Where is the fun in Agile IT Management?

You might wonder what this ancient machine has to do with Agile IT Management. Well for me this is where it started. In 1986 when my parents got me and my brother an old second hand Commodore Vic 20 [2], I was more than happy when we plugged everything in. We did not have a computer before, nor did I have any clue what to do with it. So with a few instructions from my cousin we were on our way to play some rudimentary games - for hours. From the scrap books on Commodore Basic included in the package, I marveled at the English instruction sets and the various effects they had when I tried them. At that point my enthusiasm for computer science and programming was awakened.

More IT......

However, it wasn't until University that I learned to code properly, using languages like C, C++ and Java. Really challenging were the assignments (often using functional programming languages like Clean [4]) where algorithms were implemented to solve complex problems [3]. This connected well with my love for puzzles and strategy games. I never lost interest in programming and new languages features from that period onward. The transformation from properly coding to professional software development happened in my first years doing projects at Info Support. Quality standards were, and are, high and the peer reviews were strict and opened my eyes.

Management

In software projects, just as in the real world, you have to work closely together with people. All kinds of stakeholders, managers, users or colleagues are interested in the project and have a say in it. For some wonderful nerds & technical experts that is a necessary evil to support their daily portion of coding. In my case it is quite the opposite, I actually like interacting with people and I enjoy accomplishing something together, more than just working on my own. My personal drive is to get the best out of a working group of people (a team). It is very interesting to see how a team develops in time if they can indeed become a [high peforming team](#) (HPT). Despite the love I have for programming I have come to realize I can contribute more to projects and teams in a leading general role than as a programmer. This does mean that I no longer regularly code, but I still understand and relate to the daily struggles and problems in my teams. I still want to contribute visibly to the results of the team, project or department.

Agile

The rewarding feeling about puzzles and problems is the moment you have solved a part of it and you can show it proudly to your clients and peers (or twenty years ago to your parents). This also applies to the Agile way of working. Every sprint (or iteration) we have solved some problems and are able to demonstrate our newly built deliverables to the product owner and other stakeholders. In this way we all see the actual result. Who doesn't like to see regularly actual outcomes after hard work? From showing working software the discussions starts to furter sharpen the vision on the product and how to proceed next. In the Agile way of working this is fully incorporated, even more so when the results are delivered continuously in production or acceptance environments. The same holds true for improved personal running times or karate exercises, as long as my efforts are being rewarded it just feels good.

Combined

So where is the actual fun I promised in Agile IT Management? Well, for me all three parts of the term come together in the daily routines concerning software projects. We are trying to provide IT solutions for complex problems. The Agile methods we are using enable us to organize ourselves and show our deliverables to our clients. And most of all, working with people or coaching people to become a better team or better professionals is for me personally rewarding. So, if you are a little nerdy, like to deliver result and love to work and guide people, what is not to like about Agile IT Management? I enjoy the progress made by my teams just as much as the teams themselves. For me it does not matter if you are actually in a team or managing one. And of course the real boost comes when our newly made software is released on production environments and is used by customers.

Contributions & References

[1] Heading image: by Evan-Amos (Own work), via Wikimedia Commons.
[2] The illustrious Vic20: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commodore_VIC-20.
[3] Nice collection of programming assignments: https://www.reddit.com/r/programmingbydoing.
[4] Information about Clean: http://clean.cs.ru.nl/Clean