



Project team new to Agile: accelerating team effectiveness

“12-slice pizza”: understand and actively manage all aspects that drive team effectiveness – the old “people, process, technology” still applies. Even more importantly so if the project is pushing the Agile boundaries (large team, scope not really negotiable, skills gap).

Prioritize, pace, plan, manage the required actions.

11. Measurements
Decide on the metrics you need to manage the project and the ones you need to report on – and implement the system (metrics don’t become available on their own) – why, what, when, how, who, where

10. Tools
What tools will be used for what (Confluence? Jira? SharePoint?) What Dev languages and tools? Testing tools? Etc. Clarity on what tools are used for what (e.g., epic in Confluence, stories in Jira, PM stuff in SharePoint, etc.), what role updates what when – and the actual set up of each of the tools for use by team

9. Workflow
Who does what in which order; handoffs and criteria for handoff; what is posted where to be picked up by next step; check-in/check-out/acceptance rules – the larger the team, the more critical workflow clarity is

8. Interfaces with the rest of the organization
You may be running Agile, but if the rest of the organization is not, you need to manage the gaps. Examples: audit requirements may drive more documentation than usual under Agile; funding by business case usually means scope is not the variable (as in pure Agile); Agile is reporting light – but what about the PMO’s requirements? What about financial management (which is not mentioned in Agile). What about other teams you need to work with, who are not Agile?
You need to ensure clarity on what the true scope and mode of operation of your team are, and to accommodate external constraints

12. Wildcard
Any other sources of confusion, churn, delay, rework or “debt” accumulation

1. Culture
Agile is predicated on openness, self-management, courage, risk taking.
How far is this from current state? Who are your agents of change?



2. Roles & responsibilities
Agile expects team members to be generalists, able to play any role needed – but the roles themselves still need to be clear: think professional sport teams (vs. shinny!)

3. Skills
Agile assumes team members are experts in their role, and familiar with working in Agile; the accepted variable is team’s experience working together. The further your team is on any of these aspects, the more you have to a) manage the gap, b) adjust estimates and plans to realistically reflect skill level

4. Capacity & mix
Do you have enough and the right people for the work ahead? The “vanilla” Agile team is small, but this may not be sufficient for your project. Also, in addition to the core team (PO, developers), your organization’s or the project’s particulars may require additional roles (BA, BSA, QA, etc.). Finally, do you have the right “anchors” (domain expertise, Agile experience)

5. Success criteria
What’s the definition of success for your project? Deliver the MVP on time, or *also* pilot Agile or even fully transition to Agile? And whatever it is, how does it align to your sponsor’s expectations, and to your team members’ career/evaluation priorities?

7. Methodology
“Agile”, “Scrum”, etc. are not product development methodologies (they are collections of best practices), and assume key product development artifacts are available when sprints start. Especially with less experienced team, watch for gaps and allow capacity and time

6. Communications
Agile assumes “osmotic” communication inside a small collocated team, and some simple physical onsite communication tools (e.g., Kanban board). For most large projects and organizations, this may not apply (e.g., team not collocated) or be sufficient. Define, implement, deliver, ensure the right communication inside the team and between the team and the rest of the world

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INTRO

Audience for this material: Sponsor and PM for project using Agile but with project team new to Agile

Key points:

- **12 key aspects to manage to accelerate achieving effectiveness – not doing so will allow gaps, confusion, churn to fester**
- **The changes need to be prioritized, paced, planned, and managed**

How is this material different: there is abundant literature on Agile, Scrum execution, mindset, best practices, more recently even about organizational Agile transformation – but little on how to quickly identify and address gaps to effective Agile execution, like you can find here. This framework is based on transformation and organizational change principles.

What problem does it address: by the time the project is launched, expectations / constraints are already set, and usually estimates did not take into account limited effectiveness of a team new to Agile – you start the project with a major issue, which you need to urgently manage.

Benefits:

- Provides rich, comprehensive “food for thought”
- Applies to any project and product development type/domain
- Scales to any organization size
- Can be easily extrapolated beyond Agile

What this material is / what is not: It is starter list, not a playbook

Credentials: Deep experience managing large application development projects/programs – and with organizational transformation.

Credits: In the late 90’ies and early 2000’, IBM had an Application Development Effectiveness assessment framework, with 6 axes. 20 years later, I am reusing, modifying and extending that concept, using my own experience.

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