

Agile Project Management for Beginners (Cheat Sheet)

Paul Fawcett, Mar 23, 2017

From all the variety of project management methodologies, there's one approach in particular that should be known by name: Agile. It grew out of the IT world, where speed and flexibility are essential, and is now gaining popularity in all sorts of teams, from marketing and creative departments to product design and digital services.

If you're wondering whether Agile could be right for your team, it's important to first understand what Agile is and how it can help you manage projects more efficiently, increase output, and adapt to changing requirements. Here's what you need to know.

What is Agile?

Agile came about in 2001 when a group of software developers decided that they needed a different workflow. They formulated the Agile Manifesto and added twelve principles that define the criteria for Agile processes.

Four basic Agile values include:

- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
- Working software over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
- Responding to change over following a plan

When it comes to Agile project management, it is a flexible, team-based way to organize your work and your time. It focuses on continuous improvement, scope flexibility, team input, and delivering essential quality products.

12 Agile Principles

The 12 Agile Principles are a set of guiding concepts that support project teams in implementing agile projects.

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.
2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
4. Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
5. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.

6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
7. Working software is the primary measure of progress.
8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
10. Simplicity — the art of maximizing the amount of work not done — is essential.
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
12. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

Agile Project Management Roles

- **Development team:** The group of people who are creating a product. Programmers, testers, designers, and anyone else participating in product development is a member of the development team.
- **Product owner:** The person is responsible for bridging the gap between the customer, business stakeholders, and the development team. The product owner is an expert in the product – s/he knows exactly what the customer needs and clarifies these requirements to the development team.
- **Project facilitator (Scrum master):** The person is responsible for supporting the development team, clearing organizational roadblocks, and keeping the agile process consistent.
- **Stakeholders:** Anyone with an interest in the project. Stakeholders are not ultimately responsible for the product, but they provide input and are affected by the project's outcome.
- **Agile mentor:** Someone who has experience in implementing agile projects and can provide valuable feedback to the development team.

Agile Project Management Artifacts

Agile project teams often use six artifacts to develop products and track progress:

- **Product vision statement:** A quick summary of how your product supports the company strategies.
- **Product backlog:** A list of what is in the scope for your project, ordered by priority.
- **Product roadmap:** An overall view of the product's requirements and a tool for planning and organising product development (a plan that matches short-term and long-term business goals with specific technology solutions).
- **Release plan:** A timetable for the release of working software.
- **Sprint backlog:** A list of the tasks that must be executed by the team during the current sprint.
- **Increment:** The working product functionality at the end of each sprint.

Agile Project Management Events

- **Project planning:** The initial planning for your project – creating a product vision statement and a product roadmap.
- **Release planning:** Planning the next set of product features to release and identifying a product launch date.
- **Sprint:** A short cycle of development (1-4 weeks) in which the team creates potentially shippable product functionality.
- **Sprint planning:** A meeting at the beginning of each sprint where the team commits to a sprint goal and identifies the requirements and individual tasks.
- **Sprint review:** A meeting at the end of each sprint to demonstrate the working product functionality completed during the sprint.

- **Sprint retrospective:** A meeting at the end of each sprint where the team discusses what went well, what could be changed, and how to make changes.

Source

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