

What is Delivery Culture, and why is it important to Data Analytics teams?

Recently we were asked by a client to give them some advice on how to establish a 'Delivery Culture'. Now that's a term I've been hearing more often in recent years, but I'm not sure that there is yet a commonly accepted definition of how a 'Delivery Culture' looks different to your average IT team culture. The assumption that works for me is that someone asking about Delivery Culture would like to introduce something to a team that results in that team being better at quickly and reliably delivering a thing (as opposed to a plan or a design) in response to a newly expressed need.

With that objective in mind, one might consider continual delivery process automation as something worth investing in, but the question is specifically about culture – process automation isn't culture. Culture (according to Edgar Schein) is a pattern of shared tacit assumptions that was learned by a group ... that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to (solving) problems.

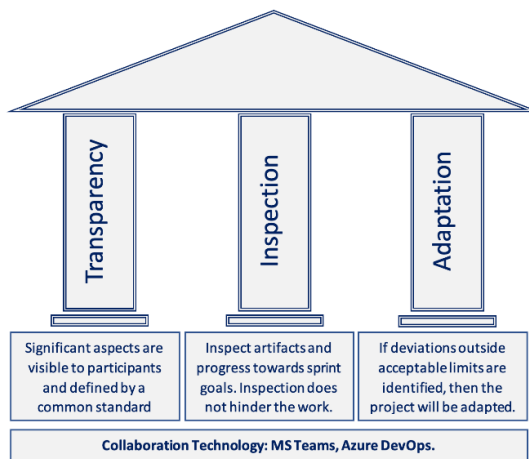
It follows then that Delivery Culture is about embedding shared tacit assumptions in a team that the best way to deal with a newly expressed need is to deliver a thing that addresses that need, or part of it, or helps to understand the need better. Can we go with that?

So, how do we establish a Delivery Culture?

John Shook, a leader in the Lean movement, is a proponent of the "change behaviour to change thinking" model. This theory is that if we change what we do, this will (over time) result in a change in values and attitudes which in turn shapes the culture of a group.

The question then is which behaviours should we address? The approach Fujitsu Data & AI has found success with is a disciplined way of working based on the SCRUM pillars, namely Transparency, Inspection and Adaptation.

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Practically, what does this mean?

Transparency can be thought of as 'We all know what is going on'. We are committed to presenting the facts as they are and strive for an environment where all team members and stakeholders trust each other and have the courage to keep each other abreast of good news and bad. No hidden agendas, everyone collaborates for the common objective. A quick glance at an Azure DevOps sprint board should reveal what every team member is working on and how they are progressing.

Inspection is about checking work as it is being done. It flows from the pillar of transparency that everyone on the team can contribute to inspection. We strive for an environment where team members are regularly sharing their work in progress and demonstrating their deliverables as soon as practical. Not only does this enable team members to continually learn from each other, it ensures that a misalignment between what a stakeholder needs and what is being built can be identified early and collaboratively re-focussed.

Adaptation is about accepting that it is OK to change tactical direction. Continuous improvement. We facilitate this way of working by incorporating retrospectives into our work plans in which we question how we could be working more effectively tomorrow than we were yesterday. How can we deliver faster? How can we deliver more value? How can we reduce future costs? How can we better satisfy our stakeholders?

In our experience, the payoff for Data Analytics teams that follow this path is speed to value. The team is better equipped to keep up with stakeholders' ever-changing demands. In extending big data collection or analytic capabilities, they are better able to prove the value of the insights that can be generated early on, adapt them as expectations evolve, or abandon them if they don't work out.

To find out how we can help with your Delivery Culture, please contact a Fujitsu Data & AI specialist now.

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