

Reflecting to enable improvement

How to get the most out of retrospectives

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Retrospective

from Latin *retrospectare*
meaning to “look back”

...at events that took place or work that was produced



Background of retrospectives

Where did they start?

- Origins in tech – software development and project management teams
- Part of the Agile framework called Scrum
- Teams work in blocks of time called Sprints
- After 1-2 Sprints, a Scrum team will come together for a retrospective or a 'retro'



Defining a retrospective

What is a retrospective?

- Discussion session with relevant team members
- Allow teams to look back and reflect on the work they've completed
- Discuss what worked well and what didn't
- Decide on actionable improvements
- Create a plan for implementing ideas



Defining a retrospective

What is a retrospective not?

- A blame game – they are not about pointing fingers
- A whinge-fest – not focused solely on negatives
- Just another meeting in which talk is cheap but no change follows – they should produce **actions that are actually actioned**



Defining a retrospective

What do they look like?

- Team members meet, talk about stuff and agree on some actions – normally after a project or a set period of time (ie. 1 month, quarterly, mid-way through a project)
- Online, in-person or hybrid with the right tools
- As simple or as sophisticated as you need them to be



Benefits

What are some of the benefits?

- Celebrate the wins
- Explore new ideas
- Examine challenges
- Plan experiments or new ways of doing things
- Support continuous growth and improvement
- Answer questions
- Improve communication between team members
- Produce better quality work
- Create a sense of pride
- Promote team unity and trust
- Build better relationships



Retrospective Prime Directive



“Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what was known at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand”

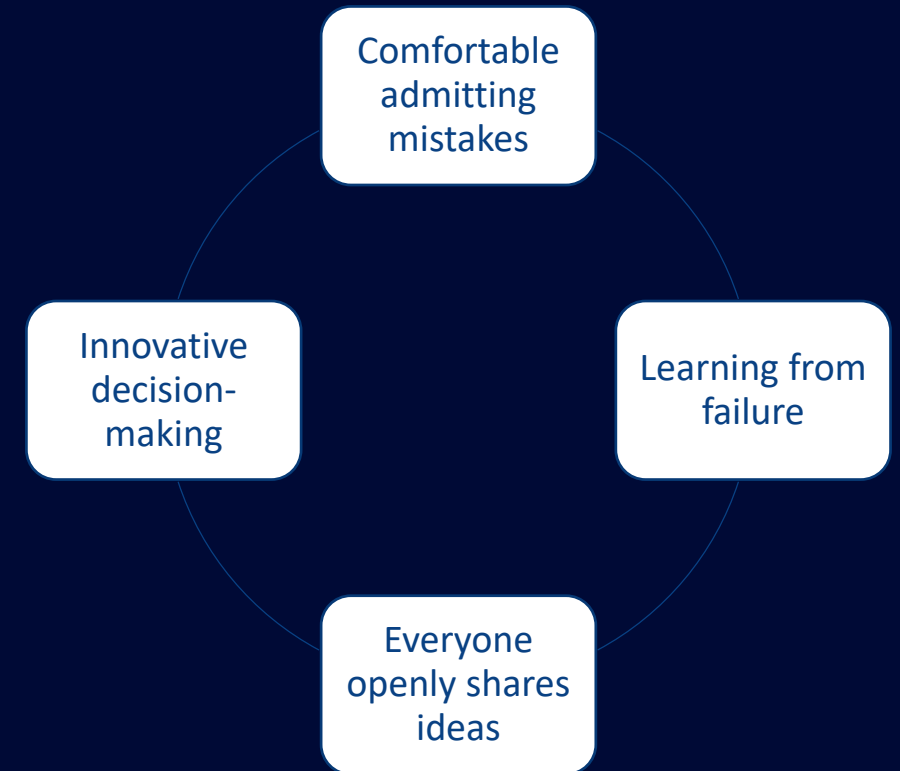
SOURCE: Norm Kerth, Project Retrospectives: A Handbook for Team Review

Setting up your retro

Ensure the retro is run by a person who is not the project lead.

Enable a safe environment to ask for feedback

- Psychological safety: a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking, team members feel accepted and respected. It can be defined as "being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career" (Kahn 1990)
- The purpose of the Feedback Loop/Retrospective is to inspect how the team is working together, identify potential improvements and create a plan for implementing them.



Setting up your retro

Growth mindset:

- welcome feedback and provide constructive feedback,
- failure is an opportunity to grow,
- learn from others,
- try new things,
- embrace challenges.

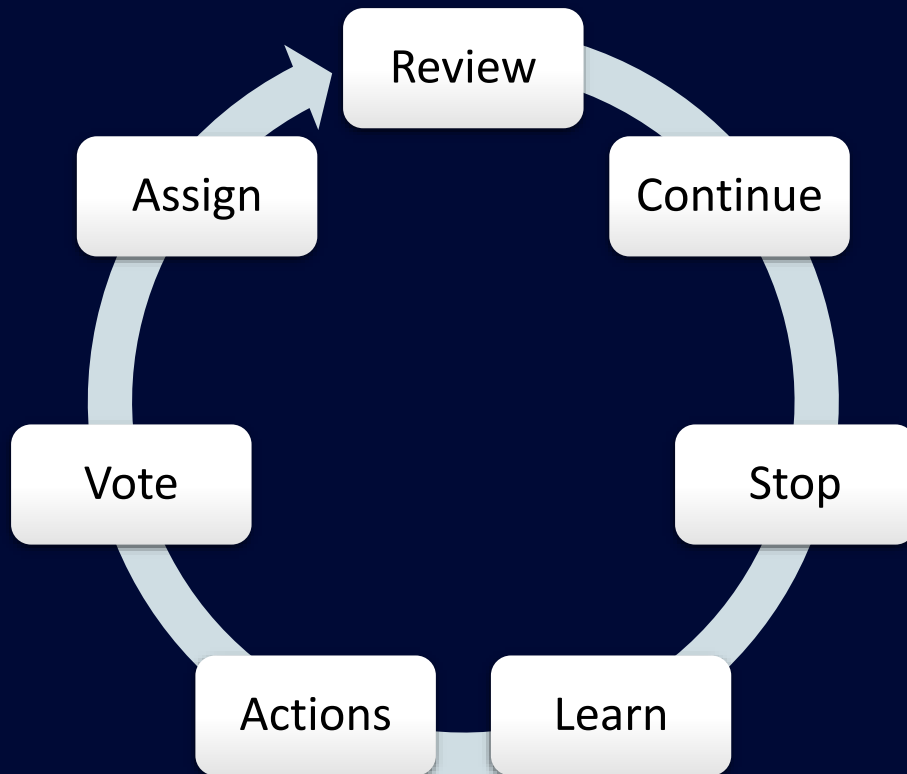
Inclusive space for all to have the freedom to speak up

- Be open and honest: This is a good way to improve parts of your project that aren't working so well.
- Focus on process/project improvement

Set an agenda

- Give participants time to add their ideas to the retro board.

Retro steps and board



Continue ▶▶
What went well?

Stop 🛑
What needs improvement?

What did you learn?



Actions



Let's practice!

DARCY'S 21ST BIRTHDAY EXTRAVAGANZA!



Let's practice!

Continue

What went well?

Everyone loved the music selection. Will use the DJ again for Sam's 21st.

Caterer provided great quality food and the right amount.

Dessert bar created by Will and Pat

Undercover dance floor in the alfresco area.

Long food table away from the dance floor

Everyone had a good time

Having enough undercover areas meant we could go ahead despite the light rain early

Outdoor garden party created lots of room for all the guests.

Let's practice!

Stop

What needs improvement?

Lighting
was either
too bright
or too dark

Birthday cake
almost didn't arrive
on time. Allow for
changes/things that
might go wrong

Photography.
Use a
professional.

Bar too close
to the dance
floor meant
too many
spillages.

Keep Aunty
Doris away
from the fruity
cocktails

Some people
couldn't hear
the speeches
when standing
at the back

Let's practice!

What did you learn? 🎓

Ordering cakes
and decorations
are big business
- career change?

Don't ask
family/friends for
favours during the
party. Outsource.

Favours before
party worked
well:
Decorations,
Desserts

Audience participation time!

Task

Look at what needs improvement and come up with an action idea.

Scan QR code



Visit this link

[Pollev.com/retro123](https://pollev.com/retro123)

Let's practice!

Actions

Hire a professional photographer rather than asking for a favour. Friends want to have fun too!

Allow an extra two weeks for cake order

Purchase/hire extra lighting options for outdoor space

Created a larger dedicated bar space away from the dance floor

Warn Aunty Doris about the alcohol content of the fruity cocktails

Hire a mic and speakers for speeches

Tools and resources

Digital options:

- Miro
- Powerpoint
- Word
- Excel

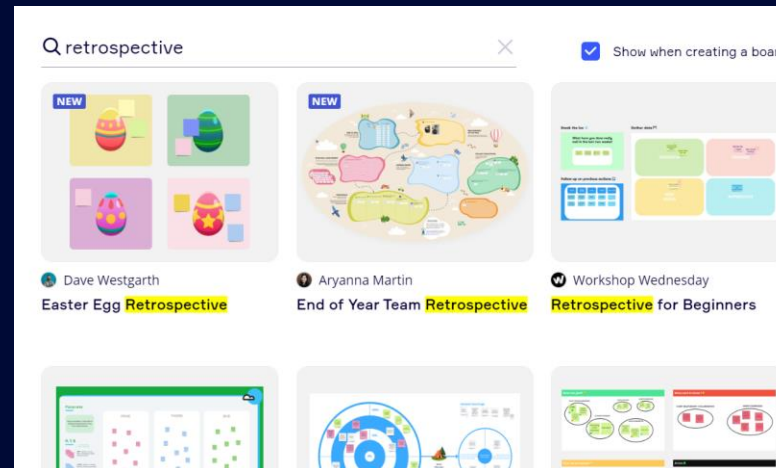
Physical options:

- Post it notes
- Whiteboard
- Big sheets of paper

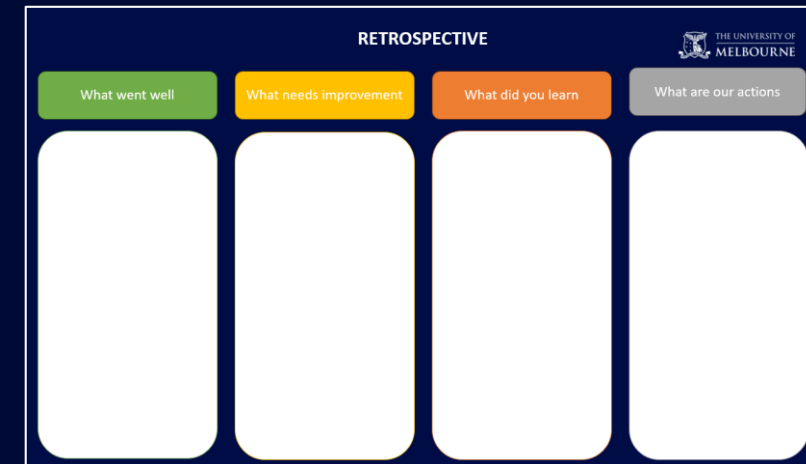
Resources:

- Ideas for fun retrospectives - retromat.org
- Free online retrospective tool - easyretro.io
- Miro.com - templates

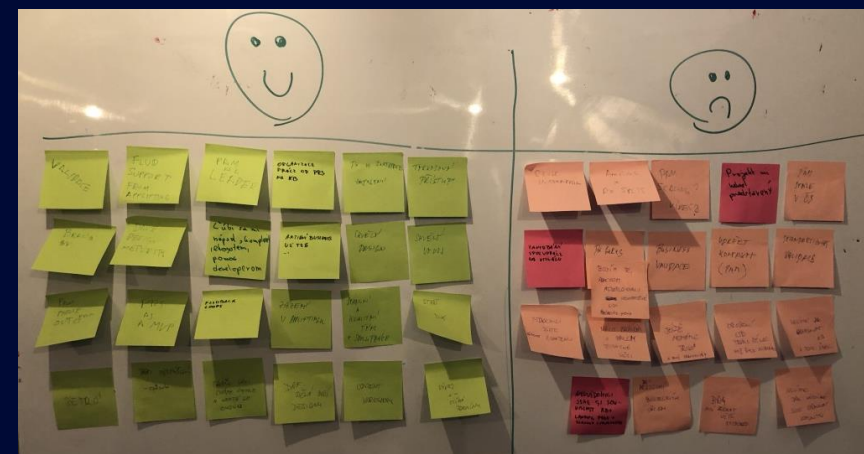
Miro templates



Powerpoint template



Post it notes on a whiteboard



**Thank you for listening and laughing to
all our jokes (we hope).**
