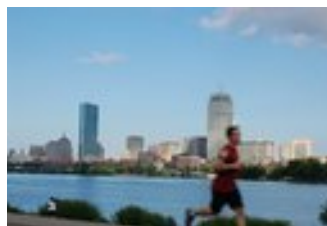




# GiveCamp—New England A Retrospective

## What An Event !!

### GiveCamp New Eng- land 2010



A Review by  
Robert W. Chin (Bob)

Realize and recognize that GiveCamp is a terrific event conceived by individuals (who are programmers, developers, coders) as an effective means for themselves and their peers to give back to their communities (specifically, select non-profit organizations). These events

conducted in multiple locations over the past few years have proven to be a huge success and very big benefit to the non-profit organizations.

This is especially significant because many, if not “most”, of the non-profit organizations do not usually have high technology savvy individuals on their staff. With the rapid

changes in high tech every few years, even commercial businesses have a difficult time keeping up with change.

The GiveCamp concept provides non-profits with free technology advice and programming capability for high intensity, concentrated weekend of work in a literal “camping” atmosphere where the volunteers eat, sleep, and work at a central sponsored site on projects for the selected non-profit or-

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## Changes Made First in New England

by Robert W. Chin (Bob)

Dan Mezick (Agile Boston and Agile Connecticut) and Bob Chin (Agile Boston and Nashua Scrum Club) spearheaded an effort to introduce a fundamental change to the way the GiveCamp or-

ganization had been operating in the past. The suggestion was made to use Project Management (PrjM) principles to help the non-profit organizations get better prepared for the GiveCamp week-

end. Specifically, we recommended the use of the skills and experience of a Agile process Scrum Master to work with the non-profit organizations for a fairly significant amount of

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- *Review of GiveCamp—New England 2010*
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- *Changes Made First in New England*
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# GiveCamp New England 2010

by Robert W. Chin (Bob) *(continued)*

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ganizations along with representatives from those non-profits.

Some of these projects are improvements to existing web sites. Other projects could be brand new web sites for non-profits who never had a web site. Or, it could be simplifying code to make it easier for them to maintain and manage their web sites.

Sometimes, it is their database that needs re-work, improvement, or even conversion from an older database to a newer database. More exotic projects include designing programming to help tag photographs of technology in use in locations all over the world; especially in local communities in third world countries. Some of the problems faced by the non-profit organizations are very unique and extremely interesting.

And, the range and variety of different technologies being

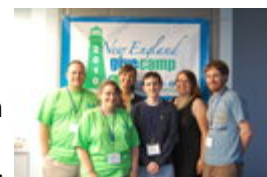
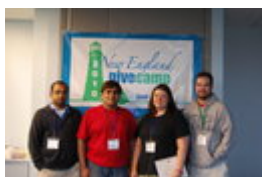
used or considered in the GiveCamps covers the gamut and are not limited to Microsoft or Open Source. GiveCamp is a great way to contribute your technical expertise and give back to your local community. If you are not an expert, you can learn and work with people who may be experts. There is always a lot of sharing of knowledge and experience among the volunteers. Or, you can help as a non-technical volunteer. There is always a need for people to help with registration, meals setup, etc.

At this first GiveCamp-New England, we had more than 100 volunteers of technical and non technical backgrounds providing invaluable technology contributions and assistance to more than 40 different non-profit representatives from all over New England. We had volunteers from all six New England states. We even one person from Virginia (VA)!

This first GiveCamp—New England event was hosted by Microsoft Corporation at their New England Research and Development Center located just off Kendall Square in Cambridge, MA. The acronym is the NERD Center and it is in the backyard to a famous school of higher learning known as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.). Talk about being in the center of high technology!!

For the first time, organized Project Management (PMP and Scrum knowledgeable) people were available to help the non-profit organizations consolidate their requirements, prioritize (by business value) and groom their list of requirements (needs). Scrum Masters were available during the weekend to work with some of the teams that wanted to utilize the Scrum methodology during the development increments.

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# GiveCamp New England 2010

by Robert W. Chin (Bob) *(continued)*

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Designers and other creative, right-brained individuals were available to complement and aid the logical, left-brained techies with User Interface (UI) design, etc. Some technical people express it as "... all that 'touchy, feely stuff...'"! In the final analysis, it was a fun



challenge, learning experience, with old friendship and new friendships, and a good feeling of accomplishment and giving. Amazing progress and use of technologies for the benefit of so many non-profit organizations who would otherwise not be able to achieve these technology improvements to their websites and other soft-



ware tools.

I, for one, look forward to next year's local GiveCamp! Consider volunteering and participating next year!



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# Changes Made First in New England

by Robert W. Chin (Bob)

(Continued from page 1)

time prior to the actual GiveCamp weekend. With their ability to help the non-profit representative understand the role of the Product Owner (PO), they could gain a better understanding of their responsibilities and participation in the GiveCamp process. Even more effective, the Scrum Masters could help the PO groom and better prepare the Product Backlog (PB) which are essentially the requirements expressed in User Story format and prioritized in "business value" priority. Items which would have more business value added to the non-profit would be ranked higher in priority and wind up nearer to the top of the PB. Our contention was that the more time the non-profit organizations thought about their needs, the more thorough the thinking, the more articulate the list, and the more de-

... the use of Project Management ..."

tailed those requirements would be.

As a second part, on the GiveCamp Weekend, Scrum Masters would be available to work with and support those teams who choose to use

Scrum to manage their project efforts.

These Scrum Masters do not have to be the same ones who worked with the non-profit organizations.

For a more effective use of skilled resources and to avoid single-

points of failure issues, I personally recommend that a more experienced Scrum

Master be shadowed by a less experienced Scrum Master in addition to a Business Analyst (BA) during the discussions with the non-profit representatives during the Requirement Gathering and creation of the Product Backlog. This provides the non-profit organization with a backup in case the primary Scrum Master is not able to attend the Give-

... instead of doing it 'off-the-cuff' we pull in a Scrum Master to manage it consistently ..."

Jim O'Neil

Camp Weekend for any reason. The "shadow" Scrum Master could take over the primary role responsibilities without a major disruption. The purpose of the BA is to provide the technical oversight and advice as needed. The Scrum Master(s) may not be as technically knowledgeable on the particular technology desired by the non-profit group as the BA. Examples include database issues, Drupal, WordPress, etc. They would rely on the BA for input and advice regarding the

soundness and feasibility of the particular requirement

or desire expressed by the non-profit; especially if the request is within the scope for a short weekend effort.

This action would not really have a time-demand impact on the vast majority of the technical volunteers as there is no change for them.

## What An Event !!

(continued)

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"I enjoyed observing the teams at GiveCamp. Very high energy. I was very impressed with how much work got done in 2.5 days. I suggest that we introduce the teams to Scrum before the event.  
Michael De La Maza

## A Team Retrospective

(continued)

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only 48 hours to develop a solution, I believe this approach would allow us to gain momentum without the challenge of time boxed durations.

- ◇ Work around the clock but in shifts so that developers have an opportunity to get some sleep rather than not at all

### Conclusion:

Overall the project was a full success. The team delivered 18 of the 21 user stories. The three user stories that were not delivered were of lower priority and defined as out of scope by the Product Owner. The solution was demonstrated in its entirety on the last day. Feedback from the PO was fantastic. The team disengaged with a high level of satisfaction, pride and a great sense of well being for having met a very daunting challenge head on.

### Links:

<http://www.givecamp.org/>

<http://newenglandgivecamp.org/>

<http://www.newtechusa.com/agileboston>

# A Team Retrospective

by Bob Contreras

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## Approach:

We received a project overview from the non-profit client describing the project need to migrate an annual reporting process from spreadsheet imports into an access database to an online solution where technology centers could enter information directly into a form and save to a central database. We conducted a one hour conference call with the client and members of the project team to review the requirements and ask several technical questions. With our questions answered and having a more detailed understanding of the business needs, I began creating user stories using the current Annual Report spreadsheet as a guide. Each story aligned with an specific tab of the worksheet which allowed the ability to break down the requirements into independent, negotiable, value added, estimatable, small and testable (INVEST) user stories.

Between the first call on Monday morning and the second conference call on Thursday afternoon, we conducted several email exchanges refining each user story paying specific attention to the Acceptance Criteria. At the completion of the Thursday call we had our initial set of backlog requirements reviewed in detail and approved by our Product Owner (client). As a last task request, I asked the Product Owner to assign a business value from 1 to 10 for each user story and bring that valuation to the GiveCamp event.

Upon arrival at GiveCamp on Friday afternoon, we encountered our first major impediment. Three of the five developers assigned to the team were no shows leaving two developers, one with a minimum amount of experience in Drupal and the other with no experience. Being Agile, we quickly modified the guideline for estimating and engaged a Drupal expert to assist us in sizing the stories. Fortunately Eric, our Drupal expert, was also an experienced agile team member and was able to help us sort the 20 user stories into 6 stacks, each

stack arranged from easy to difficult. We then assigned user story points of 1, 2, 3, 5, 8 and 13 to the six stacks.

With business value and estimations at hand, I entered these values into a spreadsheet that calculated business weight and ROI. Sorting this list by descending ROI index, I then reviewed the priority list with the PO and obtained sign off. We were now ready to get to work.

## What Went Well

- ◇ Storming, Norming Performing – the group very quickly self organized and began working on the development project as a team. The PO, in a side bar comment, complimented how amazing it was to see a group of highly skilled technicians completely check out all egos at the door and work together. She had never seen such a rapid transition of Storming, Norming and Performing before.
- ◇ Product Backlog – we began the project with a well groomed, prioritized and complete backlog (we only added one additional user story to the final backlog).
- ◇ Sprint Planning – in Sprint 1, the team committed to completing 4 user stories within the first four hour sprint. Once the user stories were selected (top to bottom in priority order), the team then mapped out the major tasks for each story. This process provided an orderly structure to the development approach.
- ◇ Sprint Close Down – the PO did an excellent job of providing feedback to the team on the format and functionality of the user stories presented during the close down.
- ◇ Subsequent Sprint Planning – the team consistently performed tasked planning so that key tasks were identified and completed in an orderly fashion.
- ◇ Pair Programming – the team paired in threes during the entire event which allowed for more

creative solutions.

## What Did Not Go Well

- ◇ Product Owner/Stakeholder Engagement – the PO did not see the developed user stories until the end of the sprint even though she sat at the same table that the developers were working from. As a result, many changes to the forms had to be incorporated in the next sprint. Had the PO been engaged during the sprint development cycle, the team would have had immediate feedback resulting in reduced re-work. Fortunately this was observed in our first team retrospective and corrected in subsequent sprints.
- ◇ Velocity – the team was only able to complete three of the four stories committed to in Sprint 1. Although three stories were considered complete, the team did not meet its commitment.
- ◇ Domain Expertise – the team was able to secure the full time assistance of a Drupal experienced resource halfway through the day on Saturday but even with this resource, we did not have the domain experience with the technology and as a result, encountered quite a few trial and errors resulting in rework.
- ◇ Development Environment – with no server we were developing in a single server environment. This prevented us from working in parallel. Had we had a better development environment, we could have worked on more than one story at a time, could have performed QA in parallel, reviewed progress with the PO without hampering development cycles, etc.

## What Would We Do Differently

- ◇ Bring a server so that we could work in parallel.
- ◇ Modify the Sprint length from fixed to variable. The Sprint ends when the committed stories are completed. When the team has

*(Continued on page 4)*

# A Project Retrospective

by Karen Favazza Spencer

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## What went right?

- Preparing the client.
- Helping the client think through what was needed.
- Fostering client ownership
- Setting client expectations

As the Backlog Mentor I had a fabulous experience with my client. I contacted the Director of the non-profit on Monday morning. She read a sentence off a piece of paper about needing a database for marketing purposes. Her e-marketing friend had given her that note. From there we explored her experience. I subsequently interviewed all the stakeholders over the phone, discovering that the non-profit already had a quite sophisticated database that met their e-marketing needs, but had several other issues. After a couple more phone conversations and several emails we agreed on our User Stories and Doneness criteria. The Director and I had a conference call with the technical lead on Thursday, who agreed that the stories were appropriate for the weekend. Throughout the process, she's been an active participant. I couldn't have asked for a better client, or a more worthy non-profit. The Director came Friday night with (at my prompting) several printouts of website designs she liked and marked up with her notes.

## What went wrong (or unexpected)?

- Lack of skills
- Lack of process

Except for the lead, the team didn't come. The two developers, with Word Press experience, had an emergency at the last minute. I, unfortunately, was also unable to attend Friday night. However, we luckily were assigned a gifted graphic designer (graphics and looks were very important to our

client) and a dedicated, hard-working e-marketing SEO specialist who was familiar with Word Press.

However, the lead, a wonderful java developer with css expertise, is not a Scrum Master and wasn't interested in leading a Scrum process. By virtue of the time constraint, we jumped into the process of working on whatever we could, which is kind of scrum, but more waterfall heroics. At the end of Saturday (and an 18 hour work day plus 2 hours of commuting), I made up a bunch stickies and had the board set up for the team when they came in. I started the stand-up with reviewing the 3 epics, reading the stickies and went through the 3 questions.... taking a sticky for myself. Whether it was the pressure of time, the fruition of our Saturday efforts, or the process - it seemed we were more focused on Sunday, although no one but me visited the board again.

We didn't finish. We're still working on it as I write this Wednesday night. But we have an online punch list and made amazing progress. We're at the end of QA and just have a couple of outstanding tasks to be completed. I expect we will complete our "sprint" within a 2 week period from my first contact with the client.

## What did I learn?

Sometimes it's a better learning experience to have things not go as expected. It was interesting to me that although every one loved the:

- one page User Stories and Doneness Criteria
- one page As Is narrative
- one page hierarchal hyper-linked Menu for the new website

Except for the Client, the Team didn't really follow them. They printed them out, and had them by their

laptops and did refer to them from time to time, but without the process, they got lost in their own ideas. There was rework on things clearly stated in the User Story doneness criteria. Of course, they met the client first and listened to her for awhile, then were forwarded the document at midnight Friday night.

It made me realize how the Scrum emphasis on CARDS + CONVERSATIONS + CONFIRMATION is much more manageable in the context of focused tasks with a process roadmap. As the backlog mentor, I had the benefit of spending significant time eliciting and creating the back log and initial requirements, but without appropriate presentation at the right time to the team, they're not going to get it simply by reading a document, even a one pager. The CONVERSATIONS have to happen at the right time, and a CARD is better than a page. That said, documentation is necessary to keep those conversations on track.... at least as reference material.

## What would I do different next time?

I enjoyed the people and the work. And the customer is thrilled. Her software will be delivered very soon. I wished I had had a chance to get to know the team before we were thrust into the fire. Everyone of them was exceptional. I couldn't even scratch the surface of understanding their talents. I'd like to work with them again... but to have clear expectations of the roles and work process up front is just as important as having clear expectations for the project.

P.S. Since the weekend, using an online task list, has made things easier for everyone and I'm performing the role of Project Manager.