Learning-Themed Retrospective Template

Theme
Code Writers as Learners: Learning Culture & Learning Debt

Goal
To reflect on how our individual beliefs and our team culture both encourages and discourages engagement in on-the-job and sometimes "invisible" learning activities

Materials
Slide deck
Messaging system that supports threading (e.g., Slack)

Total time
60 minutes

Outline & Facilitation Notes

Icebreaker (5 minutes)
- Ask everyone to briefly reflect on and answer the question: *What is something you've tried but failed to learn outside of work?*

- As the facilitator, model a response by answering the question before giving folks time to reflect.

- *Tip: Some individuals may feel the need to ask follow-up questions and comment on teammates' responses. Be mindful of time – this is a warm-up designed to get everyone contributing from the get-go, and shouldn't take more than 5 minutes.*

A Vulnerable Story to Set the Tone (5 minutes)
- Tell a personal, work-situated story that demonstrates the ideas of individually-held beliefs about on-the-job learning, unhealthy team learning cultures, and learning debt.

- The goals here are to model for folks how these concepts manifest as a code writers, as well as to set the stage for vulnerable sharing.

The Five Whys (40 minutes)
- Ask participants to post something that they have been wanting to learn or a skill they've wanted to develop for work that – for one reason or another – they haven't. Instruct them to hold off on analyzing the situation – a short description will suffice for now.

- Instruct participants to subject their item to [The Five Whys](#) through threading off their original post. Give them the first question to ask: "Why haven't I learned this thing?"

  - *Tip: To help participants understand what you're asking them to do, show them an example based on the personal scenario you shared at the beginning of the retro.*

- Ask participants to read through their teammates' threads, and to throw some emoji love at each other, if they'd like. They might add a *nod* or *me-too* emoji if they've experienced something similar, or a *hug* emoji to show support.

  - *Tip*: As the facilitator, model this by adding emojis yourself to participants' messages.

- Begin a large-group discussion of participants' items. Ask for volunteers to describe the situation they recorded in their original message, along with the line of questioning they followed for their *Five Whys* root cause analysis. Ask follow-up questions that highlight the role of individually-held beliefs, team culture, and learning debt.

- During the last five-10 minutes, ask participants to create a single action item for themselves based on their root-cause analysis. Then, ask folks to share.

Next Steps (10 minutes)
- Consider tying the discussion back to the vulnerable story you told at the beginning of the retro.
- Decide as a team how to keep each other – and the team – accountable to the action items generated.