



Psychological Safety

Practice Playbook

Preview:

Technology

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Iterum Ltd

Psychological Safety Practice Add-on: Technology.

Introduction

This is an Add-on to the Psychological Safety Action Pack, and is specifically focused on practices and tools to help teams working in or with technology, including software development, operations, IT services, and Site Reliability Engineering.

This is designed to be an actionable playbook, comprising useful tools, resources and templates. Inside, you will find a printable version of the Agile Prime Directive and The Local Rationality Principle, templates and a guide for blameless post-mortems, a technology team charter template, a “Safe-to-fail” canvas and a Team API template. Each practice is introduced along with why it might be useful, as well as some handy tips.

Contents:

1. The Agile Prime Directive and Local Rationality Principle
2. Blameless Post-Mortem Guide
3. Technology Team Charter
4. “Safe-to-fail” Canvas
5. Team API template
6. Positive Psychological Safety Behaviours for tech teams

For assistance, training, workshops or for further information about concepts introduced in this action pack or anything else, please get in touch: tom@psychsafety.co.uk

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1. The Agile Prime Directive and Local Rationality Principle

What is the Agile Prime Directive?

The Agile Prime Directive is a statement from Norm Kerth's book, *"Project Retrospectives: A Handbook for Team Review."* It is used as a reminder to maintain a positive, constructive, psychologically safe and blameless attitude when discussing outcomes and areas for improvement.

"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand."

Why should I use it?

This directive encourages teams to approach retrospectives and assessments from a place of understanding and empathy, promoting a learning culture and continual improvement without assigning blame for any shortcomings or mistakes. It's a key part of the Agile philosophy of embracing change, learning from experience, and continuously improving.

What is the Local Rationality Principle?

The Local Rationality Principle comes from the field of human factors. It provides a scaffold for investigation after failure (or success) – *What were this person's goals? How deep is their knowledge? Was their attention split during this task, and if so, why?* Like the Agile Prime Directive, it reminds us that the same situation will always be viewed differently by different people. Performance cannot be necessarily understood (or judged) from any one single perspective. Instead, to make sense of a situation, we need to shift between different perspectives, see the nature of individuals' experiences and explore how these interact.

"People do reasonable things given their goals, knowledge, understanding of the situation and focus of attention at a particular moment."

How do we use these?

These tools work best when used and revisited frequently. Use the following examples or create your own, and display them in your office or meeting rooms. Read them out at the start of meetings, retrospectives and investigations such as blameless post-mortems.

The Local Rationality Principle

“
People do **reasonable**
things given their
goals, knowledge,
understanding of the
situation and **focus**
of attention at a
particular moment.
”

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