Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

by Kate Eby on Jul 29, 2016

In This Article ▼

In this article, you'll find a brief synopsis of the Agile Manifesto. This easy-to-follow guide provides an overview of this approach, and uncovers its impact on the software development industry.

Included on this page, you'll find the history of the Agile Manifesto (#history-of-the-agile-manifesto), the four values of the Agile Manifesto (#the-four-values-of-the-agile-manifesto), and the twelve Agile Manifesto principles (#the-twelve-agile-manifesto-principles).

History of the Agile Manifesto

The Agile Manifesto (http://www.agilemanifesto.org/) and the Twelve Principles of Agile Software (http://agilemanifesto.org/principles.html) were the consequences of industry frustration in the 1990s. The enormous time la between business requirements (the applications and features customers were requesting) and the delivery of technology that answered those needs, led to the cancelling of many projects. Business, requirements, and

waterfall-vs-kanban), were not meeting the demand for speed and did not take advantage of just how quickly software could be altered.

In 2000, a group of seventeen "thought leaders," including Jon Kern (https://agilemanifesto.org/authors.html), Kent Beck (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_Beck), Ward Cunningham (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ward_Cunningham), Arie van Bennekum (http://www.acm-software.com/en/trainer/arie-van-bennekum-2/), and Alistair Cockburn (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alistair_Cockburn), met first at a resort in Oregon and later, in 2001, at The Lodge at Snowbird ski resort in Utah. It was at the second meeting where the Agile Manifesto and the Twelve Principles were formally written. The Manifesto reads:

> "We are uncovering better ways of developing
> software by doing it and helping others do it.
> Through this work we have come to value:

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

> "That is, while there is value in the items on
> the right, we value the items on the left more."

To find a wide selection of free Agile templates for your next Agile project, visit Best Agile Project Management Excel Templates (https://www.smartsheet.com/agile-project-management-excel-templates).

The Four Values of The Agile Manifesto

The Agile Manifesto is comprised of four foundational values and 12 supporting principles which lead the Agile approach to software development. Each Agile methodology applies the four values in different ways, but all of them rely on them to guide the development and delivery of high-quality, working software.

1. Individuals and Interactions Over Processes and Tools
The first value in the Agile Manifesto is "Individuals and interactions over processes and tools." Valuing people more highly than processes or tools

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

development, the team is less responsive to change and less likely to meet customer needs. Communication is an example of the difference between valuing individuals versus process. In the case of individuals, communication is fluid and happens when a need arises. In the case of process, communication is scheduled and requires specific content.

2. Working Software Over Comprehensive Documentation

Historically, enormous amounts of time were spent on documenting the product for development and ultimate delivery. Technical specifications, technical requirements, technical prospectus, interface design documents, test plans, documentation plans, and approvals required for each. The list was extensive and was a cause for the long delays in development. Agile does not eliminate documentation, but it streamlines it in a form that gives the developer what is needed to do the work without getting bogged down in minutiae. Agile documents requirements as user stories, which are sufficient for a software developer to begin the task of building a new function.

The Agile Manifesto values documentation, but it values working software more.

3. Customer Collaboration Over Contract Negotiation

Negotiation is the period when the customer and the product manager work out the details of a delivery, with points along the way where the details may be renegotiated. Collaboration is a different creature entirely. With development models such as Waterfall, customers negotiate the requirements for the product, often in great detail, prior to any work starting. This meant the customer was involved in the process of development before development began and after it was completed, but not during the process. The Agile Manifesto describes a customer who is engaged and collaborates throughout the development process, making. This makes it far easier for development to meet their needs of the customer. Agile methods may include the customer at intervals for periodic demos, but a project could just as easily have an end-user as a daily part of the team and attending all meetings, ensuring the product meets the business needs of the customer.

4. Responding to Change Over Following a Plan

Traditional software development regarded change as an expense, so it was to be avoided. The intention was to develop detailed, elaborate plans, with a defined set of features and with everything, generally, having as high a priority as everything else, and with a large number of many

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

With Agile, the shortness of an iteration means priorities can be shifted from iteration to iteration and new features can be added into the next iteration. Agile's view is that changes always improve a project; changes provide additional value.

Perhaps nothing illustrates Agile's positive approach to change better than the concept of Method Tailoring, defined in An Agile Information Systems Development Method (http://journals.tubitak.gov.tr/elektrik/issues/elk-04-12-2-5-0404-6.pdf) in use as: "A process or capability in which human agents determine a system development approach for a specific project situation through responsive changes in, and dynamic interplays between contexts, intentions, and method fragments." Agile methodologies allow the Agile team to modify the process and make it fit the team rather than the other way around.

The Twelve Agile Manifesto Principles

The Twelve Principles are the guiding principles for the methodologies that are included under the title "The Agile Movement." They describe a culture in which change is welcome, and the customer is the focus of the work. They also demonstrate the movement's intent as described by Alistair Cockburn, one of the signatories to the Agile Manifesto, which is to bring development into alignment with business needs.

The twelve principles of agile development include:

1. **Customer satisfaction through early and continuous software delivery** – Customers are happier when they receive working software at regular intervals, rather than waiting extended periods of time between releases.

2. **Accommodate changing requirements throughout the development process** – The ability to avoid delays when a requirement or feature request changes.

3. **Frequent delivery of working software** – Scrum accommodates this principle since the team operates in software sprints or iterations that

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

throughout the project – Better decisions are made when the business and technical team are aligned.

5. **Support, trust, and motivate the people involved** – Motivated teams are more likely to deliver their best work than unhappy teams.

6. **Enable face-to-face interactions** – Communication is more successful when development teams are co-located.

7. **Working software is the primary measure of progress** – Delivering functional software to the customer is the ultimate factor that measures progress.

8. **Agile processes to support a consistent development pace** – Teams establish a repeatable and maintainable speed at which they can deliver working software, and they repeat it with each release.

9. **Attention to technical detail and design enhances agility** – The right skills and good design ensures the team can maintain the pace, constantly improve the product, and sustain change.

10. **Simplicity** – Develop just enough to get the job done for right now.

11. **Self-organizing teams encourage great architectures, requirements, and designs** – Skilled and motivated team members who have decision-making power, take ownership, communicate regularly with other team members, and share ideas that deliver quality products.

12. **Regular reflections on how to become more effective** – Self-improvement, process improvement, advancing skills, and techniques help team members work more efficiently.

The intention of Agile is to align development with business needs, and the success of Agile is apparent. Agile projects are customer focused and encourage customer guidance and participation. As a result, Agile has grown to be an overarching view of software development throughout the software industry and an industry all by itself.

Use Smartsheet to Get Started with Agile

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

for Agile project management. You can make real-time updates and alert your team about the new changes, and share your plan with internal and external stakeholders to increase transparency and keep everyone on the same page.

Since Smartsheet is cloud-based you can track project requirements, access documents, create timelines, and send alerts from virtually anywhere. Choose from broad range of smart views – Grid, Calendar, Gantt, Dashboards – to manage projects the way you want. Plus, with our newest view, Card View, teams have a more visual way to work, communicate, and collaborate in Smartsheet. Card View enables you to focus attention with rich cards, give perspective with flexible views, and prioritize and adjust work more visually. Act on tasks and change status of work by dragging and dropping cards through lanes to immediately share decisions with the entire team.

Want more Agile project management tips and best practices? Don't miss our Project Management Resource Hub (https://www.smartsheet.com/resources/project-management) for the latest articles, templates, videos, and more!

smartsheet

ABOUT US   LEADERSHIP   INVESTORS   NEWSROOM

CAREERS   PRIVACY   TERMS OF USE   CONTACT US

10,000FT   DEVELOPERS & API   HELP

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto

Comprehensive Guide to the Agile Manifesto