To Agile or Not To Agile?

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

—Leonardo da Vinci

Introduction   Going agile is far from being a foreign concept. According to DevOps Digest, 88 percent of organizations claimed to have adopted agile methodologies as of February 2016*.

Agile is simple. Yet, many still find it difficult to explain what agile really is.

What if we tell you...   Agile is a mindset with lean processes that drives better and more effective results.

Agile processes include Scrum, Kanban, Continuous Delivery, Adaptive Software Development, Crystal, Feature-Driven Development, Pragmatic Programming, and more.

Like its processes, the agile mindset may not be a one-size-fits-all method. Some teams are better off operating solely in agile, while others work better with waterfall (or fast waterfall, which many mistook for agile). There are also teams that reach their full potential by operating in a hybrid method.
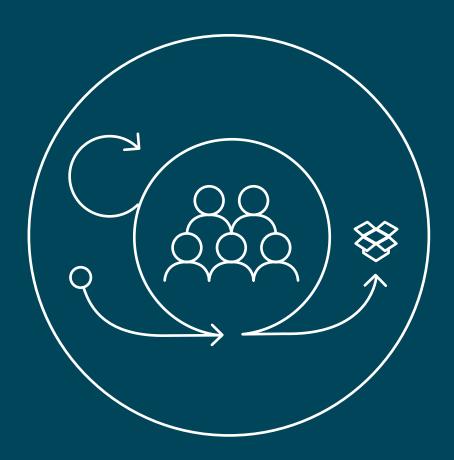
As to which process fits you best, it is up to you and your team to decide depending on the structure, nature, function, and objectives of your team.

Find Your Way...   We at Tempo believe in continuously experimenting with processes and methods that fit our teams best. In this book, we will look into the adoption of agile across teams—both development and non development—as well as agile outside a traditional work environment. You will also get to read more on some insights from agile gurus, Nicholas Muldoon and Christopher Dircks.

*Source: Testing Trends in 2016: Fully Agile or Just Fast Waterfall?

Chapter 1: Adopting agile across teams

By: Jessie VanderVeen

Adopting agile across teams   The benefits of adopting an agile methodology do not begin and end with your software development team. In fact, agile work methods have valuable applications in other departments within your organization, including:

- Marketing
- Development
- Finance
- Legal
- Human resources

While agile may not be a one-size-fits-all method, its fundamental principles—trust, teamwork, collaboration, open and direct communication, and efficiency—are critical components of any successful team.

Here are eight reasons the agile principles can extend across your entire organization:

1. Deliver a better end product   When a software team uses an agile approach, the focus is to release the product as quickly as possible, with the understanding that ongoing revisions will be made during multiple iterations. The team gathers feedback from stakeholders—typically a customer—to tweak the product until it meets the customer's needs.

Other departments could benefit from delivering their end product early and making adjustments based on various stakeholders' feedback and approval. With multiple iterations, teams are much less likely to reach the end of a project only to discover that they failed. Cross-functional teams work more closely from day one to prevent issues down the road.
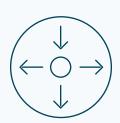
Example: *Product, sales, and customer service teams could provide marketing with feedback on a new marketing campaign, allowing the marketing team to troubleshoot issues and reduce problems early. That increases the chances that the campaign will meet its objectives, while preventing major revisions.*

2. Create a culture of open communication   Agile teams communicate often. Members give and receive feedback freely and frequently. As a result, employees see feedback—even criticism—as a way to learn and make improvements.

Fostering a culture of open communication is actually quite simple to implement for every team. It starts by offering employees a forum to share ideas. During daily huddles or standing meetings, require every employee to present both positive and negative feedback about various aspects of the work. Criticism should never be directed at people, and feedback should be specific and constructive.

Additionally, employees should present their progress and problems they are facing, and then listen as coworkers offer advice for overcoming issues. These talks keep everyone in the loop, but also ensure that no single employee is dealing with a problem on his or her own.

3. Reduce complex projects down to manageable chunks
An agile approach encourages you to take overwhelming projects and break them down until the workload is manageable. Every team can benefit from reducing daunting goals down to a series of clear action items that take a shorter time, and fewer people, to complete.

As a result, the team makes continuous ongoing progress toward the goal, without overwhelming employees or depleting resources. Once teams have broken major goals down, they should prioritize the action items, and deliver the most important aspects first.

4. Develop skills and capabilities   The most effective agile teams are cross-functional and self-organizing, so roles aren't static. Projects are broken down and work is delegated based on the circumstances and each person's knowledge, skill and availability. Members' roles will change from project to project. As a result, every person is continuously developing their skills, and teams have the flexibility and capability to move from one project to the next. All team members know how to perform all the necessary tasks, so projects don't come to a screeching halt if one member has to leave a project.

Non-software development teams can apply that idea by having team members switch roles from time to time and work collaboratively with other departments. The more skills each person masters, the more stable the team will be, especially during tumultuous times.

5. Increase capacity—and speed   An important component of agile is to find smarter ways to work. That includes investing in time management tools and reducing waste and inefficiencies. The more efficient a team becomes, the more work they can take on and the quicker they can release projects.

Every team in your organization should be actively seeking out policies, rules and processes that cause bottlenecks and slow progress. Then they should make changes—or eliminate altogether—problems. Doing so frees each team's time to focus on activities that move the team closer to meeting its goals, and the ones most likely to generate profits for the organization.

6. Commit to ongoing improvement   With agile methods, the work is never officially done. Instead, there is a commitment to making ongoing—often minor—improvements.

Every team in your organization should always be asking "What can we do to improve, become more effective and efficient?" More than that, they should constantly be seeking out problems to fix. Employees should be candid about the issues they face with work, and leaders should listen and make changes when possible.

7. Improve transparency   Agile teams typically invest in project management software that makes it possible for everyone to always have real-time updates on the status of projects. At any given time, employees can see where everything stands, who is doing what, and whether the team is on the right track to finish on time.

That kind of transparency makes it possible to plan more carefully, predict problems and troubleshoot issues in real time.

Adopt a system that allows employees to easily plan, collaborate, and communicate—one that offers 100% transparency.

8. Foster a culture of change acceptance   Change is inevitable, and employees who can handle change recover much faster than employees who resist change or hit the panic button whenever issues arise.

The agile methodology is built on the idea that regardless of how competent a team is and no matter how much planning went into a project, something at some point is going to change. When employees know that change is probable, they can more quickly move past their insecurities and keep the work moving.

All teams in your organization should spend time at the beginning of an initiative talking about what could go wrong and planning how to overcome issues; however, no team should become so tied to a plan that they refuse to alter course when the time inevitably comes.

Your take away: Don't stop with your software development team. Work with team leaders to begin using agile methods in every team in your organization. If you do, you will see an increase in efficiency, communication and productivity. Not only that, you build a more flexible and resilient organization that can manage the highs and lows of operating in today's ever-fluctuating business world.

Chapter 2: Finding Agile on a Soccer Field

By: Bjarki Óskarsson

Finding agile on a soccer field   In the previous chapter, we saw how agile principles can be applied across teams within the organization. But, if you pay close enough attention, you will also find the agile principles in other setups such as the soccer field.

In early July, the men's Icelandic national soccer team made it all the way to the quarterfinals in the European Championship 2016, eventually losing to the hosts, France. That was a very defining moment for Iceland.

That success and progress in the tournament was a brilliant effort, if you acknowledge the fact that only 330,000 people live in Iceland and it is the smallest nation ever to qualify for the European Championship.

When we think agile, we tend to think of development teams. Is that really so?

A closer dissection of the whole event shows that the Icelandic National team seems to owe their success to four key agile factors:

1. Clear vision and teamwork   Back in September 2011, the national team was ranked 131 in the [Fifa world ranking.](#) The team was struggling and many Icelanders believed that qualifying for a major tournament was a far out, unrealistic dream. Having failed to qualify on 23 occasions and being one of Europe's smallest nations, it was always going to be an uphill battle for Iceland.

In October the same year, Lars Lagerbäck and Heimir Hallgrímsson were hired as coaches for the Icelandic national team. In the coming 30 months that Lars and Heimir were in charge, the Icelandic national team's went from 131 to their all-time high of 23 in the Fifa world ranking in July 2015.

The team almost qualified for the World Cup 2014 in Brazil and finally managed to qualify for European Championship 2016 in France. The team's success at the European Championship might even take them to the 22nd spot when the new rankings were announced after the tournament. That's pretty good considering that there are 209 total teams.

Since the arrival of Lars and Heimir, the belief in the team has been evident and they are showing greater confidence than before. Lars is known for his disciplined approach and his vision for the team was clear from the beginning.

The players had a choice to adjust to Lars's rules or not be selected in the team. Following the new appointment of the coaches, results improved drastically and the players started believing that they could do the unthinkable—reaching a major tournament.

Eidur Gudjohnsen, a key member of the Icelandic team and a former Chelsea and Barcelona player, said it best:

"I played my first game (with the national team) in 1996, and I've never seen as good an atmosphere within the Icelandic national team as today."

2. Play to your team's strengths   When Lars and Heimir took over the team, they were fully aware they didn't have the world's best players at their disposal. The key to the team's success was a well organized team playing strategical football.

Playing to Iceland's strengths, the team played excellent defense and relied on counter-attacks and set-pieces. Lars and Heimir have both said in the media that they believe Iceland is not be best in the world but it may be the most organized one.

"We try to always repeat what our [strengths] are in the practice, and every team has to have some connection to this," —Lars Lagerbäck

This approached was praised by many around the world though it wasn't always popular with Iceland's opponents. For example, one of the world's greatest players, Cristiano Ronaldo, was quoted after a 1-1 draw with Iceland in the opening game for the Group F.

"I thought they'd won the Euro's the way they celebrated at the end, it was unbelievable. When they don't try to play and just defend, defend, defend, this in my opinion shows a small mentality and they are not going to do anything in the competition." —Cristiano Ronaldo

Boy, was he wrong.

Iceland continued to enjoy success in the Euro's by placing second in the group ahead of Austria and Portugal. The following game was in the knockout stages against one of the world's biggest footballing nations—England.

Iceland carried on its winning traditions in the European Championship and won the match 2-1 against all odds!

3. Prepare for the unknown   Once we entered the knockout stages of the tournament, it became even more vital to keep an agile mindset because the following opponent remains unknown until a few days before the match which makes preparation difficult.

Player injuries and suspensions also come into play which can alter team efforts. That is where an agile state of mind can be extremely helpful.

Having the ability to adapt to change is important in all success.

"I think it's really vital for a small country like ours to keep the continuity going. So don't change that today and this tomorrow, just build on what we are doing slowly." —Heimir Hallgrímsson

If you think about it, it is really not so different from an agile development team. As we iterate on a specific process, we will most likely see better results each time and that is exactly how the evolution of the Icelandic national soccer team has been in recent years.

4. Strong leadership   With the Icelandic team having had discipline issues with a few players in the past, it was clear that Lars had the players' respect from day one and is reflected in the way the players carried themselves on the pitch. Their focus has been evident throughout Lars' and Heimir's reign. Even the self belief and confidence in their own abilities, which probably had not been there before, was apparent.

Having clear guidelines is a huge benefit for any team and can play a big role in achieving goals.

Iceland's participation in the Euro's ended with them losing out to France 5-2 in the quarter-finals.

The Icelandic national soccer team's triumph shows that anything can be achieved with the right mindset as long as the team is well organized and everyone is working towards the same vision.

Chapter 3: Without Strong Teams, Nothing Else Matters

By: Nicholas Muldoon

Impact
The team is customer focused and strives to make a positive impact.

Quality
The team is minizing waste by delivering quality solutions.

Courage
The team operates in a safe environment.

Strong Team
Strives to maintain these qualities.

Kaizen
The team constantly seeks out and exploits opportunities to improve.

Flow
The team amplifies learning via iterative delivery.

Without Strong Teams, Nothing Else Matters

Strong teams.   That's what makes a company successful.
Without strong teams, nothing else matters.

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing environment, it is becoming
increasingly important for organizations to be able to respond and adapt
fast enough while scaling and growing at the same time.

More and more organizations are realizing the importance of creating
strong teams within the organization in order to stay afloat in the game.
Teams need to be courageous enough to change and are willing to
step out of the traditional processes ever so often for the sake of
driving growth.

The bottom line, teams need to be agile.

What is the definition of a strong team?   As companies strive to
build strong teams in order to grow, it is important to define and identify
the traits of a strong team above all else. The following five traits are
commonly found in strong teams:

- **Impact**
  The team is customer focused and strives to make a positive impact.

- **Quality**
  The team is minizing waste by delivering quality solutions.

- **Flow**
  The team amplifies learning via iterative delivery.

- **Kaizen**
  The team constantly seeks out and exploits opportunities to improve.

- **Courage**
  The team operates in a safe environment.

Agile is not the magic solution to a strong team... There are a lot of talks about going agile in order to create strong teams, but not many can provide a proper explanation on what it does.

We need to understand that agile is not Scrum, or Kanban, or any other particular process—there is not one process or mindset that is suitable for every team.

Some organizations already have a fixed process in place that seems to be working fine, which is fantastic. Having a fixed process does not necessarily mean they do not have strong teams within the organization because there is no causal relationship between a particular process and being a strong team.

It lies more within the environment we create.

To support strong teams, we need an environment where agile is seen as a mindset. It is a mindset that leads a team to learn, iterate, explore and constantly improve. In short, agile is a mindset that allows teams and people to adapt and change.

An agile organisation allows its people to continuously learn and adapt as needed. The approach to agility depends on the context and situation in which we find ourselves as a team or an organization. Therefore, whether or not there is already a fixed process in place, organizations should still be open and courageous to experiment with new approaches that may further enhance their performance.

A strong team begins with the right individuals   To build and foster a strong team within the company, we need to make sure we hire people with a learning mindset. And to that, we focus on the competencies of a candidate during the hiring process.

Example: For every open role, the interviewer should have an internal list of competencies that they are looking for among candidates—such as the ability to collaborate, the ability to communicate, did they exhibit adaptability, etc. These competencies are the yardsticks for the interview panel when assessing the candidates.

Hiring people with the right competencies without a structure is like searching for a needle in the hay. Having a structure will allow you to identify whether the candidate has the competencies you are looking for. I have found a structured interview technique called top-grading to be particularly effective in identifying these competencies as well as patterns in the candidate's career.

Top grading is…   A paired interview where the candidate is asked several questions for every role they have had over the past 10 years. For example:

1. What was your role? What were you hired to do in this role?
2. What were the highlights of your time in this role? What were the lowlights of your time in this role? Who is your manager?
3. What was your manager's name? How do you spell your manager's name?
4. If I were to call that manager to ask for your reference, what would your manager say were your highlights? What would your manager say were your lowlights?
5. What would your manager rate you on scale from 1-10?
6. And finally, why did you leave that role and move on to the next role or next company?

We found this technique quite effective at Twitter and introduced it for all interviews in the Product & Engineering group.

Have a vivid vision   Apart from hiring the amazing individuals for the team, a vivid vision is a very powerful tool for aligning people throughout the company. A vivid vision does not have to be complicated.

It is a one to three page document written by the leadership team that describes the company at a future point in time, say three years out from today.

Sharing a vivid vision with every single person in the organization allows each of them to come together and say "we've better get out of day-to-day, and go to the next level" or "how do we get the company to that huge place in the future".

Dream big, work smart   The most effective way to reach those big dreams is to work smarter. Team effectiveness is essential in helping us move towards the right direction. Adopting the lean principles is a sure-fire way to ensure team effectiveness.

The lean principles allow us to eliminate waste and focus on optimizing the whole organization, not merely your part within it. Leaders demonstrating the lean principles in their day-to-day behaviours will speed a transformation.

If you are hiring people and they are not getting stuff done, then obviously there is a tremendous amount of waste. The first step to achieving team effectiveness is to eliminate waste.

Example: Leaders can change the questions they ask. Instead of asking "When is it going be done?" they may ask:

- What is possible here?
- What other angles can you think of?
- What seems to be the main obstacle?
- If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do?

Grow with your team   When an organization grows, so will the teams within it. Continuous learning is a key aspect in maintaining strong teams. It is essential to have a sustainable pace so that people have the opportunity to fit learning into their regular workweek.

As people learn, they bring more to the team. And this is only good. Learning can come in many forms:

1. Carrying out retrospectives in a coffee shop, for example. It can be difficult to get the team to open up in a traditional setting. When you open up, you learn more on how to work together or build relationships among teams. Always experiment with new processes.
2. Back to school: Never stop learning. It can be holding a book club where people commit to reading one chapter a week and discussing or paying for tuition to external and/or online training. Some organizations pay and send people to conferences.

The key point is, never stop investing in your people.

Your take away: Strong teams create and have impact. They are focused on delivering values to their customers and they're delivering quality. They also have flow and are running experiments. They have kaizen to continuously improve how they operate as a team and how they deliver value to their customers. And finally, they have courage to have forthright conversations with one another and other teams.

Those traits with strong teams can successfully deliver values to your customers and that is what agility is at companies large and small.

Examples of agility...
- teams such as Gazebo at Twitter that had such strong cohesion they shared breakfast every single day,
- communicating a vivid vision at Atlassian that empowers teams to achieve by providing a vision of the future and no instructions on how to get there,
- the Engineering Effectiveness group at Twitter training thousands of people and shaving tens of minutes of the build, test, deploy cycle time,
- Rahul of the Safety group telling me the casual coffee shop retrospective was the best ever

Chapter 4: From Agile Team to Agile Enterprise

By: Christopher Dircks

From Agile Team to Agile Enterprise   At a recent Agile event, our team had a larger than usual presence, leading to a larger than usual amount of attention, which actually is just what a good consulting team needs.

I appreciate the times when we get pressed for answers and (valuable) insight, all within the 30 seconds it took to pass by our booth. From FinTech to Aerospace (yes, agile adoption is rocket science), the PA Consulting team learned volumes about real-world successes, experiences and need. And in turn, the agile community (or at least those passionate attendees) now knows who we are.

While I spoke to many fantastic professionals on a wide variety of agile topics, there was one conversation that was so prevalent, I found the need to focus many agile discussions since then on this one point.

But first, let's listen in on the conversation (which may sound very familiar to many of you):

Chris: Hello, are you having a good conference?
Agilist: Yes I am, thanks.
Chris: So how is the agile adoption going with your organization?
Agilist: We have a couple of teams doing well, but we can't seem to get traction at the enterprise level. (said with a tone of frustration)
Chris: Sorry to hear. One quick question: Do you have an agreed upon strategic plan for agile adoption that clearly communicates to the rest of your organization "why" your organization is moving to agile?
Agilist: Um, no… but we did team training.
Chris: Ouch, let's talk.

Continuing the conversations we heard stories of

- "trying for 6 years"
- "small silos of adoption"
- "we lost the only C-suite member that got it"
- "supporting services teams don't know how to transform along with us"

It was tough to watch and listen to very committed, passionate folks who were at their wit's end, knowing the benefits of agile, but not knowing how to take it farther, more broadly, or jump-start a lagging rollout, essentially make that jump from team level agile to Enterprise level agile. Their frustration set the path for the rest of those conversations, and to help get to the heart of the matter, I asked a couple more related questions:

- **Can you clearly articulate to the C-suite the value of agile and how it supports the goals of the Enterprise?**
- **Have you defined success and can you measure your progress?**

The vast majority of responses was "no" on all counts. Deeper discussion identified the overwhelming challenges agile champions are up against (and very often do not have the time, skills or support to address them):

- **Do you have committed executive sponsorship that understands the positive financial impact of a move to agile?**
- **Does your procurement department have processes and contract templates that support the delivery of services into your newly agile environment?**
- **Does your HR team understand how job descriptions and performance reviews will transform to align with the more to agile?**
- **How do you manage those in fear of losing responsibility, authority (and their jobs) in the world of flatter, self-directing teams and decentralized decision making?**

As you can see, all of these have nothing directly to do with sprints, backlogs, velocity, etc., but will kill an Enterprise-wide agile transformation all the same. All of these do, however, get addressed in a well-executed and well-developed strategic plan for agile transformation, providing your organization a documented understanding of the value to the organization.

This also becomes an empowering tool that the agile evangelist can wield when engaging different parts and levels of their organization.

Quick associated point: "Training" is a point in time event that starts and stops, just as your momentum and support will. When planning to expand agile out to the Enterprise, take the time to understand and communicate and gain consensus for why your organization is embracing agile and what it will take to get there.

So you have decided to step back and start looking at this strategically, what does that actually look like? To get started, your organization needs to discuss and agree (as a team) on the critical components for a successful agile adoption:

1.   Why are we adopting agile?

- Mission and guiding principles
- The top level objectives of your organization
- Measurable key result of meeting each objective

2.   What will it look like when we are done?

- As-is Current State (People, process and technology)
- Desired future state (required to meet above mentioned objectives) (People, process and technology)
- The gaps between as-is and future

3.   What work will it take to get there? Who will do it? When will it be done?

- Workstreams required to address above mentioned gaps— Including timeframe and team to support development of budget and business case

4. How will we execute?

- Clearly documented governance structure

Most importantly, how these critical items all tie together to support the overall business case for the agile transformation.

Your take away: You now have a strategic plan in hand, but unbeknownst to your teams, you have an unseen benefit of developing the strategy through required discussions that support increased transparency, increased understand, and a shared sense of ownership. All intangible contributors to success in any initiative, technology or otherwise, team level or Enterprise level.

Simply put, just as agile always stresses the delivery of value, and increased visibility and understanding, your agile adoption needs to incorporate those same values.

Chapter 5: Agile versus Continuous Delivery

By: Ólafur Jens Ólafsson

Agile versus Continuous Delivery In the previous chapters, we discussed a lot about agile being a mindset. Whether you have been going agile for some time now or not, you may question if it really is the right way for you to go. In the midst of finding your sweet spot with this mindset, it is very likely that you may have stumbled upon something else known as Continuous Delivery that seems to be the new bandwagon.

But, wait, what is Continuous Delivery?

Continuous Delivery—Agile's replacement? Over the years, Agile has evolved to mean so many different things that it is very hard to define what it actually means. Try asking three different people in your team or organization and you will definitely yield three different answers to what agile is and what it means.

It is also hard to nail down what activities you do day-to-day are within the scope of agile.

- Is it agile to write stuff on post-its? Sometimes!
- Is it agile to visualize your work? Probably!
- Is my teams' build process agile? Eeeermmmm….maybe?

Emergence of Continuous Delivery It is no wonder agile is beginning to take a backseat, because nobody can provide a clear answer as to what it is and how you do it!

Developers, especially, find that when things are hard to define, they are useless and are thus discarded.

However, from the ashes of agile, came a definable process which is supported by a growing community of developers for its ability to make life easier for them in the long run—the phoenix that is known as Continuous Delivery.

What is Continuous Delivery?

Jez Humble defines Continuous Delivery thusly:

"Continuous Delivery is the ability to get changes of all types—including new features, configuration changes, bug fixes and experiments—into production, or into the hands of users, safely and quickly in a sustainable way."

The goal is to make deployments—whether of a large-scale distributed system, a complex production environment, an embedded system, or an app- predictable, routine affairs that can be performed on demand.

We achieve all this by ensuring our code is always in a deployable state, even in the face of teams of thousands of developers making changes on a daily basis. Thus completely eliminating the integration, testing, and hardening phases that traditionally followed "dev complete", as well as code freezes.

Continuous Delivery: a holy grail?   This all sounds incredible. Unbelievable, even. Drama-free deployments are the holy grail for development teams.

If you have ever worked with or near a development team, you have definitely seen them enter the dreaded crunch mode—that time near a release when everything that is not quite done has to get finished along with all tasks related to building, packaging, testing and releasing before the software goes out the door.

It can be a nightmare.

Continuous Delivery promises to get rid of that stressful time. By using Continuous Delivery, you always have a fully-tested and working software product ready to deliver to the customer. Releasing it to the world should be a trivial matter, preferably just the press of a button and it's out. It is routine, it is predictable, it should be downright boring.

Sounds amazing! So, why do agile when you can adopt Continuous Delivery right now?

But, wait a minute... You can ask almost any developer and get the same reply:

"This stuff is actually very hard to do."

There is so much stuff in a normal teams' release process that is manual labor:

- Integrating the final stories,
- Quality Assurance,
- writing last-minute tests,
- doing a final release build,
- sometimes submitting to a marketplace (like Google Play or Apple Store or others)
- the list goes on and on.

When doing Continuous Delivery, you want to automate all of the above, while also delivering top-quality software. You can't stop making the product while implementing improvements to your process.

Some things are hard to automate and take a long time to get right, especially if you're only releasing every four weeks or even more rarely. The main reason releasing is hard for many teams is because teams release only when required to—it's a much rarer activity than other things the team does. For example, code review, pairing, writing tests, releasing, and testing.

The loop is longer. And long loops mean less learning.

Does Continuous Delivery replace Agile/Scrum? The Scrum framework makes very light requirement on how you release software or how frequently you do it.

One of the principles of agile software suggests is:

"Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.".

Continuous Delivery, on the other hand, makes this requirement:
"It's not enough to deliver working software frequently, you must be able to deliver software continuously".

Thus shortening the feedback loop of software creation. Again, shorter loops mean more learning.

This dovetails Scrum quite nicely: In a sprint, you are spending time writing code, tests and integrating. After a sprint, you should have a potentially releasable product increment, which in reality is just shorthand for "no way we are releasing this thing anytime soon".

If you are doing Continuous Delivery, you find the problems in your release process and solve them. This can be scary for some teams (especially if the impedance in the process isn't technology but people!), but here is where the agility mindset helps with discovering friction and implementing change to remove it.

When teams come up to release time, many incorporate tasks in the sprint that capture the work required to release the software. If you have spent time streamlining your delivery process to the point that these stories aren't required, you can release without drama or friction on the day of the sprint's end, thus saving you precious time your team can spend on valuable things, like foosball and NERF fights.

Continuous Delivery puts the focus on delivering software, and making that process as smooth and frictionless as possible—a topic that scrum and agile do not delve into.

By putting this critical part of the software creation process on center stage, all sorts of improvements take place.

- You test things more rigorously,
- You spend time to improve your staging and production environments to be able to accept new relases more easily,
- You spend less time on building and more on providing value to users
- Continuous Delivery brings developers into the driver's seat of how to continuously improve, which is a fantastic thing. That is how things should be on a high-performing agile team.

Your take away: Ultimately, Continuous Delivery is a mindset, just like agility is a mindset. It helps you surface problems in your delivery process and encourages you to fix them so that you can deliver quicker.

Continuous Delivery complements agile or scrum nicely, since neither specifies much on how to deliver software—and delivering quicker is definitely a worthy goal for any agile development team.

Conclusion

Conclusion

Even though the Agile Manifesto dates all the way back to 2001 with evolved processes under its wings, its first and most important principle remains the same today:

"Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software."

If you find yourself constantly ending up with a team entering the dreaded crunch mode as mentioned in Chapter 5, which can be a nightmare, it is a sign that the team is not agile.

Then, it is time to make a change. Our environments will continue to evolve over time, and so will our methods as well as processes.

Teams need to be willing to change and experiment with new methods in order to unleash their ultimate potential in upholding the core agile principle—customer satisfaction through early and continuous delivery of valuable software. The same mindset applies to non-development teams; especially those that are operating within a service mindset.

If you look closely enough, agile processes are everywhere. In Chapter 2, we discussed agility on a soccer field which took the men's Icelandic national soccer team further than ever in the European Championship 2016.

An agile team allows space for growth and delivery.
All in all, the best way to achieve high performing agility still boils down to having the right people with the right mindset in the team. Without strong teams, nothing else matters (Chapter 3).

With the right tools and the right mindset, you are pretty set to be on your way towards your organization's big vision!

"The only thing that is constant is change." —Heraclitus

Author's bio:

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Christopher Dircks   Chris is an Agile certified trainer with 10+ years of experience working with Agile teams across industries and at varying levels of Agile adoption. Chris' skills and experience includes development of corporate Agile adoption strategies, creation of associated rollout plans, overseeing pilot programs, training of Agile teams,mentoring corporate leadership, and acting in embedded roles with technical and business teams. His ability to engage, understand and motivate both technical and business teams helps drive the required visibility and transparency to remove blockers to communication, in turn building trust, consensus and driving engagement, ownership and accountability.

Ólafur Jens Ólafsson   Ólafur is one of our brilliant Agile Coaches at Tempo. He joined Tempo after finishing his M.Sc. degree in IT Engineering in Aarhus, Denmark, where he lived for two years. Before that, he worked as a developer in a focused Scrum team. When not obsessing about cloud technology and agile methodology, he enjoys mountain biking, sci-fi books, and a strong Indian Pale Ale.

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