
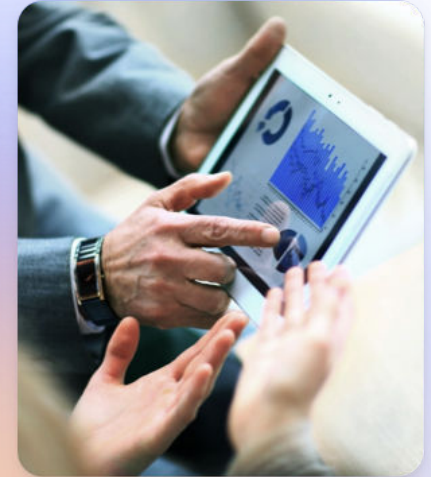


# Driving Product Excellence with Collaborative Team Learning

 36% higher on-time milestone completions



# Why Process Matters

Legendary engineer and professor W. Edwards Deming, famous for his continuous improvement methodologies, said:

“If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.”

It follows, then, that most product teams today know what they're doing. A recent survey of product development team managers conducted by Shamaym found that 94% of software development teams have some kind of formal learning process in place. As long as you debrief, conduct After-Action-Reviews, or routinely practice some other combination of compiling lessons learned, discussing them, and assigning tasks for follow-up, you are part of that 94%.

The reason so many teams emphasize learning is simple. Continuous learning improves business value, quality, and product delivery, reduces repeated mistakes, and promotes a culture of openness, innovation, and high performance. It seems as though all teams are doing more or less the same thing. But are all teams benefitting from their learning in the same way?



# The thing is, not all learning is the same.

Just going through the motions to “check the box” won’t cut it. Teams that fail to enact effective learning processes could end up with flawed results, confusion about workflows and priorities, and a culture of blame and mistrust. For those teams, learning will fail to translate into a competitive advantage. Managers understand this: 73% think a better process for continuous learning and improvement is highly important.

For improved outcomes in value delivery, quality, and efficiency, teams need to get their learning process right – whatever that process is. Read on to explore where your team can start.





# Key Obstacles to Collaborative Team Learning — and How to Overcome Them

Based on conversations with customers and partners, we've identified three key obstacles that prevent product development teams from reaching desired results, as well as best practices to overcome them.



# Obstacle 1: Failing to embrace mistakes as opportunities

Culture is a major obstacle in any learning process. In a recent Shamaym survey, 85% of managers said that gaining visibility to their team members' blockers is highly or moderately challenging.

One software development manager told us: "it's hard for any team, and for me as a manager, to fully benefit from the retrospective discussion when no one wants to put things on the table as they are, or own up to their mistakes."

Let's be blunt: sharing honestly is scary. Team members are hesitant to take responsibility for errors and are perhaps too quick to own up to successes for which others deserve credit. And this affects the learning process. 61% of the managers surveyed believe their learning processes would be more effective if people on their teams were more open about mistakes.

## How to Conquer Cultural Obstacles

Managers who model honesty for their team members create a culture of openness. Team members who see their managers talking openly about mistakes, and speaking responsibility for solutions, are more likely to follow suit. This is especially true when the discussion is highly actionable and relevant to the team's work.

Real-time improvement platforms can enhance the relevance of that discussion by using AI algorithms to generate high-quality learning. When shared across the team, high-quality learning promotes accountability and action because team members can clearly see how it benefits them.



## Obstacle 2: The idea of “learning” feels cumbersome and overwhelming

Data shows that most workers understand and appreciate the importance of learning. The problem is incorporating it into their daily work routine. Indeed, 41% of managers believe their team’s learning process would be more effective if team members took more time to be thoughtful about it. Of course, no one has more time.

### How to Make Learning Less Cumbersome

We suggest an approach to learning that fits how product teams already work: breaking learning down from something amorphous into palatable, actionable, bite-sized pieces.

Rather than saving learning only for the retrospective or project review meeting, try implementing this simple method across your team. Each time you finish a high-impact task or action:

- 1** Consider what worked well and what could have gone better, and write down your thoughts.
- 2** Assign yourself one action item based on your conclusions, to be implemented next time you’re faced with the same task.
- 3** Share learning with team members and others across the organization.
- 4** Use learning as the basis of your next retrospective (or any other form of team discussion).

Any product team can conduct this bite-sized learning method at any point that feels important in the development cycle. Teams can also take the method a step further by using a collaborative real-time learning platform to capture lessons while they’re fresh, and share them instantly across the team.



## Obstacle 3: Lessons learned are not implemented

Even if teams can overcome cultural challenges and establish a routine learning procedure, none of that leads to business results without proper action and follow-through. Implementation is arguably the most significant obstacle to learning, with 75% of managers highly challenged by implementing their team's learning from past mistakes.

### How to Translate Learning into Results

For learning to translate into action, and therefore to better results, team members need to access it at the optimal time: when it is most relevant to an upcoming task or action. This is an area in which technological developments play a big part.

For instance, serving team members with automated briefs containing previous lessons related to an upcoming action. Individuals need not remember what they jotted down somewhere – the software surfaces that knowledge for them. AI-powered tools of this kind have the potential to close the gap between learning and implementation.



# Case Study: How Akamai's R&D Team Uses a Better Learning Process to Drive Results



## Challenge



Akamai Technologies is a global content delivery network, cybersecurity, and cloud services company, providing web and Internet security services. Akamai's development and quality assurance teams already had learning routines in place. But those routines didn't translate into solving recurring and inherent problems. They wanted to improve their delivery quality and timelines by changing the way they worked and, specifically, to empower developers with a better way to learn and improve.

## Solution



Akamai's development and QA teams use Shamaym to capture their learning and share it across the team regularly. Team members view hundreds of debriefs on Shamaym per month, creating significant exposure to learning that team members would otherwise miss. Employees are also more effectively collaborating across teams, sharing learnings and best practices more widely across the company.

## Results



Collaborative learning using the Shamaym platform creates the streamlined work processes that Akamai hoped for, because even when issues do arise, there is more brain power and more organizational knowledge available to tackle them. In just three months, they saw a reduction of 86% in the average number of monthly incidents, and a drop of 60% in the average number of customer escalations.

[Read Akamai's story](#)



# Ready to build a learning process that drives results?

## Contact us

Shamaym helps teams improve their performance and adapt quickly to changing needs by turning day-to-day actions into learning opportunities. Powered by AI, our Collaborative Real-Time Learning Platform makes it easy for employees to capture lessons learned from each activity, share insights with team members, and tap into relevant takeaways at the moment of need. Based on a methodology developed by the Israeli Air Force to drive rapid learning and continuous improvement cycles, we help sales, support, product, and other mission-critical teams drive higher KPIs and accelerated growth.

Shamaym works with leading multinational organizations:



 [shamaym.com](https://shamaym.com)

 +1.857.444.9686

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