

AGILE RETROSPECTIVES

Optimizing Agile Success with AgileBox



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Why we made this ebook	5
Diving Deep into the Heart of Agile: The Magic of Retrospectives	5
Why All the Fuss About Retrospectives?	5
Taking a Stroll Through Retrospective-Land	5
Give Your Retrospectives Some Extra Sparkle with AgileBox	5
Chapter 1: What is Agile Retrospective?	6
The Essence and Origins of Agile Retrospectives	6
Different Types of Retrospectives	6
Journeying Through the Phases of Retrospectives	7
Building Blocks of a Successful Retrospective	8
Core Principles Lighting the Path	9
Chapter 2: Why are Retrospectives useful?	10
Boosting Your Team's Processes	10
Spotting and Tackling Hurdles Head-on	11
Enhancing Communication and Fostering Collaboration	12
Crafting a Positive and Productive Team Atmosphere	13
Chapter 3: How to run a retrospectives meeting?	14
Planning Your Retrospective:	14
Preparing for the Retrospective:	14
Facilitating the Meeting:	14
After the Retrospective:	15
Chapter 4: Retrospectives checklist (Before/During/After)	16
Before the retrospective:	16
During the retrospective:	17
After the retrospective:	17
Chapter 5: Offline and Online Retrospective	18
Offline vs. Online: A Tale of Two Realms	18
Offline Retrospectives	18
Online Retrospectives	18
Tips and Best Practices for Online Retrospectives	19
Unlocking the Potential with AgileBox Plugin for Jira in Online Retrospectives	20

Chapter 6: Retrospective Templates	21
Types and Categories of Retrospective Templates	21
Retrospective Templates	21
Drop Add Keep Improve (DAKI)	21
Energy Levels	21
Glad Mad Sad	22
Highlights & Lowlights	22
Hopes and Fears	23
Liked, Learned, Lacked, Longed For (4Ls)	23
Mountain Climbers	23
SWOT Analysis	24
Hot Air Balloon	24
Sailboat	25
Chapter 7: How to run retrospectives with AgileBox	26
Step 1: Install AgileBox from the Atlassian Marketplace	26
Step 2: Access to AgileBox	26
Step 3: Find the Retrospectives feature	27
Step 4: Create a new retrospective meeting	28
Step 5: Join and go to the Reflection stage	28
Step 6: Go to the Group stage	29
Step 7: Go to the Voting stage	30
Step 8: Go to the Discuss stage	30
Chapter 8: Best practices and Tips for making better retrospectives	33
Best practices and Tips	33
Set Clear Objectives	33
Create a Safe Space	33
Rotate Facilitators	33
Vary Retrospective Formats	33
Close the Loop	33
Breaking the Ice with Retrospective Icebreakers	34
Choosing the Right Ice Breaker Activities	34
Examples of Retrospective Icebreakers	35
Chapter 9: Our recommendations	37
Books	37
Podcast	37
References	38

Why we made this ebook

Diving Deep into the Heart of Agile: The Magic of Retrospectives

In the ever-shifting world of Agile, one thing remains constant - our hunger to do better, evolve, and grow. We're all part of a grand story, and each chapter is about becoming a little more awesome. But how do you turn the pages? How do you make sure that each chapter is more exciting than the last? That's where our trusty tools and techniques come in.

Let's talk about one such tool close to my heart (and should be close to yours, too) – the retrospective. Picture this: It's like a cozy campfire gathering at the end of an adventurous day. Everyone sits around, sharing stories, learning from mishaps, and dreaming about the next big adventure. That's what retrospectives are for Agile teams.

Why All the Fuss About Retrospectives?

Think of retrospectives as the heart-to-heart chat you never knew your team needed. It's that moment of pause, a collective breath, where you look back to leap forward. It's not just about fixing what went wrong; it's about celebrating the wins and gearing up for what's next.

Taking a Stroll Through Retrospective-Land

Buckle up, folks! We're about to embark on a colorful journey, exploring every nook and cranny of the retrospective process. Whether you've been championing Agile from day one or just dipping your toes in, we promise this guide will make you see retrospectives in a whole new light.

Give Your Retrospectives Some Extra Sparkle with AgileBox

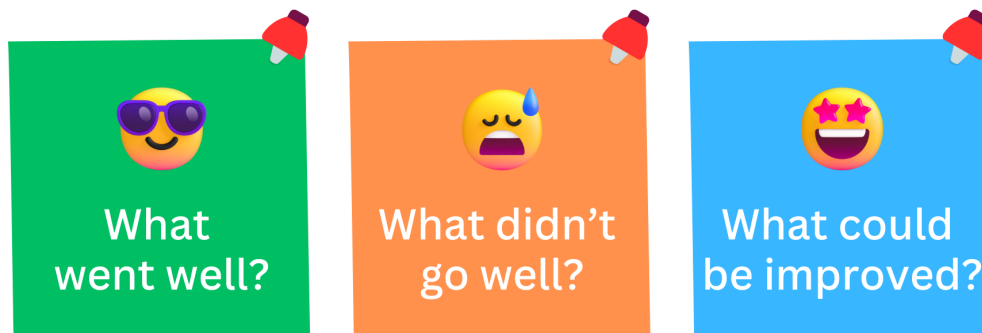
Alright, we get it. Tools matter. It's why we wouldn't try to light our campfire with two wet twigs. Enter 'Agile retrospectives for Jira' by AgileBox. It's like the marshmallow on top of your hot cocoa – making an already good thing even better. Seamlessly conduct retrospectives and make them part and parcel of your Jira flow.

By the end of our journey together, we hope you'll be brimming with insights, ready to make your retrospectives the highlight of your Agile adventure. Let's turn the pages of this story and find our next 'aha!' moment together. Cheers to a better tomorrow and stories worth telling!

Chapter 1: What is Agile Retrospective?

The Essence and Origins of Agile Retrospectives

Agile retrospectives play a pivotal role in the agile development journey. Think of them as a reflective pit-stop held at the close of every iteration or sprint. Here, teams gather to celebrate their wins, discuss potential improvements, and strategize for the upcoming iteration.



At the core of agile retrospectives lies the intent to foster a candid and secure environment. This ensures that team members feel empowered to share insights and feedback transparently. By doing so, the aim is to pinpoint and overcome challenges hindering the team's path to success.

But where did this practice originate? Let's time-travel back to 2001. In the picturesque setting of Snowbird, Utah, a cohort of software developers have convened to pen down the Agile Manifesto. Among the foundational values listed, "continuous improvement" shone prominently. Agile retrospectives, in essence, breathe life into this value. They stand as a testament to a team's commitment to relentlessly refining their processes and end products.

Different Types of Retrospectives

Just as a composer has varied notes to craft a symphony, retrospectives come in different flavors:

- **Sprint Retrospective:** Done at the end of each sprint, this retrospective zeroes in on the immediate past sprint, assessing its highs and lows.

- **Release Retrospective:** Once a product release is out, this retrospective looks at the broader aspects and the overall journey of the release.
- **Project Retrospective:** After a project wraps up, this is a grand reflection, analyzing the entire project from inception to completion.
- **Systems Retrospective:** This is a retrospective that is held to reflect on the entire system, including the people, processes, and tools.
- **Team Retrospective:** This is a retrospective that is held to reflect on the team's dynamics and how they can work better together.

Journeying Through the Phases of Retrospectives

Every retrospective follows a rhythmic dance of phases. It begins with setting the stage and inviting openness. Teams then gather data, painting a picture of the sprint. From this data, insights are generated, and then? It's time to decide on actions. As the curtains fall, retrospectives close with affirmation and a look towards the future.



- **Set the stage:** The goal of this phase is to create a safe and open space where team members can honestly share their thoughts and feedback. The facilitator should start by welcoming the team and explaining the purpose of the retrospective. They should also establish ground rules for the meeting, such as confidentiality and respect.
- **Gather data:** In this phase, the team gathers data about what went well, what could be improved, and any challenges they faced during the past iteration. This data can be collected through various methods, such as surveys, brainstorming, and retrospective templates.
- **Generate insights:** The team analyzes the data to identify patterns or trends once the data has been gathered. They also try to understand the root causes of any problems or challenges.
- **Decide what to do:** In this phase, the team brainstorms solutions to the identified problems or challenges. They then prioritize the solutions and commit to taking action on them.

- **Close the retrospective:** The facilitator summarizes the key takeaways from the retrospective and thanks the team for their participation. They should also remind the team to follow up on the agreed-upon actions.

These are just the basic phases of a retrospective. The specific steps involved may vary depending on the team and the situation.

Building Blocks of a Successful Retrospective

Every retrospective is like an intricate puzzle, with each element playing its vital role.



- **Facilitator:** The facilitator is responsible for leading the retrospective and ensuring it is productive. They should be someone who is impartial and has good facilitation skills.
- **Participants:** The participants are the people who will be attending the retrospective. They should be from all levels of the team and have a stake in the outcome of the retrospective.
- **Agenda:** The agenda is a list of topics discussed during the retrospective. It should be created in advance and shared with the participants.
- **Tools:** Many different tools can be used in a retrospective. Some popular tools include whiteboards, sticky notes, and post-it notes.
- **Environment:** The environment should be conducive to productive discussion. It should be quiet and free from distractions.
- **Ground rules:** Ground rules are a set of guidelines that help to ensure that the retrospective is productive and respectful. They should be created in advance and agreed upon by all participants.

- **Process:** Many different processes can be used in a retrospective. Some popular processes include the 4L's retrospective, the highlights and lowlights retrospective, and the SWOT analysis retrospective.
- **Follow-up:** The retrospective should not end with the meeting. There should be a plan for following up on the agreed-upon actions.

Core Principles Lighting the Path

Retrospectives are more than just processes; they're governed by values and principles.

- **Prime directive:** This dictates that the retrospective should serve as a secure haven, ensuring all participants feel free and encouraged to express their perspectives and insights.
- **Safety:** This means that they should feel comfortable voicing their concerns, insights, and even critiques without fear of backlash or retribution.
- **Respect:** No matter how divergent, every opinion arises from an individual's unique perspective and experience. Every team member's contributions should be treated as valuable insights, even when they don't align with the majority or one's beliefs.
- **Collaboration:** The essence of retrospectives is to foster a collaborative spirit. It's not about finger-pointing but about collectively identifying areas of concern or opportunity.
- **Learning:** The retrospective isn't just about discussing what went wrong. It's an opportunity to evolve by assimilating lessons from both successes and failures.
- **Actionable:** The objective of every retrospective should be to leave with a clear set of actionable steps or improvements that the team commits to implementing.
- **Continuous improvement:** The spirit of retrospectives is built upon the pillar of continuous improvement. This means the team doesn't get complacent.

Chapter 2: Why are Retrospectives useful?

Retrospectives, often lovingly termed "retros," aren't just another meeting in the Agile playbook. They're influential, transformative gatherings that can supercharge teams to new heights. But what makes them such a standout? Let's dive into their myriad benefits.

Boosting Your Team's Processes

Imagine running a marathon with a pebble in your shoe. It is a tiny pebble, but with every mile, its annoyance grows. Retrospectives help teams identify such "pebbles" in their processes. By reviewing what worked and what didn't, teams can iterate on their approach, making each sprint smoother than the last.



Let's explore how these reflective sessions can be your secret weapon for transformative improvement.

Retrospectives aren't just about assembling and conversing; they're your ticket to delving into the past and emerging with insights. This introspective voyage lets your team glean wisdom from experience, spotting patterns illuminating the path forward.

Embedded within retrospectives is the very essence of "continuous improvement." It's not just a buzzword; it's the beacon that guides your team towards betterment. As you identify those pockets of potential enhancement, you're cultivating a culture that thrives on evolution and welcomes change. These sessions aren't merely a ritual but a commitment to perpetual growth and adaptability, fostering a collective hunger for progress.

Spotting and Tackling Hurdles Head-on

Every team faces challenges, but the difference lies in addressing them proactively. Retrospectives serve as a spotlight, highlighting pain points, bottlenecks, and areas of concern. And once identified? The team can strategize on actionable solutions, ensuring problems don't linger and fester.



Let's embark on a journey to understand how retrospectives can be your compass for identifying and unraveling problems.

Imagine retrospectives as your microscope, allowing you to peer deeply into the core of problems. But it's not just about addressing isolated concerns; it's about unveiling intricate patterns and recurring trends that might otherwise slip through the cracks. Examining the past allows you to navigate a more informed future.

Retrospectives aren't your typical meetings; they're candid conversations waiting to unfold. This is where your team members, each bearing unique insights, gather to share observations, voice concerns and offer valuable suggestions. It's a communal endeavor, pooling together diverse perspectives to shed light on every facet of the issue at hand.

But retrospectives aren't content with merely shining a light on problems. They hold the promise of transformation. The solutions you unearth here are not solitary fixes; they shape the very trajectory of your team's journey toward excellence. It's about moving beyond the superficial, delving into the root causes, and steering your course toward an improved future.

Enhancing Communication and Fostering Collaboration

In the hustle and bustle of deadlines and deliverables, team members may sometimes operate in silos. Retrospectives break down these walls. They serve as open forums where everyone's voice is valued. Through sharing experiences, insights, and feedback, teams foster a culture of open dialogue and joint problem-solving.



Let's uncover how retrospectives can be your compass for elevating teamwork dynamics.

Retrospectives, by design, are the fertile ground for open dialogue. Team members unfurl their perspectives, observations, and ideas within this space, painting a vivid canvas of collective understanding. As these voices intertwine, the symphony of collaboration plays its melody, nurturing a sense of unity that transcends roles and positions.

Retrospectives transcend mere meetings; they're hubs of feedback exchange. They celebrate triumphs and confront challenges, transforming them into stepping stones. Collaboratively, they forge shared solutions, turning challenges into growth opportunities. Here, learning spans beyond victories to lessons from missteps.

Within the realm of retrospectives, transparency takes root and thrives. This isn't just about sharing victories; it's about embracing vulnerability by showcasing challenges. The result? A culture of accountability that permeates every endeavor. Through retrospectives, teams weave a narrative where everyone's contribution is valued, successes are celebrated, and challenges are met with collective determination.

Crafting a Positive and Productive Team Atmosphere

Beyond tasks and processes, retrospectives touch the heart of team dynamics. They pave the way for acknowledging hard work, appreciating individual contributions, and celebrating shared victories. By consistently addressing concerns and appreciating efforts, teams can nurture a culture where positivity thrives and productivity soars.



Retrospectives are like the sunlight that filters through the leaves, casting a warm glow on achievements. In their embrace, the team examines experiences, allowing both triumphs and challenges to dance under the same spotlight. This process transforms hurdles into stepping stones, forging an unbreakable link between growth and the courage to face adversity head-on.

Retrospectives yield ownership, nurturing a blame-free culture of constructive critique. Challenges aren't weapons of blame; they're seeds of shared responsibility. Together, the team transforms hurdles into shared solutions, united in harnessing collective ingenuity. Individual accountability merges with collaborative prowess in this landscape, fueling limitless growth.

Chapter 3: How to run a retrospectives meeting?

Retrospective meetings, often the unsung heroes of the Agile journey, are where reflection meets action. Yet, their success isn't automatic; it hinges on meticulous planning, execution, and follow-through. Let's walk through the roadmap of orchestrating a retrospective that genuinely resonates.

Planning Your Retrospective:

- **Define the Goal:** What do you hope to achieve? Whether it's improving communication, refining a process, or addressing a specific issue, having a clear goal will steer the conversation.
- **Scope:** Determine what period or aspect you're reviewing. It might be the last sprint, a particular project, or an event.
- **Duration:** An ideal retrospective is long enough to be thorough but concise enough to keep energy levels up.
- **Participants:** Ensure all relevant stakeholders attend. This isn't a meeting just for managers; it's a collective reflection involving everyone from interns to team leads.
- **Allocating Time:** Set a realistic duration for the retrospective, balancing thoroughness with efficiency.

Preparing for the Retrospective:

- **Choose a Technique:** Depending on your goal, choose a format. 'DAKI' is popular, but there are many other templates like '4Ls (Liked, Learned, Lacked, Longed for)' or 'Mountain Climber.'
- **Gather Data:** Before the meeting, solicit feedback. This could be in the form of surveys, direct feedback, or even performance data.
- **Setup:** Whether it's a virtual board, a video call platform, or a physical whiteboard with sticky notes, ensure your tools and environment are primed and ready.

Facilitating the Meeting:

- **Set the Stage:** Kick off with a positive tone. Reiterate the importance of open dialogue, mutual respect, and constructive feedback.

- **Guide the Discussion:** Encourage participation, ensure the conversation stays on track, and make certain voices aren't overshadowed.
- **Manage Time:** Allocate specific durations for each segment to keep things flowing smoothly.
- **Handle Challenges:** Emotions might run high. Address conflicts with empathy, steer away from blame games and keep the focus on collaborative problem-solving.

After the Retrospective:

- **Document Results:** Record key insights, action items, and decisions. This isn't just minutes of the meeting; it's a blueprint for future action.
- **Assign and Track:** Clearly delegate responsibilities and set deadlines for action items. Use tools or platforms to monitor progress and ensure accountability.
- **Celebrate Wins:** It's crucial. Acknowledge improvements, no matter how small, and laud team efforts. It boosts morale and drives motivation.
- **Iterate:** After implementing changes, measure their impact. This helps in validating decisions and making course corrections if needed.

Chapter 4: Retrospectives checklist (Before/During/After)

A retrospective is more than a meeting; it's a moment of opportunity, a platform to extract maximum value for everyone involved. But to extract this value, a holistic approach is essential. This entails leaving no stone unturned before, during, and after the retrospective.

Imagine the retrospective as a symphony. Each element, whether before, during, or after, plays its distinct note, harmonizing to create a masterpiece. A checklist is your musical score, ensuring every message is played flawlessly. It's not just about staying on track; it's about cultivating an environment brimming with positivity, providing actionable insights that aren't just generated and meticulously tracked. It's the guide that propels teams toward heightened performance and perpetual improvement.

Consider a checklist as the compass that steers your retrospective towards effectiveness and ensures the positivity radiates. Without this guiding star, the retrospective might lose its shine, and the gems of insight it produces could gather dust on forgotten shelves. But armed with this checklist, you're equipped to orchestrate a retrospective that leaves an indelible mark on your team's journey.

The checklist below will help you smoothly run a perfect retrospective:

To Do List

- _____
- Before** _____
- _____
- During** _____
- _____
- After** _____
- _____
- _____

Before the retrospective:

- Review the previous retrospective action items and their status
- Prepare a clear agenda and share it with the team in advance
- Choose a suitable facilitation technique and prepare the necessary materials
- Invite feedback from the team members on the current sprint and the retrospective format
- Set up a comfortable and distraction-free environment for the meeting

During the retrospective:

- Start by ensuring a shared understanding. Review the retrospective's goals and key discussion points as a collective.
- Encourage active participation from all team members. Every voice matters, so provide opportunities for everyone to share their insights.
- Foster an environment of respect for diverse opinions. Even when opinions differ, maintain courteous and considerate interactions.
- Keep the spotlight on solutions. The focus should be on improving processes rather than dwelling solely on problems.
- Pause to acknowledge successes and express gratitude for the team's contributions after each action item.
- Use a tool or a method to collect and organize the data, such as AgileBox's Retrospectives feature.
- Stay attuned to the team's energy levels and incorporate breaks as needed to maintain engagement.
- Generate actionable items to enhance processes. Assign owners and set achievable deadlines for implementation.
- Extend thanks to all participants for their valuable input and involvement.
- Summarize action items, ensuring everyone comprehends their roles and responsibilities.

After the retrospective:

- Solicit feedback from the team on how the retrospective process can be improved for the next iteration.
- Share the results of the retrospective with the team. Make sure that everyone is clear on the action items.
- Track the progress of the action items and ensure they are completed on time.
- Evaluate the action items' impact and ensure they are having the desired effect.

Chapter 5: Offline and Online Retrospective

In the realm of Agile retrospectives, there are two distinct landscapes to explore: offline and online. Each brings its advantages, challenges, and opportunities, shaped by tools, techniques, and the dynamic interplay of team members. In this chapter, we'll journey to understand these differences and offer insights into running effective online retrospectives, focusing on the AgileBox plugin for Jira.



Offline vs. Online: A Tale of Two Realms

Offline Retrospectives

In-person retrospectives promote natural and spontaneous communication as team members can observe each other's body language, facial expressions, and gestures, fostering rapport and trust.

However, they also have some disadvantages, such as being costly and time-consuming, being affected by external factors, and being biased or dominated by some team members.

Online Retrospectives

Online retrospectives offer conveniences like flexibility with participation from anywhere, inclusivity through diverse stakeholders, and scalability using various digital tools, making them a versatile choice for teams.

Yet, online retrospectives have drawbacks like reduced engagement due to technical glitches and screen fatigue, diminished personal connections lacking the warmth of face-to-face interactions, and potential creativity constraints tied to predefined templates.

Tips and Best Practices for Online Retrospectives

Here are some tips and best practices to make your online retrospectives more effective and enjoyable:

- **Choose a reliable online platform:** Many online platforms can be used for retrospectives. Choose one that is easy to use and that has the features you need.
- **Test the Technology Beforehand:** Ensure all participants are familiar with the chosen platform and have tested their audio and video setups.
- **Set Clear Objectives:** Define the purpose and goals of the retrospective. Make sure every participant understands what you aim to achieve.
- **Time Management:** Allocate specific time slots for each retrospective stage and stick to them. This keeps the session on track and prevents it from dragging on.
- **Visual Aids:** Utilize digital whiteboards, mind-mapping tools, or collaborative platforms for visualizing ideas and data. This fosters engagement and creativity.
- **Record Everything:** Document the retrospective, including insights, action items, and responsible team members. Share the records with participants afterward.
- **Ensure Good Audio and Video Quality:** Clear communication is vital. Invest in quality microphones and cameras to reduce frustration caused by poor audio or video.

Unlocking the Potential with AgileBox Plugin for Jira in Online Retrospectives

AgileBox is a toolbox for Agile teams to estimate and prioritize the product backlog, conduct retrospectives, daily standup & team health analysis, with three main features: Planning Poker for Jira, Agile Retrospective for Jira, and Daily Standup for Jira.

AgileBox helps teams plan, collaborate, and track their agile projects. This is a powerful tool that can help teams improve their agile development process, which is developed by the DevSamurai team. AgileBox makes the Agile process seamless, simple, fun, colorful, and productive.

The image displays three screenshots of the AgileBox plugin interface. The top-left screenshot shows a meeting titled "Sheldon Daily #4" with a "What did you do yesterday?" section. The top-right screenshot shows a "My history" section with a "What did you do yesterday?" section. The bottom screenshot shows a "SHeldon WEEKLY MEETING" interface with four columns: DROP, ADD, KEEP, and IMPROVE, each with a "Type your opinion..." field and a list of suggestions. The bottom-right screenshot shows a "Backlog Estimate" interface with a "TO DO" list and a "LIVE CHAT" section.

Try out our app now: [Agile Planning Poker, Retrospectives, Daily Standup for Jira](#)

Chapter 6: Retrospective Templates

Retrospectives are a canvas for teams to paint their journey, and just like artists, they need a palette of templates to craft their masterpieces. This chapter delves into the world of retrospective templates, offering a range of options to suit your team's unique needs.

With the AgileBox plugin for Jira, accessing and customizing these templates becomes a breeze. AgileBox does support almost all of the popular retrospective templates listed below.

Types and Categories of Retrospective Templates

Retrospective templates come in various flavors, catering to different goals, scopes, durations, and formats. They can range from simple to more creative and interactive. Some templates focus on specific aspects like team dynamics, while others offer a comprehensive view of the entire sprint or project. The possibilities are diverse and adaptable to your team's specific requirements.

Retrospective Templates

Drop Add Keep Improve (DAKI)

This template encourages teams to evaluate aspects of their process. They identify what they want to drop (stop doing), add (start doing), keep (continue doing), and improve. It's a structured way to collect actionable insights.

<p>DROP 📉</p> <p>What should we stop?</p> <p>Type your opinion...</p>	<p>ADD ✓</p> <p>What should we try or adopt?</p> <p>Type your opinion...</p>	<p>KEEP 🙌</p> <p>What should we maintain?</p> <p>Type your opinion...</p>	<p>IMPROVE ★</p> <p>What should we improve or revise?</p> <p>Type your opinion...</p>
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Ideal for teams looking to make actionable changes to their processes. It helps identify what to stop, start, continue, or improve in a structured manner.

Energy Levels

Participants gauge their energy levels throughout the sprint or project by plotting points on a chart. This helps visualize the team's emotional journey, which can inform discussions on factors that influence energy levels.

The image shows three survey cards for energy levels. The first card is green and titled 'Fully Charged 🟢' with the question 'What energized you?'. The second card is red and titled 'Low Battery 🔴' with the question 'What depleted you?'. The third card is purple and titled 'Sprint Energy 🟡' with the question 'What's your energy level going into the next Sprint?'. Each card has a text input field labeled 'Type your opinion...'.

Useful when you want to gauge the emotional journey of the team during a sprint or project, helping to understand factors influencing team morale.

Glad Mad Sad

In this simple yet effective template, team members express what made them glad, mad, and sad during the iteration. It provides a straightforward way to highlight both positive and negative experiences.

The image shows three survey cards for 'Glad Mad Sad'. The first card is light blue and titled 'Glad 😊' with the question 'What are you happy about?'. The second card is orange and titled 'Sad 😞' with the question 'What could be improved?'. The third card is red and titled 'Mad 😡' with the question 'What are you angry or disappointed about?'. Each card has a text input field labeled 'Type your opinion...'.

Effective for teams looking for a quick and straightforward way to capture both positive and negative experiences during an iteration.

Highlights & Lowlights

Teams discuss the sprint's highlights (successes) and lowlights (challenges or failures). It allows for focused conversations on what went exceptionally well and what needs attention.

The image shows three survey cards for 'Highlights & Lowlights'. The first card is orange and titled 'Highlights 🏆' with the question 'What was great or exceeded expectations?'. The second card is pink and titled 'Lowlights 😞' with the question 'What didn't go well or made us feel down?'. The third card is black and titled 'Kudos ❤️' with the question 'Who helped you or deserves some appreciation?'. Each card has a text input field labeled 'Type your opinion...'.

Great for highlighting successes and pinpointing areas that need attention or improvement, providing a balanced view of the sprint.

Hopes and Fears

Participants share their hopes (optimistic expectations) and fears (concerns or uncertainties) about upcoming work. It helps address concerns early and align expectations.

The image shows two side-by-side form cards. The left card has a green header with the title 'Hopes' and a prayer hands emoji. Below the header is the question 'What do you hope for in the next period?' and a text input field with the placeholder 'Type your opinion...'. The right card has a red header with the title 'Fears' and a worried face emoji. Below the header is the question 'What are you worried about for the next period?' and a text input field with the placeholder 'Type your opinion...'.

Valuable at the beginning of a project or sprint to align team expectations and address concerns or uncertainties.

Liked, Learned, Lacked, Longed For (4Ls)

This template prompts team members to reflect on what they liked, learned, lacked, and longed for in the past iteration. It covers both positive and negative aspects.

The image shows four side-by-side form cards. From left to right: 1. 'Liked' (yellow header, thumbs up emoji) with the question 'Things you liked, enjoyed or appreciated.' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 2. 'Lacked' (orange header, speech bubble with slash emoji) with the question 'What was missing in the last iteration or sprint?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 3. 'Learned' (blue header, graduation cap emoji) with the question 'What did you learn during this iteration or sprint?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 4. 'Longed For' (pink header, starburst emoji) with the question 'What was the thing that had you thinking, "if only we had..."?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'.

Suitable for retrospectives where you want to cover a wide range of aspects - what worked well, what was learned, what was lacking, and what the team aspires to achieve.

Mountain Climbers

Teams visualize their journey as if it were a mountain climb. They identify things to consider when climb like ropes (what helped), boulders (challenges), weather (feelings), and first aid (what's missing).

The image shows four side-by-side form cards. From left to right: 1. 'Ropes' (green header, rope emoji) with the question 'What helped us reach our goal?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 2. 'Boulders' (purple header, boulder emoji) with the question 'What stood in our way?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 3. 'Weather' (blue header, weather icon emoji) with the question 'How did we feel about our work?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'. 4. 'First Aid' (red header, first aid kit emoji) with the question 'What more do we need to reach our goals?' and input field 'Type your opinion...'.

Effective for teams who appreciate visual metaphors.

SWOT Analysis

Borrowed from business strategy, this template involves identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It encourages a holistic view of the team's situation.

The SWOT Analysis template consists of four distinct colored boxes, each with a specific question and a text input field:

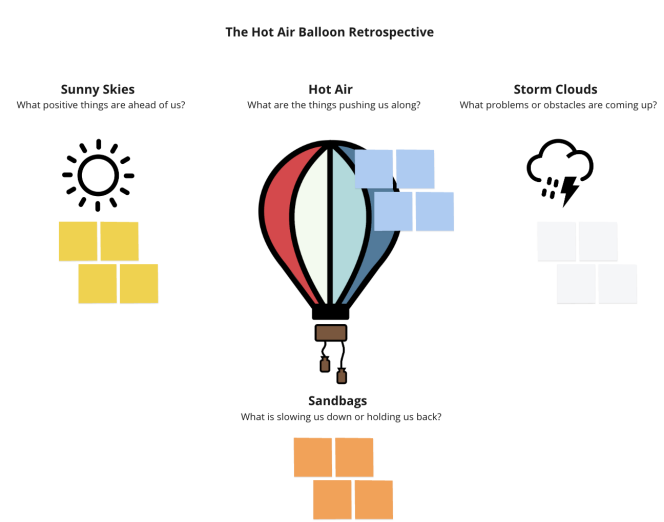
- Strengths** (orange header): "What are we good at?"
- Weaknesses** (pink header): "What needs more work?"
- Opportunities** (blue header): "Where can we improve or what can we take advantage of?"
- Threats** (black header): "What could be negative or dangerous to us?"

Each box contains a text input field with the placeholder text "Type your opinion..."

Ideal for a comprehensive review of the team's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats.

Hot Air Balloon

Team members imagine themselves in a hot air balloon, with sandbags (hindrances) and hot air (positive factors) influencing their ascent. It's a symbolic way to discuss what's holding the team down and what's lifting it.



Suitable for retrospectives aiming to identify both the positive factors elevating the team and the hindrances holding it back.

Sailboat

Similar to the hot air balloon, this template uses the metaphor of a sailboat journey. Team members visualize their current location (status), favorable winds (positive factors), and anchors (obstacles). It's a dynamic way to discuss the team's progress and challenges.



Works well when you want to discuss the team's progress in a metaphorical context, considering the current status, favorable winds (positive factors), and anchors (obstacles).

Chapter 7: How to run retrospectives with AgileBox

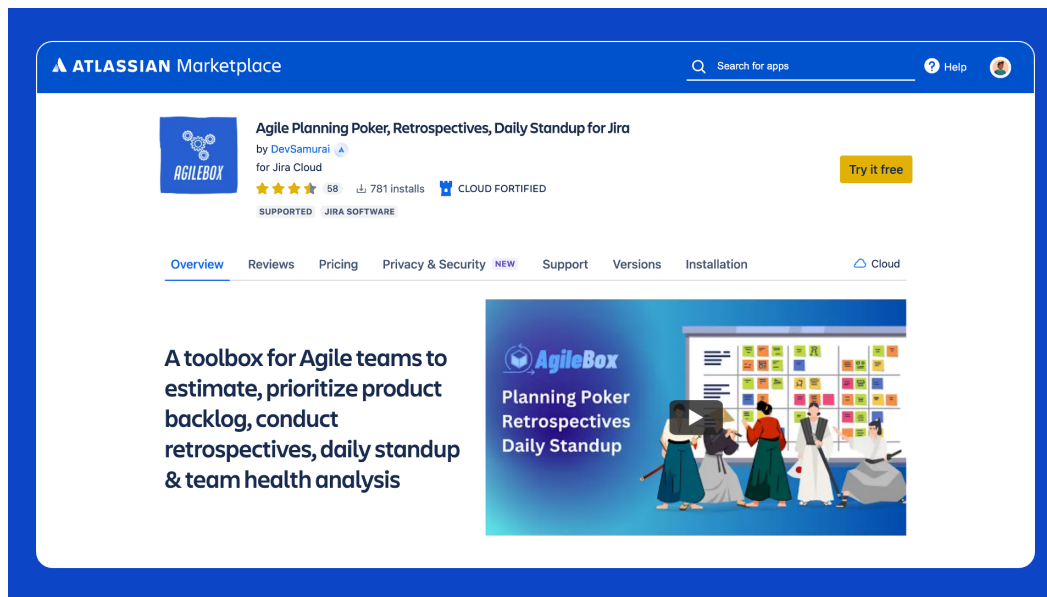
Unlock the full potential of retrospectives with the AgileBox plugin for Jira. This comprehensive guide will take you through installing, setting up, and seamlessly conducting retrospectives, ensuring every session catalyzes continuous improvement.

Let's walk through the below steps to understanding the way to run retrospective sessions with AgileBox:

Step 1: Install AgileBox from the Atlassian Marketplace

First, you need to log in to your Jira instance with an administrator account.

Go to the Atlassian Marketplace website and search for **AgileBox** or **Agile Planning Poker, Retrospectives, Daily Standup for Jira**.

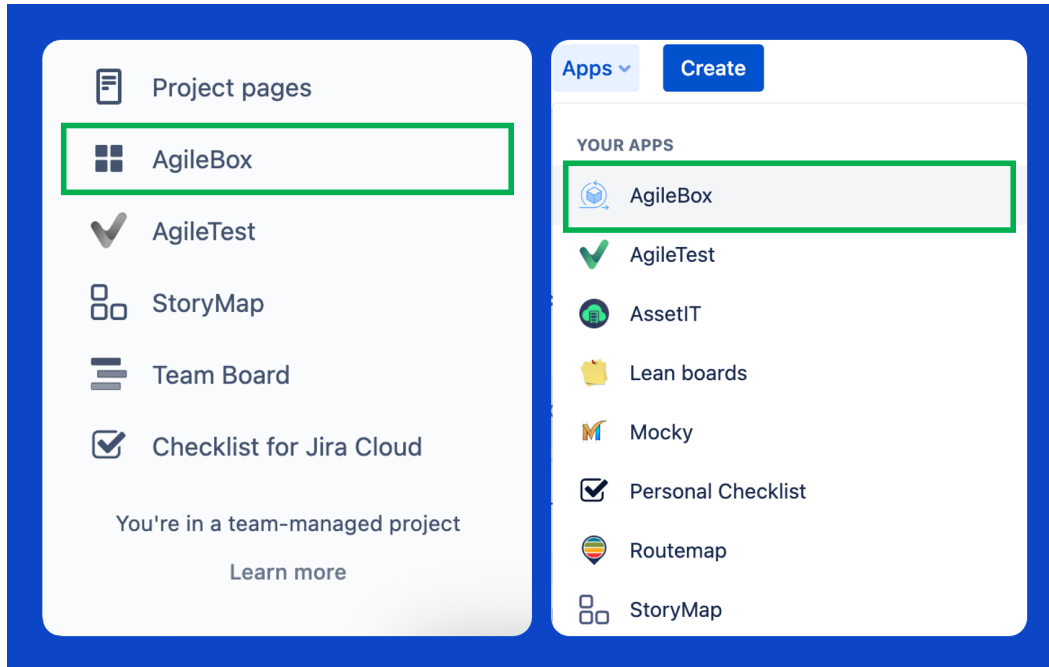


Click the **Try it free** button to install the app to your Jira instance.

Step 2: Access to AgileBox

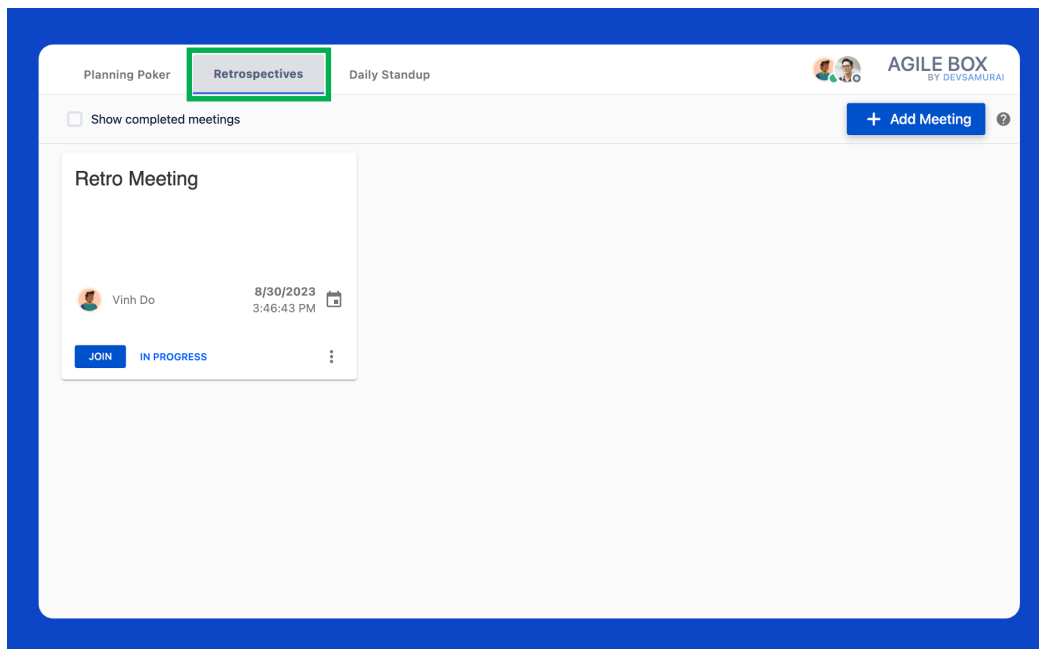
There are two ways to access AgileBox:

- From the left side menu of your projects, click on the AgileBox app
- From the Apps menu, click on the AgileBox app from the dropdown list → Choose the project you want to run the retro session.



Step 3: Find the Retrospectives feature

Enter the Retrospectives feature by clicking on the **Retrospectives** tab at the top of the AgileBox's interface.



Step 4: Create a new retrospective meeting

Click on the **Add meeting** button at the top right to create a new meeting.

The screenshot shows the AgileBox interface for creating a retrospective meeting. The main form is titled 'RETROSPECTIVE MEETING' and contains the following fields:

- Meeting name:** A text input field with a placeholder 'Enter the name for the meeting' and a note 'Max length of 40 (including space)'.
- Description:** A text input field with a placeholder 'Add description for the meeting'.
- Template:** A dropdown menu with the placeholder 'Choose a template for the meeting'.
- Reflection owner visibility:** Three radio button options: Private, Public, and Visible for the facilitator only.
- Teams:** A dropdown menu with the placeholder 'Choose teams'.
- Participants:** A dropdown menu with the placeholder 'Choose participants'.
- Facilitator:** A dropdown menu with a placeholder.

On the left side, there is a sidebar with a 'Retro Meeting' section, a user profile for 'Vinh Do', and buttons for 'JOIN' and 'IN PROGRESS'. At the top right, there is a '+ Add Meeting' button and the AgileBox logo.

Fill in the required information:

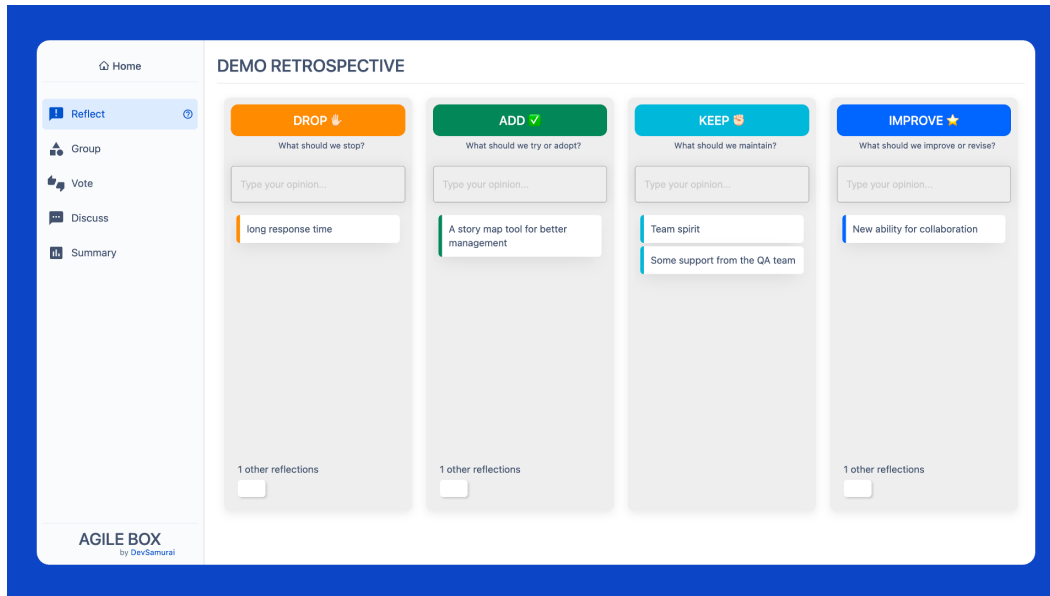
1. **Meeting name:** Enter the name of the meeting
2. **Description:** Add a description for the meeting
3. **Template:** Choose between up to 8 different retrospective templates
4. **Reflection owner visibility:** Choose between Private/Public/Visible for the facilitator only
5. **Teams:** Choose teams created in the AgileBox Team option
6. **Participants:** Choose participants
7. **Facilitator:** Choose types of facilitator mode: Dynamic/Fixed

Step 5: Join and go to the Reflection stage

Click the **Join** button on the retro game you just created.

(In this demo, we use the DAKI template for example)

Each participant will type their opinions for the specific projects into the columns in this stage. Opinions from other participants are hidden in this step.

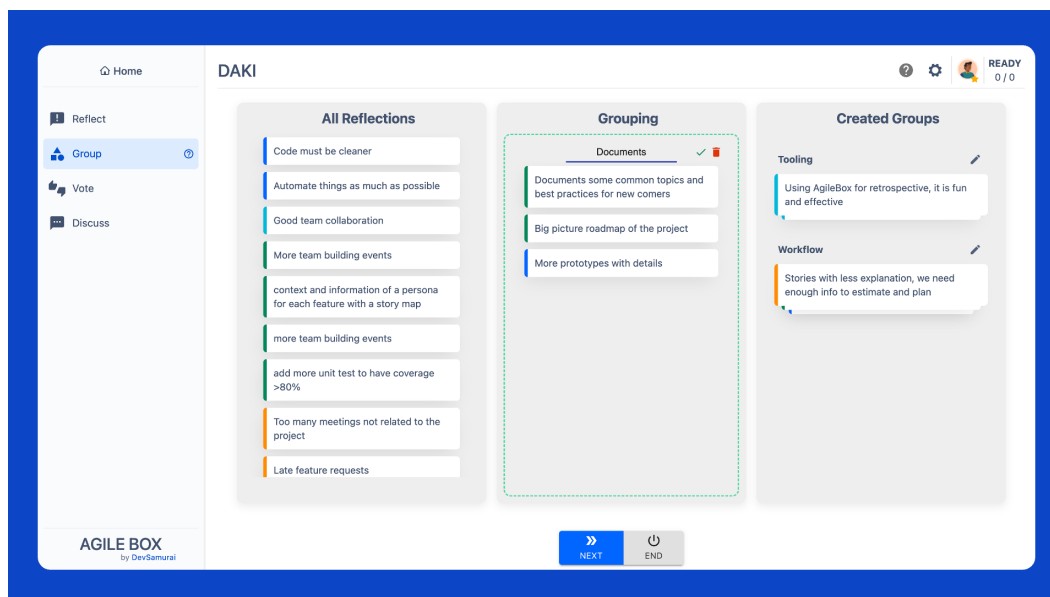


Participants can edit or delete their reflections before going to the next step.

Participants should click on the **Ready** button after they finish entering their opinions. Then the Facilitator will click on the **Next** button to move to the next step.

Step 6: Go to the Group stage

At the Group stage, the team members discuss to group the reflections with similarity. Then the Facilitator will drag and drop the related reflections in order groups for later discussion.

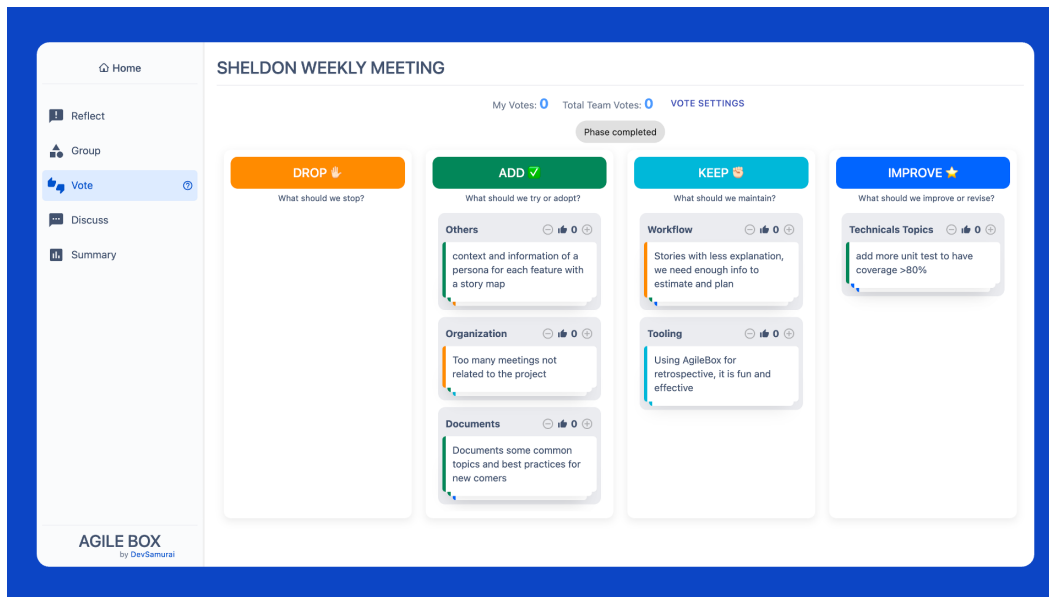


The remaining reflections are automatically grouped as the “Others” group before going to the next stage.

After finishing grouping the reflections, the Facilitator will click on the **Next** button to move on to the next step.

Step 7: Go to the Voting stage

At the Vote stage, participants will vote for the topics which they think it is important to discuss further.



Each participant will have a maximum of 5 votes and 3 votes per group as default. The Facilitator can redefine this in the Vote Settings option.

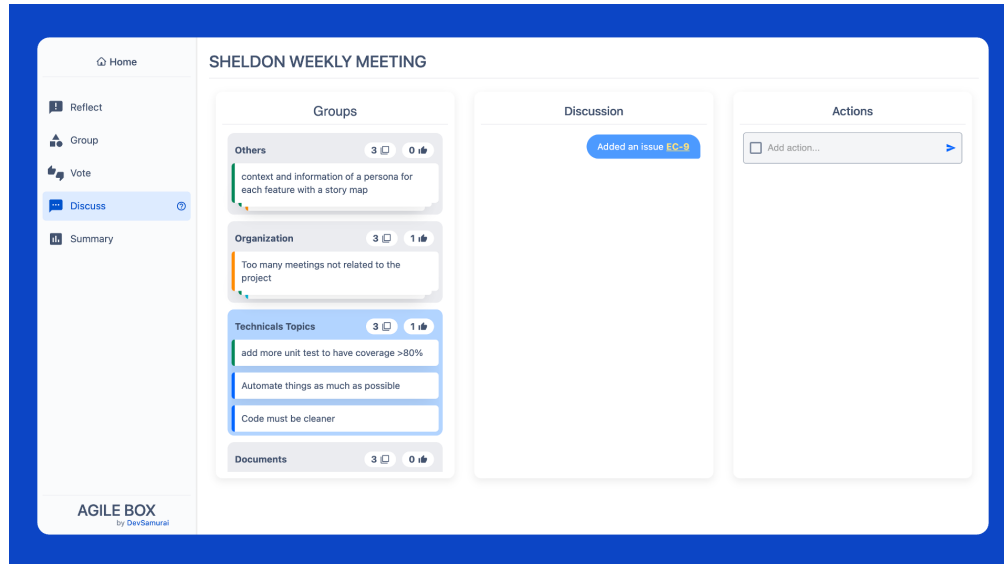
Participants should click on the **Ready** button after they finish voting for groups. Then the Facilitator will click on the **Next** button to move to the next step.

Step 8: Go to the Discuss stage

In the last stage, every participant will discuss the groups from the previous stages.

The groups are sorted decreasingly by the number of votes from the Vote Step.

Team members can create new issues for each group by clicking on the **Add Issues** button when discussing. These issues will be added directly to your Jira projects.

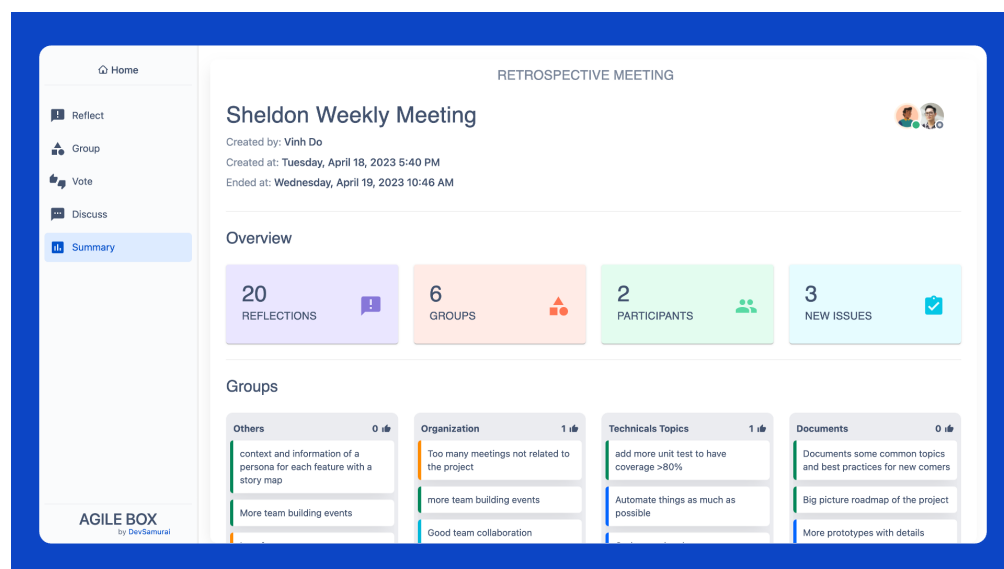


Teams can also create a checklist of actions by adding actions into the Action column at this stage.

Participants should click on the **Ready** button after finishing the group discussion. Then the Facilitator will click on the **End** button to end the meeting and move to the Summary screen.

Step 9: Go to the Summary screen

This is the end of the Agile Retrospective meeting. In this stage, participants can see an overview of the meeting by the number of reflections, groups, participants, and new issues.



Participants can also see details of reflections, groups, and issues created in this stage.

All previous meetings are achieved and can be accessed by ticking on the **Show completed meetings** on the home screen.

Chapter 8: Best practices and Tips for making better retrospectives

Best practices and Tips

This chapter brings you a curated collection of best practices and time-tested tips. These insights are culled from the wisdom of successful Agile teams who have made retrospectives a cornerstone of their continuous improvement journey.

Set Clear Objectives

Start each retrospective with a clear understanding of what you want to achieve. Define specific goals and outcomes you aim to attain during the session. This clarity helps participants stay focused on actionable improvements.

Create a Safe Space

Foster an environment of trust and psychological safety. Encourage open and honest communication, where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, even if they involve criticism. Ensure that discussions remain respectful and focused on solutions rather than blame.

Rotate Facilitators

Change the person responsible for facilitating the retrospective regularly. This rotation ensures fresh perspectives and prevents facilitator burnout. Each facilitator may bring their unique approach to the session, keeping it engaging and dynamic.

Vary Retrospective Formats

Don't stick to a single retrospective format. Experiment with different templates and techniques to keep the sessions interesting and effective. Rotating formats prevents monotony and allows you to tailor retrospectives to specific team needs or challenges.

Close the Loop

Retrospectives are not just about discussing issues; they're about taking action. Document the insights and action items generated during the retrospective, assign owners, and set clear deadlines for implementation. Regularly follow up on progress during subsequent retrospectives to ensure accountability and track improvements.

Breaking the Ice with Retrospective Icebreakers

Starting your retrospectives with a burst of energy and camaraderie is a recipe for success. Let's dive into the world of retrospective icebreakers, offering a delightful array of options to kickstart your meetings with enthusiasm.

Retrospective icebreakers inject vitality into the team's reflection by fostering a relaxed and open atmosphere. They encourage team members to connect personally before discussions, making retrospectives more engaging and approachable.



These icebreakers promote more substantial relationships, enhance communication, and create a positive environment where everyone feels valued and heard, ultimately leading to more meaningful insights and actionable improvements during retrospectives.

Choosing the Right Ice Breaker Activities

Selecting the right icebreakers requires careful consideration to ensure they align with the team's dynamics, goals, and comfort levels. Here are some guidelines for choosing the most suitable icebreaker activities for your retrospective meetings:

- **Consider the Team Size and Composition:** Some icebreakers work best in small groups, while others are more suitable for larger teams. Choose icebreakers that can accommodate and engage the entire team.
- **Assess Familiarity and Trust Levels:** If the team is new or comprises members who have yet to work closely before, opt for icebreakers focusing on introductions and getting to know each other.

- Define Desired Outcomes: Are you looking to foster team bonding, encourage creativity, or address specific issues? Select ice breakers that align with these desired outcomes.
- Adapt to Team Preferences and Comfort Levels: Consider the team members' preferences and comfort levels. Some individuals may be more extroverted and enjoy lively and energetic icebreakers, while others prefer more introspective or low-key activities.

Examples of Retrospective Icebreakers



1. *Two Truths and a Lie*

Two Truths and a Lie is a popular icebreaker game that encourages team members to get to know each other better and builds a sense of camaraderie.

This game fosters a sense of connection and understanding among team members as they learn interesting facts about each other. It promotes active listening, communication, and a shared sense of discovery.

2. *Appreciation Circle*

The Appreciation Circle is an icebreaker activity that focuses on expressing appreciation within the team. It has a positive impact on team dynamics and morale.

The Appreciation Circle helps build trust, boosts team morale, and strengthens relationships within the team. It creates a culture of recognition and gratitude, making team members feel valued and appreciated for their contributions.

3. *Team Building Games*

Incorporating team-building games as retrospective icebreakers offers various benefits, such as promoting collaboration, problem-solving, and teamwork. Here are a few examples of simple and engaging games:

- **Marshmallow Challenge.** Provide teams with limited materials, such as spaghetti sticks, marshmallows, and tape. The objective is to build the tallest freestanding structure using only these materials. The game encourages creativity, communication, and collaboration.
- **Lego Retrospective.** Each team member builds a Lego model that represents their experience or insights from the previous sprint. Afterward, team members share the meaning behind their models, fostering discussion and reflection.
- **Create a Playlist.** You first need each person to create their playlist on Spotify or Apple Music. You can use this team-building icebreaker as an exercise for yourself, or you can use it in your next meeting. Engaging everyone in the process is the goal.
- **Create a Dance.** Dance is one of the easiest ways to bond with others in a fun, non-threatening way. You can teach employees how to do the Macarena or some other popular dance to show off their moves at the next company party.

These team-building games inject fun and excitement into the retrospective meeting, encouraging active participation and collaboration. They also provide a different perspective on team dynamics and problem-solving abilities.

4. Personal Highlights

Sharing personal highlights helps team members recognize their achievements, reinforces positive behaviors, and encourages a growth mindset. It also fosters a sense of pride and camaraderie within the team.

5. Photo Sharing

Photo sharing helps create personal connections, triggers memories, and deepens understanding within the team. It allows team members to see different perspectives, experiences, and achievements, fostering empathy and strengthening bonds.

Chapter 9: Our recommendations

In this final chapter, we offer a selection of recommendations for teams seeking to enhance their agile development process through retrospectives. These resources encompass various formats, from books and videos to podcasts, providing a well-rounded approach to continuous improvement.

Books

Agile Retrospectives: Making Good Teams Great by Esther Derby and Diana Larsen: A must-read for teams looking to dive deep into the art of retrospectives. This book offers practical guidance and numerous exercises to improve your retrospectives.

Retrospectives Antipatterns by Aino Corry: This book describes what can go wrong in that activity and how to remedy it.

FunRetrospectives: Activities and Ideas for Making Agile Retrospectives More Engaging by Paulo Caroli, Tainã Caetano Coimbra: FunRetrospectives is a book with the necessary tools to develop the main element of continuous improvement: an effective, committed team

Podcast

The Agile Retrospective Podcast by Esther Derby and Diana Larsen. This podcast is hosted by the authors of the book "Agile Retrospectives: Making Good Teams Great" and covers a wide range of topics related to retrospectives, including how to run effective retrospectives, common mistakes to avoid, and tips for getting the most out of retrospectives.

Retrospective Facilitation by Paul Hobbs. This podcast is hosted by an experienced retrospective facilitator who shares his insights and experiences on how to run effective retrospectives.

The Retrospective Whisperer by Emily Rose. This podcast is hosted by an agile coach who focuses on helping teams improve their retrospectives.

These recommendations are meant to guide teams in their quest for continuous improvement. By exploring these resources, you'll gain valuable insights, practical tips, and a deeper understanding of how to make your retrospectives more effective and impactful.

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