

How Does Pervasive Leadership Improve Agility?

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Abstract

Agile team members and those who embody the organizational infrastructure around them have, by and large, been raised in a culture that has taught them to follow and ask permission rather than lead and take the risks inherent in leadership. Every pause for permission is a delay that impacts decision latency. Organizational leaders have been encouraged to direct rather than coach which often leaves them in the position of making more decisions than necessary. This impacts important decisions due to lack of access to them as decisions or due to allowing decisions to be made by default, which impacts decision quality. Pervasive leadership has been designed to address both decision latency and decision quality by focusing leadership at the locus of the most appropriate decision point.

Pervasive leadership is based on the following three principles:

- Change your mental model of I and Thou.
- Act locally, think holistically.
- Exact empathetic awareness.

This paper discusses the details of pervasive leadership, expanding upon the author's January 2015 *IEEE* article. The paper examines two short case studies where introducing pervasive leadership immediately improved an organization's ability to execute and addresses why this approach to leadership has the outcome of improved agility.

Biography

Jean Richardson is an Agile coach and process consultant and a consulting project and program manager. She also provides individual development and leadership coaching. She has been an instructor or adjunct professor at Oregon Graduate Institute, Portland State University, and Maryland University. She contributes to the community in her roles as Vice President of Professional Development for the Portland Chapter of the Project Management Institute, member of the Agile Alliance user group AgilePDX, and for the last 17 years as a mediator in the Multnomah County Court Mediation program. She is immediate past vice president of professional development for the Portland Chapter of the Project Management Institute and past president of the Portland Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

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