Extreme Hiring for Agile Teams

Presented By
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Thank You!

Doctors without Borders

Theme: Beyond Limits!

Leon Sabarsky Bio

- Enterprise Agile Transformation Consultant / Agile Coach / Trainer / Certified Prof. Coach

- 25 years in Software Development,15 years Agile

- Specializes in Agile transformations in Regulated Industries

- Frequent speaker at Agile & Scrum conferences

- Many certifications (Business, PM, Agile, Scrum, etc.)
  - MBA, PMP, CSM, CSPO, CSP, SPC, IGTF, COM, ED, IAN

- Not a purist

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In hiring for Agile teams…

Dream

MEH.
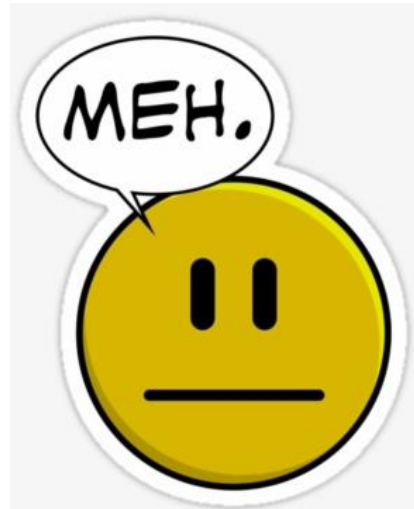
Nightmare

Note: This is an interactive part

Hiring for Agile Teams was a nightmare

Hiring for Agile Teams was a nightmare

- **Had to hire the right candidate who fit in**
  - Hiring the right individual who fit in with the team culture was extremely important
  - People who didn't fit the team culture often did not perform well
- **Too many interviews over too much time**
  - 4-5 one-on-one interviews were scheduled by management over 2-4 weeks
  - Team was not included in candidate interviews
  - Difficulty in gaining consensus on candidate selection
- **Candidate often accepted another job**
  - Before we could even finish our interview process

Hiring for Agile Teams was a nightmare

- **Couldn't tell who was a collaborative person in real life**
  - Asking "Are you a collaborative person?" produced the same response ("Yes, of course.")
  - Collaboration was our #1 criterion for hiring; technical skills was not
- **We wanted some way to prove a candidate was indeed collaborative as they said**
  - 1:1 interviews weren't producing a "collaboration test"
- **We needed another way to interview**
  - Where we could test collaboration

We decided to apply Agile to hiring

"You can't apply Agile to hiring!"

What did Extreme Agile Hiring look like?

- **Leveraged a different interview and hiring process**
  - Utilized group interviews with 20-25 candidates per group interview (even for one open position)
  - Included all hiring stakeholders (Team, HR, Managers)
  - Held one (1) group interview per month (2 hr. session)
- **Focused on key differentiators (i.e. collaboration)**
  - Interviewed all 20-25 candidates at one time
  - 4-5 per table
  - Had them collaborate via simulations
- **Goal was to provide offers immediately**
  - Offers were given immediately after group interview
  - Blind voting among hiring team (e.g. Top 1, 2, 3)

How did Extreme Agile Hiring help?

- **Group Interviews solved a lot of problems**
  - Had plenty of candidates to choose from (20-25)
  - Interview process was simplified – 1 interview/month
  - Interview took 2 hrs on one day vs 5 hrs over 2 weeks
  - All hiring stakeholders were in one place in context
- **We focused on collaboration as #1 criterion**
  - We felt collaboration was key to team culture/success
  - Simulating collaboration in teams produced differentiation among candidates
- **We made offers immediately and didn't lose folks**
  - Making hiring offers immediately after the group interview reduced the change of a candidate leaving for another opportunity

What are Group Interviews?
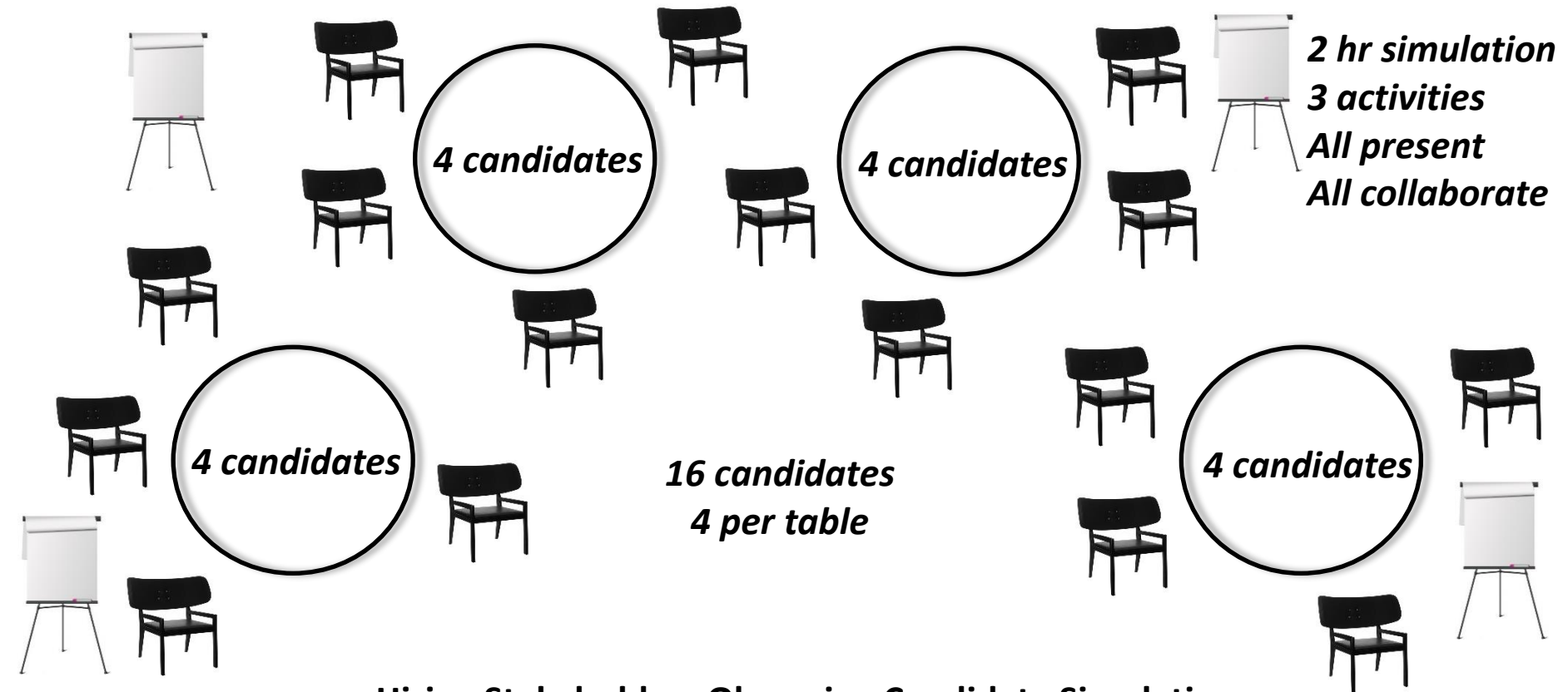
- **Group Interview Definition**
  - Group interview refers to a type of interview where more than two people are involved. It can mean that a number of candidates are interviewed together at the same time (known as candidate group interview) or that one candidate is interviewed by more different department representatives at the same time (known as panel group interview)
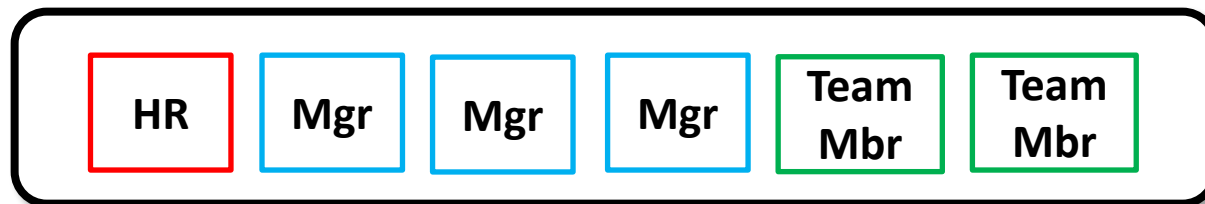 - Ours was a blend of the two, but more of a simulation interview

Are Group Interviews Effective?

- Group interviews are efficient, allowing organizations to interview multiple candidates at the same time thereby saving numerous hours

- Group interviews enable you to see which candidates work best with others. Sure, every candidate will say they work well with others. Group interviewers allow you to see those skills in action.

- Group interview environments provide unique insights into who fits in with company culture. The group interview creates an environment to help identify candidates compatible with your culture.

- Group interviews show you who performs well under stress. Is the position at hand a high-stressed, fast-paced one? If so, consider a group interview, which will help simulate the stress and pace of the position

What did this Group Interview look like?

4 candidates

4 candidates

2 hr simulation
3 activities
All present
All collaborate

4 candidates

16 candidates
4 per table

4 candidates

Hiring Stakeholders Observing Candidate Simulations

HR	Mgr	Mgr	Mgr	Team Mbr	Team Mbr

All Hiring Stakeholders Present and in Context

What did this Group Interview look like?

Team collaborating

Team collaborating

Team collaborating

Team presenting

Hiring stakeholders observing

What happened in the Group Interview?

- **Candidates / Staffing Companies were informed**
  - Everyone knew ahead of time
  - Some walked out; most enjoyed the experience
- **We told them that the Group Interview and simulation was about collaboration**
  - And that we would be observing their collaboration skills
- **We interspersed team members among the candidates**
  - In order to get an idea of what "really went on"
  - Also get team "buy in" on hiring

What happened in the Group Interview?

- **Three (3) Simulation sessions – total 90 minutes**
  - Two (2) group collaboration and presentation
  - One (1) timed group activity (marshmallow challenge, legos, etc.)
  - Thirty (30) minutes each session

- **Hiring decision – 30 minutes**
  - Blind voting for top candidates
  - HR prepared offers on the spot
  - Most candidates / staffing companies stayed behind to find out results

What did we realize?

- **Everyone enjoyed the experience**
  - HR loved seeing all candidates in action
  - Hiring managers liked having the same experience
  - Team loved being part of the interview
  - Most candidates liked the process (after trepidation)
- **Most hires were good hires**
  - Team took responsibility to onboard/train/coach new hires
  - We weeded out jerks
- **We saved time for everyone/saw more folks**
  - HR, Hiring Managers, Team, Candidates all saved interview time
  - We interviewed more candidates than usual
  - We hired some "diamonds in the rough"

What did we realize?

- **Teams are all about collaboration**
  - Not sure that you can "teach" adults collaboration
  - Collaboration is more important than technical skills
- **Group Interviews are good collaboration tests**
  - Candidates who interviewed well were flummoxed by the process
  - Type A extroverts often "took over" and stood out negatively
  - Candidates who intuitively helped were seen
- **Once we did Group Interviews for Teams…**
 - We didn't want to interview/hire any other way

- **Some people were freaked out by the process**
  - Had some walkouts; refusals to show up
  - Candidates wanted to know if we would discuss technical skills
  - People (Staffing companies) told us "it was wrong" to do what we were doing
- **Some candidates did not pan out**
  - If a team needed deep technical skills, some candidates did not meet the need
  - No candidates left due to team culture / team fit
- **We lost some candidates before our interview**
  - Some candidates needed a job immediately and couldn't wait for our 1x/month interview date

Final Thoughts

- **Group Interviews were far more effective than 1:1 interviews for team members**

- **Group Interviews can save time, money and headaches**

- **Extreme Agile Hiring is not for everything**

    - **Good for Teams**

    - **May not be good for individual contributors**

We created an Agile Hiring Pyramid
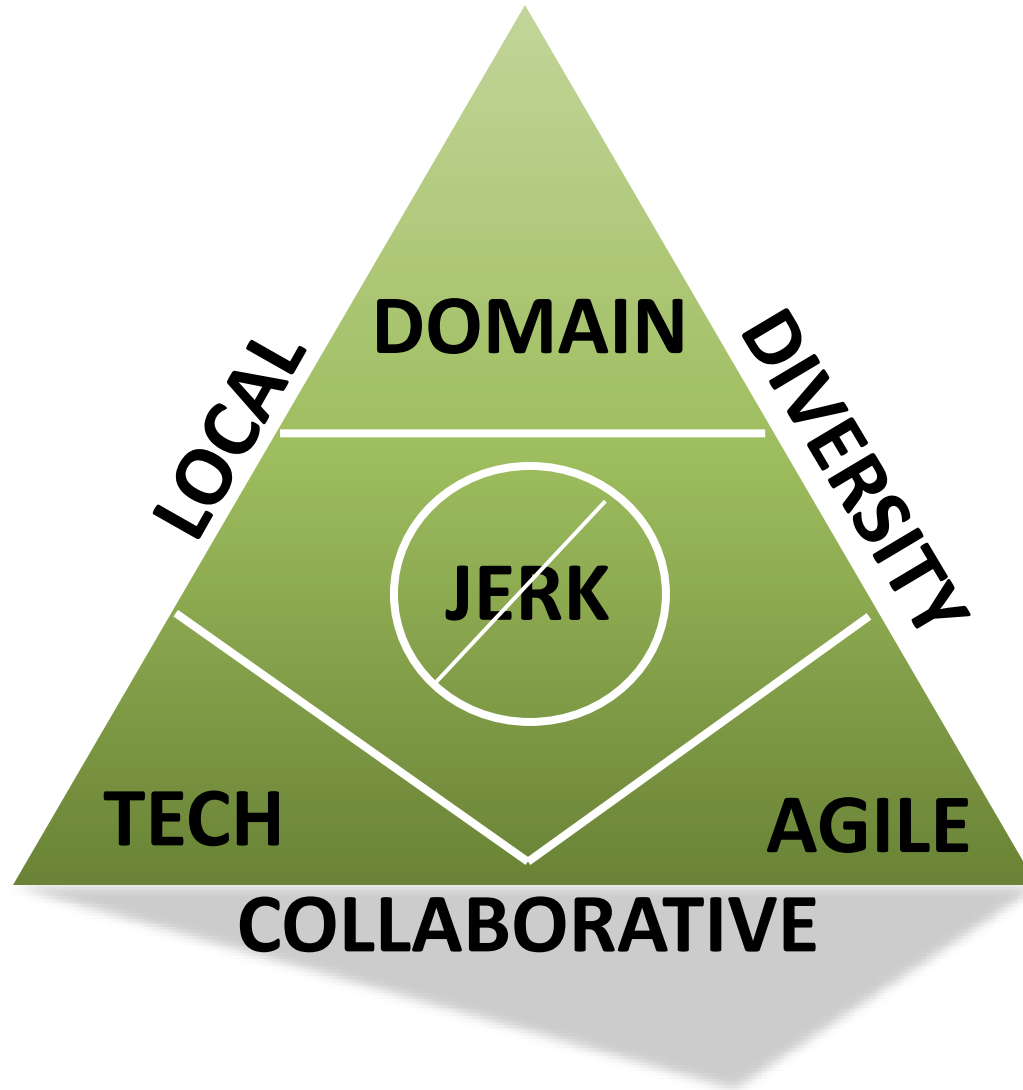
Do you think that this is an "Agile way of hiring?"

| What elements are? | What elements are not? |

Note: This is an interactive part

Questions?