

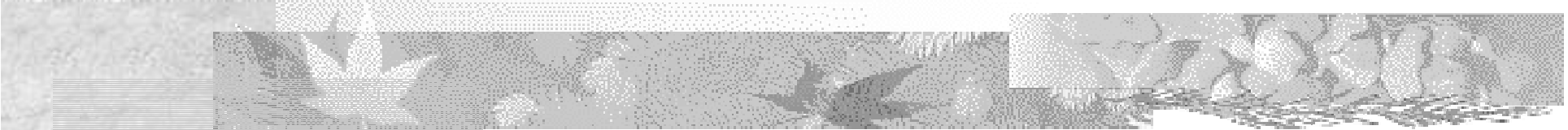


# **The Power of Retrospectives**

**Linda Rising**

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[www.lindarising.org](http://www.lindarising.org)



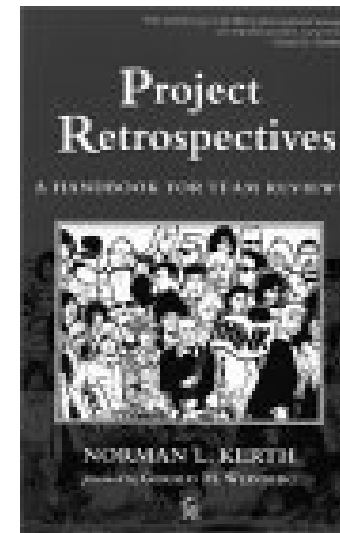
At regular intervals, the team  
reflects on how  
to become more effective, then  
tunes and adjusts  
its behavior accordingly.

[agilemanifesto.org/principles.html](http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html)

# Project Retrospectives

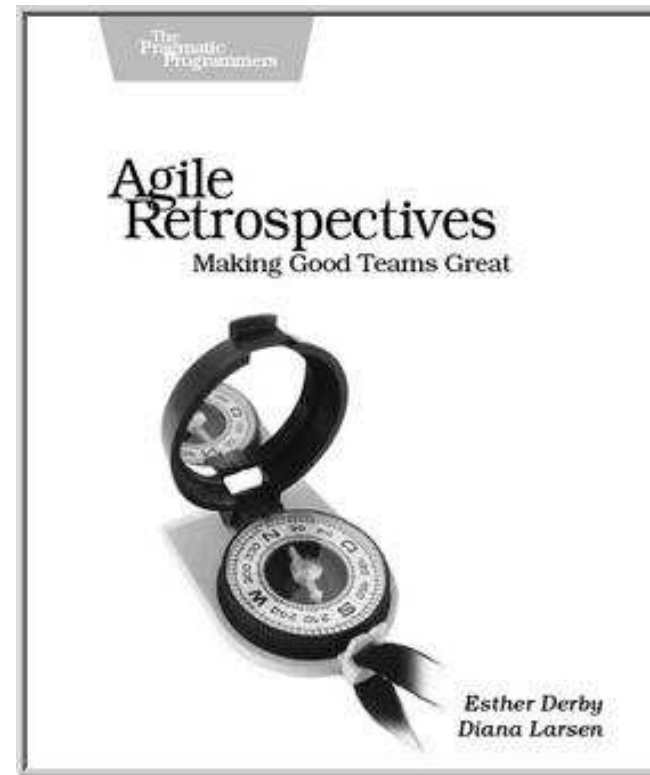
*A retrospective is an opportunity for the participants to learn how to improve. The focus is on learning—not fault-finding.*

Norm Kerth

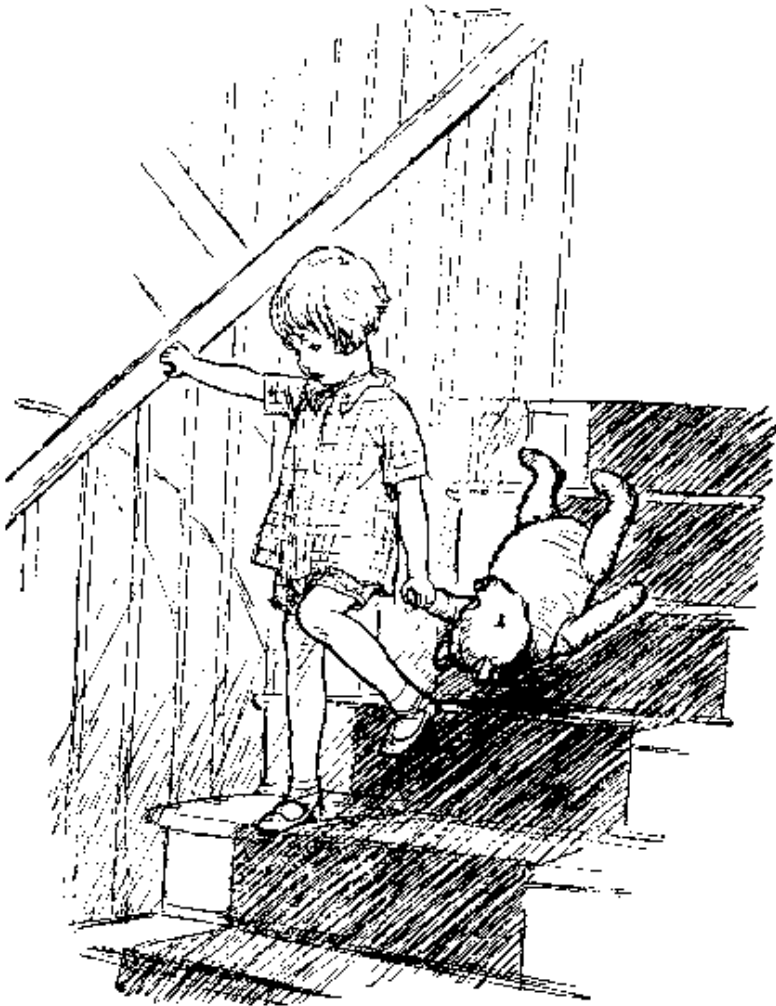


# Agile Retrospectives

How to mine the experience of your software development team continually throughout the life of the project.



# Reflect and find a better way



*Here is Edward Bear,  
coming downstairs now,  
bump, bump, bump, bump,  
on the back of his head,  
behind Christopher Robin. It  
is, as far as he knows, the  
only way of coming  
downstairs, but sometimes he  
feels that there is another  
way, if only he could stop  
bumping for a moment  
and think of it.*

A. A. Milne  
*Winnie the Pooh*



# What is a retrospective?

We have to test our knowledge constantly—using practices like retrospectives. These should be done after each iterative cycle rather than waiting until the end of the project. The quality of learning derived from this practice shows an organization's true commitment to learning, and therefore, a key to its adaptability.      Jim Highsmith



# **Why a retrospective?**

To learn from the past

We want to believe that learning from experience is automatic, but it requires profound skills.

Experience provides data, not knowledge.



# Why a retrospective?

To plan the future

People want to improve themselves but usually they don't know what to work on.

When they get good feedback on specific goals, that releases the natural internal inclination to improve.      James Fallows



# **Why a retrospective?**

To reach closure

Research shows that when organizations go through changes, people have feelings and thoughts but no place to express them in the normal course of business. Thus, their experience is carried forward as a heaviness that slows them down and keeps them from moving into the new setting with enthusiasm.



# Why a retrospective?

To create a community

*I have seen whole-team reflection explain, discover, and teach so much. I believe that there is no better way to improve a team's performance and quality.*

Norm Kerth



# Retrospective Examples

Military: After Action Reviews, Navy  
Lessons Learned, Coast Guard Uniform  
Lessons Learned

Post-Fire Critiques

[chiefmontagna.com/Articles/post%20fire%20critique.htm](http://chiefmontagna.com/Articles/post%20fire%20critique.htm)

*The CEO & The Monk* – corporate funeral



# What a retrospective isn't

No naming, no blaming.

Kerth's Prime Directive:

*Regardless of what we discover, we must understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job he or she could, given what was known at the time, his or her skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand.*



# Why take so much time?

Memories are short and selective

We tend to focus on recent events, especially if they are painful

Humans need help to remember, to translate experience (data) into learning (knowledge)

External facilitation is required



# What are the driving questions?

- What worked well that we don't want to forget?
- What should we do differently?
- What did we learn?
- What still puzzles us?

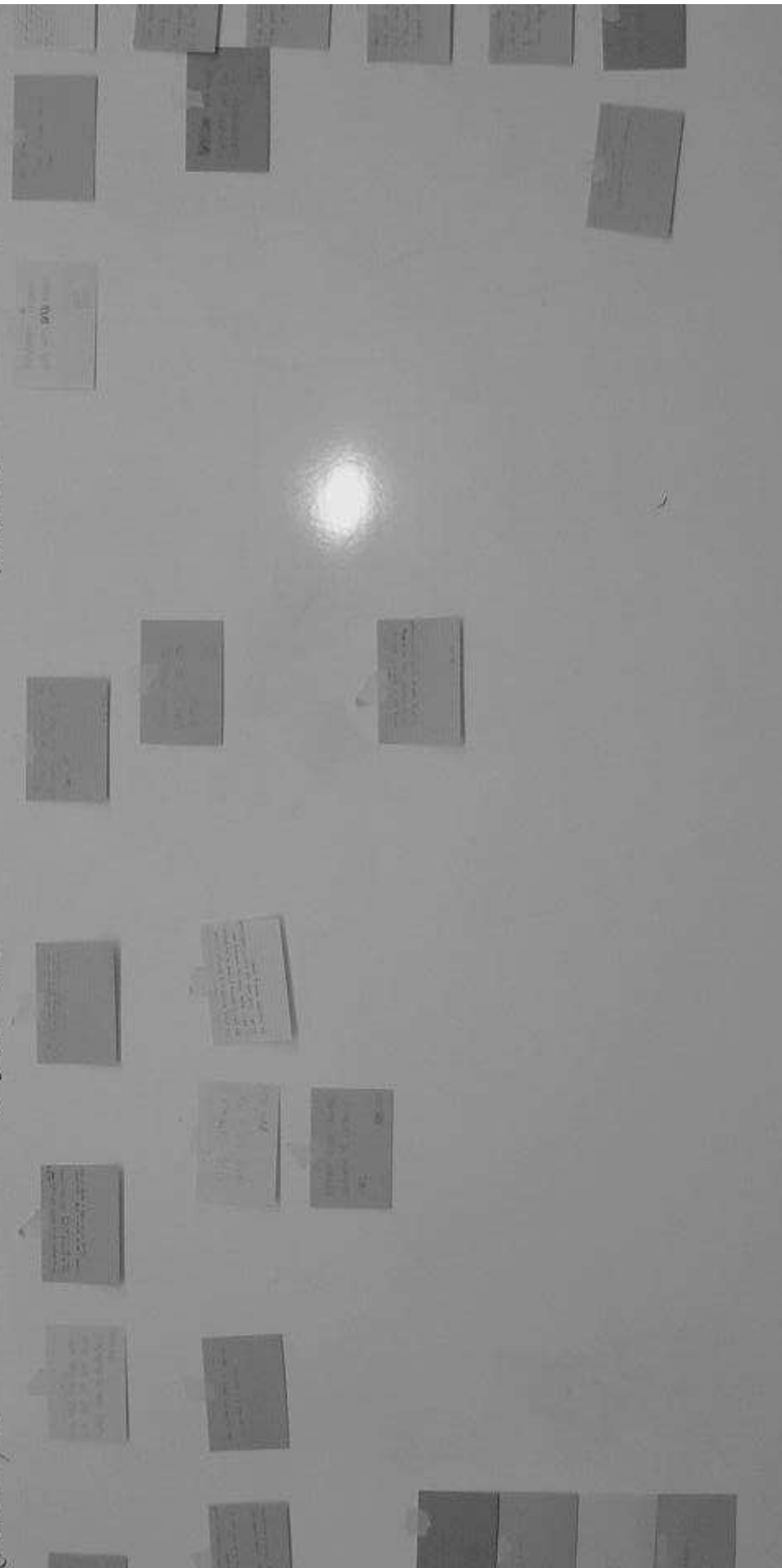


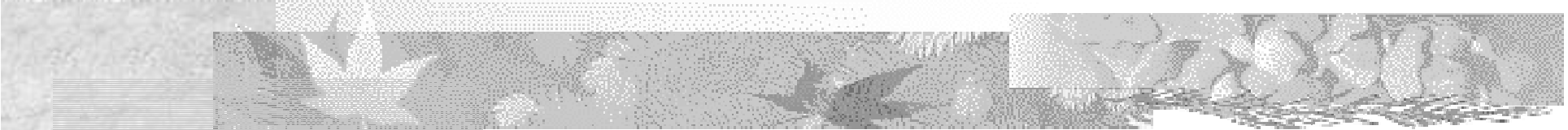
NOV 2002 (STARTED) ← WEEK → 1/2 WEEK → MAR 2003 → WEEK → DAY → SEPT 2003 → NOV

START AUTO-TEST FOR NEW DRIVER

END AUTO-TEST FOR NEW DRIVER

START PICCOLITH





Many of the improvements people make as a result of retrospectives are things that people have been talking about among themselves for some time, but those discussions by themselves never developed the horsepower to actually make the desired changes happen. It takes critical mass with a common understanding, such as is developed in a retrospective where all perspectives are represented, considered, and included as a part of the planning process.

"The Whole Enchilada: Effectively Blending, Management, Planning & Technical Practices," Joshua Kerievsky.



# How is knowledge shared?

- Web postings
- Posters
- Team meetings, staff meetings, tech forums
- Patterns

WHAT WORKED WELL THAT WE  
DON'T WANT TO FORGET

OPERATION  
MIX

FOCUS ON  
TECH  
ISSUES

BRANCH

PASSION  
FOR  
LEARNING

SOP

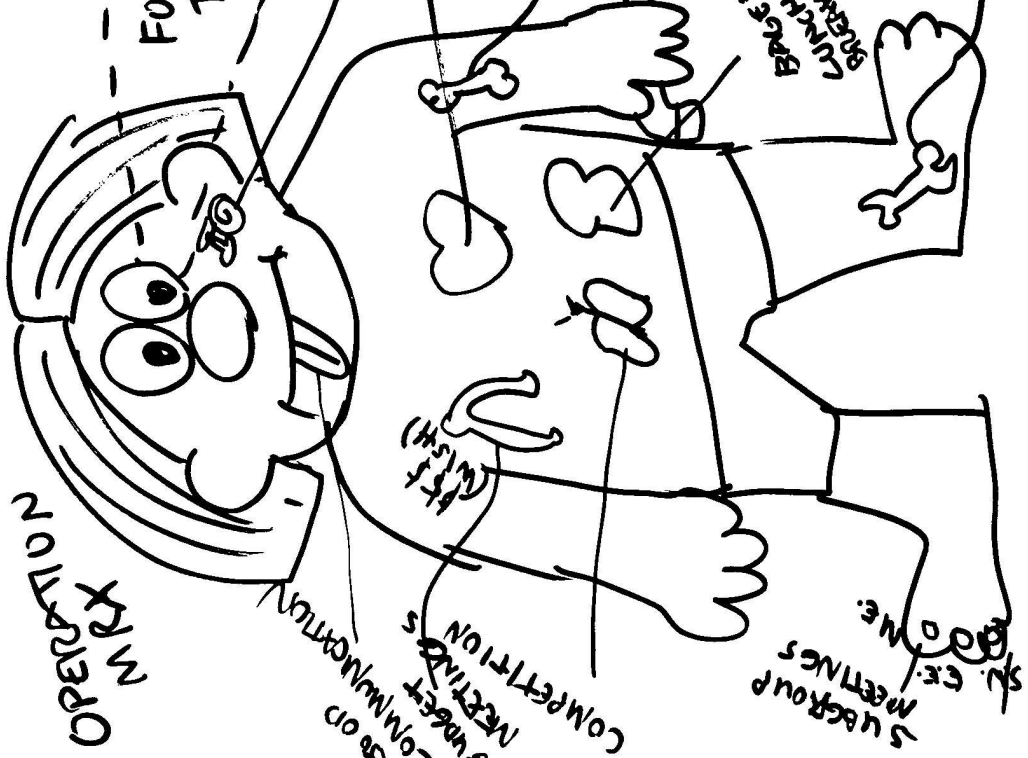
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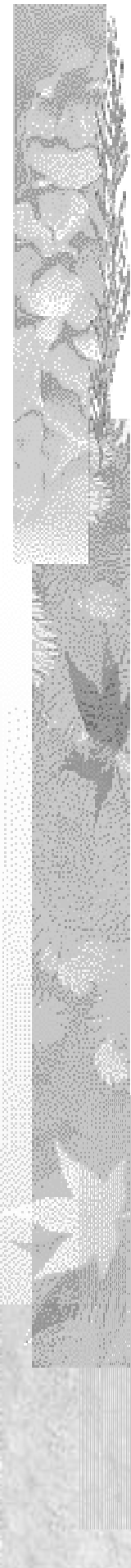
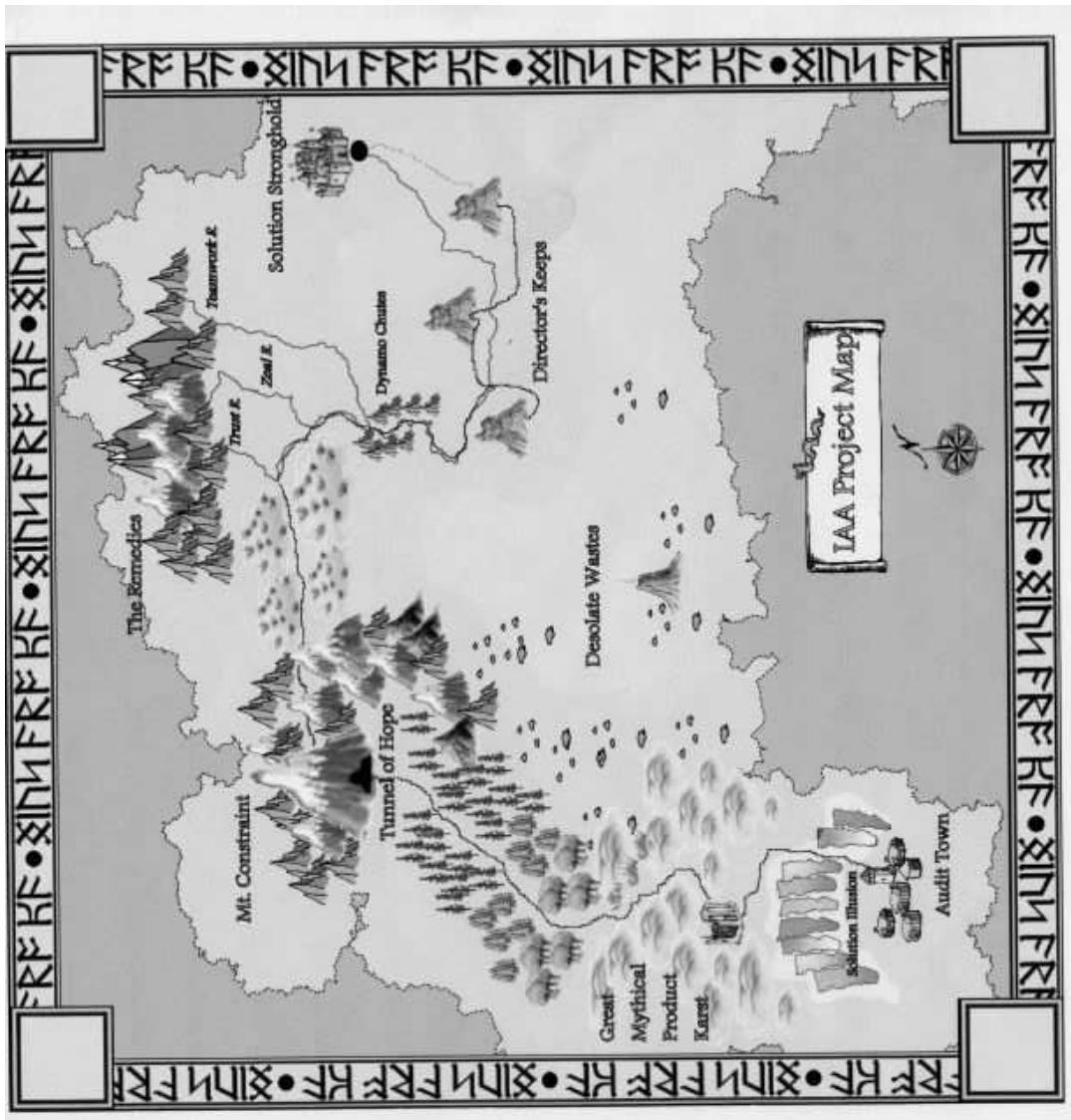
PRD

"BUMPS"  
TRIPPING  
LUNCHES  
BREAKFAST  
BRACKETS

Geop  
COMMUNITY  
MEETINGS  
COMPETITION

GROUP  
MEETINGS  
St. Et. Me.







# Next Steps

- Buy and read Norm Kerth's book: *Project Retrospectives*, Dorset House, 2001
- Buy and read Esther Derby and Diana Larsen's book: *Agile Retrospectives*, The Pragmatic Bookshelf, 2006
- Check out Linda's web site – click on Articles
- Sign up for the Yahoo group: retrospectives

# Retrospectives

## a closing thought

### from Norm Kerth (and Edward Bear)

*... we bump our heads in project after project, day after day. If we would only take a moment to stop and think of alternative ways to proceed, I'm sure we could find better ways to do our work.*

Norm Kerth





# A mini-retro on IEEE Meetings

- Keep
- Change
- Puzzles – “Why ....”
- “I hope....” or “I wish....”