



WHAT PEOPLE WANT

I was sitting in Caryn's living room last weekend watching three teenage boys play the video game Halo II. If you are not familiar, it's a guns and ammo program pitting everybody against each other in the backdrop of some bombed out city. The competition was fierce since your survival depends on killing the other guy before he kills you. Toss in a crew of other bad guys and a variety of deadly obstacles, and you need to be on your game, so to speak, to survive. I waited patiently to be asked to join in, but apparently I did not make the cut. I was relegated to the role of observer with Pete, who was long dead. This game had been going on well before I got there and I am sure it continued for a few hours after I left. I was even told that when playing at a high level players wear Depends to avoid any break in the action. This was good news for me since I am not too many years away from sporting the standard combat equipment.

I only see the same intensity from this gang in two other arenas, skate boarding and surfing. The boys will roll out of bed at 5:30AM in the dead of winter to go jump in the water. How do I get some of this mojo? An even more interesting question - how does this translate into a project team? Then I remembered a recent article I read about what motivates people: Autonomy – Mastery – Real Time Feedback. Bingo! Halo II, surfing and skating deliver all three in spades.

With this in mind I recently launched a modified version of Agile with a small sub-team of a larger project. The daily update of the scoreboard (real time feedback for individuals and team), clear ownership of each task card (autonomy and mastery), and independent selection of tasks (more autonomy) provided some amazing insights for the group. We instantly began to question our performance against the plan and thought about solutions for improvement. With real clarity we identified that our limited resources were actually more limited than we thought. We realized our traditional method of being organized was keeping half of the team out of the game. Best of all, since the intent was to create a self managed work group (more autonomy) it was exhilarating to see the "team" figure this out!

I think the author was on to something really big here after just scratching the surface of creating Autonomy – Mastery – Real Time Feedback. With this as an underpinning to my approach, I am hot in pursuit of bringing more of the big three to the party.

I can only dream of the day I can sit back and watch a project team execute with the same intensity as a group of teenagers playing Halo II. When that happens, I will know I have found it!

The Value of Projects