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Escape from Scrum Island

In the Jungle of Application Development, the Most Mysterious and Elusive Tribe May Provide the Best Results but Only if They Can



Get off the Island...

In the jungle of application development are several tribes. As in any untamed jungle, some of them are uncomfortable allies, some are ‘frenemies’, some only get along if coerced.

In a world where innovative use of technology is an increasingly important competitive advantage, the ability to develop new applications that meet business needs quickly and with high quality is imperative. The new jungle presents many dangers, but also many opportunities. The increasing use of flexible, iterative and ‘agile’ methodologies rather than the traditional waterfall methodologies, is creating a new set of challenges for business and for software product companies. The goal: adapt to this brave new world and take advantage of the inherent promise of faster to market, better quality software.

Meet the Tribes

While the inhabitants of the business jungle are well known, the application development tribes have existed largely hidden from the rest of the world for quite some time. With only limited contact with the outside world and their own languages/lingo, some are still virtually untamed. The first tribe you may encounter is actually the one that intermixes most freely with the rest of the world—the “**Chiefs**”. Chiefs are powerful and demanding. They know what they want and they always want it at a certain time (now). Chiefs are increasingly powerful, in

large part because they are able to get the other tribes to do work for them.

“**Waterfalls**” are an ancient tribe. They have lived their lives and practiced their black arts of application development largely unchanged since ancient days. They historically have interacted with the Chiefs only to listen to their demands and desires and to receive a large stack of information from them at the beginning of the process, only emerging from the jungle when they’ve finished their work and are ready to share the results of their labor with the Chiefs. In the beginning this worked. The Chiefs were careful and articulate and provided great detail to the Waterfalls at the beginning so that the Waterfalls could retreat and do their work undisturbed. But recently tension has grown between the Chiefs and the Waterfalls. The world has sped up, and the work that is delivered to the Chiefs by the Waterfalls is now often not what the Chiefs want (or the Chiefs have changed their minds while the Waterfalls were away working, so technically, the Waterfalls delivered what the Chiefs wanted, just not what they want now). A storm is brewing in the application development jungle...

A very distantly related tribe, the **PMBOKs**, has recently begun to encroach deeper into the jungle. The PMBOKs are renowned for being methodical. They have proven able and adept at delivering large projects for the Chiefs, not just in application development, but also in other areas of the business. The PMBOKs are often attached to the Waterfalls as a kind of spy and overseer for the Chiefs

to monitor their work and to remind them of the commitments they made. This is an uneasy relationship, and the PMBOKs are sometimes resented by the other tribes for their meddling. The Chiefs however, find them invaluable because of their ability to monitor the other tribes and keep them aware of problems and situations that the tribes are reluctant to discuss with the Chiefs until it is too late.

A tribe with growing influence, but very little understood by the Chiefs, the PMBOKs, and the Waterfalls, is the **Scrummies**. The Scrummies are so different, so removed from the rest of the tribes in the jungle that they are confined to an island—Scrum Island--that is barely visible to the mainland jungle on a clear day. The goings-on on Scrum Island are as mysterious to the other tribes as the formula for turning lead into gold, and there are many myths and legends about the Scrummies that are intriguing but as yet unconfirmed. The reason the Scrummies are so important in the new application development jungle is that they are gaining a reputation as wizards of application development, and in many ways they are eclipsing the previously dominant position and reputation of the Waterfalls who for many years have held sway with the Chiefs.

Why the Scrummies are Ascendant

The mysterious Scrummies would not be gaining influence with the Chiefs if they hadn't proven themselves very

valuable. In fact, the Chiefs have tired of the Waterfalls' style and particularly their habit of going away for long periods of time. The Scrummies are in favor because of speed--pure and simple. The art practiced by the Scrummies has given the Chiefs better product faster than the Waterfalls old way. It has come at a cost however...

The Uneasy Alliance of Chiefs and Scrummies

Chiefs want what they want fast, and Scrummies have proven themselves able to deliver faster than the Waterfalls. The problem is that where the Waterfalls went away and stayed silent for long periods of time, the Scrummies come back to the Chiefs with little pieces of what they wanted—never the whole thing at one time. So while the Chiefs grew tired of waiting for the Waterfalls, they now are becoming annoyed that the Scrummies deliver piecemeal what they want, often without progress updates along the way. While they appreciate the speed and the fact that they don't have to wait long, they often have to wait anyway before the pieces add up to something they really can use.

The rituals and practices of the Scrummies are not well understood by the Chiefs, and their inaccessibility, and their love of isolation is becoming as unacceptable to the Chiefs as was the Waterfalls' slowness and silence.

PMBOKs as Overseers and Bridge Builders

Increasingly the Chiefs are commanding the PMBOKs to intercede on their behalf. They need someone to monitor the Scrummies outputs and also to think about how it fits the needs that the Chiefs really have. While they value the speed of the Scrummies, certain chiefs are now becoming nostalgic for their old allies, the Waterfalls. “At least when we got what we got from the Waterfalls, it was complete,” say some Chiefs.

The Chiefs have decided that the PMBOKs have special skills and traditions that might actually help them get from the Scrummies what they liked in the past from the Waterfalls, only faster.

The challenge for the PMBOKs though runs deep. The PMBOKs, as introduced earlier are sort of like spies (at least in the eyes of the Scrummies). The PMBOKs longevity in the jungle is due to their careful and methodical nature. This nature, however, is often very much at odds with the carefree and collaborative Scrummies. It’s not that the Scrummies aren’t doing large amounts of work, it’s just that they rarely take the time to let the Chiefs know what they’re doing. They always deliver something to the Chiefs—sometimes even before the Chiefs expect it—but more often than not, the Chiefs would’ve been happy to wait just a little bit longer if they could get even two or three things at the same time. PMBOKs are starting to bridge this divide by participating

in the Scrummies unusual rituals. The PMBOKs are in a unique position to report back to the Chiefs and help them understand what might be coming from the Scrummies in the near future.

Getting Off the Island

Remember, one of the reasons the Scrummies tribe has remained mysterious and misunderstood is that they occupy an Island, and rarely escape to the mainland jungle where the other tribes frequently interact.

The Scrummies stay on the island for a number of reasons. Firstly, they take great pride in their output and like that isolation from distractions makes them more productive. Secondly, they like their island. They are comfortable speaking their language and interacting with others that understand their ways. Thirdly, the waterway between the mainland and the island is populated with unpleasant and potentially dangerous obstacles (to play ***Escape From Scrum Island*** see image below. Lastly, the Scrummies are much more likely to leave the island and interact with the other tribes in the application development jungle if they are helped and encouraged by the PMBOKs.



Play "Escape from Scrum Island" at www.daptiv.com/escape

Do You Need an Escape from Scrum Island?

You may have recognized certain tribal tensions in this story of Escape from Scrum Island that exist in a similar fashion in your organization. Daptiv has introduced a new solution for helping IT organizations and product teams navigate the untamed jungle of application development by providing tools for the Scrummies and PMBOKs along with special features specifically designed to keep the Chiefs happy. Check it out at www.daptiv.com/scrum.

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