that need additional clarity.
- Progressively build towards potential solutions for the impediment using the prompts available.

# Distributing Tasks



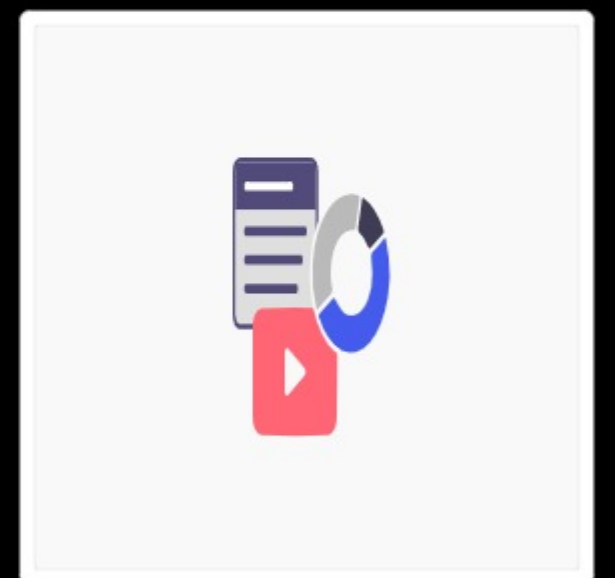
## ACTIONS

Next iteration we'll schedule meeting free time on Thursday afternoons to help us focus

Experiment next iteration with a WIP limit of 5 per column on our board



## RANDOM NUMBER GENERATOR



## SCORE

16

# Let's lock in that learning 🗝️ 🧠

Talk to your table buddies and answer the below questions

1. One thing I've learned today about facilitating retrospectives is..

2. Another approach I've tried before to facilitate great retrospectives is..



**5 Minutes**

Team Name:

Retro Date:

"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand."

  
45 mins

**Actions / Experiments**  
Identify 3-5 actions or experiments to try in the next few weeks..

**The Worlds Worst Team**

Share the attributes you believe the worlds worst team possesses. Use the post-its here or add images to convey your views >>



Next Retro date



# THE WORLDS WORST RETROSPECTIVE

How could we reduce the level of psychological safety we have as a team?



Convert to improvements



How could we make our customers less satisfied with our products?



Convert to improvements



How could we make it more expensive to maintain our product?



Convert to improvements



Ideas for next retro format..



This template was created with  
by The Virtual Agile Coach  
[www.thevirtualagilecoach.co.uk](http://www.thevirtualagilecoach.co.uk)

## Tomato-meter



Using a fist of five, allow the team to rate individually how the retro went. Average score wins.

Use this to improve your retrospectives over time and to drive your collective focus towards retrospective excellence



1 = Retrospective took place, some team members were missing, potential improvements discussed, time box not respected

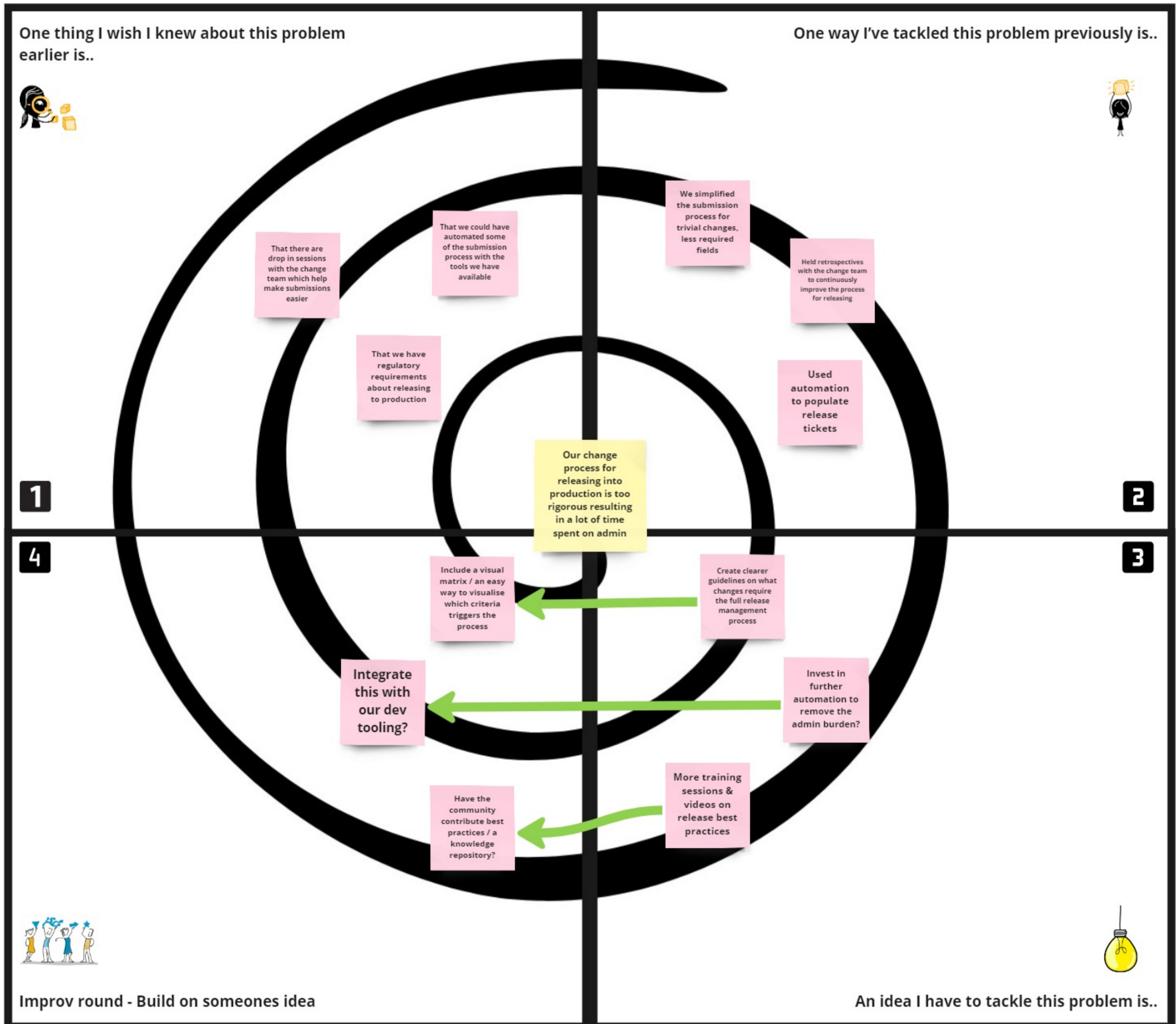
2 = Whole team in attendance, some people contributed, may have identified improvements without owners (where applicable)

3 = Majority of team contributed, opinions may or not have been openly shared due to fear of judgement or conflict, actions identified with owners (where applicable)

4 = Time box respected, Majority of team contributed without fear of judgement, time box respected, team celebrated success AND reflected on challenges, actions identified with owners (where applicable)

5 = Whole team contributed without fear of judgement, time box respected, actions identified with owners (where applicable) team celebrated success AND reflected on challenges,

# Impediment Cyclone



## How to use it



Start with an impediment in the centre of the cyclone. Work through the sections clockwise as a group.



Taking each section at a time, allow for silent divergence, enabling people to collect their thoughts on post-its.



Converge back together and address any surprises, trends or points that need additional clarity.



Progressively build towards potential solutions for the impediment using the prompts available.

# Let's Practice



**Talk to your table buddies and choose a theme for a new retrospective**

Work together to create 4-5 prompts or ways to get the conversation going about how they can improve



**8 Minutes**



# Let's practice

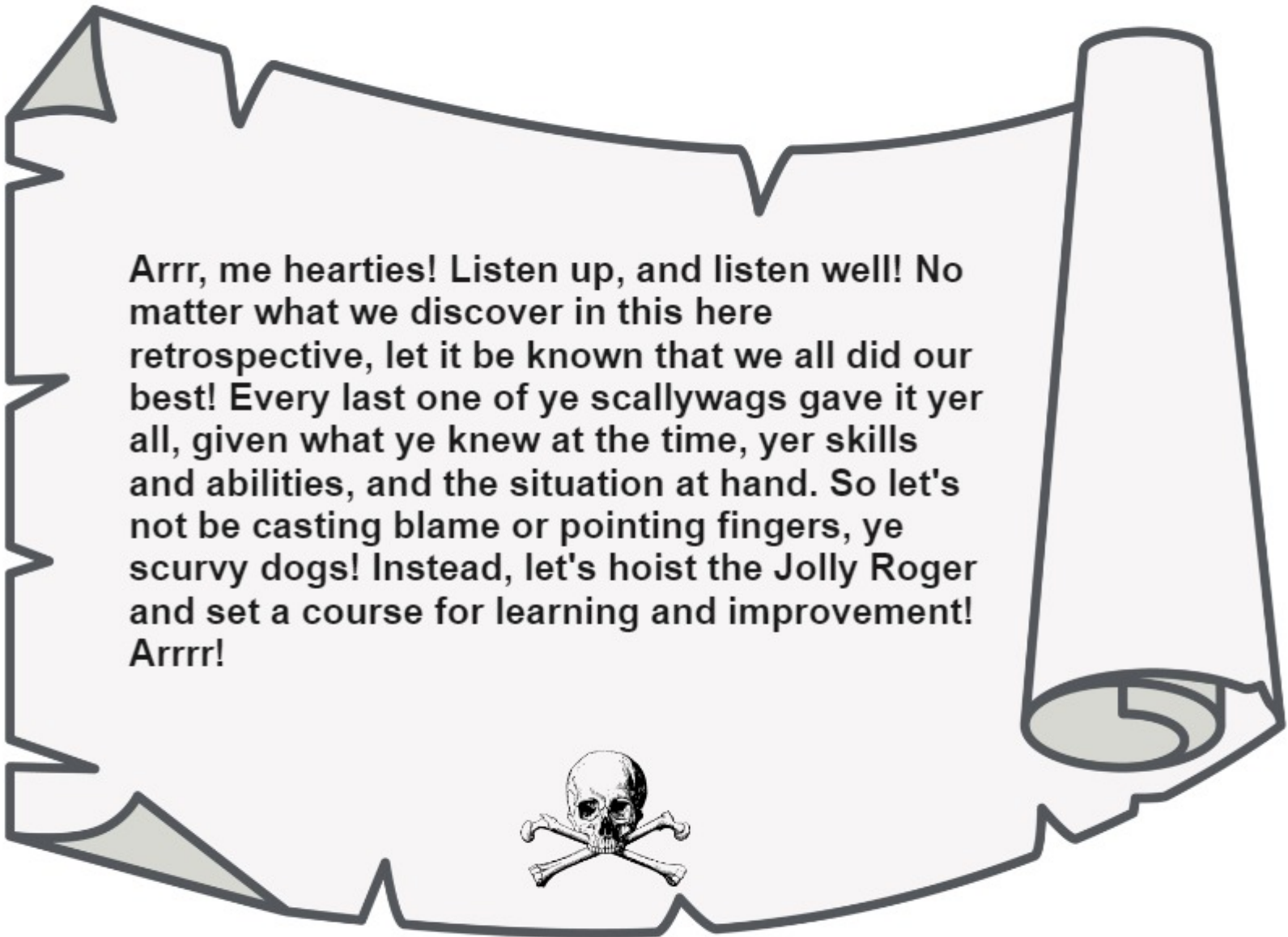


**Talk to your table buddies and answer the below questions**

- 1. One thing I've learned today about the foundations of retrospection is..**
- 2. Another approach I've used that creates the environment for a successful retrospective is..**



**5 Minutes**



Arrr, me hearties! Listen up, and listen well! No matter what we discover in this here retrospective, let it be known that we all did our best! Every last one of ye scallywags gave it yer all, given what ye knew at the time, yer skills and abilities, and the situation at hand. So let's not be casting blame or pointing fingers, ye scurvy dogs! Instead, let's hoist the Jolly Roger and set a course for learning and improvement! Arrrr!



Hark! The Herald Prime Directive sings:

No matter what tidings we uncover, let it be known that we all did our best! Each and every one of us, given our knowledge, skills, and the jolly circumstances, acted with the utmost goodwill and cheer!

So let us not blame one another for any missteps we may have taken, but rather, let us focus on the gifts we can give to each other and to ourselves! For in the spirit of Christmas, we are all part of one family, and together we shall spread joy and merriment throughout the land! Ho ho ho!