Practitioner Perspectives

Top 10 Ways to Manage Agile Expectations

1. *Agile is not foregoing documentation; it is elevating delivered capabilities over checked boxes*

2. *Agile is not only daily scrums; planning, collaboration, and lessons learned are key*

3. *Agile does not guarantee success; it highlights issues earlier and hastens recovery*

4. *Agile does not ipso facto improve quality or cut cost; technical and execution excellence are mandatory*

5. *Agile is not the enemy of project management; cooperation between business and development personnel is vital*

6. *Agile is not a single methodology; there are numerous Agile methods*

7. *Agile is not a scope free-for-all; change is welcome, but not to the detriment of business value*

8. *Agile is not anarchy; self-organizing teams reflect and adapt*

9. *Agile is not a pass to exclude the customer; customer satisfaction is the top priority*

10. *Agile is not the only solution; waterfall, spiral, and others are still very relevant*

Oh, The Places Agile'll Go!

- Agile grew out of the need for an alternative to documentation-driven, heavyweight software development processes

- Agile has now permeated marketing, strategy, business processes, strategic planning, and IT, touching 94% of companies

- From SAFe to LeSS and DaD, Agile comes in many shapes and sizes and works best when the end-point is not defined or is mutable

- Differentiate your approach by tailoring it to customer needs and conveying insights, not by trademarking marketing materials

- The evolution of Agile, along with increased collaboration between development and operations staff, has led to the growth of DevOps

- Agile is not the only answer; traditional waterfall techniques are still valid for well-defined scope, cost, and schedule

A Process's a Process, No Matter How Small

This month marks the 15th anniversary of the publication of the *Manifesto for Agile Software Development*. More commonly referred to as the "Agile Manifesto," it grew out of the need for an alternative to documentation-driven, heavyweight software development processes. Its principles take root in lean manufacturing concepts pioneered by Taiichi Ono from the Toyota Corporation and Edward Deming, who popularized the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) quality process. Today, Agile and lean are used interchangeably to describe the principles of increasing efficiency and productivity through trust and respect while eliminating waste. After some early execution stumbles that hindered adoption, agility is now being embraced by other technical and non-technical disciplines and integrated within program and project management techniques and business practices.

ACME Agile Framework

Does your Agile approach look like this? So does everyone else's. Tailor it with customer insights and unique differentiation or lose to those that do. The framework may be compliant, but far from compelling.
Source: "The TechFAR Handbook," https://playbook.cio.gov/techfar/

This Mess is So Big and So Deep and So Tall

The increasing adoption of agility within the federal government is reminiscent of the integration of PMBOK standards, ITIL best practices, and the tools and techniques from the many other frameworks and methodologies that have become norms in the private sector. Some of the known frameworks, including Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe), Large Scale Scrum (LeSS), and Disciplined Agile Delivery (DaD), have been adopted by federal customers and give cause for optimism. However, there remain underlying worries of over-engineering implementation at the expense of utility. The variety of missions and legacy technology environments across the federal market dictates inserting Agile processes in measured doses. Dropping traditional approaches and shifting everything to Extreme Programming is not only overkill, but it will likely create undue execution risk.
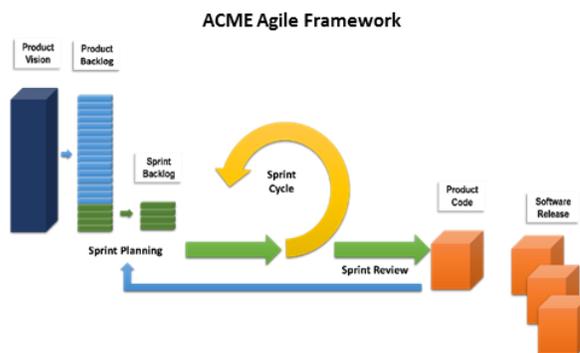
Sylvester McMonkey McBean

Agile continues to gain converts as older development methods fail to keep up with change and innovation. Organizations are using enterprise Agile frameworks to manage programs, develop strategy, provide oversight, respond to proposals, and manage risks. While not always the earliest adopter of emerging standards and technologies, the federal government is now on the Agile bandwagon. OMB and GSA are leveraging Agile practices for acquisition and execution processes. DISA is seeking advice from industry on applying Agile techniques to modernize its aging Global Command and Control system. As Agile fever sweeps the federal landscape, with acquisitions calling for more Agile approaches, companies are falling over themselves to sell their intricate Agile frameworks and sprint cycle wares.

Agile, Dear Boy, is Not Modern Enough

Backlog. Planning. Sprint. Review. Release. Daily scrum/Stand-up. As depicted in our central graphic, nearly every proposal response that incorporates an Agile approach within its technical volume embeds these elemental Agile buzzwords. Rather than touting your sprint "loop de loop," that almost identically resembles your competitors', address how your Agile approach is uniquely positioned to solve the customer's problem. What are the customer's pain points? How can existing processes be improved? Answering these questions, not defining the length of your sprint cycle or your release numbering scheme, leads to demonstration of customer understanding and intimacy, as well as success in execution. Once you have mastered this, you can prepare for the DevOps adoption trend that is riding Agile's coattails.

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