

The HUMAN SIDE of AGILE

GIL BROZA

How to Help Your Team Deliver



Supplementary resource for the book *The Human Side of Agile*. More at www.TheHumanSideOfAgile.com

Refactoring Conversation Smells with Precision Questions

DELETIONS

Vague Reference

Making a general statement about an amorphous group of people. *Clue words:* a person, someone, people, users, management, businesspeople, one, we.

Example: "Management ignores our suggestions."

PQ: "Which managers, specifically?"

Example: "We love user feedback."

PQ: "Is that a particular category of users? Or all users?"

Vague Object

Using vague nouns, pronouns, or objects in a confusing or ambiguous way.

Example: "We deliver business value regularly."

PQ 1: "What is business value, specifically?"

PQ 2: "What kind of value?"

Missing Comparative

Implying a comparison or relationship without stating the basis of it. *Clue words:* even, very, more, less, greater, lesser, best, worst.

Example: "Kanban is better than Scrum."

PQ 1: "Based on what? What makes you say that?"

PQ 2: "Better how?"

Example: "This was the worst iteration since we started using Agile."

PQ: "How was it worse than others? What was different about it?"

Vague Action

Using process words with an incomplete description; omitting the verb and/or its object.

Example: "We welcome changing requirements, even late in development."

PQ: "In what way do they change?"

Example: "We've announced the start of the pilot Agile project."

PQ: "To whom exactly have you announced it?"

Missing Reference

Making a statement without identifying its reference object or source. *Clue words:* It, they, that, and the passive voice.

Example: "We were told to have a nightly build."

PQ: "Who told you that?"

Value Judgment

Making a value judgment without attribution (not mentioning the performer of the judgment).

Example: "Agile is not a good option for our company."

PQ 1: "Who in the company says that?"

PQ 2: "What makes you say that?"

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DISTORTIONS

Cause and Effect

Implying or stating that one thing causes another, without enough logical support or evidence. *Clue words:* makes, because, if...then, then, since, so.

Example: "Business pressures don't let us implement our improvement initiatives."

PQ 1: "Is someone actively holding you back?"

PQ 2: "How, specifically?"

Meaning

Stating that an idea, object, or situation has a certain meaning or significance. *Clue words:* that means, in other words, therefore, that's the same as. *If the clue words are missing,* but injecting them keeps the statement's semantics unchanged, you have a meaning pattern.

Example: "Kim rarely pairs up with her team-mates. She probably dislikes them."

PQ: "Could she like them and still not want to pair with them?"

Presupposition

Making a statement that can be true or false (or make sense) only if some unmentioned element is assumed to be true. That element is not an established fact; it might be false or even not exist.

Example: "Our team can't spare time for pairing."

PQ: "How do you know that pairing takes more time than working solo?"

Mind Reading

Believing you know another person's thoughts, feelings, intentions, meanings, or motivations – without sufficient proof or sensory evidence.

Example: "Ron is just waiting for an excuse to show that using Agile was a bad idea."

PQ 1: "What have you seen or heard to make you think that?"

GENERALIZATIONS

Necessity

Stating or identifying compulsory rules or limits to behavior. *Clue words:* must, mustn't, have to, should.

Example: "Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project."

PQ: "What would happen if they didn't?"

Possibility

Stating or identifying possible rules or limits to behavior. *Clue words:* can, can't, could, couldn't, may, might

Example: "We can't use iterations."

PQ 1: "What could happen if you could use iterations?"

PQ 2: "What's stopping you from using iterations?"

Universality

Making absolute generalizations without identifying a specific group or category. *Clue words:* always, never, every, all, none.

Example: "Our users never know what they want."

PQ: "Have you met one user who knew exactly what she wanted?"

Nominalization

Freezing a dynamic process (verb) into a thing or event (noun). *Clue words:* nouns formed by adding "-ing" to verbs.

Example: "Our teamwork is so-so."

PQ: "How is the team working right now?"

Example: "We don't like our iteration planning process."

PQ: "How did you plan your most recent iteration?"

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