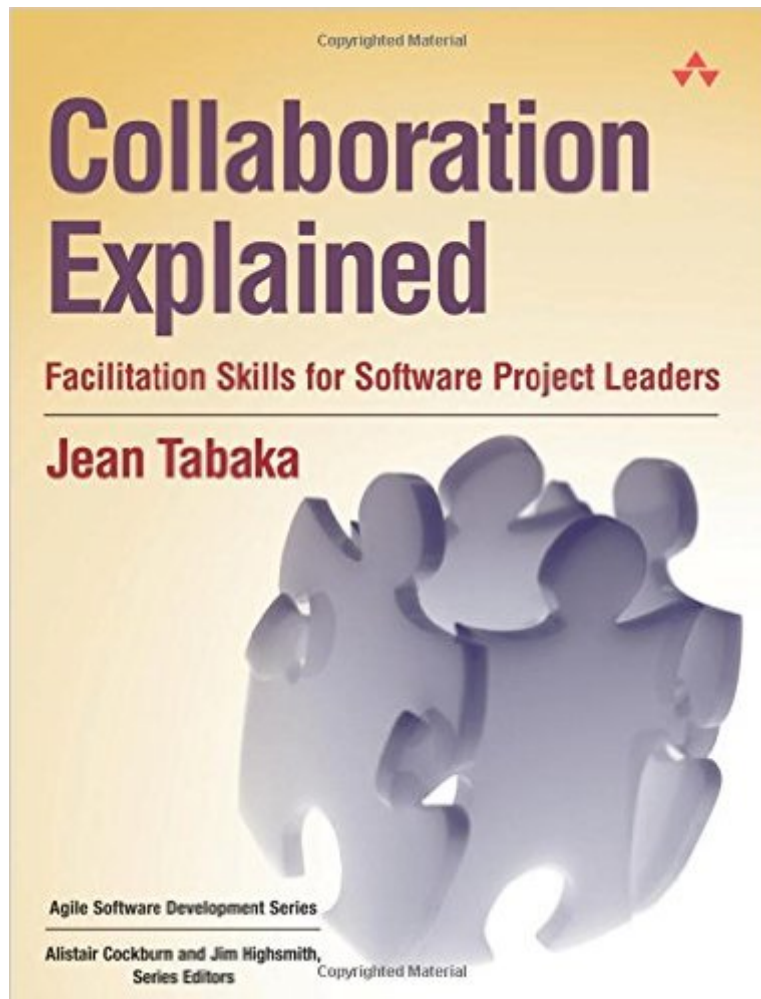# Collaboration Explained: Facilitation Skills For Software Project Leaders

Synopsis

â œCollaboration Explained is a deeply pragmatic book that helps agile practitioners understand and manage complex organizational and team dynamics. As an agile coach, Iâ ™ve found the combination of straightforward advice and colorful anecdotes to be invaluable in guiding and focusing interactions with my teams. Jeanâ ™s wealth of experience is conveyed in a carefully struck balance of reference guides and prose, facilitating just-in-time learning in the agile spirit. All in all, a superb resource for building stronger teams thatâ ™s fit for agile veterans and neophytes alike.â • â ”Arlen Bankston, Lean Agile Practice Manager, CC Pace Â â œIf Agile is the new â ˆwhat,â ™ then surely Collaboration is the new â ˆhow.â ™ There are many things I really like about Jeanâ ™s new book. Right at the top of the list is that I donâ ™t have to make lists of ideas for collaboration and facilitation anymore. Jean has it all. Not only does she have those great ideas for meetings, retrospectives, and team decision-making that I need to remember, but the startling new and thought-provoking ideas are there too. And the stories, the stories, the stories! The best way to transfer wisdom. Thanks, Jean!â • â ”Linda Rising, Independent Consultant Â The Hands-On Guide to Effective Collaboration in Agile Projects Â To succeed, an agile project demands outstanding collaboration among all its stakeholders. But great collaboration doesnâ ™t happen by itself; it must be carefully planned and facilitated throughout the entire project lifecycle. Collaboration Explained is the first book to bring together proven, start-to-finish techniques for ensuring effective collaboration in any agile software project. Â Since the early days of the agile movement, Jean Tabaka has been studying and promoting collaboration in agile environments. Drawing on her unsurpassed experience, she offers clear guidelines and easy-to-use collaboration templates for every significant project event: from iteration and release planning, through project chartering, all the way through post-project retrospectives. Â Tabakaâ ™s hands-on techniques are applicable to every leading agile methodology, from Extreme Programming and Scrum to Crystal Clear. Above all, they are practical: grounded in a powerful understanding of the technical, business, and human challenges you face as a project manager or development team member. Â Â Â Â Build collaborative software development cultures, leaders, and teams Â Â Â Prepare yourself to collaborateâ ”and prepare your team Â Â Â Define clear roles for each participant in promoting collaboration Â Â Â Set your collaborative agenda Â Â Â Master tools for organizing collaboration more efficiently Â Â Â Run effective collaborative meetingsâ ”including brainstorming sessions Â Â Â Promote better small-group and pair-programming collaboration Â Â Â Get better information, and use it to make better decisions Â Â Â Use non-abusive conflict to drive positive outcomes Â Â Â Collaborate to estimate projects and schedules more accurately Â Â Â

Strengthen collaboration across distributed, virtual teams Â Â Â Extend collaboration from individual projects to the entire development organization

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Customer Reviews

A challenge faced by any project leader is how to lead the team without resorting to a command-and-control management style. This book's essential premise is that the project leader can do this by fostering collaboration among team members. Jean Tabaka's Collaboration Explained is really two books in one. The first explains the benefits of collaborating and why project leaders need to foster collaboration among their teams if those teams are to perform at a high level.The second, and by far longest, part of Collaboration Explained is a compendium of techniques that will foster team collaboration and will help the reader become a more collaborative leader. Any reader will finish this part having learned new techniques. Nominally this book is about team decision making and so most of the book is about the various decisions teams make and how the project leader can ensure that the team makes the best decision. Covered are decisions about project requirements, estimates, priorities, vision, resolving conflict and more. Tabaka provides both general purpose advice that can be used in many contexts as well as very specific advice for each of the contexts or meetings she describes.This book is well-placed in a series devoted to agile software development. However, it is important to point out that the techniques covered here will be applicable to any team with any development process. Any project leader who wants to help his or her team work better together will benefit from reading this book.

Tabaka's book is part of an ongoing series on the use of the Agile software development process. It deals with a key idea of involving participants to the fullest extent. The word collaboration is used to describe this idea. The book is directed at someone who has to manage this process. Someone in a supervisory capacity. Though of course the book could be usefully read by anyone else involved.The book has many suggestions. About such tasks as conducting status meetings during the project. Or how to distinguish between a good meeting and a bad meeting. Or supervising small group work. The advice is entirely about the human element. And not about any specific software tools or languages. If you are a supervisor from a programming background, it could be the human element aspects that you are most in need of advice about.Naturally, the text also has numerous instances of how to deal with what it calls Agile Practices. Yet you might not need to adhere to the latter to still derive gain from the book. There is no need to buy into some or indeed any of the Agile Practices. Much of the book has useful advice (like the example above of the good and bad meetings) that is germane to whatever overarching development process you already have in place. Er, you do have one in place, don't you?

I'm not a manager or project leader or ScrumMaster, I'm just a tester on a development team using Scrum. So I started reading it with a little trepidation that it wouldn't really apply to my day-to-day work, or that I wouldn't really be able to learn the facilitation skills.The book really opened my eyes to the fact that my team needs to collaborate with our business folks a whole lot more. It's something we know intellectually, but don't effectively do on a day-to-day basis. Ideas from the book are helping me change this. I'm also learning to be more effective in any kind of meeting, even if I'm not leading it. The book is full of examples from the author's personal experience. I learn best by examples, so this really helped me and got me charged up about the whole thing.There's a great reference section where you can look up whatever meeting you need to plan and get a wealth of ideas. I'm looking forward to trying some of these out in our next sprint review! If you have any difficulties communicating with those inside or outside your team, or meetings are driving you crazy, you're going to find a gold mine in this book.

Jean Tabaka has done a great service to Software Development. The highest cost meetings where everyone is attendance can be at least twice as valuable when well run and Jean gives us some great guides to make these fruitful. This is especially true with Agile methods that recommends frequent time-boxed meetings to evaluate plans, inspect them and adapt to the changing conditions

our fast-paced environments introduce. I have adopted many ideas and have found them very useful. Finally, this kind of skill is what many technically trained people need most for creating a truly collaborative environment.

Jean Tabaka's COLLABORATION EXPLAINED: FACILITATION SKILLS FOR SOFTWARE PROJECT LEADERS tells how to build an agile project which fosters techniques for ensuring effective collaboration. Jean Tabaka has been studying and using agile environments since its early days: her guidelines and templates for project events cover all areas and aspects of methodology and application, applying concepts to business practices and special circumstances project managers face with their development teams. A recommended, real-world project pick.

Having had the pleasure of seeing Jean in action at a CSM class years ago and having read her book I can tell you that she is passionate about helping teams succeed. I was given a copy of the book when it was first published and it was easy to see Jean's passion play out in the book. I have used this book over the past couple of years to help me better coach teams and traditional PMs make the transition to an Agile execution model. In my mind this book should be part of every Lean/Agile consultant's/coach's toolbox.

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