Agile for Families
Iterating with Children

Mason, 13
Lacrosse Apprentice

Cutter, 11
D&D Journeyman

Isabelle, 10
Loves Animals

Bowman, 8
“The Provoker”
Dad and Butters
Can’t leave well enough alone

Mom
“Keep your work at work.”
Session Overview

- Where We Started
- The List, and Inflection Point
- Incentives
- Artifacts
- Ceremonies
- Our Conclusions
Pre-Conditions

- Individuals were assigned ad-hoc chores
- No standards for “a job well-done”
- Inconsistent follow-up from parents promoted apathy
- “Not my job” was frequently heard
- The noise level was HIGH
Mornings Were Particularly Bad

- Did you eat your breakfast? X2
- Are you wearing underwear? X3
- Take your medicine. X3
- Did you brush your teeth? X4
- Where’s your lunch? X3
- Did you put away your dishes? X4
- Is that what you think you’re wearing? X1
- Is your bed made? X3
- Where’s your homework? X4
- Do you have your book bag? X4
- Wash your face X2
- Comb your hair. X3
The List

The first inflection point
Genesis of the List

- Information radiators were successful at work
  - Build lights
  - Defect tolerance lights

When defect count climbs, light goes on.

Stop new work until light goes out.
The Self Directed Morning Checklist

1. Take vitamins or medicine
2. Eat breakfast
3. Shower or wash face and neck
4. Take care of your hair
5. Do morning chores
6. Brush your teeth (2 minutes)
7. Backpack, shoes, and socks
8. Update information boards

What are you having for lunch?
What are you taking to school today?
What are you forgetting?
Results of the List

- Fewer prompts needed from parents
- Children began to self-regulate
- Children preferred sequential execution
- Some even began to *focus*!
- Noise level significantly reduced

Elle thought MAYBE
Dave wasn’t
a crazy fanatic

Dave felt
safe to push
his luck
Incentives

Kids don’t care about raises
# Work and Home are Different

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Life</th>
<th>Home Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team members are volunteers</td>
<td>Team members are trapped on the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can get fired</td>
<td>No one gets voted off the island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The work is often creative</td>
<td>The work is often repetitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software development is about solving cool problems</td>
<td>No one get excited because the bathroom is clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can get a raise!</td>
<td>I can not get punished!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Work and Home Have Similarities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Life</th>
<th>Home Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When the team has work, the usual suspects tend to slack or carry the weight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural tensions exist within the organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some jobs repeat, others are unique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one wakes up thinking, “Today, I plan to screw up royally”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Incentive Models Considerations

Group accountability is ideal

*And all but impossible with kids*

Individual development is paramount

*Individual incentive is key*

The goal is create healthy adults

*By stewarding a cohesive family*
Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

- **Intrinsic Motivation**
  - Comes from rewards inherent to a task or activity itself
  - The enjoyment of a puzzle or the love of playing

- **Extrinsic Motivation**
  - Comes from outside of the performer.
  - Money
  - Coercion and threat of punishment

Children who expected to be (and were) rewarded with a ribbon and a gold star for drawing pictures spent less time playing with the drawing materials in subsequent observations.
Incentive – Daily Points

- Possible to get one per day
- Awarded by consensus of the entire family
- 30 points earn a $10 book coupon
- Book coupons

Who thinks __________ deserves a point today?

Did you meet your commitments today?

Were you well behaved?

Did you cause promote peace or turmoil today?
Incentive – Cotchas

- Tool for immediate feedback
- May be earned or lost
- Anyone may award or penalize
  - Mom or Dad
  - Kids with a vote of 2 or more
- 20 Cotchas earn a family activity
  - Sometimes activities are singular due to busy schedules
  - Older kids means fewer times when all are present

Typical Activities
- Skate rink
- Go fishing
- Picnic or hike
- Family D&D night
- Kid/parent date
- Breakfast out
- Movie
- Motorcycle ride
The Current Experiment

- Cotchas and Daily Points are gone
- Replaced with … nothing
- So far so good
The Family Methodology

Artifacts
• Task Cards
• Task Boards
• Checklists
• Cotchas
• Point Cards

Ceremonies
• Weekly Family Meeting
• Daily Standup

Roles
• Parents
• Kids

Mom and Dad can act autonomously
Everyone learns to facilitate
## Methodology Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agile Term</th>
<th>Family Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iteration</td>
<td>A week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Criteria</td>
<td>Can pass inspection (peer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Chore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Scrum</td>
<td>Family Standup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and Retrospective</td>
<td>Weekly Family Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Process (workflow state)</td>
<td>Promised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Check Lists

- For repeated tasks

- Actually marking the box
  - Shows historical performance over the course of the week
  - Is fun and feels like I got something done

- Refreshed every week

- Everyone can see how I am doing
Index Cards

- For one time or ad-hoc reminders
  - Write my report
  - Produce my podcast

- For my personal responsibilities
  - Clean my room
  - Clean my pet’s cage

- For family responsibilities
  - Sweep the porch
  - Clean the shared bathroom

For weekly deliverables
to be done when I choose

- These are white
- I have them again next week

- These are pink
- Rotate to someone else next week
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kid Information Boards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kid Board</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Do</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Point Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Checklist</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ ✔️ ✔️ ✔️ ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotcha Holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise d</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Done</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shared Weekly</td>
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**Weekly cards start here**

**Move here for tomorrow**

**When done**
## Parent Information Boards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Do</th>
<th>Daily Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily Point Card</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise d</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**All cards are ad-hoc work**

Parents use a continuous flow model

This is great for real life!

Queue limit 3

When done
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some Task Cards</th>
<th>Some Daily Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Produce that podcast</td>
<td>• Feed the dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Go to the grocery store</td>
<td>• Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Send that invoice</td>
<td>• Water the plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deliver that course module</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get the car oil changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It All Looks Like This

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Kid Board</th>
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<tr>
<td>To Do</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓✓✓✓✓</td>
<td>✓✓✓✓✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Done</td>
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(pluralsight)
It All Looks Like This
Ceremonies

Because it is a better word than Meetings
Daily Family Standup

1. How did you do today?

2. What will you promise for tomorrow?
   - Should you move a promise card?

3. Do you need any help?

4. Who thinks ______________ deserves a point?

Kids even do this when mom and dad are out for the night.
Weekly Family Meeting

- Monday night
- Everyone participates

3 Distinct Phases

1. The Week in Review
2. Allowance
3. Next Week Planning
The Week in Review

- Everyone gets a chance to talk
- Parents go last

1. What went well this week?

2. What could be better next week?

3. What changes would help?

- Any topic is open for discussion
- This helps put the kids in control of the process
- Answers are posted for all to see

The issues brought up are often personal.

“Mason hit me.”

“Bowman annoyed me when…”
Allowance

- $1 per week for each year old
- 10% minimum to charity jar
- 10% minimum to savings account

Children pay for their own lives

- 20% of all sports activities
- 100% of all holiday and birthday gifts
- 100% of all hobbies
  - D&D supplies
  - Magic cards

- Nothing to do with the methodology
- Provides a break point in the meeting
- Can be useful to change the mood 😊
- Takes about 10 minutes
Next Week Planning

- What commitments do you have for the calendar?

- What ad-hoc tasks do you need to track for next week?

- What changes will we commit to for next week?
  - Personal behavior
  - Process change

- Rotate the share chore cards
- Queue up the new check lists
Results

- Mornings aren’t awful

- Family members work together to improve
  - How I like being in the family
  - How the family experience can be better

- Less noise, more communication

- Kids develop their own improvements

- Performance transparency drives individual improvement
The Vacation Responsibility Experiment

- Each child owns a room for the week
- Each room is kept intact at all times
- Daily points are based on effective stewardship

**Results**
- Mixed. Some kids like it, some don’t.
- Kids express more feeling of accountability with lists and tasks.
- Kids struggle without checklists or cards
Interviews with the Kids

What does the team think?
How has the process changed things?

The house is more organized, and it’s easier than mom always telling me to do stuff. I have more responsibility than I used to have. - Mason

The house is a lot cleaner, and the cat isn’t starving. - Isabelle
What do you like about it?

I like that it helps me get stuff done without mom having to tell me. It keeps me on track and let’s me know what I have to do every day. - Cutter

If we didn’t have the boards we pretty much wouldn’t get anything done. - Bowman
What should change? What don’t you like?

I don’t like that mom doesn’t forget my chores, because they’re on the board, and I have to do them. - Mason

I would take away the “promise” slot, because either it’s finished or it’s not. - Cutter

I don’t like it when mom and dad forget to reset boards. - Bowman
Conclusions

- Kids crave safety

- Changing artifacts frequently keeps interest alive
  - The color of cards
  - The routine of the standup

Many Agile practices are simply effective behavior modification techniques
Conclusions

Without discipline, any process will trend toward entropy.

With discipline, even a poor process can be more effective than not having one.