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Agile Testing DevOps Security AI

Experience and Learning

ARTICLE

By Steve Berczuk | July 11, 2011

SUMMARY

In the past few months I've heard a couple of stories about (in effect) the disadvantages of experience when it comes to innovation and productivity. A Story on WBUR on July 5, 2011
discussed how venture capitalists tend to favor young entrepreneurs, as, having never learned the wrong things in business, they don't know what's possible or impossible. In one quote, a VC said:

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One thing I love about these people is they don’t know what they don’t know. They don’t fear failure. They don’t mind risk ...

A March 6, 2011 story on NPR on the pros and cons of raising the retirement age made reference to an article in Foreign Policy which asserted that younger workers have advantages in the workforce since they learned more recent technology in school.

While new skills and new perspectives can add a lot to a team, is the best way to get these skills to simply hire people who know only what they learned in school? Is anyone you know who is a successful, productive, software developer only working with skills and perspectives that they had when they graduated school? I suspect that the answer is "no." And do people who are new to a field often fall into avoidable traps because they don't have the experience to know that the traps were lurking?

In any field, it's important to be continually learning. I've worked with recent grads who

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The important thing in both of these cases isn't "new-ness or experience" but an ability to keep an open mind, learn, and "embrace change" (to borrow an expression from an agile software development method).

In the book **The Cat Who Walks through Walls**, the subject of the title could walk through walls because she was too young to know that she could not. While having this mindset is useful, there are ways to achieve it without being inexperienced or ignorant.

As the WBUR story concluded: "In this day and age, forget about age. All you need to start is a fresh idea."

To be a successful agile team you need a mix of perspectives and experiences and a willingness to learn from each other.

Topics: people management, project management, teams,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Berczuk

Steve Berczuk is a Principal Software Engineer with experience as a manager, Scrum Master and technical lead in Boston, MA. The author of *Software Configuration Management Patterns: Effective Teamwork, Practical Integration*, he is a recognized expert in software configuration management and agile software development. Steve is passionate about helping teams work effectively to produce quality software. He has an M.S. in operations research from Stanford University and an S.B. in Electrical Engineering from MIT, and is a Certified ScrumMaster. Contact Steve at steve@berczuk.com or visit berczuk.com and follow his blog at blog.berczuk.com.

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