

# Assessing Your Agility: Introducing the Comparative Agility Assessment

Kenny Rubin and Mike Cohn

Agile Development Practices  
November 13, 2008



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## Who We Are

### ► Kenny Rubin

- Former managing director of Scrum Alliance
- Early-market thought leader in Object Technology / Smalltalk
- Certified Scrum Trainer

### ► Mike Cohn

- Author of two popular books on agile development
- Co-founder of Agile Alliance and Scrum Alliance
- Certified Scrum Trainer



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# Scenario

- ▶ Our company has decided to use agile
- ▶ We get training and maybe some coaching
- ▶ After six months, management wants to know:
  - ▶ “How are we doing at adopting agile?”



# Some specific questions

- ▶ Are we where we should be?
- ▶ In which areas do we need to improve?
- ▶ In which areas are we excelling?
- ▶ How are we doing relative to others?
- ▶ How are we doing relative to our competitors?

# We need an assessment framework

- ▶ An instrument for “measuring” agility
- ▶ Desirable attributes
  - ▶ Must evaluate multiple dimensions of agility
  - ▶ Must lead to actionable recommendations

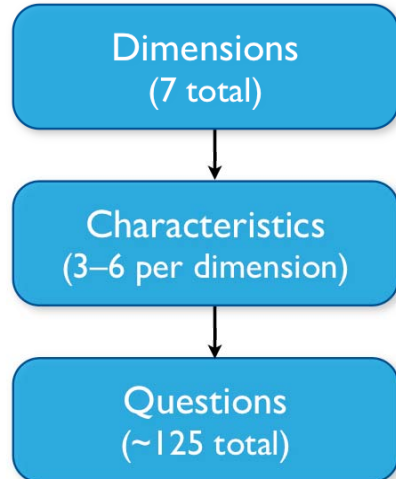


## Agenda

- The Assessment Framework
- Assessment Process
- Preliminary Industry Results
- Sample Company Results



# Assessment framework



# Seven assessment dimensions

- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Requirements
- ▶ Planning
- ▶ Technical practices
- ▶ Quality
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Knowledge creation



# An Example

All-encompassing, task-oriented plans created upfront; reluctance to update plans; little buy-in to dates from team

## Planning (dimension)

Created at multiple levels of detail; frequently updated; created by team with full buy-in

### Characteristics

Planning level  
Critical variables  
Progress tracking  
Source  
When  
All upfront ← → Spread throughout

### Questions

- We do the right amount of upfront planning; helpful without being excessive.
- Effort spent on planning is spread approximately evenly throughout the project.

### Responses

- True
- More true than false
- Neither true nor false
- More false than true
- False



# The Requirements Dimension

Document-centric; collected upfront; little acknowledgement of emergence

## Requirements

Collected at different levels of detail; progressively refined; conversation-focused, augmented with documentation

- ▶ Four characteristics
  - ▶ Communication focus
  - ▶ Level of detail
  - ▶ Emergence
  - ▶ Technical design



## Requirements. Communication Focus

- ▶ Written requirements are augmented with discussion.
- ▶ The details of a feature are fleshed out in just-in-time discussions.
- ▶ Our product owner is available to discuss features during the iteration.
- ▶ We acknowledge that not all details can be conveyed in written specifications.



## Requirements. Level of detail

- ▶ Teams are able to start projects with incomplete requirements.
- ▶ During an iteration the specific details of some features are negotiable.
- ▶ Requirements are represented at different levels of detail based on how soon we expect to implement them.



## Requirements. Emergence

- ▶ Change is a natural part of our business; we accept it and embrace it at reasonable times.
- ▶ Product owners can change requirements without a lot of fuss.
- ▶ Development teams can request and negotiate requirements changes with product owners.
- ▶ Product owners acknowledge that sometimes features turn out to be bigger than anyone thought.



## Requirements. Technical design

- ▶ Projects begin with a big, distinct technical design phase.
- ▶ Technical design occurs iteratively throughout a project.
- ▶ Technical design is a team activity rather than something performed by individuals working alone.





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## Assessment approaches

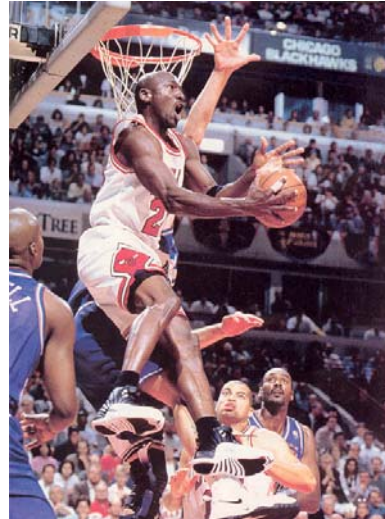
- ▶ Consultative
  - ▶ Administered to a team of people by a consultant
  - ▶ Consultant fills in the questionnaire based on responses collected during interviews
- ▶ Self-administered
  - ▶ Individuals working on projects complete either paper or online version of the survey
- ▶ Online version is at
  - ▶ [www.ComparativeAgility.com](http://www.ComparativeAgility.com)





# Assessment philosophy

- ▶ Not trying to determine maturity levels
- ▶ Organizations do not need to be perfect
  - ▶ Only better than their competitors
- ▶ Lead to the idea of a Comparative Agility Assessment
  - ▶ “How am I doing compared to my competition?”



## 2. Teamwork Questions

██████████ 25%

### \* 1. Team Composition

	True	More True Than False	More False Than True	False	Not Applicable
Testers and programmers are on the same team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Everyone required to go from requirements to potentially shippable product is on the team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specialists are willing to work outside their specialties to achieve team goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teams have 5-9 people on them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People are not on more than two teams.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team members are kept together as long as	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sample from online survey



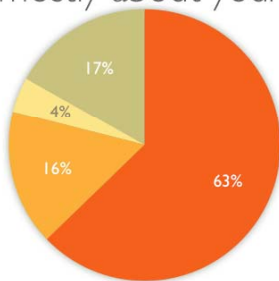


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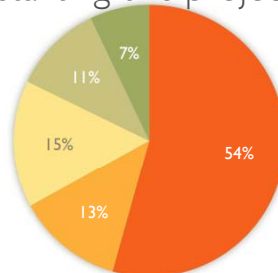


As you respond to this survey, will you be thinking mostly about your:



- Team
- Department
- Division
- Organization

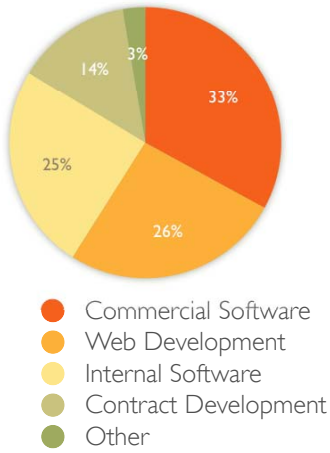
How long had this group been doing agile development prior to starting this project?



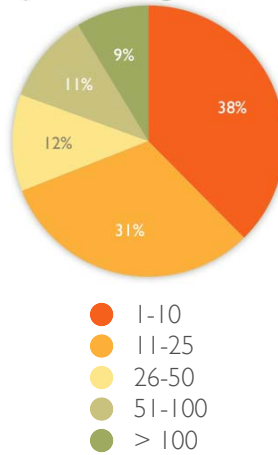
- 0-6 Months
- 7-12 Months
- 1 Year
- 2 Years
- Longer



Which best characterizes this project?

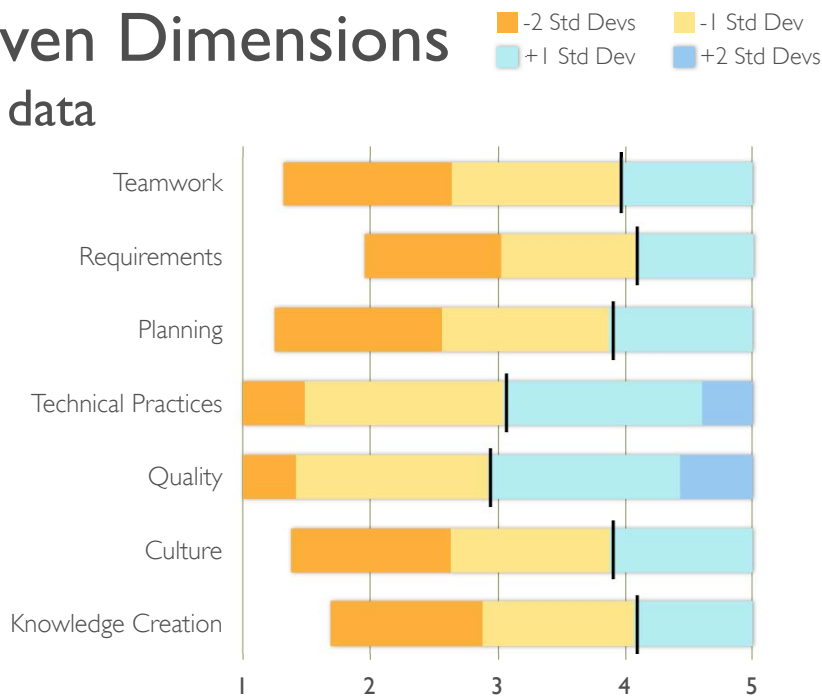


About how many people were or are on the project being assessed?



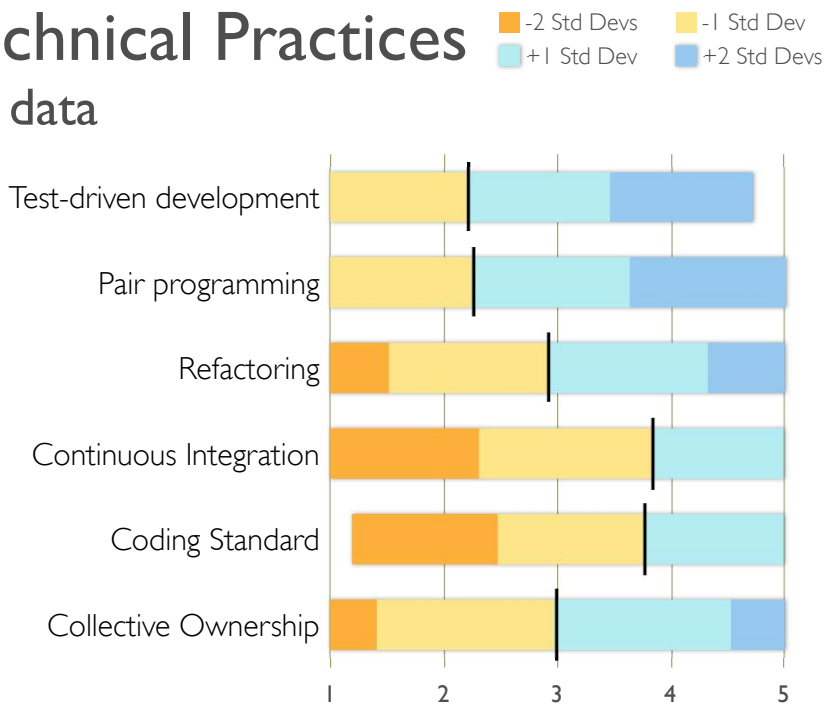
# Seven Dimensions

All data

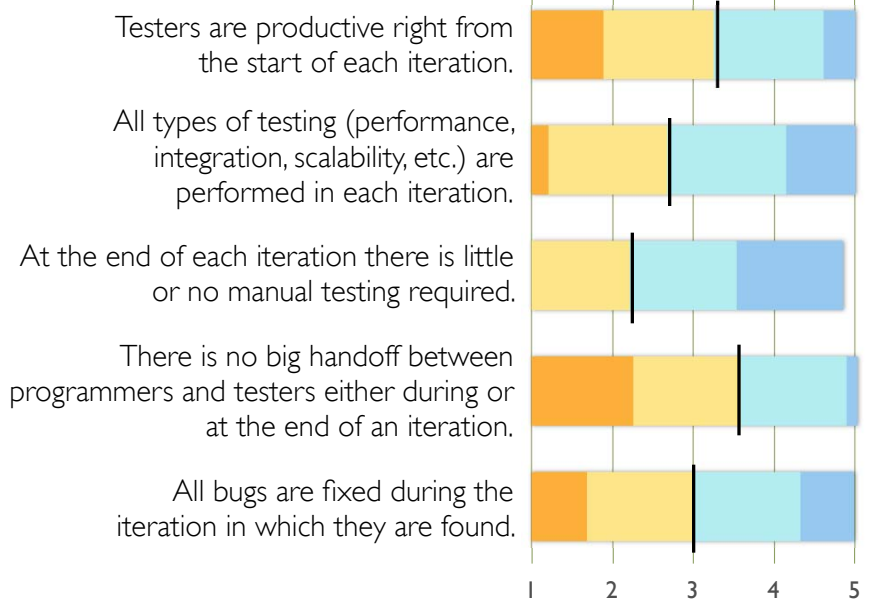


# Technical Practices

All data



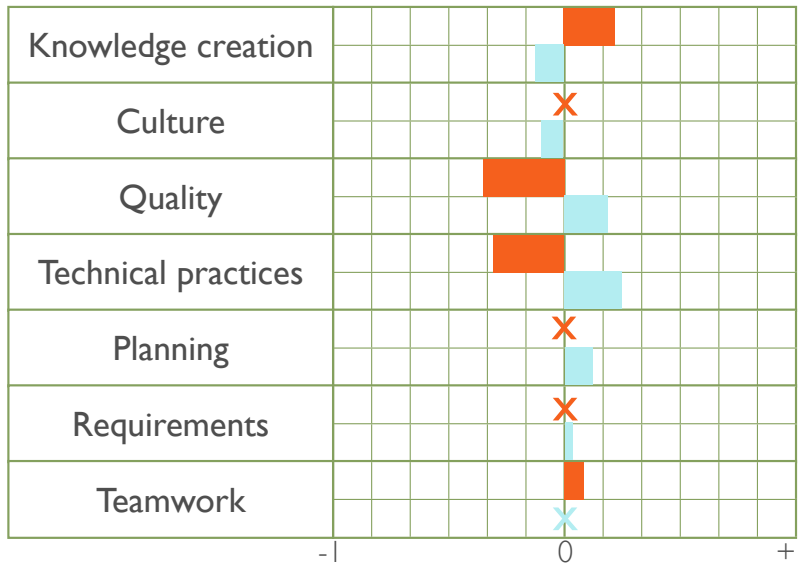
# Quality.Timing



## Interesting results: Length of agile experience

≤ 6 months

2+ years



## Agile web development

- ▶ Compared to the overall sample, web projects:
  - ▶ Are more likely to contain duplicated code, less likely to have a coding standard, and do less refactoring
    - ▶ Are these things less important on web projects?
  - ▶ Are less likely to be built automatically once a day
  - ▶ Are more likely to have collocated product owners
    - ▶ And more likely to have product owners who respond in a timely manner
  - ▶ Are more likely to be done in mini-waterfalls



What do you think the average answer was to these questions?

	False (1)	True (5)
Teams know their velocity		
Product owners provide acceptance criteria for each feature		
We don't cancel training, holiday, and vacation time when behind schedule		
Testers are productive right from the start of each iteration		



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# How does a company use this data?

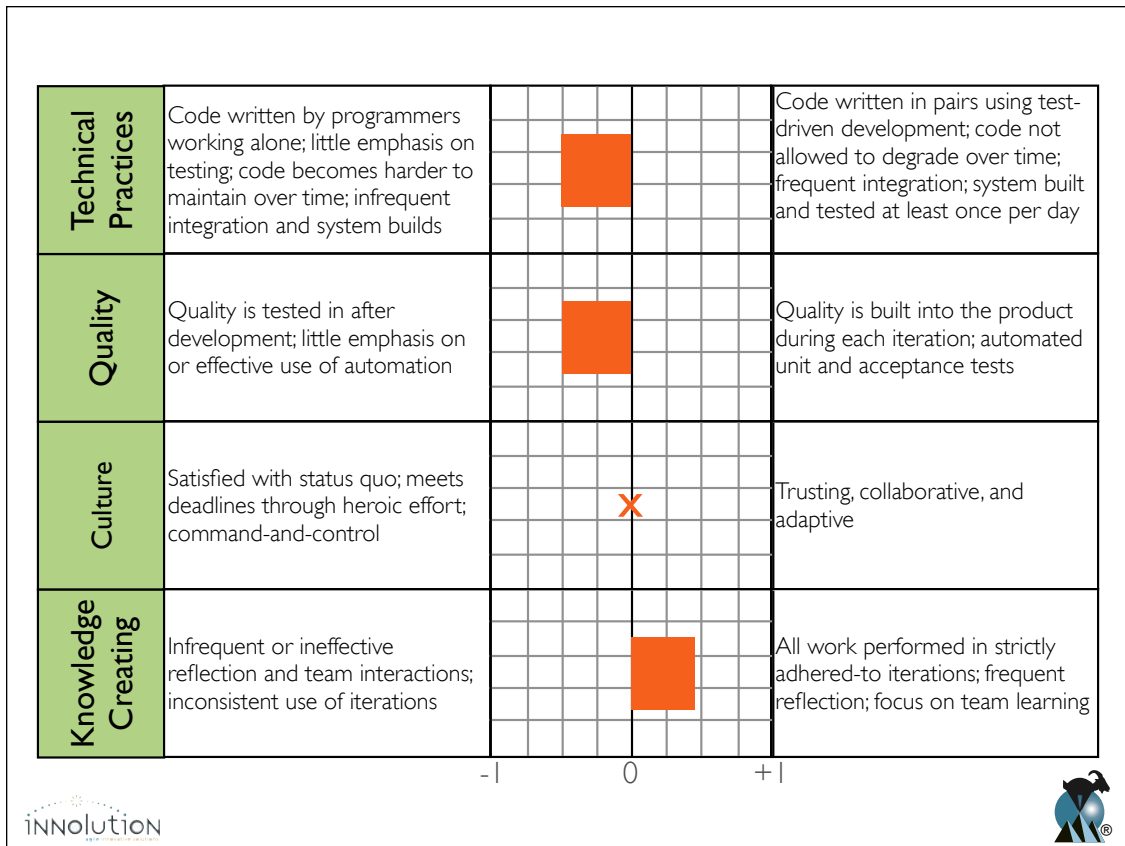
- ▶ Stock their improvement backlog with items for teams (including non-delivery teams) to work on
- ▶ Identify Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs) to ask teams to meet
  - ▶ Identify leading and lagging indicators of success to gauge and measure progress



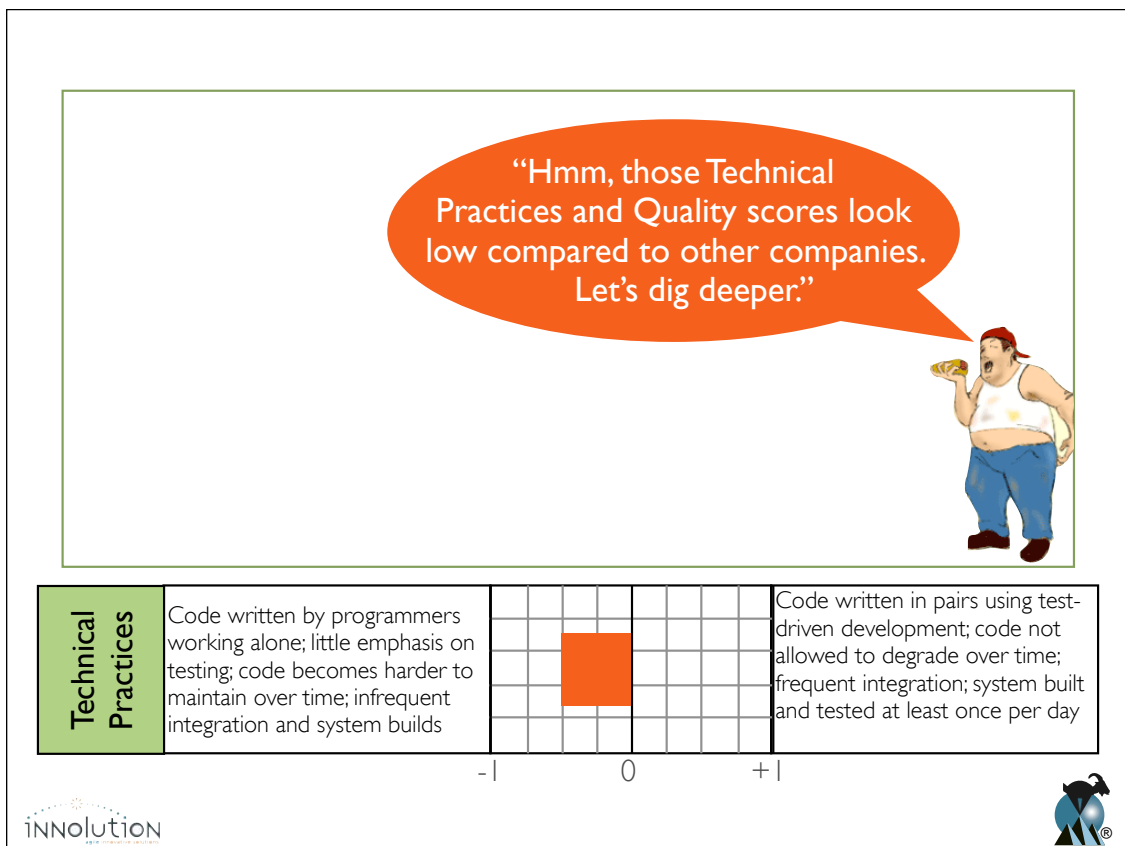
# Dimensions of an example company

<b>Teamwork</b>	Directed; individuals work in silos; multiple locations; multiple projects		Self-organizing, cross-functional teams; dedicated team members; collocated
<b>Requirements</b>	Document-centric; collected upfront; little acknowledgement of emergence		Collected at different levels of detail; progressively refined; conversation-focused, augmented with documentation
<b>Planning</b>	All-encompassing, task-oriented plans created upfront; reluctance to update plans; little buy-in to dates from team		Created at multiple levels of detail; frequently updated; created by team with full buy-in





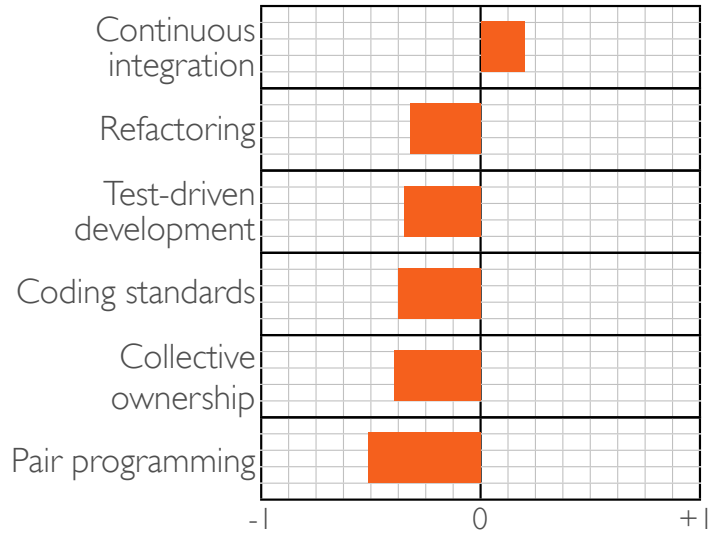
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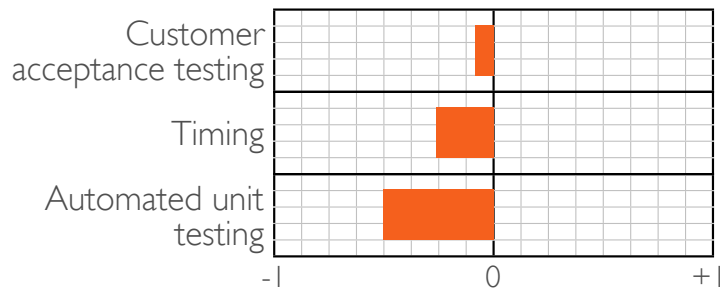
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# Technical Practices characteristics

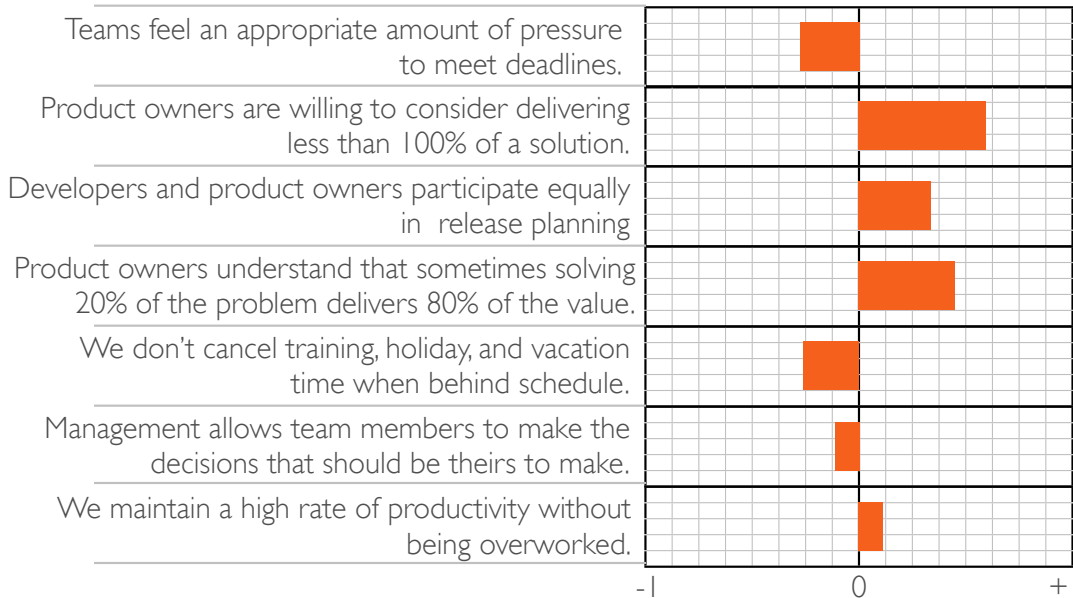


# Quality characteristics



## Management Style:

If your company just received this assessment, what might you do?



## How you can participate



- Take the survey, its free!
  - Get a report summarizing your answers
- We're working on getting comparative reporting available
  - Timeline is somewhat dependent on how much more data we get and how fast
- You can opt-in to a notification list to stay in touch with new reporting features
- Visit the website for details:
  - [www.ComparativeAgility.com](http://www.ComparativeAgility.com)



# Contact information

Kenny Rubin  
krubin@innolution.com  
(303) 827-3333

Mike Cohn  
mike@mountangoatsoftware.com  
(720) 890-6110

[www.ComparativeAgility.com](http://www.ComparativeAgility.com)

