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Agile Essentials in Project Management

Individual Assignment: Reflection Paper

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Introduction

January marked the end of my role as a Territory Sales Manager. Ultimately, I felt the industry was evolving and company methods were not adjusting accordingly. When I heard about Agile Project Management, the capacity to welcome change and embrace uncertainty intrigued me. Considering I am yet to find a new job, I will discuss the concepts I have learnt in relation to my previous position.

Four Organizational Benefits of Using Agile

1. **INFORMED INNOVATION** – *What is the Customer's current WHY?*

Common phrases during team briefings included "We did this last year" and "Back when". In contrast, an Agile approach recognises that the basis of customer needs may change over time.

Example: In 2018, the company improved the ordering website to reduce the percentage of phone orders. When the percentage increased in 2019, the proposed fix focused on improving the website. Later on, it became clear that the increase was due to inaccurate deliveries. Using an agile approach, the deployment team would welcome the assumption that new cause may be unrelated to the website. Furthermore, they would interact with customers, and discover sooner that there are sorting and packaging issues.

2. **SYNCHRONIZED OBJECTIVES** – *Are Company Teams on the Same Page?*

Being a traditional setting, there are siloed departments. Sometimes, these departmental projects contradict each other during execution. An Agile setting fosters integrated and cross-functional teams which prevent conflicting initiatives.

Example: The credit department switched from paper to online returns. Additionally, the deployment team increased the product availability and freshness requirement to 99%. In reality, the online return process was tedious, and payment took months. This affected cashflow and made store owners shelf stale products or cut slowly moving products. Using an Agile approach, experts from both departments would be on both projects and ensure the new return process maintains operating cashflow.

3. **RESOURCE ALLOCATION** – *Can Resources be Salvaged?*

Resources were buried into entire projects, making it difficult to pivot during poor conditions. In Agile, focus is on the outcome as opposed to planning and execution.

Example: The 2019 Q4 objective was to increase the market share of a top product. The proposed solution was a sales discount to increase customer and consumer purchase. However, during the course of the quarter, our competitor offered a larger discount and a rebate program. Using an Agile approach, company funds would be assigned to iterations rather than the entire project. Also, each sprint will adapt to accommodate market conditions.

4. **PROPER ESTIMATION** – *Can a Company Under Promise and Over Deliver?*

The company had a history of backtracking on customer agreements, causing poor customer relations. Often times, the ramifications of these agreements were not properly estimated. Using an Agile approach, a company-customer team can be setup to deconstruct agreements into properly weighted tasks. The company may proceed with feasible tasks, without making unnecessary commitments.

Two Most Valuable Topics + Future Applications

1. **KANBAN PRACTICES** – *Backlog → In Progress → Done → Accepted*

This topic discussed visualizing and managing workflow. A major takeaway was the use of a Kanban Board to oversee the status and goal of every project activity.

Application:
- Using a Kanban Board to track the progress of personal and professional projects.
- Setting a limit for work in progress to avoid unnecessary multitasking.
- Placing emphasis on collaboration and gradual improvements.

2. **THE ART OF ESTIMATION** – *Deconstructing Items for More Accuracy*

This topic outlined the importance and process of estimating tasks. It highlighted the need for collaboration during estimation and the use of relative estimation.

Application:
- Using story points to assign weights to all my tasks.
- Evaluating the complexity of each feature and the amount of effort required.
- Ensuring that heavy tasks are broken down into lighter bits to avoid overload.

Conclusion

Overall, this was a valuable learning experience. Although, I had no prior background in Project Management, I now feel capable of taking on the responsibility. Many thanks to the instructor for all the answered questions and meaningful suggestions. I look forward to implementing what I have learnt in both my personal and professional journey.