

End Well to Begin Well: Project Retrospectives to Improve Product and Process

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Topics We'll Cover

1. What are Retrospectives?
2. Types of Retrospectives
3. When to do Retrospectives
4. Questions Asked and Answered in Retrospectives
5. Retrospective Design
6. What is a Retrospective Experience Like?
7. Summary and wrap-up



Retrospectives and Team Reviews

A ritual in which the project community gets out the project story, harvests the collective wisdom of the team, tells the truth without blame or judgment, identifies what to appreciate and improve, understands and forgives its failings, and relishes in its successes.

The insights gained from retrospectives are the basis for starting again.



Retrospective vs. "Post-Mortem"?

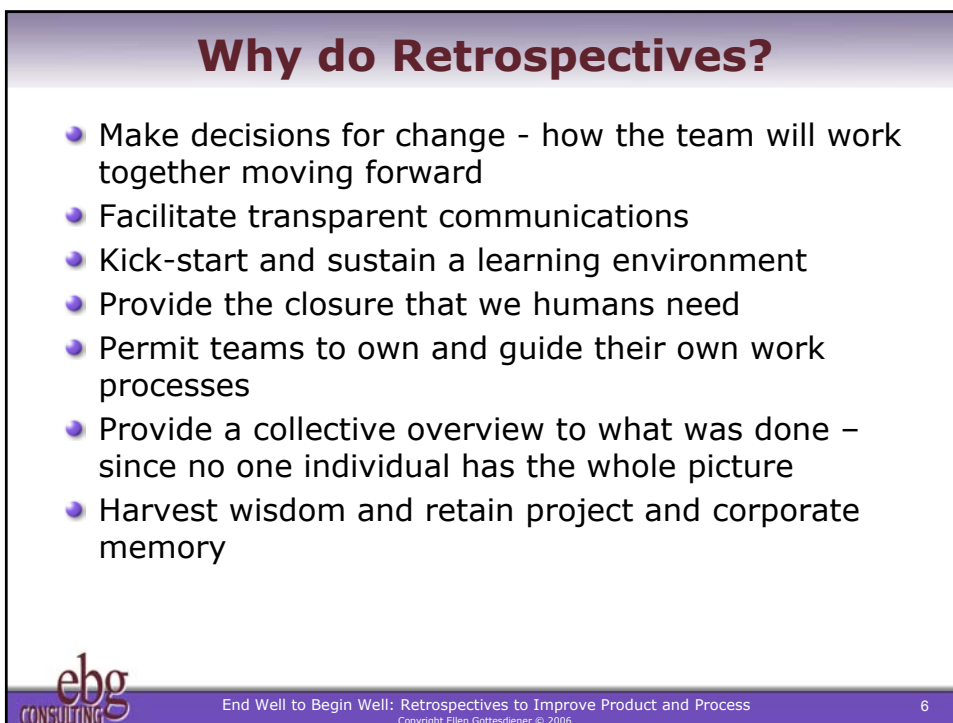
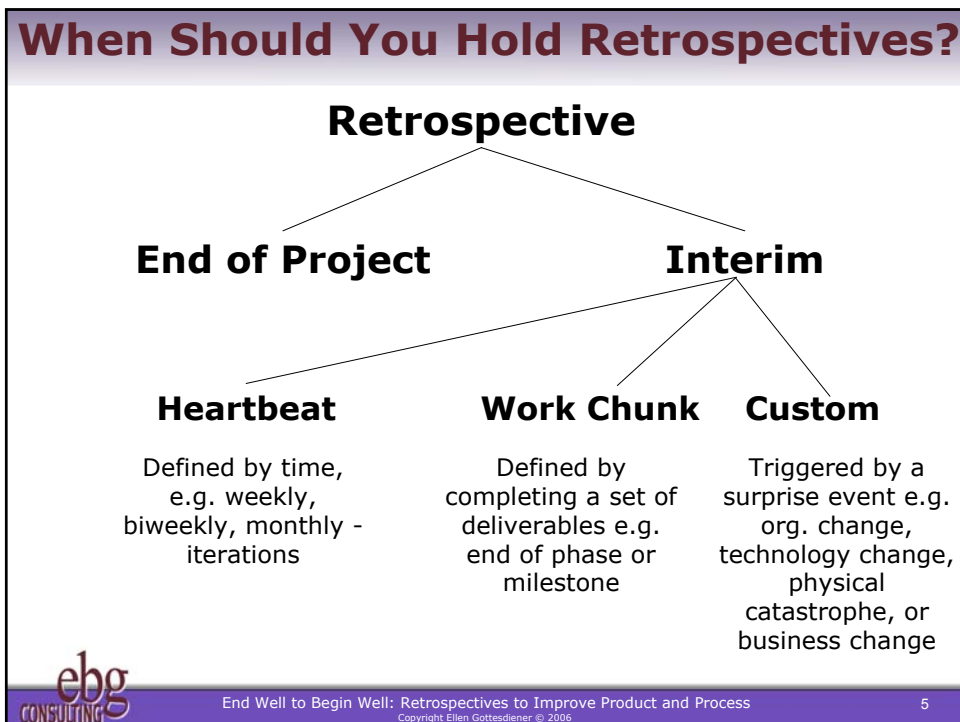
Typical Post-Mortem, Debrief, Lessons Learned....:

- Negative connotation
- "Fileware"
- If done, usually done once—at the end
- Can be long or short, involving only part of the project community
- Little risk-taking, self-reflection, mistake examination

Retrospective:

- Positive connotation; leverages what we know about adult learning
- Generates actions for change
- Can be done throughout the project
- Length varies depending on period to be retrospectively, involves whole project community
- Usually addresses the real stuff that often makes-or-breaks project – people, feelings, communications, etc.





Five Key Questions

1. What did we do well, that we might forget to do next time, if we don't discuss it?
2. What did we learn?
3. What should we do differently next time?
4. What still puzzles us?
5. What needs more discussion?



Adapted from: Norm Kerth



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Successful Retrospectives

Characteristics

- They are planned
- They involve the entire project community
- They use data from the project
- They acknowledge that feelings count
- They follow a structure
- They are the basis for change



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The 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.



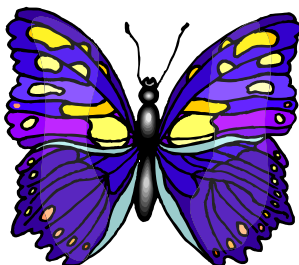
Source: Norm Kerth

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Structure for Retrospectives

1. Get ready.
2. Explore the past.
3. Understand the present.
4. Decide the future.
5. Retrospect the retrospective.



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Retrospective Activities

What Worked Well?

- follow the spirit of the rules without striving to the letters
- storytelling
- consensus decisions for storytelling
- sharing leadership
- making notes of the stories (re-construct)
- good communication (eg, between pairs)
- dividing the task

What Would You Do Differently?

- more clearer definition of tasks prior to project start
- explain the task in diff ways
- ask/invite the customer using a copy machine
- Keep one face to the customer if CR's come:
- Discuss internally the problem
- discuss new situation w/ customer
- close the project and ask customer for feedback

Motivation & Safety

How do we feel?
 ↳ 1 card per person; please write one number & one letter

4					
3					
2					
1					
	E	D	C	B	A

Year, Request Communication
 RESUME-
 BUSINESS
 Elicitation

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Activities by Phase

Example: End-of-Project Retro

- 1. Readingy**
 - Sense of the Group
 - Create Safety
 - Define Success
- 2. Past**
 - Artifacts Contest
 - Project Timeline
 - Mine the Timeline
- 3. Present**
 - Temperature Reading
 - Locating Project Strengths
- 4. Future**
 - Change the Paper
 - Celebration Card
- 5. Retrospect the Retrospective**
 - Start-Stop-Continue-More of-Less of

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Simulation



Importance of Rituals

- Early prehistoric man often sat around the campfire using storytelling to describe to the others the great hunt.
- Kerth: it is much easier to identify another's foolishness than to recognize one's one. This is the Law of Wisdom Acquisition.
- Based on this law, stopping to reflect is not a natural activity. You need to make it a ritual.
- Rituals bring people together, help focus the team on what's important, and helps them acknowledge significant events or accomplishments.
- The big picture learning comes from seeing the relationship between the individual's work and that of the team or organization.



Ellen Gottesdiener, Principal Consultant, EBG Consulting, helps teams collaboratively explore requirements, shape their development processes, and to plan and review their work. Ellen's experiences as an agile requirements facilitator are articulated in her book *Requirements by Collaboration: Workshops for Defining Needs* (Addison-Wesley, 2002). Her latest book is *The Software Requirements Memory Jogger: A Pocket Guide to Help Software and Business Teams Develop and Manage Requirements* (GOAL/QPC, 2005).

Ellen has extensive experience working with business and software teams to successfully start up projects, define product requirements, and improve teamwork. Her industry career includes being a developer, analyst, trainer, project manager, and process leader. She presents seminars on requirements, facilitated workshops, retrospectives, and software inspections and peer reviews. She is a conference speaker and advisor for the Software Development conferences and the stickyminds.com Web site. She has authored numerous papers on software requirements, methods, and modeling, and she is a Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF).

Ellen is a member of DAMA (Data Administration Management Association), IEEE, ACM and the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA). She serves as an expert reviewer of the currently under-development IIBA's B Business Analyst Body of Knowledge (BOK) and is an IIBA Charter Endorsed Education Provider.

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Attendee Handouts

- References, web sites
- Retrospective Summary info
- Retrospective simulation instructions and template

