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The
Agile
Employee
Feedback
Manifesto

Business outcomes
over measurement and compliance.

Open and owned
over anonymous and unowned.

Frequent small actions
over big slow actions.

Getting feedback to where it's useful
over following the hierarchy.

Participation and inclusion
over rigid experimental-design.

Usefulness for employees
above everything else.

The Agile Employee Feedback Manifesto

Twenty years ago, the team who wrote the **Agile Manifesto** realised we were prioritising the wrong things in the way we work. They came up with a set of values that form the Agile Manifesto and in turn, changed the way organisations work around the world.

Since then Agile has helped teams work more collaboratively, brought businesses closer to their customers and made work environments more dynamic. And yet, Agile enterprises are still asking employees for feedback through occasional anonymous surveys.

We set out to fix employee feedback for Agile enterprises. To make it something that supports an Agile mindset and reinforces Agile principles.

Over the past few years working with Agile enterprises, we've come to realise that in much the same way, the solution involves re-thinking what we value when it comes to employee feedback.

So we wrote a new manifesto:
The Agile Employee Feedback Manifesto.

Business outcomes over measurement and compliance

Despite years of surveys the consistent employee belief is "nothing ever changes". This is because employee feedback has centred on measurement first. Reducing people to statistics.

Instead, start with the question. How could feedback advance our business outcomes? Employee feedback is too valuable (and finite) a resource to be squandered on HR only. Stretch beyond measuring engagement. Apply feedback to many business outcomes – crowdsourcing change, adoption of new processes, shifting culture.

Also. Preoccupation with measurement is a bedfellow of obsession with benchmarks. Benchmarks narrow your application of feedback, and ensure you aim for the average.

Open and owned over anonymous and unowned.

When an employee leaves anonymous feedback they abdicate responsibility for that feedback. It becomes "someone else's problem".

Also, psychological safety is a defining feature of successful Agile teams. Only ever asking for feedback in secret sends an opposing message – feedback here is unsafe.

Instead the goal is to help everyone feel comfortable giving **and** receiving feedback. Feedback should focus on outcomes rather than being ego-bruising. Feedback should encourage empathy, honesty and ownership.

Frequent small actions over big slow actions.

Traditional feedback gets aggregated to a subset of leaders who create valuable high level programs in response. But, aggregation also destroys useful opportunities for individual action, and it removes ownership for outcomes. Many many individual actions will have an impact greater than a few macro programs. And action will happen faster.

Getting feedback to where it's useful over respecting the hierarchy.

Feedback systems shouldn't just aggregate feedback up the hierarchy. They should direct feedback to where it's most useful, and often that means to multiple places. Not only to leaders, but to subject matter experts, within squads, to coaches. And if teams reconfigure often, historical feedback needs to move to where it's relevant.

Participation and inclusion over rigid experimental-design.

Traditional feedback systems are built on statistical assessment. They ask rating questions with precise language to get to very specific measurements. This is often at the expense of reading age and inclusion.

Instead of asking questions, start conversations that encourage dialog, and prompt action. Rather than statistical analysis use natural language processing to extract insights.

Usefulness for employees above everything else.

Employee feedback programs fail if they are not useful for employees. Feedback should give employees a voice that they can see is heard, includes them in change, and gives them ownership of their own experience of work.

The Agile Employee Feedback Manifesto is based on the:

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

- **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
- **Working software** over comprehensive documentation
- **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
- **Responding to change** over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

Kent Beck	Mike Beedle
Arie van Bennekum	Alistair Cockburn
Ward Cunningham	Martin Fowler
James Grenning	Jim Highsmith
Andrew Hunt	Ron Jeffries
Jon Kern	Brian Marick
Robert C. Martin	Steve Mellor
Ken Schwaber	Jeff Sutherland
Dave Thomas	

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