

REDMIND

Retrospective Guide

Think, discuss and act your way to
success.

White paper • June 2018

REDMIND

Why do a retrospective?

When running a start-up there always seems to be a lack of time. You want to raise funds, polish your product so that you turn it into a steady revenue stream, and support your first users. It's really a matter of how smart you work rather than how much you can do. Well, how do you make yourself and your team work smarter?

In simple terms: you stop cranking widgets for a while, breathe, and think about what's happening and where you want to be, discuss with the entire team, and eventually decide together what you want to change. Even shorter: You have a retrospective.

Sounds simple, right? It is. Still if you haven't yet tried this deliberately, or together with others, we have a few pointers for you.

Themes to talk about

You probably already have a vision for your product and you test and critique it every day on the job. What you might not have considered much is how you and your team are working. If that is the case, the "how" is what you really want to look at in your retro.

A good start to have in mind:

- **Learn and experiment rapidly** - Are we learning new things about the product, technology, users? Are we learning quickly and experimenting with new things?
- **Make safety a prerequisite** - Are people on the team feeling safe enough to say what's on their mind? Are the conditions at work sustainable and healthy?

Theme to talk about (cont)

- **Deliver value continuously** - How often do we deliver something that brings value to the customer? What brings more revenue?
- **Make people awesome** - How can you help everyone on the team work their best and be successful?

Preparations checklist

- ❑ Book two hours with the whole team - choose a time when the participants are alert and creative.
- ❑ Consider the purpose for your retro - why are you doing this? The purpose should be on your mind when preparing and running the retro.
- ❑ Prepare a clear agenda.
- ❑ A good agenda gives time for people to think for themselves and for all-team discussions, and makes sure you leave the meeting with clear and actionable improvement that you can start doing the following day.
- ❑ Time-box the agenda items - and consider what to do if any of them goes over time
- ❑ Reserve a space for the retrospective that allows the team to be creative - a lot of space and access to whiteboards etc
- ❑ Prepare materials - sticky-notes, pens, flip-charts and of course fika to keep the energy up.

Running the Retrospective

- ❑ Start the meeting by going through the agenda och remind the team of how we want to act towards each other. ¹

¹ In case you don't have working agreements in the team, the first retro is a perfect occasion to set up a first version together.

Running the retrospective (cont)

- ❑ Help the team to keep discussions open and on point. Observe and listen, to see if someone is not participating or someone is talking too much.
- ❑ You can ask other team members for help to keep track of time, take notes etc.
- ❑ The main outcome for the retrospective is actionable improvements: Aim for 3-5 things to try that the whole team has agreed on and is in the power of the team to change.
- ❑ In a bigger group it is often good to split into smaller groups to generate ideas and then bring them to the whole group towards the end.
- ❑ Wrap up the meeting with taking in feedback about the meeting what you can do differently next time.

What to do afterwards

- ❑ Book the next time soon after the first one. Rome wasn't built on a day! A retrospective every 2-4 weeks is a good start.
- ❑ Think about if you can do it another way next time. Different room? Another time of day? Changed agenda?
- ❑ Follow up on the improvements you agreed to do. Book up time to carry them out.
- ❑ Observe how things change with the improvements and talk about what you learned about your way of working and your product e.g. over cup of coffee halfway to the next retro.

Examples agendas to try out

Team Radar | taking the broad perspective

One-word check-in. (10 minutes)

- In a round-robin fashion let everyone choose a word to describe how they are feeling or what they bring to the retrospective. The purpose is to mark the start of the retrospective and to make sure everyone participates from the start.

Radar Survey. (20 minutes)

- Take your 4-5 most important values or the themes mentioned above and draw a line for all of them (all lines start at the same spot and points outward).
- Mark each “arm” with 1-5 evenly spaced (1 closest to the middle, 5 at the end). Write the name of a value/theme on each of the arms.
- Let every team member make a mark on each of the arms. 5 means “We possibly couldn’t do better in this area.”, 1 means “We start at square 1 here.” It is ok to make your mark between numbers.
- When everyone have answered mark the mean on each axis with an “x” in another color. Connect the “x:es” to create a 4- or 5-sided polygon.

-
- 2 ★ Learn and experiment rapidly
 - ★ Make safety a prerequisite
 - ★ Deliver value continuously
 - ★ Make people awesome

The purpose of the radar is to gather data about your current situation to see what would be most important to improve.

Generate options for actions. (30 minutes)

- Let everyone write down 3 actions on post-its that they think could lead to improving any of the areas on the radar. Ask the team to focus mainly on improvement actions they can act on themselves.
- Have the team to present the action ideas.
- Group similar actions and discuss in the team what would be the wanted outcome of each action group. Expected result is to have at least 3 outcomes that the team can continue to work with in the next step.

Choose actions to try - dot vote. (20 minutes)

- Let each team member have 5 dots to vote on actions with. Each person can place one or several dots on each action. The action that gets the most votes should be the action that has most impact/is most probable to get done in the upcoming weeks.
- Sort out 3-5 of the actions with the most dots. These are your improvement actions to work on. Decide who should be responsible for each improvement action.

Futurespective | when you just started something new

Start with the One-word check-in from above (In a round-robin fashion let everyone choose a word to describe how they are feeling or what they bring to the retrospective.) or take time to go through the purpose and the agenda of the retrospective.

If you do the latter you can ask each participant for what they expect as outcome from the retro when making sure everyone has contributed from the start.

Futurespective (20 minutes)

- Tell the team to picture themselves six months or a year in the future when you are celebrating the successful delivery of your project/product/milestone.
- Take 5 minutes where everyone in the group writes down on stickies what made the success possible. What did you do early in the project? Who was involved in the work? How did the way you worked differ from not so successful situations?
- Work in pairs and tell each other the story of a successful project. What did both of you think of? Were you surprised by anything your partner came up with?
- Have all pairs present what they came up with and put the stickies on the board.

Futurespective (cont)

- Continue with creating actions and then choose what to do in a similar manner as 3 & 4 under Team Radar.
- End with a retro on the retro using a quick version of the Learning Matrix below. Write for 3 minutes and do only the first three steps

Learning Matrix - when you are pressed for time

Taking time to be able to take a step back and think is important for a good result. Even when you know that you sometimes find yourself in a situation where you have only an hour or thirty minutes. This variant can be done quickly, but still produce some results.

- Draw vertical and a horizontal line that cross each other in the middle, so you get four quadrants. Make a smiling face, an unhappy face, a lightbulb and a flower in the quadrants to show the meaning of each box
- Let the participants take a few minutes (3-10 depending on how much time you have) to write down on stickies what was good, what was bad, ideas to try and things someone did the last weeks you think they should have appreciations for.
- Go around the group and let each team member put their stickies in the corresponding box, while telling the group what they wrote and why.

Learning Matrix (cont)

- Deciding what to do
 - a. If you have just 30 minutes in total: Look at the ideas on the board and see if any of them is a good action to try. Choose someone to be responsible for the action
 - b. If you have a little more time: Start, Stop, Continue. - Write the three words next to each other on the board. For 5-10 minutes the team member write down ideas for actions starting with either “Start”, “Stop” or “Continue” (e.g. “Stop doing X”) and put them on the board. When you have created enough actions, use dot voting as in the Team Radar example above to choose what to do. Don't forget to choose a responsible for each action.

Need more help?

We at Redmind have facilitated countless of retrospectives in a wide range of teams.

From us you can ask for help with setting a good theme for your specific conditions, or facilitate it for you if everyone wants to participate 100 % as a team member, or coach you through the entire process.

Check out our services and contact us at <https://redmind.se>.

**WE BUILD
COMPANIES**

But in the end, we are all human beings, we support companies and products to be enjoyed by other human beings. We believe in relationships and what the right people with the right idea and the right support can achieve.

REDMIND



[@Redmind_sweden](https://twitter.com/Redmind_sweden)



[@RedmindHQ](https://www.facebook.com/RedmindHQ)



[@your_friends_at_redmind](https://www.instagram.com/your_friends_at_redmind)