Agile Project Management Written Assessment

Define the differences between Agile and other project management processes.

Traditional project management processes were developed to generally be used for manufacturing or construction projects. These projects typically produce products that are identical to their original design at the start of the project. This allows design engineers and managers to produce highly detailed checklists of tasks and processes to be carried out by the team. All these tasks at a given stage of a project would have to be completed before the team was able to carry on to the next stage of the project. This led to it being called the waterfall model wherein the project is split into clearly defined phases each producing deliverables that are required to advance to the next phase of the project.

Agile project management is a philosophy of project management that stems from following a manifesto with 4 tenets. The first is, "Individuals and interactions over processes and tools." The second tenet is the preference of working software over comprehensive documentation. The third tenet is the preference of customer collaboration over contract negotiation. The last item is a preference of responsiveness to change over following a preordained plan. Agile methodologies use these tenets to execute projects with more of a focus on the people working on them, the customers and showing working versions of the product being developed at every stage of development.

Whereas traditional project management follows a linear organizational structure Agile uses an iterative approach. This means that the entire process is gone through over a shorter period of time producing a deliverable product at the end of the process. This is called a sprint. The deliverable is then taken into the next sprint and iterated on. This means that the client can be involved more often in an Agile process as the team will have a product at the end of each sprint that can be shown to the client as opposed to much later in the development. This approach also means that testing will take place at the end of each sprint rather than once closer to the end of the project. Finally due to the iterative nature of agile the requirements can be tweaked at the beginning of each sprint as a result of feedback from the client or things that the team has learned. This makes it much easier and cheaper to make changes to the requirements than in a traditional project management process.

Define how Agile contributes to innovation and creativity in project outcomes.

The customer does not get to see the product before the early testing phase in a traditional project management process. This means that it could be very late in the development that the customer points out crucial errors in the project or that changes must be made due to some outside factor. Agile avoids this by having the customer involved throughout the process. This lets the team and the customer work together to identify issues even before they become problematic. The team is able to innovate solutions to these issues during the project with direct customer support and approval.

In traditional project management processes checklists are expected to be followed and entry to the next phase is gated by the completion of these tasks. Using the Agile approach the team is given the freedom to control their own goals and checklists. At the start of each sprint an Agile team will work together to decide what work should be done during it. Additionally there are no bars for when certain actions can be taken in an Agile approach. For instance any amount of testing can be done whenever is deemed necessary. This means that the team members in an Agile project have the freedom and flexibility to get creative and innovate when it comes to determining the best way to proceed with the project. All this while continuing to maintain a structured enough approach to ensure results get delivered.

Agile also places a large focus on communication between not only team members but everyone involved with the project. Face to face communication and knowing your team members is strongly encouraged. Actions in the agile process such as developing user stories and stand up meetings are specifically designed to encourage face to face communication. This lets team members not only communicate extremely effectively but become comfortable with sharing and responding to ideas. This will create an environment where team members are comfortable with attempting to be creative and innovate.

Explain how Agile is scalable for bigger projects and the issues which might be encountered.

The Agile process doesn’t scale well for larger projects. Many Agile concepts are very effective when they are applied to smaller teams but quickly become difficult to co-ordinate when dealing with multiple teams working on a large scale project. For instance implementing small self-managing teams just doesn’t work in a large scale project.

As a solution to this a few new Agile frameworks have been developed to use with larger scale projects. They do this by building upon the ideas, concepts and techniques used in the regular Agile framework. For instance Disciplined Agile Delivery (DAD) builds upon the foundation of existing Agile techniques and builds upon them. It adds inception, construction and transition phases to the development. DAD uses this to address areas of the project that aren’t fully covered in a smaller scale Agile framework. Although DAD is sometimes not the best model to move to for those coming from using a traditional project management process due to the lack of structure.

It is of course most important to research which process is best suited to the project you are undertaking and which is most feasible to implement in your organisation. What could be the best option for one team may not be the best option for another even if they are working on similar projects.

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