



**AGILE CHANGE**  
*management limited*

# Agile is a collaborative way of working

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## Introduction

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To enable Agile working practices, it is important to involve areas of the business that support those working in an Agile team. In this paper I have outlined examples of Agile thinking and doing that is supporting those who want to work in an Agile way.

If you don't know much about Agile working, I have included in the first section a description of an Agile team and how it works. If you are familiar with Agile, just skip to the next section.

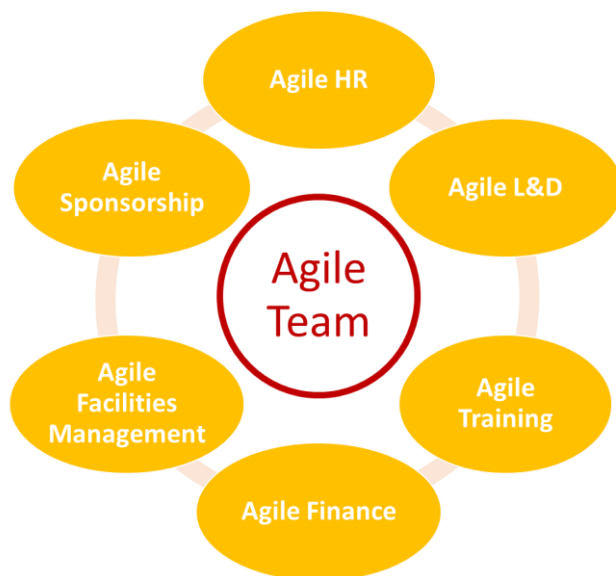
## What is an Agile Team?

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There are many different flavours of Agile, based on different methods including Scrum, SAFe®, AgilePM®. Whilst these different methods have different titles for the job roles needed in an Agile team, there are common approaches across all of them.

A basic rule for Agile working is that 'the team needs what it needs when it needs it' and this applies to resources, information and decisions. For this reason, an effective Agile team needs to draw on the support of many functions within the organisation.

## Factors for an effective Agile working environment



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An Agile team is a self-directed team, so there is a core of personal responsibility for getting the work done running through the team. The manager role is there to facilitate learning, remove blockages to progress and encourage collaboration. This management role is not there to undertake detailed planning on behalf of the team or micro manage the activities of each team member. The assumption

is that each team member is a specialist who knows the detail of their work better than anyone else, and that they work with their colleagues in the team to plan and deliver the requirements.

Many of the Agile methods encourage co-location of the team, or if this is not physically possible, lots of face to face collaboration via Skype and other video conferencing platforms. This face to face collaboration is needed for team planning exercises, and the regular sharing of progress and issues via the Daily Stand Up or Daily Scrum which is a meeting of all team members including those from the business who bring up to date understanding of the needs of the business into the team.

The team works in short, focused chunks called Sprints or Timeboxes where all the effort is out into completing the work. There are no prizes for half-finished work at the end of the Sprint, so team members are encouraged to track progress of the whole team, not just their own work and step in to help others finish when needed.

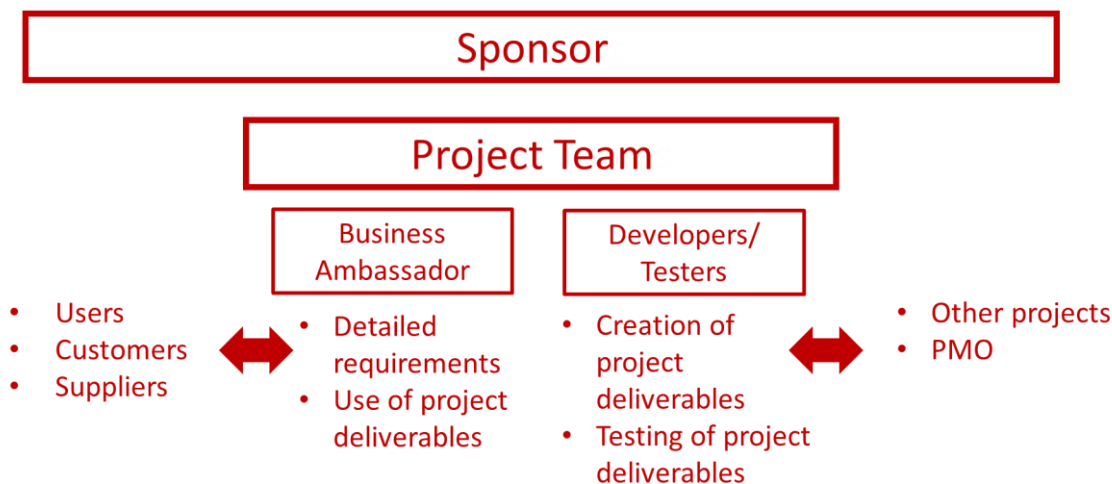
Agile encourages visual tracking of progress and achievements so it is important that the team has the space to display Burn Down Charts, Kanban Boards and examples of work in progress.

## Agile Sponsors

Effective Agile teams are constructed on the principle of a "One Team culture". This means that those creating the Change work collaboratively with representatives from the part of the Business that will work differently as a result if the project. In the AgilePM® methodology this role is called the Business Ambassador and there should be one or more of these in every Agile team.

There is a need for the Sponsor to recognise that they are not just overseeing those who create and test the deliverables. Their sponsorship needs to include the wider eco system which includes other initiatives in the portfolio (overseen by the PMO) and those who will ultimately use what is being created.

### Agile Sponsor responsibilities



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It is difficult for those with essential business relevant information to collaborate in an Agile way because their value comes from their skills and experience with current business processes, which is why all their time is taken up with their business as usual responsibilities.

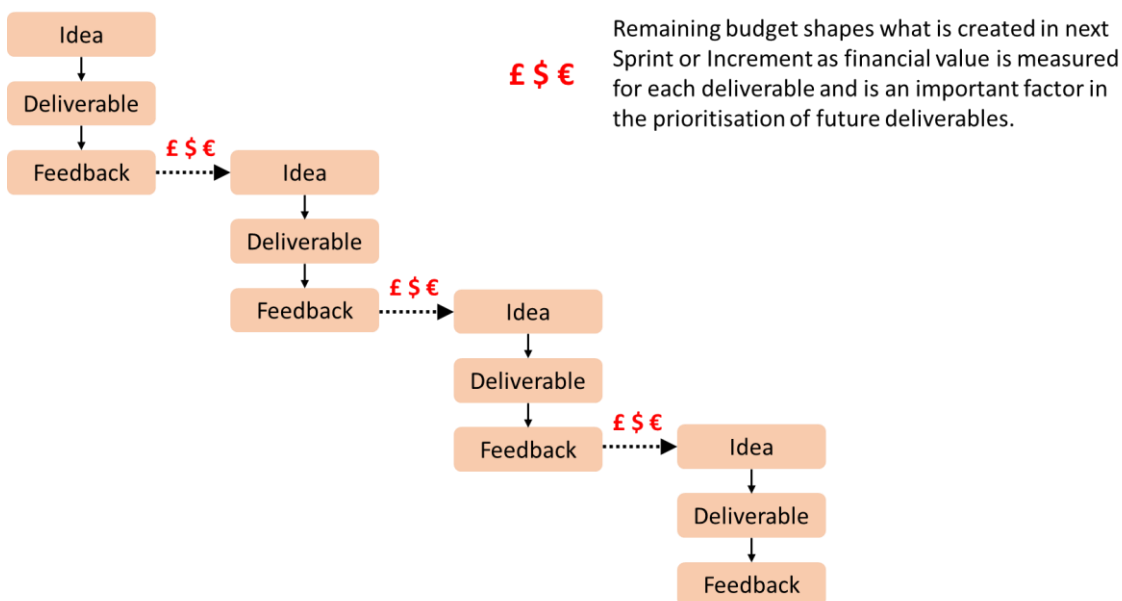
To make their contribution possible, a Sponsor in an Agile environment must address head on the challenge that the business is so busy with "business as usual" that they don't have people to spare to work with the Agile team. It is the responsibility of the Sponsor to create a working environment that enables Agile working.

In a practical sense this means reducing the amount of work in business as usual or backfilling staff with contract and temporary workers whilst these staff work with the Agile teams. Streamlining business as usual and backfilling are difficult decisions but if the Sponsor is not able to create enough space in the system to work in an Agile way then subordinate staff do not stand any chance of success.

## Agile Finance

Agile delivers change incrementally so there is no detailed end to end plan which can be costed. Therefore, unlike in a waterfall project there is no total figure for the budget. Instead the responsibilities are turned upside down and we need the Finance function to work on the Business Case to identify how much should be spent on the potential solution. To ensure that there is not an unending stream of iterations, there needs to be boundaries for the Agile work established that the Agile team can work within.

### Financial boundaries



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This might imply a 'top down' planning approach which feels uncomfortable in an Agile environment. However, it is entirely appropriate if the budget is the result of a collaboration between those in the Project Team who can provide the costs of potential solutions, and a decision by the business who need the project about how much they want to spend to get the benefits they are expecting.

To provide the guidance that the Agile team needs, the business must answer two important questions:

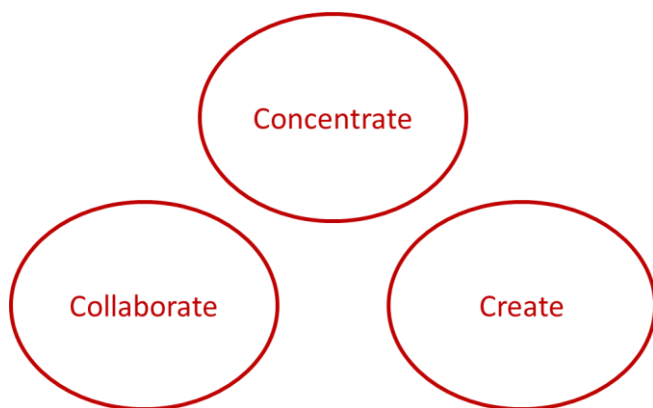
1. How much are you prepared to spend to solve your problem or give you this new opportunity?
2. How much time can you give the team to develop the initial answers and the complete solution?

Finance can then use these answers to create boundaries within which the Agile team can plan their iterations and prioritise their work.

### Agile Facilities Management

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#### Mixed use environments



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An Agile environment is different to a 'business as usual' environment as it relies on frequent collaboration between those in the Project Team full time and those in the business who are going to use the project deliverables in their day to day work. This collaboration includes:

- Business Users taking part in the Daily Stand Up meetings.
- Project Team members sitting alongside Business Users to demonstrate 'in situ' elements of the project so they can discuss how they will work in progress.
- Ad hoc meetings to share information and generate ideas for further requirements.
- Workshops and brainstorming sessions to create content for the project.
- Demonstrations and feedback sessions so the Business can be kept in the loop about what has been created and share their views on the viability and workability of what has been done.

For these reasons, the support of Facilities Management is important in creating the physical environment to support Agile working. This can be as simple as helping the Project Team create a

workspace in which they can easily display Post It Notes on walls, or if no walls exist, to provide them with mobile white boards.

- Creating multiple informal spaces where impromptu meetings can take place.
- Supporting the mobility of Project Team members and users from the Business by giving them places to sit next to each other in the Business environment and in the location of the Project Team.
- Ensuring that support functions to the Project Team are co-located including the PMO, Business Analysts, Change Managers.

Many facilities management professionals working in offices and manufacturing spaces are now addressing the need for more than just a space to do a repetitive job, and that space needs to support collaboration and creativity as well as quiet space to concentrate on key tasks.

### Agile HR

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Agile teams don't write progress reports. They evidence their progress through their achievements. These achievements are delivered at the end of every Sprint, so they are often working in 2 week sessions. In this environment an annual appraisal process feels irrelevant. I think ideas from the Agile HR movement are very relevant to engaging Agile team members.

For example, feedback is a continuous process. The contribution, attitude and achievements of a team member are assessed on an event rather than time driven basis. Those who are working with or reliant upon the work of team members are encouraged to share their views when they have had a particularly positive or negative experience. Many organisations are now using apps like Trip Adviser to capture a rating and a short performance review.

Agile working changes the approach to resource planning which often derives it's requirements from extrapolation of data related to business as usual with limited input from the PMO on project need.

Team members co-create their own job descriptions with other members of the Team so that it is relevant to the work they will be doing and the level of responsibility and accountability they have for delivering their work.

This replaces a fixed and generic job description linked to the job title. Instead it is more directly connected to what has to be achieved and it is a portable document. The team member takes it to their next team when they move to their next project.

Agile resource planning is based on 'tours of duty', not hiring someone to do the same task for a continuous period. What I mean by a 'tour of duty' is an assignment to achieve a specific set of objectives. This is likely to be the objectives of a specific project or programme.

No Agile team member can be successful unless the team is successful. It is the Project Team and not any single individual that is responsible for creating value by the end of each Sprint. In this environment, it makes sense if performance measures are team based and not set for individuals.

### Agile Learning and Development

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As an Agile team is motivated by achievement, it makes sense that any learning opportunities are tactical, delivered at the point of need, tackling the problem or blocker that is stopping the team member increasing their output or getting their work finished.

This Agile approach is not a replacement for formal training courses, which up-skill staff for new challenges by equipping them with new skills and new perspectives. Instead this Agile learning approach supplements this training with individual support as needed. For example, Learning and Development teams are working with Agile teams to deliver learning needed within a Sprint including:

- One to one coaching on how to facilitate a workshop with the business on requirements for automating a process. The training concentrates on how to manage a hostile audience and how to establish the credibility of the team member so the representatives from the business will listen to what they have to say.
- 30-minute online learning module that helps new users to utilise the Jira or Trello Agile software for recording User Stories.
- Drop in sessions on how to use a new time recording system, at a specified day and time run every 2 weeks for anyone new to the company.

Having spoken to those planning training in Agile environments it is apparent that their success in providing this tactical support is based on their knowledge of the skills that staff have to create quick 'buddy learning' where existing employees are asked to coach others to fill a need.

### Agile Hiring

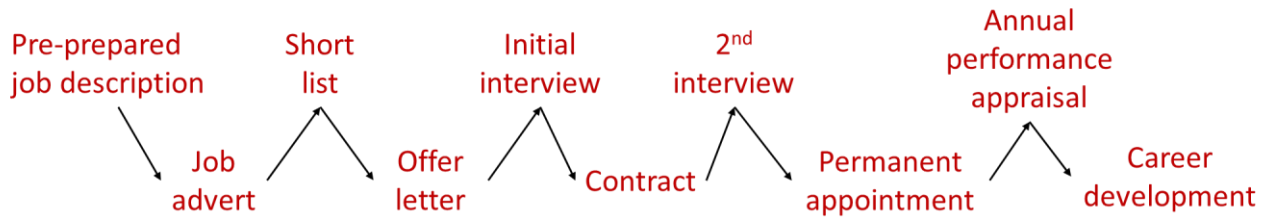
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An Agile team is a multi-disciplinary team formed of the specialists needed to do the job. To hire effectively into this environment requires a change in mindset from the hiring practices needed to acquire permanent members of staff who are hired for a stable and consistent 'business as usual' role.

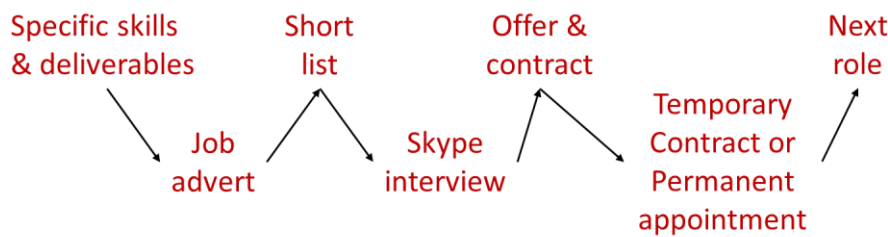
There is a need to bring these specialists into the team as quickly possible, so the time taken for arranging face to face interviews on site, and for a series of first and second interviews before making a formal offer via a letter sent in the post just doesn't fit.

## Changes to hiring practices

### Business as usual



### Agile working



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Agile practices of arranging interviews via Skype, making decisions on the same day as the interview, confirming offers via email, providing contracts which allow for electronic signatures are all helpful in reducing the number of 'lost' candidates who take jobs elsewhere whilst the organisation moves slowly through its hiring process.

## **Agile Induction**

Self-empowered Agile teams are formed of subject matter experts who are in the team because they have the skills and experience to deliver early and regular value to the business. This means they can be a mixture of permanent and contract staff, as well as seconded from suppliers and partners. Induction needs to explain the values and principles of how the organisation works, and what constitutes appropriate behaviour and core expectations of professionalism for everyone, not just those who are permanent employees.

In some organisations there are still rules in place that restrict access to induction and training to permanent employees only. This is of no benefit to an Agile team as it creates unnecessary differences in knowledge and understanding of those who need to work closely together.

An Agile induction process needs to ensure all team members irrespective of contract type have the information they need to be fully effective as quickly as possible.



## Conclusion

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This paper provides examples of how Agile working involves more than just the Agile team members. Agile is a different way of working and these differences need to spread out to all of the corporate functions that support employees. It also requires that people adopt a different way of thinking about how they support their colleagues, how progress is measured and how work is prioritised.

Agile practices continue to develop, and I am sure that if I revisit this paper in 6 months from now, there will be a lot more than I can add, but for now I hope you have found this of use.

## About the author

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I have been responsible for the successful delivery of effective change and for creating environments that support transformational change for over twenty years. I have an impressive track record of successful consulting assignments and I am an acknowledged thought leader in Change Management.

I am the Co-Chair of the Change Management Institute UK and a respected author of text books and articles on change, project and programme management. I am a talented communicator with a reputation for delivering complex information with humour and passion. I draw on my wealth of practical experience to illustrate concepts and to engage my audience in lively debates on advantages and disadvantages of each approach that I outline.

To access more resources about change management, connect with Melanie on LinkedIn  
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