

# Radiant Energy

written by CD | APRIL 21, 2018

The radiant energy that filled on a chance encounter with the Dalai Lama 40+ years remains with me to this day.

# Making Rules

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My first early childhood education exercise was to go to a pre-school where a teacher was having particular trouble with three very disruptive boys she could not get under control. She hoped just to get a day of relief by having me take them for the day. I approached the boys and told them that

I hoped to be a teacher some day and that they could help me. They were surprised to hear that from me. I asked them to tell me what made a good teacher and a bad teacher. They said they didn't like their teacher because she had all these stupid rules. I acted very surprised and asked for an example. They said, like no playing ball inside the classroom. In shock, I asked why on earth would a teacher tell them that? Playing ball is fun!!! I probed further to get them to tell me why a teacher might have such a stupid rule. After some thought, they suggested the ball might break something. I said, oh wow, yeah, that might make some sense. One by one, I had them give me rationale as to why any teacher would have any of the rules that their teacher was imposing on them. They came up with some great reasons.

The next week I heard back from the teacher who wasn't sure if she should ask what I had said to the boys because they had somehow become the best behaved children in her class. Later I learned that one approach to establishing rules that students would adhere to is to have them come up with their own rules. It would take longer to arrive at a good set than it would if the teacher dictated them; however, the students observed would consistently adhere to the rules they came up with far more than those a teacher dictated.

## Core Tenant of Agile Software Development Philosophy

When interviewing engineering manager candidates, I like to ask them: "If you had to choose just one tenant of Agile Software Development Methodology to be "religious" about, what would it be?" I get some interesting responses, but the one I tell them I am religious about is to not be religious about anything. Every situation is slightly different and the most effective process is adapted to the situation. More on that in another post. My next favorite answer is to have Retrospectives where the team analyzes how the last sprint went and determines what to repeat, what to improve and what to not do again. In essence coming up with their own rules for how to best development software.

## The Path to Enlightenment

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The path to enlightenment lies not in the footsteps of another. – CD



In developing talent, it is important to help them learn to find their own path that not only resonates with them, but that is also appropriate for the unique experiences they will come upon in their path. When I interview someone who has "Agile" on their resume, I ask them: *"If you had to be religious about just one thing about the agile development methodology, what would it be?"* It's a bit of a trick question as the answer I seek is: *"To be religious about nothing at all."* I say this because every project and every team is unique and what works well in one situation may not in another.

Kanban may be well suited for green-field projects dealing with technologies and/or languages the team hasn't used before. Similarly, the use of Story Point Poker may apply well to a well understood

technology, language and project.

Likewise, when it comes to be a teacher, manager, coach or colleague, there is most likely not one specific approach that will work in all similar situations. Even the exact same situation involving the exact same people may have different outcomes on any given day as circumstances may have altered. Prior to coming to work, school or the field, one individual may have lost a loved one, or another may have had a fight with their partner...

So too, it is unlikely that any advice dispensed will always be applicable and resulting in predictable outcomes. As a horse whisperer, it is good to understand how to interact with a horse and how to recognize certain signs, but it tends to be most effective and safe to adjust the approach to what works in a specific moment and interaction. So too with humans or a business, there is no one answer or approach that will always work. I have been at early, mid and late stage companies operating in existing and emerging markets, I have seen there are many different paths to success that apply even within the same company and business as it matures.

To go back to the question about Agile, my next favorite answer is the Retrospective – this is where a team looks back at the last sprint to decide what worked, what didn't what to keep, abandon or adjust from the last sprint. So too, the Post Mortem after an outage or the debrief after a game present wonderful opportunities to learn from that experience what might work better than previous approaches. As a coach, teacher or mentor, I'm always careful with dispensing advice for there are always many vectors of force at play and many may not be readily visible to me. Hence, I'm also careful to closely follow what I learn from others and how I arrived at the view that the path to enlightenment lies not in the footsteps of another. We may observe and learn from others, but I believe we should each find our own path and see what lies in front of us with a beginner's mind.

And, change marches on at an accelerating rate...



# Unconscious Bias / Privilege

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Unconscious Bias and Privilege are things that are easy to claim we don't have. The City Bus metaphors may help us wake up.