It's Day Three of the London Scrum Gathering.

We've talked about its history and we've talked about its culture, but there is something else for which London is known.

Getting on people's nerves.

Even trying to get into London this morning meant tolerating train cancellations, fighting for a seat and then, once nicely uncomfortable, waiting as the train was inevitably delayed. The conductor and platform staff were the recipients of several hard stares, but we conveniently forget that all these calamities are not their fault. They are the 'middle man', at best, and looked tired and worn out, attempting to spout the scripted rail company excuses with no enthusiasm or conviction.

And I didn't blame them. Because they were given a message, but never trained in how to convey it in such a way that it would inform and appease grumpy sods like me.

In his brilliant keynote speech. Damian Hughes explained five simple ideas, aptly using the acronym 'STEPS', to make training not just clearer, but 'stickier'. These steps are:

- **Simple** – Use language, when conversing, that everyone can understand, dump 'management speak' and don't be afraid to say when there is something you don't understand.

- **Tripwire** – Don't use 'heuristics', mental short cuts that you think everyone knows, as they may not. If people have to sit and try to decode what you have said, it won't stick and they may miss the next point.

- **Emotional** – Messages stick when you provide an emotional content with which somebody can empathise. Telling someone that famine is terrible will get a sympathetic response, but a video of a starving child may cause them to put their hand in their pocket for charity. Don't tell a person, get them to see for themselves and feel.

- **Practical** – Use everyday examples and keep away from abstractions. People can associate with real 'hands-on' things, but vague concepts may not stick.

- **Storytelling** – Sure, you can lay out the facts. But I remember when I gave my Gran, on her deathbed, some statistics about cancer, her final words were, 'Next time you do that, put it into a story using the previous steps and they might remember the point'.

These aren't just theory: Damian works as a trainer in the sports world and applies these ideas all the time. Which is how long it felt like when I finally boarded the Tube for the Excel Centre. I say 'finally' because the queue (or rather crowd) for the Jubilee Line was so grotesque that they had to stop the escalators. The logistics of running such an intricate network of continuously-running Tube trains must be a difficult task, but it is still frustrating to the commuter as they don't understand what creates such bottlenecks in a system and why they cannot be solved.

Kanban is a method that helps identify such bottlenecks, as illustrated in Dan Brown's (no, not that one...) talk entitled 'Scrum Is from Mars and Kanban Is from Venus'. Here he showed how, by using Kanban boards and displaying only the items of value, that it was easy to identify where things were being held up. The work process could then be changed in order to alleviate that stress point. He also seemed to imply that this could not be done in Scrum, but at Aquila Heywood the technology teams have adopted their own visualisation techniques to highlight such bottlenecks, such as tasking out User Stories and adding dots to them for each day that they are in progress.

I wanted to change to the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) in order to complete my journey to the Excel, but there was a power failure on one the tracks, so the platform that I had become used to using over the last couple of days was not the one from which my train would be leaving. The information system utilised to explain this to me seemed to consist of three or four platform staff shouting incoherently at the confused horde of commuters, which just caused a lot of bumbling. If only there were a clearer more visual system that could be used.

Tamsin Mitchell, in her workshop, 'A Picture Paints a Thousand Words', introduced us to the idea of Graphic Facilitation. This technique encourages practitioners to write and draw notes in a poster-type style, both improving the creator's chances of retaining the information (due to the parts of the brain used during crafting) and having a graphical representation of notes that can be presented to others and easily understood. This is a skill that needs to be practised to be able to be utilised in any circumstance, but Tamsin made it clear that it was something anyone could learn, not just the Picassos amongst us.

So, I finally made it to the last day of the Scrum Gathering and, while the transport system did its best to annoy me, the talks and workshops mentioned above more than made up for it.

In the blog that I wrote about the first day of the Gathering, I asked the question as to whether change made things better. And honestly I don't know the answer to that. But what I do know is that we shouldn't be fearful

of making the attempt and learning from our failures as much as our successes.

At Aquila Heywood, we are certainly at this stage. It is our second year of Agile transformation and we're still making incremental changes, becoming more Agile, getting to where we want to be.

After all, London has been around for over two thousand years and it's not perfect.

Yet.