

Fresh Shit Syndrome in Agile Transformations

First of all, sorry for the raw image that this title might create in your mind, but let me explain the meaning of Fresh Shit. Shit is the feces that we expel from our body, but for this example, imagine that it is from a dog. Their shit smells bad and you know that something is wrong with that, even if it looks like chocolate, it's not chocolate, but when some days have passed, this shit stops smelling and is not that bad as the first day (even if it is still shit). What did you expect me to write as an introduction? I'm talking about shit.

Fresh Shit Syndrome

The Fresh Shit Syndrome represents the cycle that people and companies have when they leave something or someone because it is causing problems and actually smells bad (Fresh Shit), but when some time passes and the idealization of a world without this shit is not as good as you imagine, then you start thinking of your old shit that was not that bad and you can live with it. I'll explain this with an example:

Imagine you're in a relationship and having some issues that make it obvious that this relationship is not working. Obviously, you decide to get out of this relationship. That's what represents the first phase of the Fresh Shit. Everything stinks. You start trying new things and hanging out with some other people until you start thinking about your ex, thinking that some things were not that bad. That's what the Shit Syndrome represents. When time passes, you start looking to the past and find that the issues were not that bad, so you get back to the same shit. Spoiler alert, if you get back to the same place, you will find the same shit.

Agile Transformation

OK. Let's stop this shit and start talking about Agile. When companies start looking for an Agile transformation, one of the first things that passes through the heads of these big companies is, why is my competition delivering better things than me? I'm not sure

what Agile is, but this will help me be faster and get more money, or they even just read an article that said that Agile is awesome.

But the real thing is that it doesn't matter the reasons they have in their minds. They are trying to change because what they are doing right now smells bad and something is wrong, even if it looks like chocolate (we are making money). So these companies are living on fresh shit.

Mistakes in the Agile Transformation that creates this Syndrome

Having fake expectations is one of the main causes of this syndrome. If you think that by doing Agile your company will start working faster, that's a huge mistake. Another common misunderstanding is actually thinking that you are only using fancy names that represent a huge change. I might write about these common mistakes in other posts, but for now, the important thing is that, after making these changes and finding that these mistakes or misunderstandings don't align with the expectations you have, then we start thinking that our shit wasn't that bad and end up getting back to the same shit of the past.

That said, you might have already made the connection with this syndrome, but if not, let me give you a quick explanation. First we have fresh shit with all the old practices and ways of working that need a change, then we make some changes to that. Then we escape from this shit and you will be OK for some time. If you make this change and get the value expected, then you won't have this syndrome, but as soon as you have unexpected outcomes you will continue with this syndrome (in most cases). The final part is to start thinking that your old shit wasn't that bad because you are not getting all the benefits you imagined, and actually you forget that the old shit actually stinks, so you want to get back to that.

To finish this, I just want to say, remember shit will always be shit, even if it stops smelling bad.

