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The
Pragmatic
Programmers

Agile & Coaching



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Foreword by Ron Jeffries



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Foreward

If you're interested in Agile software development, or in software development at all, chances are that Rachel and Liz's book will help you. It's not just about coaching: it is about playing the game well.

When we are really serious about something, whether it's golf, playing the piano, painting, or just trimming a few inches, we often benefit from the help of a coach. A good coach knows the subject material and can assess where we stand and what will help us to improve. The coach can help us stay motivated when we reach the inevitable plateaus in progress.

Most of us spend more time at our work than we do in an avocation like golf or sit-ups. Yet all too often, we get little or no help in improving. It turns out that opportunities to help others, to be helped, and to help ourselves are all around us. This book will help each of us find those opportunities and capitalize on them.

Agile software development is deceptively simple. At its core, it's just a matter of choosing some things to build, building them over a short period of time, thinking about what has gone on, and repeating the process until our product is ready to go. Nothing to it, right?

It turns out that there is a lot to it. Most teams who start using Agile methods see benefits very early on. The very best Agile teams, however, see their productivity double, or more. These high performance teams may not be all that much smarter than your team, just working in better ways. Each team needs to find the better ways that work for them, and that's what this book is really about: finding better ways and getting them in place.

If you're an itinerant Agile coach, this book will help you serve your clients better. If you're an internal coach, a ScrumMaster, or a customer / product owner, this book will help you serve your team. If you're "just"

a team member, this book will help you too, because there are small coaching opportunities in front of us all.

Rachel and Liz take us through all the key aspects of the Agile cycle, from team formation, through estimation and planning, tracking, demonstration, and on through the retrospectives that help us improve. They help us figure out how to improve our definition of “done,” and how to test and build our software so as to get done more quickly. They help us understand the importance of clean code, and how to get it.

Now software development is quite rich and complex, and teamwork is as well. It’s impossible to put everything we need to know into one book, or a dozen. What Rachel and Liz do for us is to identify important aspects of our team’s process, and give us some key ideas that will help us understand and shape our practice. In every chapter, they list the hurdles we’re likely to encounter as we try to grow, and a checklist of some key things to be aware of.

Rachel and Liz also give us examples from their own long experience helping teams. There’s something about a real story that makes things clear to us, and it’s freeing to know that someone else has been in a similar situation and survived. Once we know there are ways of dealing with a problem, we can calm down and start making good choices.

The stories, checklists, and hurdles are alone worth the price of the book. But wait, there’s more. Rachel and Liz also give us some good advice for improving ourselves, in their “Growing You” chapter. One bit of advice from that chapter is to read one book per month about our profession. My advice is to start with this one. You’ll be glad you did.

Ron Jeffries

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