

AGILE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCING AGILE PRINCIPLES
AND METHODS FOR FLEXIBLE,
RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

In this series of eduzines we will take you through the basics of the Agile management concept and introduce you to Kanban and Scrum, two of the most popular frameworks that can be used to enable Agile teams.

Agile management can contribute to the circular economy by unlocking wider perspectives, stakeholders and energy for the rapid holistic evolution required for a green economy. Its fundamentally human centred approach can balance the unremitting focus on shareholder returns that is driving linear business models and overconsumption.



EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

| | |
|------------------|--|
| KNOWLEDGE | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key principles of the Agile management approach• Two of the most popular frameworks for Agile management• How to integrate Agile with other innovation frameworks |
| SKILLS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to introduce the main principles of Agile management• Able to describe the differences in Agile and traditional “Waterfall” management• Identify Agile’s benefits in adapting to rapidly evolving business environments |
| ATTITUDES | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An agile, human centred mindset• Willing to engage with Agile principles• Appreciation of the potential benefits of the Agile mindset for product innovation in the circular economy |



SELF-REFLECTION EXERCISE

Welcome to the Agile self-reflection exercise! You will face 4 questions that will test your initial awareness of Agile Management Concepts before exploring the content of this EduZine. How much do you know?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1y-n6Er4Qq_JTDJNIFFV1e1rdTkK7hLviK73dXMUYKcw/viewform?edit_requested=true



WHAT IS AGILE MANAGEMENT?

Agile Management is a concept that has been around for more than 20 years. It has evolved and spread from its original base in software development industries because it deals well with a world that is ever more complex, uncertain and volatile.

Instead of a business being conceived as an efficient steady-state machine aimed at exploiting its existing business model, the Agile organization is a growing, learning, adapting living organism in constant flux responding to new opportunities. Fully implemented, Agile redefines assumptions about how a business runs that have dominated the scene for the last hundred years. **Think horizontal teams, not pyramids.**



Agile organizations work in rapid cycles of thinking and doing. Self organising teams produce a minimal viable product or deliverable very quickly. During these short activity bursts, the team holds frequent check-ins to share progress, solve problems, and stay together.


To accomplish their goals team members must be totally accountable for the outcome of their work and empowered to manage all the steps in a process including direct stakeholder input. This approach creates opportunities for creative “leapfrog” solutions, and increases the sense of ownership, accountability, and accomplishment within staff.



In a recent McKinsey Global Survey, respondents in all sectors felt more of their employees should be working in agile ways. Three-quarters of respondents said organizational agility is a top or top-three priority on their agenda. Of those who have not begun agile transformations, more than half say plans are in the works.

This reflects Agile's ability to solve a fundamental management puzzle: how do you execute a project in a disciplined way while creating continuous innovation? Disciplined execution crushes innovation, while innovation often tends to be undisciplined. Businesses large and small have been locked into rigid command and control mindsets such as the "Waterfall" approach. This maps out projects into distinct, sequential phases, each new phase beginning only when the previous one has been completed. With each step preplanned any change in priorities or needs totally disrupts the project.





The dynamic alternative Agile presented was based initially in the “Agile Manifesto” with some key principles including

- a. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development.
- b. Motivate individuals, give them the environment and support they need, trust them to get the job done.
- c. Create simplicity--maximizing the amount of work not done--is essential.
- d. Reflect regularly, tune and adjust behavior accordingly.
- e. A raft of Agile management tools have emerged and can be useful (there is a link to a guide in the resources section). However Agile management is as much a mindset and a human centred approach as a process.
- f. It thrives on the core values of trust, empowerment and collaboration. Embracing these soft skills creates some hard financial gains.



EMBEDDING THE AGILE MINDSET AND CULTURE

In challenging economic environments it is tempting to retreat into old ways of doing things, with new layers of control stifling innovation. ***Agile on the other hand asks us to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.***

The best way to minimize risk and succeed is to embrace uncertainty and be the quickest and most productive in trying new things.

Learning to live with 'good enough'

Senior executives are typically a risk-averse group. Traditional product-development models emphasize management oversight at various stages of development to ensure that everything is going to plan. By contrast, agile development emphasizes a test-and-learn approach—for instance, releasing a minimally viable product that delivers value in the short term but is expected to change on the fly.

It is a counterintuitive cultural shift to accept that an approach that shares power, reduces control, puts people at the center, mobilises all the human resources available and, critically, gives permission to fail, actually reduces risk.

The mindset shifts from: “People need to be directed and managed, otherwise they won’t know what to do, and they’ll just look out for themselves. There will be chaos.” To: “When given clear responsibility and authority, people will be highly engaged, will take care of each other, will figure out ingenious solutions, and will deliver exceptional results.”



Agile leaders need the skills to understand human networks, how to design and build them, and how to nurture and sustain them.

Leadership culture is probably the number 1 factor for success. Senior leaders need to stick with the new mindset and double down when set backs occur instead of reverting to the old command and control mentality.

The experience of Agile Management practitioners in organisations at different scales in different sectors suggests **9 key levers for success in embedding Agile thinking:**

1. Visualise the behaviours that will help leaders to change and keep reviewing these, so that when things get tough you can keep your eye on the prize.
2. Send out clear messages from leaders about the behaviours you require. Reward them and don't excuse resistance to Agile behaviour, even in highly skilled staff.
3. Recruit for a mindset as well as a skillset. Hire staff with the ability and personality to fit into an Agile culture. Retain them by embedding the mindset into your career growth structure.
4. Place someone with Agile skills in teams and let them surface fears that create unproductive environments
5. Give people permission to take chances and allow them to fail.
6. Be prepared not to have the comfort blanket of a project plan, working to goals rather than rigid plans.
7. Give people time to prove what they can do and to earn trust and credibility as an Agile team.



8. Ring fence time to discuss continuous improvement.
9. Agile is all about evolution. It may not work first time, but get it going and work on it.



**AGILE
MANAGEMENT
FRAMEWORKS
– KANBAN**

“No innovation happens without a group of individuals coming together to support it” - McKinsey

Two of the most popular Agile project management frameworks or methods are Kanban and Scrum, both based on forming and focusing teams.

Kanban is a method formulated a decade ago. It focuses on evolutionary change and continuous process improvements.

The method has six core practices:

- **visualize work**
- **limit work-in-progress**
- **manage flow**
- **make process policies explicit**
- **implement feedback loops**
- **improve collaboratively**

Teams visualise their work on a Kanban board that serves as a central information hub where all tasks should be placed. This allows people to exchange information much faster and collaborate more effectively while working on different projects.

A Kanban board is divided into columns that represent different stages of the workflow. This helps project managers and teams organize and manage work much better, keep track of various projects, and acquire a better overview of the process.



One of the most critical Kanban practices is limiting work in progress in each of the board columns. It is one of the most effective tools to increase your team's focus and prioritize finishing work to improve overall efficiency.

On the other hand, projects, teams, and individuals are unique. Different teams have a different set of skills, levels of experience, expertise. Various projects may have different scopes, budgets, and so on.

This is why Kanban suggests you should start with what you do now and evolve gradually. No drastic changes, no revolutions, making Kanban an adaptive Agile project management method.

Kanban can be applied by any team in your organization.

The main reason is that Kanban:

- respects the current processes and roles;
- doesn't require revolutionary, but evolutionary changes;
- suggests you should pursue incremental, evolutionary change and try to improve continuously;
- encourages managing the work and letting people to self-organize around it.

Like any current management methodology Kanban has a lot of tools and guidance built around it. To find out more, follow the links in the resources sections.



**AGILE
MANAGEMENT
FRAMEWORKS**
– SCRUM

The development of Scrum started back in 1993 when Jeff Sutherland, John Scumniotales and Jeff McKenna implemented it at the Easel Corporation. It works for complex projects because it combines rapid innovation with disciplined execution.

The foundations of Scrum

The core unit of Scrum is the Scrum Team. The foundation of the team's work is continuous learning and adjustment to changing factors.

Core practices

There are some core practices to be observed that guide relationships and interactions:

1. Organize work in *short cycles called Sprints*
2. The management *doesn't interrupt* the team during a Sprint
3. The team estimates *how much time* work will take
4. The team decides *how much work* it can do in an iteration
5. The team decides *how* to do the work in the iteration
6. The team measures its own performance
7. Define work goals before each cycle starts
8. Define work goals through *user stories*
9. Systematically remove impediments



None of these practices is new, but Scrum puts them together in a disciplined way.

When only some of the practices are implemented, such as doing the work in short cycles but interrupting the team during the cycle, the energy can dissipate. This is where the commitment of senior management to the process comes in. Without a senior champion barriers multiply until the initiative fails.

Scrum values

Commitment, Focus, Openness, Respect, and Courage

When consistently applied, these values support the Scrum Team and maintain motivation when challenges inevitably arise.

Scrum Team

The Scrum Team works in “Sprints” at a sustainable pace. The team has three main roles;

- Scrum Master
- Product Owner
- Developers

There are no sub-teams or hierarchies. It is a cohesive unit focused on one objective at a time. Scrum Teams contain all the skills necessary to create the product. They are also self-managing. They internally decide who does what, when, and how.





The Scrum Team is responsible for all activities including stakeholder collaboration, experimentation, research and development. The entire team is accountable for creating a valuable outcome from every Sprint.

If Scrum Teams become too large, they reorganize into multiple cohesive Scrum Teams sharing the same Product Goal and Product Owner.

Developers

Developers create a plan, deal with backlogs, adapt their work every day, and stick to the definition of Done.

Product Owner

The Product Owner is a single person accountable for maximizing the value of the Sprint. They develop and communicate the goal and manage backlogs.

Scrum Master

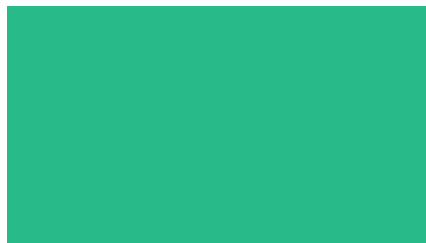
The Scrum Master is accountable for establishing a Scrum and its effectiveness. They serve the Scrum Team and the larger organization. They help everyone understand Scrum theory and practice and remove barriers for the Team.

Why bother implementing a system like this? According to management guru Steve Denning, the best Scrum teams routinely obtain productivity increases of 200 to 400 percent.

COMBINING AGILE WITH OTHER INNOVATION MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Any new or existing business looking to manage product development in a more flexible, responsive way will come across a lot of different concepts that all have their cheerleaders. Agile, Lean and design thinking are all part of this jigsaw puzzle of innovation management concepts. After looking at the Agile concept and frameworks in these eduzines you might be wondering how do I make these things come together in an intelligent way that doesn't overburden my company?

For a simple take on combining the principles and philosophies of the main innovation management concepts around at the moment try this video from Jeff Gothelf.



FINAL ASSESSMENT TASK

TITLE OF THE TASK:

Agile Project Management Assignment

AIM OF THE ACTIVITY:

You are required to write an individual research report of 1500 words to demonstrate your understanding of the origins and foundations of Agile.

TIME REQUIRED:

12 hours

FORMAT FOR THE PRESENTATION:

Report

STEPS TO COMPLETE THE TASK:

1. Write a 1500 words research report to demonstrate your understanding of the origins and foundations of Agile by addressing the following areas:

1. The origins of Agile – why did Agile emerge, what was it in response to, and how did this lead to the values and principles as outlined in the agile manifesto?
2. The origins of Lean and how it has influenced Agile practice.
3. The similarities and differences between Scrum and Kanban as work methods
4. Why adopting Agile benefits an organisation.



The introduction (100 – 150 words) that will also serve as your statement of purpose for the report—this means that you will tell the reader what you are going to cover in your report. You will need to inform the reader of:

1. Your area of research and its context
2. The key concepts you will be addressing
3. What the reader can expect to find in the body of the report

The body of the report (1200-1300 words) will need to cover four specific areas:

1. Why did Agile originate? When did it emerge and what was it in response to? How did this lead to the four values and 12 principles that are outline by the agile manifesto?
2. Where did Lean originate? Briefly define what Lean is and two Lean philosophies have been adopted in the evolution of Agile practice?
3. Scrum and Kanban have many similarities, but also key differences. Compare and contrast Scrum and Kanban with each other, illustrating these similarities and differences with examples.
4. Explain what value adopting Agile can offer to an organisation.

The conclusion (100-150 words) will summarise any findings or recommendations that the report puts forward regarding the concepts covered in the report.



FINAL TEST

Are you ready to test the knowledge you have gained from this EduZine? Do you feel that you know more now than you when taking the self-reflection quiz at the beginning? Once you have read all the articles in this EduZine, you will have no problem in completing this quiz!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1OLGfWEDSNzFDZN2DBAevcq_BVdQxHYdTIDw9q4BRQzk/viewform?edit_requested=true



FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

The history of Agile and Lean

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKIy8nssMQc>

The Agile Manifesto

<http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html>

A Business Leader's Guide To Agile

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/a-business-leaders-guide-to-agile>

5 trademarks of an Agile organisation

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-five-trademarks-of-agile-organizations>

Top 5 Tips for Success with introducing Agile to an organisation with an older management model

<https://salsa.scaledagile.com/wp-content/uploads/Making-the-case-for-business-agility.pdf>

Easy Agile: The Agile Mindset

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_6jJ2YyJZU

An introduction to Kanban, Scrum and Scrumban

<https://kanbanize.com/agile/project-management>

Scrum is a Major Management Discovery – Steve Denning

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/04/29/scrum-is-a-major-management-discovery/>

Scrum Guides

<https://scrumguides.org/>



Scrum Guides in different languages
<https://scrumguides.org/download.html>

How does agile and sustainability fit together
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWiOYs62peU>

How to scale up in the circular economy with Agile
<https://scaledagile.com/how-to-scale-up-the-circular-economy/>

Agile Transformation, implementing Agile - Mike Cottmeyer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtWP0f2HWgY>

How to create an agile organisation
<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/how-to-create-an-agile-organization>

How agile is agile? Insights for a post-pandemic profession
<https://www.apm.org.uk/blog/how-agile-is-agile-insights-for-a-post-pandemic-profession/>

Agile Project Management
<https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/find-a-resource/agile-project-management/>

The 6 Best Agile management tools
<https://www.getclockwise.com/blog/best-agile-project-management-tools>

The Top 10 Agile Management Tools
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5P8H4Yh-VhE>





LEARNING CIRCLE



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