

Running without insight?

Failing fast in the wrong direction
and creating maps that no one
ever uses?

Don't worry,
just ask **Aris Capellos**



1. Run with insight

- Agile without user *insight* = running fast in a random direction
- User insight without delivery = writing a map no one ever uses

Note: '*insight*' can include research, support tickets, sales calls, and analytics

2. The Tension

User insight doesn't fit neatly into Agile cadences:

- Discovery spans multiple sprints
- Quarterly planning locks in goals
- Insight rarely arrives on schedule

Result? Teams either skip it to stay on plan

- or run it off to the side, losing connection with delivery

3. Better Ways Forward

- Run **dual-track discovery + delivery** in cycles
- Reserve initial **10 to 20% capacity band** for discovery
- Use “**Enablers/Spikes**” to make research visible
- Treat insight as a **first-class quarterly deliverable**

Measure your success

- TTL, Backlog Kill Rate, and Activation

3.1 Time to Learning (TTL)

Time to Learning (TTL) = the elapsed time from the moment you frame a hypothesis/question → until you get a reliable, evidence-based answer.

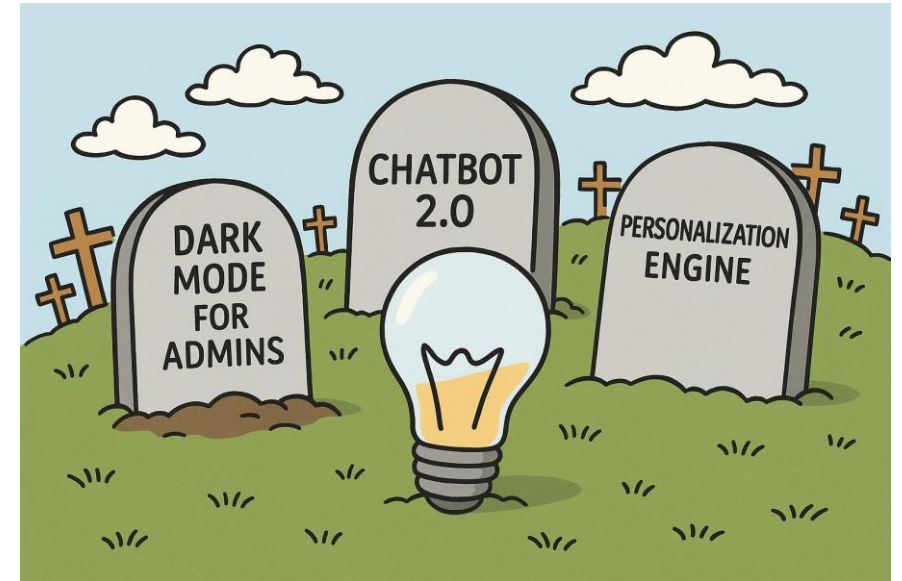


3.2 Backlog Kill Rate

Backlog Kill Rate: 27% of backlog items thrown out

As an agile aficionado, this is a favourite, underused metric

Leveraging user research to slim down backlogs and putting a metric to it is a liberating, decluttering process for multiple teams



Initiatives and Features
invalidated through insight

3.3 Activation Example

Activation: +15 pts vs baseline

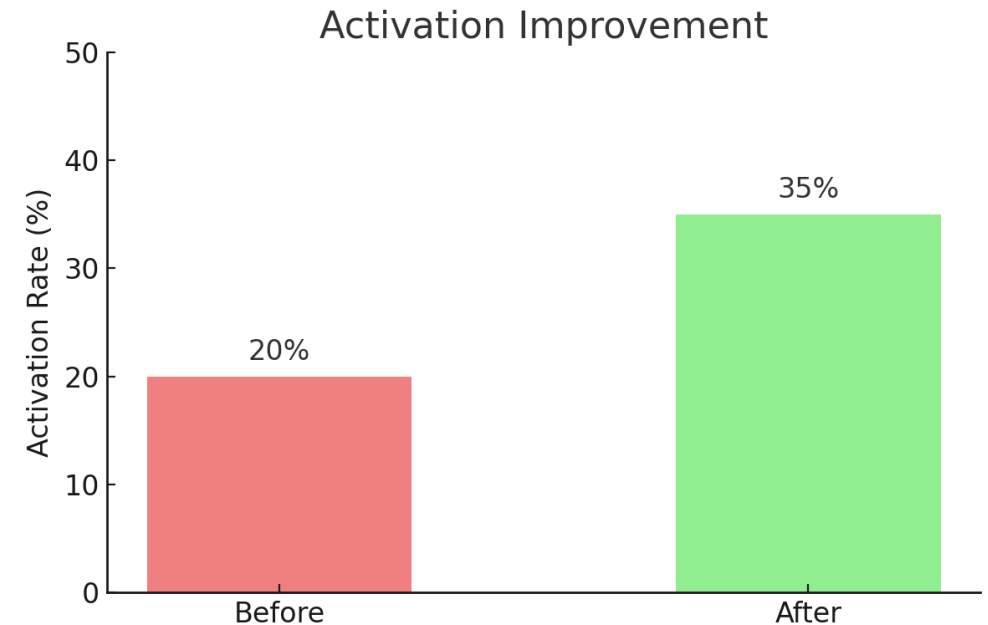
Before the change

- only 20% of users completed the key step (baseline activation)

After the new slice was released

- 35% did

So, activation improved by +15 percentage points



4. Anti-Pattern

The Steve Jobs effect

- Misusing his quote, “*People don’t know what they want until you show it*” as an excuse to skip important user research

Vision without insight is still guesswork

- Jobs didn’t ignore users
- He obsessed over their behaviour, pain points, and context

4.1 Other Anti-Patterns and Solutions

Insight theatre: decks and personas with no backlog changes

- Review what was delivered and dropped because of each insight

Pilot purgatory: endless “experiments” that never scale

- Set an exit criterion: promote, pivot, or park within one cycle

Stakeholder validation as a proxy: sign-offs replace user evidence

- Minimum bar: 5 to 7 real user sessions or a live signal (A/B, painted door)

5. Leadership

False certainty: “Trust me, I know this dark alley.”

People follow until the first wrong turn. Confidence without evidence is brittle.

Broken trust: “You’ve led us here before and it went badly.”

Even with a light, progress will stall, and doubt will slow every step.

Leading with Agility:

“It’s dark. However, I’ve got a **flashlight** and a **map**. Let’s take short steps, check **landmarks**, and adjust together.”

No promises about every turn. But clear process, shared visibility and safe course-corrections.

6. Running with Insight

The flashlight = shared insight: user research, telemetry, support data

The map = strategy and direction (testable and value-focused)

The landmarks = waypoints like TTL, Activation, Kill Rate

Leaders may not guarantee the exact route; but they can navigate with transparent evidence, small bets, clear check-ins, and the courage to turn when the data or metrics say so.

6.1 Running with Insight

- Activation telling us to turn
 - ✓ Time to learn (TTL) down from 14 to 6 days
 - ✓ Backlog Kill Rate 27%
 - ❖ Activation **-5 pts**
- Activation confirming our path
 - ✓ Time to learn (TTL) down from 14 to 6 days
 - ✓ Backlog Kill Rate 27%
 - ✓ Activation **+15 pts**

TTL and Kill Rate are valuable hygiene

Activation is the leading signal



What is your approach?

When you balance **insight + delivery**, Quarterly cycles stop being about hitting dates...

...and start being about delivering **outcomes you can prove users care about**.

How does your organisation fit user **insight** into its **delivery** cycles?

Problem solve with **Aris Capellos**, the Agile Gutsy Ninja

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