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Agile Metrics In Action: Measuring And Enhancing The Performance Of Agile Teams

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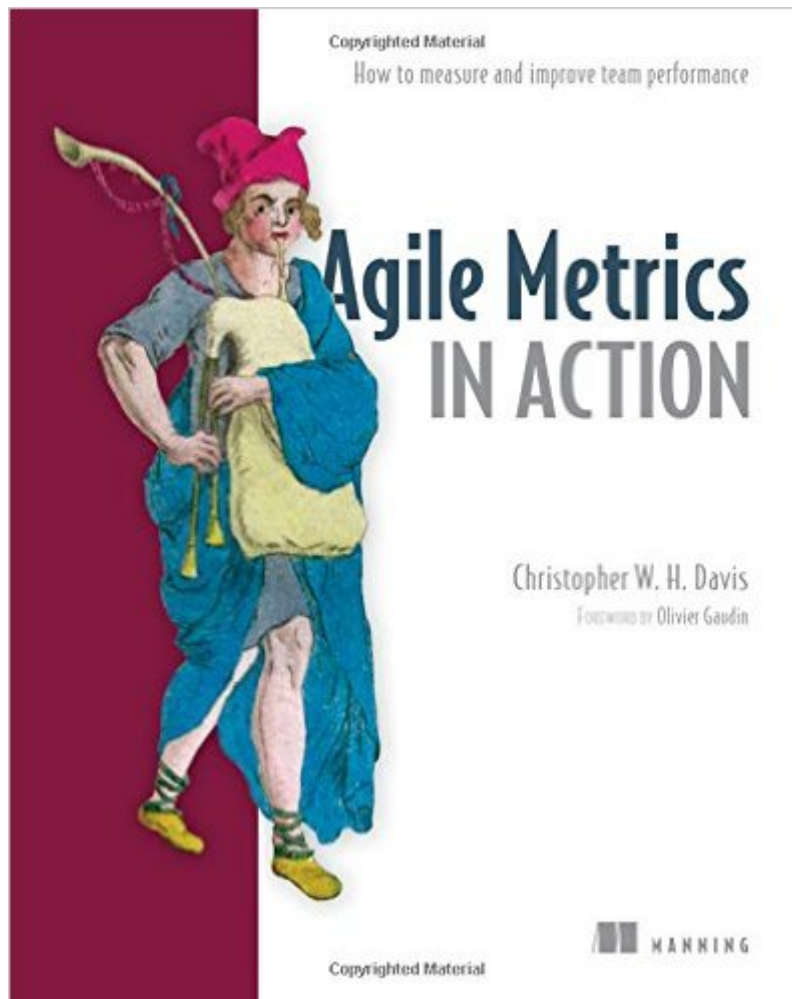
Synopsis

Project tracking systems, test and build tools, source control, continuous integration, and other built-in parts of the software development lifecycle generate a wealth of data that can be used to track and improve the quality and performance of products, processes, and teams. Although the iterative nature of Agile development is perfect for data-driven continuous improvement, the collection, analysis, and application of meaningful metrics often fades in favor of subjective measures that offer less insight into the real challenges of making better software. Agile Metrics in Action: Measuring and enhancing the performance of Agile teams is a practical book that shows how to take the data already being generated to make teams, processes, and products better. It points out which metrics to use to objectively measure performance and what data really counts, along with where to find it, how to get it, and how to analyze it. The book also shows how all team members can publish their own metrics through dashboards and radiators, taking charge of communicating performance and individual accountability. Along the way, it offers practical data analysis techniques, including a few emerging Big Data practices. Purchase of the print book includes a free eBook in PDF, Kindle, and ePub formats from Manning Publications.

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Customer Reviews

I have been reading this book in fits and starts over the past month, trying to decide if it's good or bad. I am 63-years-old and still writing code. The grumpy old man in me can't believe that anyone wrote a book about software metrics without a bibliography or acknowledging the seminal work in

the field by Grady and Caswell (Software Metrics: Establishing a Company-Wide Program) and Boehm (Software Engineering Economics). But this is a good book, even if it appears to be written by someone with no knowledge of the field before Extreme Programming came along.The book starts out by acknowledging that a common principle of Agile development is Ã¢Â ÂœOnly measure what mattersÃ¢Â Â• but then dismisses that idea by calling it a Ã¢Â Âœbad tenetÃ¢Â Â• because Ã¢Â ÂœHow do you know what matters? When do you start tracking new things and when do you stop tracking others? Because these are hard questions, metrics end up getting thrown by the wayside when they could be providing value. A better wording would be measure everything and figure out why metrics change unexpectedly.Ã¢Â Â™Ã¢Â Â• I read this and thought Ã¢Â Âœget off my lawn! How can anyone write a book about metrics and not tell us how to measure what matters?Ã¢Â Â• But sure enough, most of the rest of the text addresses the fundamental issue of figuring out what matters, and to whom.The author relies on an analysis tool called Ã¢Â Âœmind mappingÃ¢Â Â• which is new to me. From what I can gather about this technique (from googling it) I can imagine he conceived of a book about Agile Software Metrics and then broke it down into component parts. The book is well-organized, sometimes to a fault: each chapter starts with an outline of what he is going to say, then he says it, and then he closes the chapter by summarizing what he said. Sometimes this is really good, like when you been reading the book in stolen moments at work and at home (as I did, mostly), but other times it gets a bit tedious and I found myself thinking Ã¢Â Âœcould we possibly just get to the point?Ã¢Â Â•The final chapter is the best, talking about Agile principles in general and getting into some specific metrics that can be useful and are measurable. A lot of the book leading up to final chapter is more descriptive of the different stages of Agile development, what tools are available at each stage to collect metrics, and how different people in the organization have different questions they want answered by metrics. I found the discussion of Continuous Development to be really interesting Ã¢Â Â" it actually got me to recall an article I read 31 years ago in Scientific American (September 1984) by Alan Kay about the software and where it might be heading in the future, back then.

The Agile methodology (or approach) to software development is still relatively new. The promise of Agile, when it is not used as an elaborate cover for the old no-process no-planning no-accountability way software was developed in the Very Bad Old Days, is that customers can be made happy with continuous delivery of software that gets ever closer to what they want - usable software that works without bugs and without security risks.So how do you find out whether your Agile team is producing as well as it can? What do you measure? How do you measure it? In the new world of development

and build and tracking tools, almost everything can be instrumented to provide data. So how do you fulfill the Agile goal of measuring only what matters? How do you figure out what matters? Davis has provided lots of measurement tools with examples of the metrics produced AND several case studies that show how to implement his ideas AND guidance on how to discover what matters in your situation by measuring various things. Finally, there is guidance on how to match metrics to the Agile principles and how to use the metrics to improve your team and processes - and products, which is what your customers care about. And then there is an appendix with full and explicit info on constructing a metrics system using commonly available tools.This is a highly technical book; you have to understand the jargon and know modern software engineering and build processes to understand it and benefit from it There is no list of acronyms and no glossary of concepts, so you really have to know the field. The index is spotty and inconsistent, a minor irritant. None of this ultimately matters if you're part of the intended audience of this book - Agile teams and their first-level supervisors and leads.

This is straightforward and practical guide on Agile Metrics aimed primarily at software teams already familiar with agile principles and working in accordance with these methodologies. Written by a software engineer experienced in leading such teams, this book explains the role of agile metrics in this process and goes on at length to discuss what and which kinds of data should be collected and how. It then recommends how the data can be analyzed and disseminated for maximum effectiveness and impact.According to the author, Ã¢Â ÂœA metric can come from a single data source or it can be a combination of data from multiple data sources. Any data point that you track eventually becomes a metric that you can use to measure your teamÃ¢Â Â™s performance.Ã¢Â Â• These multiple sources include project-tracking systems, source control, deployment servers and other production systems. In addition, Agile Metrics can be used to measure the technical quality of your software and the performance of the team itself (i.e., levels of communication, productivity, morale, etc.). However, the author cautions that introducing this type of analysis into a company unfamiliar with its tenets may very well encounter difficulties unless the management and personnel are fully informed of what these processes involve.Overall I found this book to be enlightening and challenging. As a newbie to the field of agile development, I was intrigued by the software tools it recommends, that are applicable to many development situations. I plan to pass this book on to my IT team for additional comment and review.

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