The Geek’s Guide to Leading Teams

@patkua
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Who am I?
Who am I?
Who am I?

- Programmer
- Tech Lead
- Agile Coach

-ThoughtWorks-
Who am I?

- Programmer
- Tech Lead
- Agile Coach
- Author

[The Retrospective Handbook: A guide for agile teams](http://tiny.cc/retrobook)
Why do we need a Tech Lead?
Think this doesn’t happen in the real world?
@thejayfields: I had ten guys on my last project, all of them had opinions and all of them were expressed in the code base #speakerconf
A simple test for an effective Tech Lead...
Does the codebase look like it was written by a single person?

☐ Yes

☐ No
What does a good Tech Lead focus on?
Programming
Programming

People

P
Programming
People
Process
Do effective Technical Leaders need to code?
Do effective Technical Leaders need to code?

Definitely!
Do effective Technical Leaders need to code?

Definitely!
Do effective Technical Leaders need to code?

Definitely!

At least 30% of the time with the team.
Opinion: The unspoken truth about managing geeks

September 8, 2009 (Computerworld)

I can sum up every article, book and column written by notable management experts about managing IT in two sentences: "Geeks are smart and creative, but they are also egocentric, antisocial, managerially and business-challenged, victim-prone, bullheaded and credit-whoring. To overcome these intractable behavioral deficits you must do X, Y and Z."

X, Y and Z are variable and usually contradictory between one expert and the next, but the patronizing stereotypes remain constant. I’m not entirely sure that is helpful. So, using the familiar brush, allow me to paint a different picture of those IT pros buried somewhere in your organization.

My career has been stippled with a good bit of disaster recovery consulting, which has led me to deal with dozens of organizations on their worst day, when opinions were pretty raw. I’ve heard all of the above-mentioned stereotypes and far worse, as well as good bit of rage. The worse shape an organization is in, the more you hear the stereotypes thrown around. But my personal experiences working within IT groups have always been quite good, working with IT pros for whom the negative stereotypes just don’t seem to apply. I tended to chalk up IT group failures to some bad luck in hiring and the delicate balance of those geek stereotypes.

Recently, though, I have come to realize that perfectly healthy groups with solid, well-adjusted IT pros can and will devolve, slowly and quietly, into the behaviors that give rise to the stereotypes, given the right set of conditions. It turns out that it is the conditions that are stereotypical, and the IT pros tend to react to those conditions in logical ways. To say it a different way, organizations actively elicit these stereotypical negative behaviors.

Understanding why IT pros appear to act the way they do makes working with, among and as one of them the easiest job in the world.

It’s all about respect

Few people notice this, but for IT groups respect is the currency of the realm. IT pros do not squander this currency. Those whom they do not believe are worthy of their respect might be called "street-smart" or "street-fighting IT pros."
"...respect is the currency of the realm"
"The amount of respect an IT pro pays someone is a measure of how tolerable that person is when it comes to getting things done..."
Consistency over Cleverness
Tabs OR Spaces

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces

Brackets OR not

Curly brace end of line OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore
Tabs OR Spaces

Brackets OR not

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces

Curly brace end of line
OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore
Tabs OR Spaces

Brackets OR not

2 Spaces OR 4 Spaces OR next line

Curly brace end of line OR next line

CamelCase OR Underscore

There are more important topics to spend time on...
Team Culture
How long does the build stay broken?
Team Culture

How long does the build stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?
Team Culture

How long does the build stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?
Team Culture

How long does the build stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?

Do people flag when they need help?
Team Culture

How long does the build stay broken?

Do people avoid conflict?

Do people offer new ideas?

Do people flag when they need help?

Do people feel okay to admit being wrong?
Vision
People
Strength in Diversity
People
Woo

Analytical

Intellection

Strategic

Achiever

Activator

Input
Fortune 500 companies with 3 or more women on the Board gain a significant performance advantage over those with the fewest.
 Fortune 500 companies with 3 or more women on the Board gain a significant performance advantage over those with the fewest

Return on Sales: 73%
Return on Equity: 83%
Return on Invested Capital: 112%

“...over the past six years, companies with at least some female board representation outperformed those with no women on the board in terms of share price performance.”
“...over the past six years, companies with at least some female board representation outperformed those with no women on the board in terms of share price performance.”

Return on Equity

12%
“...over the past six years, companies with at least **some female board representation** **outperformed** those with no women on the board in terms of share price performance.”

![Graph showing return on equity for male and female representation](http://bit.ly/Oozuvl)
Collective Accuracy = Average Accuracy + Diversity*
Collective Accuracy = Average Accuracy + Diversity*

* Requires ability to integrate
Trust isn’t built in one day
Growing People
Source: Csikszentmihalyi, Flow (1990)
People

Challenge

Skill/Ability

Anxiety

Boredom

Source: Csikszentmihalyi, Flow (1990)
Anxiety

Boredom

Flow

Anxiety

Flow

Boredom

Challenge

Skill/Ability

People

Anxiety  

Boredom

Flow

Anxiety

Flow

Boredom

Challenge

Skilled/Ability

Anxiety

Boredom

Flow

Anxiety

Flow

Boredom

Anxiety

Boredom

Flow

People

Maximising Potential
People
People

Skills
Learning Activities
Learning Activities

- Team code reviews
- Brown Bag sessions
- Pair Programming
- Video/Book Club
- Spike Showcases
- Technical Retrospectives
Beware the bad apple

“Bad Is Stronger Than Good” (2001) Baumeister et al
Process
Is it okay to tell people what to do?
Is it okay to tell people what to do?

Yes (but only sometimes)
Situational Leadership Model

Process
Situational Leadership Model
Process

Situational Leadership Model

High

Directing Behaviour

High

Supporting Behaviour

Low

Directing Behaviour

High
Situational Leadership Model

Process

Supporting Behaviour

Directing Behaviour

Directing

Coaching

High

Low
Situational Leadership Model

Process

Supporting Behaviour

Coaching

Directing Behaviour

Directing Behaviour

Supporting

High

Low
Situational Leadership Model
Situational Leadership Model
Development level of an individual

Process

Situational Leadership Model
Development level of an individual

Situational Leadership Model

Process

Developed

Developing
Development level of an individual

Process

Situational Leadership Model
Process

Situational Leadership Model

Development level of an individual
Developing Development level of an individual

Situational Leadership Model

Development level of an individual

- Moderate-high competence
- Low-some competence
- Low competence

- Variable commitment
- Low commitment
- High commitment
Developing Development level of an individual

Low competence  High commitment

Low-some competence  Low commitment

Moderate-high competence  Variable commitment

High competence  High commitment

Situational Leadership Model
Tuckman’s Model
Forming

Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development
Forming → Storming
Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing

Process
Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning
Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning
“Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful.”

- George E. P. Box
Make time for you
Process
Concluding Thoughts
Questions?

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