

Enhancing Learning in Agile Teams through Resource-Oriented Retrospectives: Initial Findings from Field Research

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Abstract

Retrospectives play a critical role in fostering learning within agile teams by providing recurring opportunities for reflection that facilitate continuous improvement and adaptive learning in a complex digital environment. Despite this potential, retrospectives often result in deficit-oriented discussions, in which problems are examined extensively without yielding actionable learning outcomes. This research addresses this challenge by presenting initial field study findings on the implementation of resource-oriented retrospectives in agile teams. Drawing on Integrative Resource Theory, as articulated by Petzold (1997), this research assumes that agile teams can assess, activate, and develop resources to maintain their capacity for action and ongoing development. The objective of this research is to identify resource-oriented retrospective formats that enable agile teams to explore their resource repertoire, leverage these resources to meet challenging job demands, enhance learning, and unlock developmental potential. The central research question examines which retrospective formats are used in practice to activate diverse employee resources. Using an action research methodology, four workshops with 62 practitioners were conducted, resulting in the identification of 47 resource-oriented retrospectives. These retrospectives activate personal, work, social, and organizational resources and can be categorized into question-based, metaphor-based, game-based, and model-based formats. Initial findings indicate that resource-oriented retrospectives tend to activate multiple resources simultaneously. Accordingly, this study presents the current stage of a broader ongoing research project. It emphasizes the value of sustained resource orientation in agile teams and links these insights to relevant theories in resource psychology to contextualize their impact.

Keywords: resource orientation, integrative resource theory, agile learning, retrospectives, digital transformation