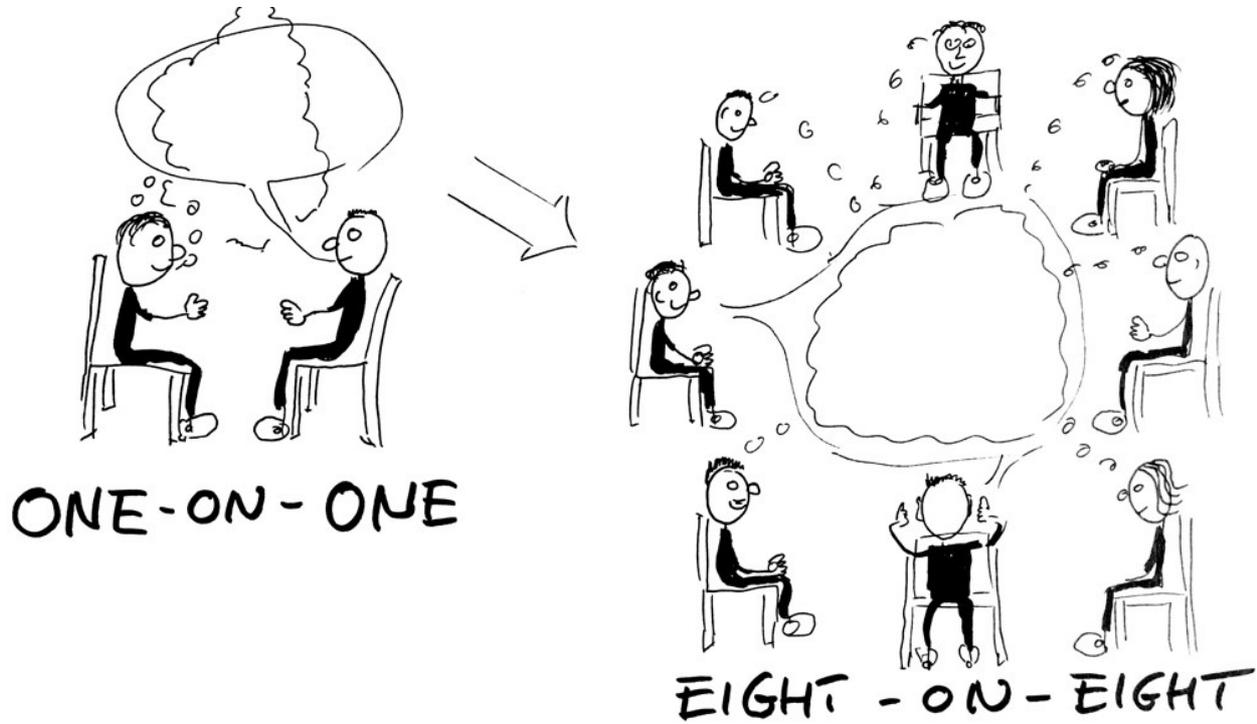


Will you try this fast group synchronization and replace your one on ones?

 ontheagilepath.net/2016/02/will-you-try-this-fast-group-synchronization-and-replace-your-one-on-ones.html

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With this post I describe our newly introduced group synchronization – 8 on 8 – where all Agile Coaches synch together regarding their current situation and feelings.

So far we used 1 on 1 sessions where every team member synced with me on a biweekly base. We exchanged about current topics, how one is doing and how individual development is progressing. I took notes and provided a journal for later usage of our sync output.

What was clearly missing was the update between all members of the team – a chance to get to know more about another and our everyday situations. We asked ourselves – Should everyone have 1 on 1es with everyone in the team? And came to the conclusion that this is clearly not scaling.

As an outcome of a 1 on 1 session, we came to the conclusion to try a new format, where the whole group syncs together.

How the 8 on 8 works

We get together on a bi-weekly base and invest 90' to synch. We arrange a chair circle so that everyone can see each other.

One team member after another starts and describes her current situation:

- What are significant things going on in the supervised team?
- How am I doing and feeling?
- What are my current challenges?
- Is there an important feedback for a member of my team or the whole team?

We try to listen carefully and just raise questions to further understand the input. Sometimes we start smaller discussions and exchanges but try to limit it or postpone it to a follow up session.

It works mainly self organized, without real facilitation. Team members hold another accountable to keep in mind that everyone has enough space to contribute.

Experiences so far

After 2 sessions and strong support to continue during the retrospective I'm looking forward to our next session (tomorrow). So far I'm impressed by:

- Our openness and intensity that we show as a team.
- Everyone is engaged and really listens to what a team member has to say. It shows real interest and seems to be valuable for everyone.
- Highly emotional – team members really express their feelings and we get to know so much more about another. There is a high value connected as we already experience more smoothend collaboration in the team.

In contrast to our retrospective, where we aim much more on process improvements this format really goes deeper for everyone in the team.

For me it is a replacement of our former used 1 on 1 sessions adding these advantages:

- is provides direct input for everyone in the team and less lost in translation effects
- the team can learn much faster and much more about another

Important preconditions

You need to establish an open and trustful atmosphere

As everyone expresses current feelings and describes ones situation team members have to be sure that all that is mentioned stays in that group. Like in a retrospective – it is important to clarify that level of security for that meeting.

Use a location where members can show emotions. E.g. we started in our open space cafeteria (btw a beautiful space at idealo) but soon realized that is is interrupting and hinders to express emotions. So we decided to use a large but closed room with a circle formation (see picture above).

Provide enough time

As members sometimes open a lot about their current situation and questions get raised and answered it needs enough space and less time pressure for that meeting. Not like e.g. in our huddle where every topic is limited to 15' max – this time it's a little like open end. Last time we used 90' ++.

Our team has a good feeling how to include everyone and provide space for everyone to express themselves. No explicit facilitation was necessary.

I guess it depends on the groups situation too and maybe needs more facilitation if it gets to single headed.

It's not that much about solving problems but about discovering everyone's situation and get to know each other better

As people start to describe their current situations and emotions it's important to listen and just ask questions to further understand what was said (and not to jump in with own solutions and fast interpretations). To use active listening is highly recommended.

People will ask for help and maybe it's a moment to plan a further coaching or cooperative case advise session – but it lies within everyone to take next steps.

This way everyone can express more and all members get the chance to learn a lot about each other.

Free choice

As this format can get highly emotional and transparent in the team it has to be of free choice attendance. No force and to accept silence of team members during the session are really important.

To monitor

During the session there are many topics raised and many open ends stay afterwards. Let's see if it can continue that way?!

My current impression is that many of the open ends get closed afterwards just by knowing more about everyone's situation and a strong offer to help one another.

Does everyone have enough freedom and time to express herself?

Further readings

We process – a disruptive retrospective exercise – a description of another crazy format to silently discuss in a group

Huddle – a claim for more efficient group discussions – a powerful group synchronization regarding organizational topics

Agile Coaches Connected – 7 ways we share knowledge and learn together – a description of formats we use in our agile coach team

What do you think about that 8 on 8 format? Will you try a similar way in your environment too? Or do you use other ways for synching on everyones individual situation? Thanks for your extensions via your highly welcome comment!