



Goals vs. Roles

Agile is all about collaboration.

Clients often ask me to explain Agile project management – what it is, and how can it benefit their organization. I usually start by telling them what Agile is not.

Traditional project management processes can be top-heavy: emphasizing documentation; delineating lines between users and developers; and adhering to dependencies between build activities as a means to underpin the work.

Agile foregoes all of that in favor of working software, and the best way to get working software is through collaboration. Sounds straight-forward, right? It should, because it is.

The concept is simple, but the key is the manner in which Agile gets you there.

COLLABORATION TRUMPS HIERARCHY

The sum is greater than the parts. And this is true for Agile project management. Close collaboration between developers, business users, and product owners (regardless of authoritative reach in the organization) is essential to stimulate the Design Thinking needed to truly innovate. Co-location (whether physical or virtual) is a key element of Agile, ensuring project team members work side-by-side to envision, build and test deliverables.

RESULTS EARLY AND OFTEN

Agile is particularly effective in software development, because it enables the team to deliver working software early and often. Process-laden documentation protocols take a back seat to creating working prototypes, that enable everyone to see their ideas come to fruition. With ideas delivered in small, continuous releases, everyone can benefit from actually seeing the vision as it takes shape. Throughout, software can be refined and extended until a finished project is achieved.

CHANGE IS WELCOME

Without change, the project team and the end product cannot benefit from the learnings that are born through collaboration. As visions solidify and gaps get filled, change will inevitably result. And this is a good thing because the team knows more than when they started, and have proven out their assumptions along the way. So in an Agile project, this change is embraced rather than impeded or discouraged through counter-intuitive project controls.

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