**COMP 2831 Week 8 Exercise - A01029917 Andrew Hewitson**

**Agile Methodology**

I don’t work in the software industry, so my current workplace doesn’t exactly fit the mold to which Agile methodology can be applied. A full model of the Agile methodology couldn’t be implemented within my work environment. There is a lot of places within my work which could benefit from applying parts of it though and in some cases, the way we handle daily tasks may even resemble Agile to some degree.

From the Agile Manifesto at <http://agilemanifesto.org/principles>:

1. Our highest priority is indeed to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of our services. Our industry is highly competitive and merely beating someone because you have the cheapest price hasn’t been enough for years. Consistently delivering high quality products on or ahead of deadlines is important because more often than nought clients aren’t looking for the cheapest solution so much as they are looking for the highest quality and most reliable vendor that fits their budget. Their timeframes for their project are almost always critical and the projects these things represent can be worth millions and saving a few dollars only to look stupid in front of the board of directors because a quality project was delivered on time is the worst nightmare of most of my clients. So, our goal is always to make sure that never happens.
2. As my current industry isn’t as pliable as the digital world it’s often hard to “Welcome” changing requirements. We try to maintain a positive outlook when clients do make last minute changes. We work hard to be as accommodating as possible but often these changes affect delivery dates and costs and it’s important to let clients know this up front. As these outcomes often affects the degrees of changes the client ends up wanting to make.
3. Deliver working software frequently. This one doesn’t really work in my industry. With the way our process works projects need to be well thought out in advance but as the project becomes reality there is usually only one tangible that is delivered. Proofing is a big part of my industry though so timely exchanges of well thought out proofs (these are initially done electronically but eventually become mock-ups (also called dummies)) is a big part of getting a final project going quickly and efficiently.
4. Continual communication across all business lines and development roles required for the project. This is very important in what I do. We are constantly in discussion with the client and our own production staff. Especially in the development stages. In the end it’s important that the project satisfies all the clients needs. Generally, these needs are pretty set by the time a project gets rolling but what we normally encounter isn’t that the needs change so much as the needs were not clearly communicated in the planning process. So constant communication between all stakeholders through the course of the project is important to minimize mistakes made from miscommunication.
5. Building projects around motivated individuals. This one is very important. We have a lot of staff that can be hard to handle. They are very good at their jobs but lack certain social nuances. It’s important in the planning stage to make sure that the most suitable person for a project is tasked with working on that project. Then to clearly communicate the project to that person or group of people and then trust them to complete the task on time to the best of their ability. When you second guess them or undermine or dictate to them then they tend to rebel, and it feels like they almost intentionally undermine the success of the project. When they feel respected and invested in the project the work is almost always completed quicker and to a higher quality.
6. Face to face conversation is important as well. It is the most efficient and most effective. It’s not always the most convenient though as often clients are across town and you wouldn’t drive for an hour to have a 5-minute conversation. When these types of meetings arise then the next best option is usually a phone call. Emails are also important because of the paper trail they leave. Email communication can take hours to solve something that can take minutes on the phone. Face to face though is best because things can be solved quickly but also because of the ability to read body language often you can achieve more than expected with a face to face.
7. Working software is the primary measure of success. This one doesn’t really translate into my industry. Our measure of success is generally based more on the metrics of time. Once a project is underway we can judge how long it will take until completion based on time. Another primary measure of progress is after the first tangible is delivered and we know that the customer is happy with the product. (Before we make 20,000 more of them). So, I guess in that way this part of it might be relatable.
8. Promoting sustainable development. This one is also difficult. We work hard to make sure that the systems in place are efficient and sustainable. Our business is very up and down as there are busy times and slow times. When it’s busy we are constantly fighting tight deadlines (some might say unreasonable sometimes) and work overload. When it’s like this it’s difficult to prevent employee fatigue and burnout. At the same time, we also have slow times where the employees are not needed to work at 100%. Finding that balance where it was always the perfect amount of busy would be ideal but unfortunately that is not something that would exist in our business.
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility. This is very much something that we work with. From the first aspect of quoting to when a job goes live we are looking for the most efficient ways to do every step of the process. Generally, it is only by finding the best practices that we can complete projects on time and for a profit.
10. This continues from 9. Where Simplicity and maximizing the amount of work being done is essential. For us that could mean moving a piece of equipment or arranging the workspace so that the employee doesn’t have to walk as far. If the process is made to be complicating it immediately becomes time consuming and it increases the frustration level of people involved which directly affects the quality and speed of the work being done.
11. The best architectures, requirements and designs emerge from self organizing teams (self directed teams). We do find that the people that work in specific duties are the best people suited to organize their portion of a job. In our case though sometimes what might be better for person A is not better for person B and a management decision must be made to make sure that the overall gains are maximized. Letting the employees sort out small daily tasks amongst themselves is very organic and contributes to motivating individuals and providing them with the feeling of ownership on a project or set of tasks. Sometimes, much to the chagrined, of the employee their work must be negatively impacted to give a positive impact for the project. In a perfect world they would all see that for themselves and work for a common good but in our work situation you must mediate this to make sure it happens efficiently.
12. Daily stand up meetings. It would be very helpful if at regular intervals (daily or maybe even just at the end of each project) we could reflect on the project and on what went wrong (or right) and how we can avoid (or repeat) this behaviour in the future. Notes could be taken to assist in making changes for future projects and larger infrastructure changes could be best determined which could implemented on our down cycles when more time is available. Currently, our meetings to discuss these things could be described more like elevator pitches. Where people discuss the status of projects etcetera in quick intervals at random times when it’s convenient. These discussions are never documented and quite often the people that would be best suited to affect change are not even present.