

Introduction to Agile Project Management

Learn How to Apply Project Management Practices in an Agile Environment



Agile vs Waterfall Recap

Background Material



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Hi, with this lesson, we're going to start a new section on some background material – this is simply a quick refresher on material we have covered in previous courses

Background Material



Agile versus Waterfall Recap
Choosing the Right Approach

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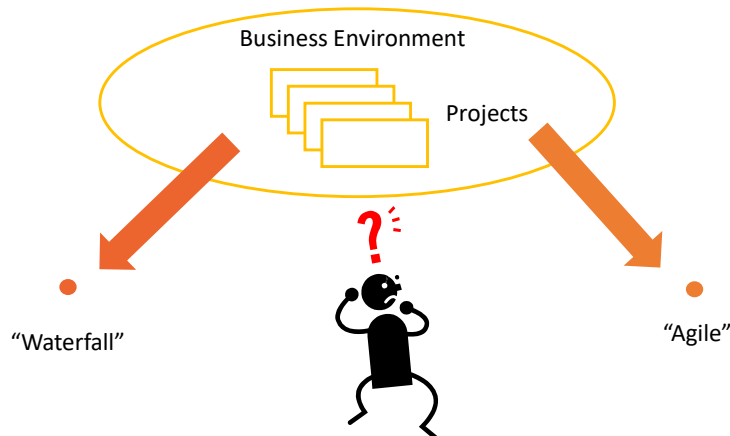
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Here's a brief outline of what we're going to cover in this module:

- We're going to do a brief recap of the Agile versus Waterfall course
- And then we're going to do a short summary on choosing the Right Approach between an Agile approach, a plan-driven approach, and a hybrid approach

Agile vs Waterfall Recap

Agile and "Waterfall" are often thought of as two binary, mutually-exclusive choices and people try to force-fit projects to one of those extremes



That causes a lot of confusion and consternation

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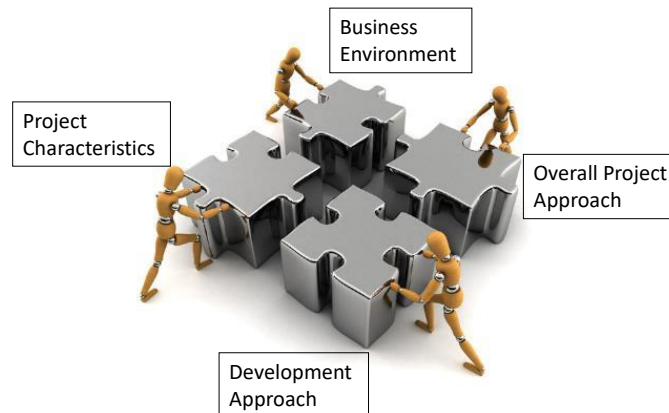
Before we get into the rest of the course, I want to do a very brief recap of some of the key points that were covered earlier in my Agile versus Waterfall course because it's very important to develop the right mindset about Agile and Waterfall before we get into the rest of the course.

The first key point is that Agile and "Waterfall" are often thought of as two binary, mutually-exclusive choices which causes people to attempt to force-fit their business and projects to one of those two extremes. That causes a lot of confusion and consternation because it doesn't often result in a good fit.

That one misconception about Agile and Waterfall is a very important mindset change that is essential to make progress in this course. It is very important to see Agile and Waterfall in a fresh new perspective as complementary rather than competitive approaches and recognize that they are not mutually exclusive and the principles and practices behind both Waterfall and Agile can be blended together as necessary to fit a given situation.

Agile versus Waterfall Recap (cont.)

A better solution is to fit the approach (or combination of approaches) to the project and to the business environment



That may require more skill but it definitely can be done!

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In this course we're going to focus on going in the other direction and fitting the approach to the project and sometimes that will require blending together Agile and traditional plan-driven project management principles and practices in the right proportions to fit the project.

That may require more skill but it definitely can be done! It requires a broader knowledge of different methodologies (both Agile and plan-driven) and a deeper understanding of how those methodologies work in order to understand how to blend them together to fit a given situation.

Agile versus Waterfall Recap (cont.)

Agile and traditional plan-driven project management principles and practices are often treated as separate and independent domains of knowledge



It's No Wonder that Project Managers Might be Confused by This!

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It's important to recognize that we are at an early stage in the evolution of Agile Project management and to add to the confusion that already exists, Agile and traditional plan-driven project management are often treated as separate and independent domains of knowledge with little or no integration between the two by PMI and other project management forums.

In this course, we will help you begin to understand these two areas at a deeper level as complementary to each other instead of competitive and begin to see these two areas from a much more integrated perspective.

It's important to understand that this is an area that is constantly evolving and there is a lot of work to be done within the project management community to develop a more integrated approach that fully integrates both Agile and traditional plan-driven project management principles and practices.

What's Are the Benefits of Adopting a More Agile/Adaptive Approach?

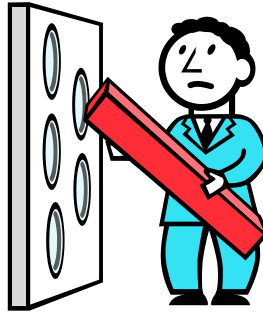
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It's important to objectively understand the strengths and weaknesses of both an Agile and a plan-driven approach so in the next few slides, I want to summarize some of the key benefits of adopting a more adaptive or agile approach.

Why Is a More Adaptive (Agile) Approach Important?

Adaptability - an alternative way for companies to manage projects that involve high levels of uncertainty



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There's a lot of hype associated with Agile – like many new things, it has become somewhat of the “Program du Jour” and many companies want to jump on the Agile bandwagon without necessarily fully understanding why they're getting into it and exactly what they expect to get out of it. The benefits are going to be somewhat different among different companies, but I've summarized here what I think are some of the most important general benefits of developing a more adaptive (Agile) approach:

1. First is **adaptability** – Many people make the mistake of using a “one size fits all” approach for all projects and that just doesn't work well in all situations. You need to be able to fit the methodology to the project and Agile offers an alternative approach that is particularly well-suited for projects that have high levels of uncertainty.

Why Is a More Adaptive (Agile) Approach Important? (cont.)

Time-to-market - the potential to significantly accelerate the startup phase of new projects



Accelerating the startup of the project

Delivering functionality incrementally

Improved efficiency will accelerate progress

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The next one is **time-to-market**. A lot of people believe Agile provides much faster time-to-market and that's generally true, but not necessarily always true. The primary emphasis in Agile, in my opinion, is producing a higher level of customer value by taking a more adaptive approach to meet user needs. That might actually take longer in some situations because it might involve a certain amount of trial-and-error experimentation but there are several ways that an Agile approach can significantly reduce time-to-market:

First, the startup phase of projects can be reduced by deferring some of the upfront planning that might be done with a traditional project management approach.

Another way Time-to-market can be significantly reduced in an Agile project is delivering functionality incrementally.

Finally, Operating more efficiently with less overhead can also have a significant impact on accelerating progress.

Why Is a More Adaptive (Agile) Approach Important? (cont.)

Reduced Costs - opportunities to reduce the costs and overhead associated with projects



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Third, In many situations, Agile and Lean thinking in general offer the potential to **reduce the costs and overhead** associated with a project. By putting the emphasis on producing value as opposed to maximizing control, there is a lot of opportunity to reduce the costs of documentation and other overhead in a project. That's not to say that documentation and other forms of project control and administration are all bad things to do, but it is definitely good to take a hard look at those items and see if they really produce value and who they produce value for.

Why Is a More Adaptive (Agile) Approach Important? (cont.)

Customer Satisfaction - produce higher value solutions that are more well-aligned with user needs



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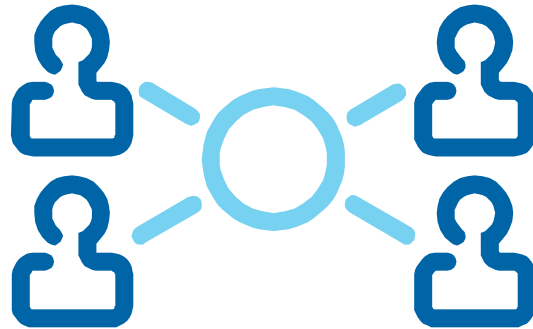
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The big advantage in many situations, as I've mentioned is **higher customer satisfaction** that results from producing solutions that are more well-aligned with customer needs by engaging customers more directly in the project to provide feedback and inputs as the project progresses rather than relying heavily on documenting requirements upfront prior to the start of the project.

There is also a significant improvement in the quality of the products that are produced because quality testing is a much more integral part of the development effort.

Why Is a More Adaptive (Agile) Approach Important? (cont.)

Organizational Agility - build much higher levels of collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility within the organization



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Finally, a big advantage of an Agile approach is that it offers the opportunity to have a **significant positive impact on the culture of the whole organization** by building a spirit of collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility within the organization. That can be a difficult thing to achieve but the benefits are well worth it in terms of organizational synergy and productivity.

Just as an Agile approach can make a project more nimble and adaptive, an Agile transformation can have a huge impact on making an organization much more dynamic and competitive.

NEXT LECTURE... CHOOSING THE RIGHT APPROACH

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In the next section of the course, we're going to talk about some useful general guidelines on choosing the right approach for a project.

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