

Agile Project Management for Business Managers

Learn to how to blend Agile and traditional project management to make Agile work for your business



Agile versus Waterfall Recap

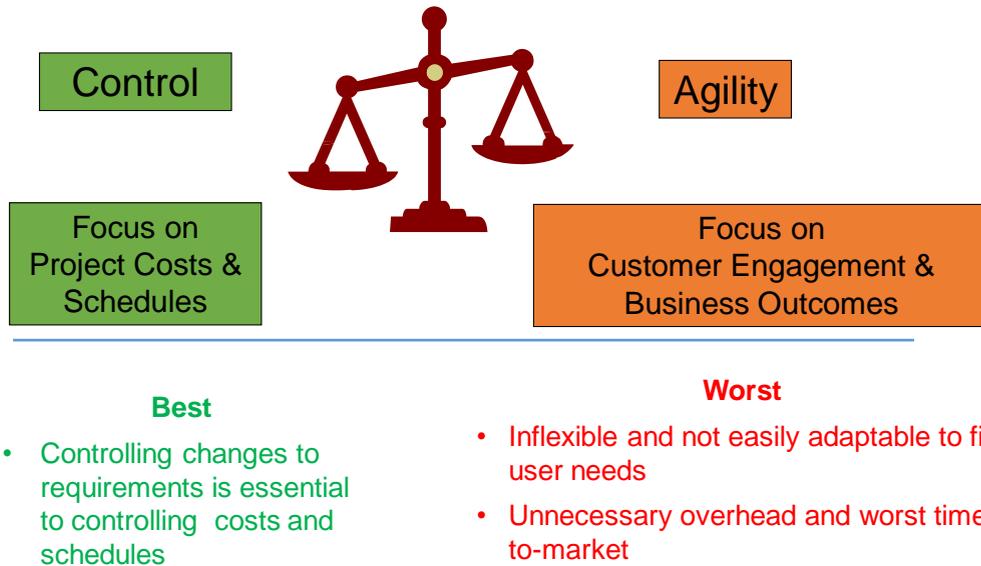
“AGILE” VERSUS “WATERFALL”

Note

- This lecture assumes that the student has taken the course, “Learn the Truth about Agile versus Waterfall” as a recommended prerequisite for this course
- This lecture is only a brief recap of the material in that course

In this lecture, I want to do a brief recap of some of the topics that were discussed in the Agile versus Waterfall course. Please note that this lecture assumes that the student has taken the course, “Learning the Truth About Agile versus Waterfall” as a recommended prerequisite to this course. This lecture is only a brief recap of the material in that course

Plan-driven Advantages and Limitations



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A “plan-driven” approach is best at situations where some level of predictability and control is required over the costs and schedules of a project and that’s what it is most suited for. An example would be a construction project where the customer is expecting to pay a fixed price for completion of a project and also expects it to be completed on time. Naturally, these projects would have to have a fair amount of certainty and specificity about the requirements in order for that approach to work.

The down-side of a “plan-driven” approach is that it’s the worst at providing some level of flexibility and adaptivity to operate in more uncertain environments where it is much more difficult to totally define the requirements prior to the start of the project. In those environments where there is a very high level of uncertainty, it might be very unrealistic to apply that kind of approach and the change control mechanisms might make it very inflexible to fit uncertain user needs as the project progresses. It also might create unnecessary overhead to try to provide that level of planning and control and delay the overall time-to-market.

Agile/Adaptive Approach

Agility

Focus on
Customer Engagement &
Business Outcomes

Worst

Scope creep - encourages customer to define and change requirements as the design develops

Best

- Higher quality - customer is directly engaged throughout the design effort as it progresses
- Reduced overhead and faster time to market

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An Agile approach is the worst possible approach in terms of predictability and control over project costs and schedules. Because it is designed for an uncertain environment, changes are encouraged as the project progresses in order to further refine the deliverables to maximize the value to the customer. Naturally, that can easily result in scope creep and any estimates of the project costs and schedules are probably not be very reliable.

Where an Agile approach really shines; however, is in the area of adaptivity to maximize the business value it produces in an uncertain environment. Because the customer is more directly engaged in the project as it progresses, changes are encouraged, and feedback is more immediate; the final deliverables are much more likely to provide a higher level of quality and value to the customer. Simplifying the level of control that is applied to the project and using an iterative and incremental delivery process, will also typically reduce the overhead associated with the project and result in faster time-to-market.

Choosing the Right Approach



Plan-Driven Approach
(Low Uncertainty)

Versus



Agile Approach
(High Uncertainty)



- The level of uncertainty in a project is a major factor in choosing the right approach
- Neither a plan-driven approach nor an Agile approach is inherently good or bad, but each has advantages and limitations

Many real-world situations require a blend of the two approaches.

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The key point is that the level of uncertainty in a project is a major factor in choosing the right approach. If the level of uncertainty is relatively low, a traditional plan-driven approach based on a predictive control model may be very appropriate. On the other hand, if the level of uncertainty is high; a traditional plan-driven approach doesn't work well and a more Agile or adaptive approach is probably needed.

Neither of those approaches is inherently good or bad, but each has advantages and limitations in different situations – a problem occurs if you try to force-fit a project to one of those approaches and it doesn't fit.

In many cases, the right solution is to go in the other direction and fit the approach to the problem, and the right approach isn't a binary choice between "Agile" and "Waterfall" - many real-world situations require a blend of the two approaches.

How Do I Make this Work for My Business?



Your Business Goals & Objectives



Agile Approach

Versus



Plan-Driven Approach

Adopting an Agile approach can have a significant impact on a business and is not likely to be successful unless it is well integrated with the business environment.

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The right approach will also be very dependent on your business strategy and the nature of the business. Adopting an Agile approach can have a significant impact on a business and it is not likely to be successful unless it is well-integrated with your overall business strategy and consistent with the business objectives you're trying to achieve. That's what this course is all about – it is designed to help you develop a well-integrated approach that is well-aligned with your business goals and objectives and will have a very high impact on your business.

I've developed a complete curriculum for Project Managers which goes into a lot more detail on how to choose an appropriate model to fit a particular project. This course provides an overview of some of the material in that course, but is really oriented around how to integrate an Agile or adaptive project management approach with your business.

NEXT LECTURE... POPULAR STEREOTYPES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

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In the next lecture, we're going to talk about some popular stereotypes and misconceptions that exist about both Agile and traditional plan-driven project management and how they might impact your business environment. It's important to get past these stereotypes and misconceptions in order to see Agile and traditional plan-driven approaches in a new light as complementary to each other rather than competitive and to see how they can be blended together to fit a given situation.

Thanks for taking the time to do this lecture and I'll look forward to working with you in the rest of the course.