BEST PRACTICE

AGILE
A Pocket Guide
for responsive organizations

Theo Gerrits | Rik de Groot | Jeroen Venneman

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AGILE FOR RESPONSIVE ORGANIZATIONS
A POCKET GUIDE

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AGILE

for Responsive Organizations - A Pocket Guide

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Colophon

Foreword

A coincidence of circumstances does not exist as far as I am concerned. Everything has cross links, causal relationships or other types of connections to each other.

I know Jeroen, Rik and Theo, the authors of this Agile pocket guide personally from the Agile Master certification. For years, they have been active in the Agile world. Indeed I have known Jeroen for more than 15 years: We are both involved in Agile communities like the DSDM Consortium and the Agile Consortium.

The day before I wrote this preface I had a conversation with a good colleague from the time when I was involved in the creation of the Agile Manifesto. This coincidence of circumstances also has a connection: she is currently a colleague of the authors.

A coincidence? Not for me. Relevant? Not for this book, but certainly for me. After all, Agile originated from networks of professionals who shared a fundamental drive. This drive is characterized by a high ambition and the absolute need to share knowledge. This drive still exists. The proof is now in your hands with this pocket guide. Agile is no longer a trend or hype. Agile is indelibly present in our market, our services and our thinking. MoSCoW prioritizing, timeboxing and iterating are more and more established in daily life.

On a regular basis I get in contact with organizations that claim to do, or even to be Agile. This is usually supported with quotes like: "we work Agile, we don't document", "we work Agile because we work in sprints", or "we work Agile but without end users". An old friend of mine, a professional soldier, would call this "blistering". And again there is a relationship here. Agile is not about 'just trying something' or 'doing what pleases you'. Agile is also not a method. Agile is an

interaction model, a concept and a mindset. The success of Agile is in the implementation of the mindset and the correct application of the techniques. Methods such as DSDM, Scrum, XP and the like are helpful in this and make it concrete.

How do you get there? How do you take Agile from the project level to the organizational level? From short cyclic project results to short cyclic product development? My advice is to use this book and its ideas as an inspiration. The authors have provided their experiences in this book, and these experiences can really help you. Use it! Enjoy reading this book and I wish you great 'Agile success'!

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Agile Thought Leader at PMtD
Certified Agile Master
Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF)

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Introduction

Agile provides effective results. The metaphor of a moving target and the corresponding need for feedback and constant (re)aiming, fits really well. Since the early days of Agile, this different way of working has taken relatively little time to become a reality at the team level. However, at the organizational level it takes more time, a lot more. Many organizations are currently experiencing this issue when using Agile at a program and organizational level. Whilst several studies support the fact that Agile at a team level has become mainstream, there is undoubtedly the need for a proven approach for transforming into an Agile organization.

Agile transformations at the organization level have been our playing ground for many years now. In response to questions from managers, teams and others, we started to investigate and analyze these transformations. We brought together materials, ideas and vision on the subject and have made these both concrete and practical.

This book is widely applicable and focuses on the Agile approach from team - up to organizational level, and on the main issues that you encounter during the transformation.

Agile originated from the IT domain, and from this domain it gained the most experience. Many examples in this book are based on situations with an IT component. However, Agile is not limited only to IT, the principles are broadly applicable. At an organization-level Agile automatically crosses the IT borders by connecting to product-development, -delivery and -innovation. An example of the broad applicability of Agile is the way this book was created.

We want to thank our inspiring colleagues, clients, friends and members of the Agile communities. Sharing experience and

knowledge gave us the motivation to write this book. We hope that this book in return will contribute to motivating the growing Agile community.

In particular, we want to thank the following people: Serge Beaumont, Remco Dijkxhoorn, Menno van Eekelen, Edwin Oldenbeuving, Pieter Rijken and Erik van der Velde.

Special thanks go to the reviewers: Mary Beijleveld, Arie van Bennekum, Geert Bossuyt, Dick Croes, Karel van de Meent, Sabine Scheepstra, Ronald Sperber and Patrick Verheij.

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Theo Gerrits, Rik de Groot and Jeroen Venneman

Reading guide

This book covers a wide range of topics. These topics can be read independently of each other, as well as reading the book as a whole from beginning to end. The book is grouped into the following chapters.

What is Agile?
Agile is a mindset, a way of thinking and working. What does this mean and what can you achieve with it; why Agile? Where does Agile come from, where does it stand today, where is it going and how does Agile fit in an existing context?

Agile elaborated
What does 'getting started with Agile' mean in practice? Agile is an evolutionary process in which a multidisciplinary team-based approach seeks to 'inspect and adapt' and continuously improve. Agile does not focus on project results, but on business results, so the entire value chain: from idea to production. Getting started with Agile needs a focus on collaboration across the value chain, from multi-disciplinary project teams to multidisciplinary value chain teams. This requires more than a change at the project level, since it affects the entire organization and its control.

Agile transformation
When an organization embraces the Agile philosophy, it requires more than a simple change process. We speak of a true transformation. An organization transformation to an Agile way of working has a strong cultural component. It is a challenging and lengthy process. But also a journey with a lot of fun and great results. In order to achieve these results, a transformation require a strategy. How do you start the change, or rather, how do you start the continuous improvement? Whatever strategy you choose, how

long will it take before you see results, and how will you measure the progress of the transformation?

A transformation is not easy. Different coaching styles and interventions, such as training workshops are needed to achieve the transformation.

Things to take into account
During the Agile transformation various challenges must be overcome. When and where is Agile appropriate? Practical tips, do's and don'ts, the use of tools and challenges such as The New Way of Working and distributed teams will all be discussed.

Compex case study
The topics in this pocket guide are explained through the use of a case study. This case describes the fictitious company Compex, which started using Agile and was subsequently acquired by a larger company.

The Agile transformation is discussed from the perspective of the manager, the employee and the coach. This case is the common thread throughout this pocket guide.

The following persons are involved in the case.

Manager Mike
Mike is an entrepreneur, he started a small company and is now going through a 'simple' transition to a small, responsive organization. Mike's company is successful with a customizable insurance product. The company has been integrated within a product department of a larger company with the aim of injecting a successful way of working there. Other departments will

subsequently follow in the transformation towards a larger responsive organization. Following the acquisition Mike is the department manager and program manager for the transformation.

Team member Tim

Tim has worked from day one in Mike's company. He is a passionate developer and customer-oriented professional. Tim works closely with (and represents) end users and all the other disciplines needed to achieve the desired final product. Tim is the originator of an Agile way of working and is an inspiring example for both existing and new colleagues. However, following the acquisition Tim has mixed feelings. It feels like moving from a speedboat to an oil tanker. He misses the agility of the original company and the influence he had on that.

Coach Kate

Kate is an Agile Certified Master and has extensive experience in Agile transformations within large organizations. She knows both Mike and Tim from meetings of the Agile Consortium. During these meetings, Mike and Tim shared a lot of knowledge and experience and gained new ideas that helped in the relatively 'simple' transition within the small company. However, for the transformation in the large organization, Mike has directly enlisted the help of Kate.

1 What is Agile?

1.1 Introduction

Literally Agile means: light, nimble, quick, ease of movement. The word Agile received a special meaning in 2001. In that year the 'Manifesto for Agile Software Development' [Manifesto 2001] was created. From that moment, the concept of Agile has been associated with this Manifesto and received a special meaning in the world of software development. Nowadays, Agile also applies to product development in general, with or without an IT component. The importance of Agility is much larger nowadays than it was before and it is becoming increasingly important. In this fast changing world only those who can adapt quickly will remain successful.

Case

Tim: "Common sense has a name: Agile! Today I read an article about Agile with a reference to the Manifesto for Agile Software Development. It was as if I had written it myself. It's all about working in multidisciplinary teams, with self-organization and a shared team responsibility. And also making fast progress towards (partial) results, so that you receive feedback quickly on what has been achieved, instead of being told afterwards that it should be different. Logical, right? Just use common sense, even at the organizational level. Now that it has a label, I can easily explain it to others. I will plan a lunch with Mike at short notice, we need to do more with this."

Mike: "Today I had lunch with Tim. We talked about Agile. Fascinating! I had heard about Agile, but thought this was a method for software developers. It is apparently much more than that, because you can apply it to the level of the organization! Agile is for some, like Tim, almost a way of life! Nice to hear how this contributes to a better connection with our customers. Agile

is not just for an individual, as an organization we need to do something with it."

Kate: "I have been asked to create a presentation together with my current client for a meeting organized by the Agile Consortium. The topic is 'Agile at the organizational level'. The presentation must be appealing for those who are relatively unfamiliar with Agile, as well as those who are experienced with Agile and ready to take the next step. The Manifesto is more than ten years old, so what are the current problems and solutions related to Agile? What are the related objectives? Agile is not a goal in itself. This is a great opportunity to talk about the Manifesto for Agile Organizations."

Before the Manifesto for Agile Software Development was drafted several other system development methods were developed from best practices. These methods were primarily intended to prevent problems with the application of traditional 'waterfall' methods. The methods didn't have a common label at that time. However, in 2001, representatives of these methods came together. They identified the similarities between these existing methods and summarized the commonality in the Agile Manifesto.

Agile has grown from a focus on small IT projects to being applied at the organizational level with proven results for the business. Agile has developed considerably in recent years and has matured. Agile at the organizational level is however still relatively unknown to many people. Moreover, it has also become an interesting topic for people outside the IT world.

Agile is a way of thinking, working, and perhaps living. Therefore, we cannot and will not describe in this book exactly how Agile should

work. Indeed, the possibilities are endless in the various contexts. If we were to capture Agile in detail we would deny the flexibility that Agile offers.

Any description of Agile is not Agile. That is to say that this book can only touch on what Agile is. Agile is not a fixed set of rules or one specific way of working. In any situation it works differently, it feels different and the concrete implementation is different. We are well aware that this kind of vagueness is not what people who wish to learn something necessarily want to hear. We nevertheless think it is wrong to have one 'proper process' in any way captured in detail, because this always involves rigidity, stiffness and is not open to change and thus potential improvement. The point we want to make is that every work or production situation is subject to change and that it is, therefore, prudent to take this into account in the thinking and the methods applied in those circumstances.

1.2   Definition

Agile is a set of values and principles, a philosophy. As we have already mentioned, the word was given additional importance in the context of software development in 2001. This origin in IT is reflected explicitly in the Manifesto for Agile Software Development. This chapter deals with the origins and definition of Agile and it, therefore, has more emphasis on software development. In the rest of this book we will show that Agile also fits very well within the broader context of product development.

Manifesto for Agile Software Development:
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.

The above four lines are called the four Agile values.

1.3   Principles behind the Agile Manifesto

The Agile Manifesto is elaborated in twelve principles. These principles are:

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of ***valuable*** software.
2. ***Welcome changing requirements***, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
3. ***Deliver working software frequently***, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
4. ***Business*** people and ***developers*** must ***work together*** daily throughout the project.
5. Build projects around ***motivated individuals***. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is ***face-to-face conversation***.
7. ***Working software is the primary measure of progress.***
8. Agile processes promote ***sustainable development***. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
9. Continuous attention to ***technical excellence*** and good design enhances agility.
10. ***Simplicity*** - the art of maximizing the amount of work not done - is essential.
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from ***self-organizing teams***.
12. At regular intervals, ***the team reflects on how to become more effective***, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

Agile is often equated with Scrum. Scrum is the most widely used Agile method [VersionOne, 2011; Xebia, 2012], but certainly not the only one. Examples of other Agile methods are: DSDM Atern, eXtreme Programming, Crystal and Feature Driven Development. The fact that Scrum is the most famous Agile framework explains why the terminology surrounding Scrum is widely used and why Scrum is sometimes used as a synonym for Agile. In this book we use generic terms. Some terms from Scrum however are so well chosen, that we opted to take them over unchanged. These are the terms 'Product Owner' and 'Product Backlog'. At the end of this book you will find a list of terms with their description.

There are many concepts within an Agile context that have a direct relationship with the Agile Manifesto principles. Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the relationships between concepts and principles. The concepts are further explained below.