

A Fairy Tale About Enterprise Agile Transformation

In ~~Three~~ Four Five Iterations

November, 2009

Iteration #1: **Hoggie has an Idea**

Once upon an unspecified time, in a land far away but close to the heart, there was a colony of ground hogs. They danced in the sun, they skipped in the snow, they chased leaves in the fall, but most of all they just enjoyed companionship.

This close knit community had survived for decades and probably centuries ... no one knew for certain. But now, with urbanization slithering their direction, the colony was at risk.

The abstract concept "road kill" became a very real reoccurring nightmare. Feeding patterns passed from father to son and mother to daughter seemed out-of-step with the approaching housing development. But most of all, that carefree sense of stability enjoyed by a tight-knit community was rapidly eroding.



Hoggie was not just the runt of his family --- he was the runt of the entire colony! Not being very athletic, *Hoggie* spent considerable time on the Internet. One rainy Wednesday afternoon (or maybe it was in the evening), he happened upon the "[Agile Manifesto](#)".

As *Hoggie* reflected on the four primary phrases he became convinced that these concepts might hold promise for saving the colony from what was becoming obvious, even if nobody talked about it. In his enthusiasm, *Hoggie* burst into his father's study.

Hoggie's father was a bit of a fringe character. He was the son of a biker hog (sometimes called '[hog biker](#)'). He was not a member of the **RULING COUNCIL** (nor did he want to be). And his favorite pastime was chewing on the roots of plants alleged to have medicinal value.

As *Hoggie* launched into a frenzied portrayal on how the items on the left held the key to the very survival of the colony --- his father was desperately trying to suppress a yawn to avoid embarrassing his son. When *Hoggie* finally paused to take a breath, his father unexpectedly said, "Why don't you take your ideas to the **RULING COUNCIL**?"

Iteration #2: **Hoggie Visits the Ruling Council**

[When we ended Iteration #1, Hoggie's father suggested he take his ideas derived from the "Agile Manifesto" to the **RULING COUNCIL**. Let's resume our story ...]

The notion of approaching the **RULING COUNCIL** sent shivers up and down Hoggie's spine; that is, until he remembered that Cousin Digger was a member. (It is unclear to the author if Digger is really Hoggie's cousin. If you go back far enough most of the ground hog colony is related.)

Not unlike Michael Anstis, Hoggie was expecting the worst. Much to his surprise Cousin Digger said that the Ruling Council had an 'open door policy'. The last fifteen minutes of each meeting is reserved for 'walk-ins'. Hoggie asked how many individuals typically show up. However, at that very moment there was the distant screech of a car braking on the new road traversing the north end of the colony; Cousin Digger never answered the question.



Hoggie's eyes traced and retraced the beautiful embossed gold lettering on the door:

THE RULING COUNCIL

He had carefully considered whether to speak about the four (4) primary phrases **and** the twelve (12) principals or just introduce the four phrases. Cousin Digger strongly agreed that sixteen of anything was a lot to swallow for a species engineered for consumption rather than sitting in meetings! Just then the door opened ... Hoggie walked in and Elder Ferdinand's stoic voice was unmistakable, "How can we help you?"

Hoggie attempted to clear his throat and started tentatively, "I would first like to thank you for the care and concern exhibited toward the colony by the Ruling Council, particularly during this time of transition". There was an unmistakable grunt heard coming from the direction of Elder Ferdinand soon after the word 'transition', so Hoggie picked up the pace.

"As you are undoubtedly aware the new road is a real hazard, and the housing development is altering our feeding habits and ... well, you don't need me to itemize the potential havoc visited on our colony by approaching urbanization." Hoggie continued humbly, "Given my lack of athleticism, I have occasion to spend considerable time on the Internet. I happened across four phrases that might help sustain our colony. The phrases constitute the "[Agile Manifesto](#)" and I've made copies of them for your consideration."

Cousin Digger graciously stepped down from the platform and retrieved the copies from Hoggie for distribution to the council members. Elder Ferdinand looked over his spectacles directly at Hoggie and said, "Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We will review these four phrases." With that, Hoggie exited the room.

Iteration #3: **The Ruling Council Prepares For "Agile"**

[When we ended Iteration #2, Elder Ferdinand committed the ruling council to review the four phrases of the "[Agile Manifesto](#)". Let's resume our story ...]

Hoggie could not have been happier. He was convinced that the Ruling Council consisted of "**Good grounders trying to do the right thing**".

Hoggie's mother was a member of the "Hoggettes" in her younger years and had not lost her charm. If you use labels you might say she had the "gift of hospitality"; but most folks just said she was a joy to be around. One Sunday afternoon (or maybe it was in the evening) she sensed her son was troubled and asked, "What is wrong?"

"It has been over three weeks since the Ruling Council agreed to examine the four phrases of the [Agile Manifesto](#) and I've not heard a grunt about it!" Hoggie blurted out. "Hmmm ... have you talked to Cousin Digger?" his mom questioned.

Cousin Digger was out back when Hoggie arrived. When Ruling Council responsibilities weighed heavily on his mind gardening was a great stress reliever. Hoggie tried to be patient as they chatted about incidental issues; the performance of the Detroit Lions football team always came up in these conversations. Finally, Hoggie asked the question, "What is going on in the Agile space?" Cousin Digger replied in a subdued tone, "Let's go inside."

They proceeded to the back room and Cousin Digger firmly closed the door. He turned to address Hoggie.

You will be proud of the four initiatives the Ruling Council is undertaking:

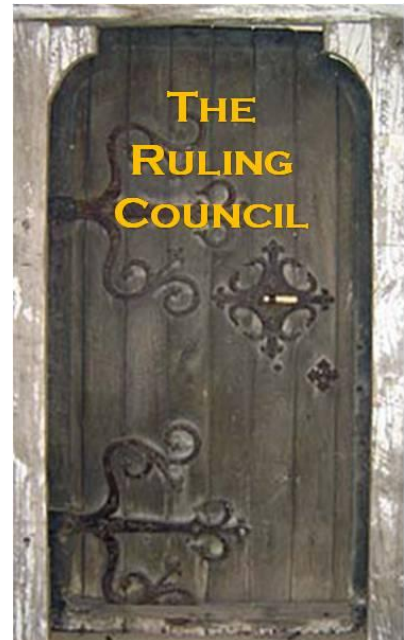
We've ordered some special Agile planning software from a Silicon Valley company. Six months of daily free training is included with the purchase!

We've begun a set of elaborate specifications for an "Early Roadkill Avoidance Detection System". ERADS will be so state of the art that some of the technology has not even been invented yet!

A secret Agile War Room was established deep underground so the Ruling Council can remain focused. And we set up a unique supply line to avoid running out of paper!

The council is 100% committed to completing our three-year comprehensive plan. It is codenamed "War and Agile"!

Even with fur on his face, Hoggie could not hide the paleness that crept into his countenance as he exclaimed, "We are doing Agile all wrong." Cousin Digger needed to sit down, and so he did.



Hoggie articulated a concern that Agile was being implemented in a most un-agile-like manner. Cousin Digger suggested an informal gathering to discuss the Agile implementation within the community; everyone was invited to meet at the trash dumpster of a local pizza joint. (Ground hogs love free pizza.)

Iteration #4: **Hoggie the Mentor**

[When we ended Iteration #3, the entire colony was invited to attend an open meeting to discuss 'urbanization' and 'Agile'. Let's resume our story ...]

Hoggie was restless. He left forty minutes early for the pizza joint and realized he was walking north only after arriving at the edge of the new road. He looked left and then right ...

It is difficult for other species to understand the sense of intimacy nurtured by living under ground. Simply stated, one is physically close to members of your immediate family, extended family, and neighbors whether you want to be or not! The physical closeness fosters emotional connectedness.

... Hoggie gasped. The unmistakable silhouette of a carcass was viewable on the side of the road. Hoggie noticed a discarded light-blue pillow case, placed the carcass inside, hoisted the pillow case on his shoulder, and proceeded to the free pizza event.

Hoggie entered unobserved from the north and placed the light-blue pillow case behind the dumpster. The entire community was focused on scavenging for food; the young ones were so hyper they could barely eat!

In due time Elder Ferdinand grunted, signaling the end of supper. Ruling Council members gathered at the front of the dumpster with everyone else facing them. Hoggie positioned himself in-between and to one-side of the two entities. He confirmed the absence of Cousin Digger from the Council.

It became clear that Hoggie was going to need to speak first. He was still feeling disturbed from his road-side discovery and initially misspoke.

Thank you for gathering together this evening as we have a chance to consider the impact of globaliza ... er, I mean urbanization on our community.

We greatly appreciate that the ruling council has shown forward-thinking leadership by considering the four phrases of the [Agile Manifesto](#). [A polite applause of affirmation ensued.]

*The first phrase speaks to valuing **individuals and interactions over processes and tools**. I'm wondering if there are some brainstorming ideas that we could try quickly and 'succeed fast' or 'fail fast'?*



[At this point one of the quieter members of the council spoke up.] *In order to bring the best ideas forward, we have ordered Agile planning software from a Silicon Valley company. We spent several weeks researching and are absolutely convinced this is the most comprehensive and full-featured option on the market.*

[Hoggie didn't perceive any benefit in publicly challenging a Council member that hardly ever says anything, so he moved on.] *The second phrase values **working software over comprehensive documentation**. Perhaps we could ...*

[Very untypically, Hoggie was interrupted by the Council member with the loudest voice.] *Our elaborate specifications for an "Early Roadkill Avoidance Detection System" (ERADS) will result in an implementation so state of the art that some of the technology has not yet been invented!*

[There was an audible collective exhalation of the community. Hoggie was afraid they would start applauding again if he did not move quickly forward.] *The third phrase values **customer collaboration over contract negotiation**.*

[Elder Ferdinand grunted which indicated that he was going to speak and the community was going to listen.] *A secret Agile War Room has been established deep underground so the Ruling Council can remain focused. We are hard-at-work on a daily basis collaborating with each other ... on behalf of our customer – this fine colony!*

[The community broke out in spontaneous applause. Upon its conclusion, Hoggie had no choice but to continue.] *The fourth phrase values **responding to change over following a plan**.*

[No one on the Council spoke; Hoggie was compelled to break the silence.] *I'm aware the Council is diligently working on a three-year plan and consuming a great deal of paper in the process. I'm wondering when the plan will be completed so that we can begin implementation?*

One of the more politically motivated attendees took this moment to launch into an expressive discourse praising the Ruling Council on their fine performance, worthy intentions and service to the community. Hoggie moved quietly to the back of the dumpster, picked-up the light-blue pillow case, and began his ascent.

By the time Hoggie hauled the carcass to the top of the dumpster and positioned himself on the front edge, he was panting from the exertion. When he went to speak, it was somewhere between a shout and a scream:

This is the moment to take 'urbanization' seriously. This is the moment to begin to speak openly about the challenges confronting our community. Now is the time to leverage our creative capacity. Now is the time to implement rather than describe. Now is the time to collaborate for the good of our community. And now is the time to respond to the death of my Cousin Digger and your Ruling Council member who became road kill on the way to this very gathering!

The site and smell of Hoggie perched precariously on the front edge of the dumpster with dead Cousin Digger in his left-hand was transforming. Mothers attempted to cover the eyes of their young.

Iteration #5: **Hoggie Returns to the Ruling Council**

[When we ended Iteration #4, the entire colony was confronted with the untimely death of Cousin Digger. Let's resume our story ...]

Hoggie's rest was interrupted with a knock on the front door. He could hear his mom's perpetually pleasant voice offering hot tea. As Hoggie moved toward the kitchen, he was aware he had not learned the name of the Ruling Council attendant.

During tea Hoggie understood he was being requested to participate in an emergency session of the Ruling Council. While on the way, he ascertained that Alfredo had worked several years for the Council.

They arrived at the door with Alfredo in the lead:



THE RULING COUNCIL

Elder Ferdinand grunted when he noticed Hoggie entering the room; all activity halted and Council members returned to their seats.

Thank you for attending on such short notice. We have made three notations on the white board and would like to hear your opinion.

First, we are thinking it beneficial to conduct focus group meetings for the next five evenings with the hope that about 20% of the community would show up at each session. These informal gatherings are intended to solicit ideas on how best to handle our 'urbanization' challenges.

Secondly, while we move forward with our scaled-down version of the "Early Roadkill Avoidance Detection System", we call it ERADS-lite, we think small fragments of glass can be placed along both sides of the new road expecting they will reflect automobile headlights. This is a low-tech low-cost solution that might yield immediate benefit.

Lastly, we want to measure the frequency of road kill mishaps so we know whether our overall approach is working or whether to adjust.

Poor Hoggie was so euphoric with the practicality of the assertions outlined that he blurted out:

Yes, we can do more of what works and less of what doesn't!

The room was palpably quiet. You could almost hear an occasional earth worm moving through the soil.

- Hoggie was silent because he suddenly realized advice had been dispensed and he was not certified as an Agile consultant.
- Junior Council members were frozen in place because they observed Elder Ferdinand had a physical reaction to Hoggie's comment.
- Elder Ferdinand was deeply moved as he considered the wisdom of Hoggie's statement.

It seemed like forever to Hoggie but was probably only 15 or 20 seconds. Elder Ferdinand reached forward and began to write. He placed small strips of scotch tape on two corners and asked Alfredo to remove the gold lettering from the door and replace it with the sheet of paper.

Elder Ferdinand faced Hoggie:

Thank you for attending, you are free to go.

Hoggie was half-way down the corridor when he became conscious of neglecting to observe the exterior of the meeting room door. We went back and saw the gold letters stacked on the floor. A warm feeling of future confidence welled-up inside when he read the note.



[Agile Manifesto](#)

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