

Avanade Point of View: Unlocking Agile Success



Agile. A development approach that has been around since the 1990's, but presents new and unique challenges for modern digital enterprises. Agile has grown in popularity over the past decade, and yet, the business powerhouses of today often struggle to find the true key to agile success. For example, how to make it work in a globally dispersed setting across cultures and time zones, and even across technical and business operations teams.

We at Avanade understand these challenges all too well, as we have undergone our own agile transformation journey that began in 2011. Now, we'd like to share what we've learned along the way. This point of view is aimed to help companies across the world unlock agile success.

The rise of agile

How did agile grow from a philosophy practiced by a small group of independent experts on software development to a crucial business advantage for innovative companies? It's all about demand. We've seen a clear indication that our clients are increasingly looking for faster and more flexible development approaches to stay competitive, as they make the transformation to a digital business. Economic turbulence further drives the shift toward agile. Clients need

to deliver value faster while staying flexible with changing requirements, realize improved collaboration between business and IT, and continually innovate in order to make the transformation to a digital business.

On the engineering side, software developers need to be able to respond to rapidly and frequently changing requirements driven by the pace of business. That's particularly true today, when the digital enterprise depends on IT to deliver not just business functionality, but also strategic advantage.

Enterprise applications are now the foundation for key corporate initiatives, and the faster these applications can respond to enterprise needs, the faster the enterprise can begin to benefit from them: creating better products, services and customer experiences.

Agile can help connect the dots between business and IT organizations that are not always aligned. As with any project, transparency, trust, open communication and accountability are essential.



The right projects for the right reasons

In our experience, an agile approach isn't right for every project.

At Avanade, we don't initiate a discussion of agile unless the client requests it, or we are confident that they can benefit from it. To determine this, we very carefully qualify each potential agile project that comes our way and have open and honest discussions with our clients.

Agile can work in the majority of projects, however, the right conditions must be met. Coaching, education, trust, transparency, and early and often conversation are on the path to getting it right.

We strongly feel that the success of an agile project is highly dependent on several factors:

Going agile for the right reasons



- The competition is doing it
- It's the latest buzz and it looks cool
- I want a quick fix 'method-in-a-box'

These are not the right reasons



- Faster time-to-market
- Providing rapid value
- Gaining higher degrees of flexibility in requirements even far along the project lifecycle
- Greater collaboration between business and IT

These are far better motivations to go with agile

Putting the right capability in place



The [Scrum Guide](#) is only 16 pages long – you read it, you get it – simple, right? Not really. Like a game of chess, it is often considered simple to learn, but difficult to master.



Only with the experience of failing fast and sustainable success will you be able to continuously evolve and adapt to achieve continuous improvement.

Acknowledging that culture is king



Many don't take the impact of cultural change seriously. A multi-step process to change an organization's culture requires strong leadership and follow through.



Culture is everything. Agility is an entirely new state and hence culture must change to achieve agility. Technology, people and process must all be in equal balance.

Agile in practice

Agile development has become increasingly popular with enterprises—including many of our own clients—over the past few years. In a recent Forrester Research survey, agile was the development choice of more technology respondents (38 percent) than any other—and the number continues to grow. Since the year 2011, Avanade has observed that a growing number of enterprises are embracing an agile mind-set in order to boost competitiveness and time-to-market. We believe that effectively practicing agile on an enterprise level requires acknowledgment of these key principles:

- Agile software development is incremental and iterative. It is implemented through the collaboration of small, often cross-functional development teams that operate in a series of rapid and relatively brief steps to foster responsiveness and flexibility.
- In an agile world, the project end goal is something you must discover along the journey. It emerges as you continuously inspect and adapt, embracing change.
- Collaboration and strong communication are key. Trust, transparency, and face-to-face conversation among motivated individuals is the most effective means of communication.

This allows teams to frequently and honestly reflect on how to improve, and then to tune and adjust behavior accordingly.

- Adopting an agile way of working requires the right attitude. It's a cultural behavioural change that needs to happen throughout all levels of the organization, from leadership to sales and development.
- Agile is technology-agnostic. It's not just for application development any more – it's about the culture and the approach.

Agile is a practice that demands continual evaluation and improvement. These concepts, as outlined in the [Agile Manifesto](#), are seemingly simple to comprehend, but, as we and most of our clients have found, it is quite difficult to master.

People drive the change

A key element in embarking on agile adoption is absolute buy-in from leadership at the executive and local levels. It is, in fact, both a top-down and a bottom-up dynamic – you also need buy-in from the your people at the ground level.

From buy-in the focus must inevitably turn to people. We recommend identifying and nurturing agile coaches who serve as the “change agents” that continuously drive awareness and adoption, support development teams, and act as trusted

agile advisors to keep teams focused on their journey to agile. They need to be strong leaders: self-management, autonomy and absolute trust from leadership are crucial ingredients to nurture a tight group capable of seeing through any agile adoption. They promote a culture of learning where respect and pride are top traits. The community of agile coaches should be equally well-connected locally and with global leadership, representing multiple lines of business and geographies.

Agile practitioners' knowledge must be complemented by agile engineering practices such as emergent architecture, build automation (such as continuous delivery), exploratory testing and test automation, and various code quality techniques. Appropriate training is an important element to building an agile capability – it ensures everyone is on the same wavelength when it comes to understanding and implementing foundational agile concepts and engineering techniques.

While a comprehensive training and coaching program are paramount to building any form of agile capability, we find that people are truly critical to success. Nurturing a team to do more than just talk about agile, but also live it every day, creates a stronger environment which enables them to deliver more business value.

Scaling agile for the enterprise

Complexity kills. Hence, the importance of keeping agile assets and tools simple, concise, and to the point. We advocate for agile guidance that is non-prescriptive, high-value and impactful. Focusing on automating engineering practices is very important, because this enables development teams to zero in on adding value, rather than on executing menial, time-consuming tasks.

When developing an agile capability for the enterprise, consider the full software development lifecycle. Beyond the typical roles, events and artefacts, build in disciplines and best practices that are priorities.

Focus not only on the build, but also on early project activities – such as stakeholder conversations, vision, high-level product backlog, distributed team mobilization, infrastructure setup, early architecture discovery and prototyping, and finally, on end of project activities such as handover and application maintenance.

Scaling agile requires an understanding and plan for rolling out across geographies, business departments, teams, and the broader project, program and portfolio levels. It will be a continuous improvement program that will necessitate foundational cultural change, and it will take time.



Measuring the success of organizational agility

When you embark on your own journey to become more agile, leadership will naturally seek to understand whether or not the agile investment is paying off. And rightly so. At the end of the day, any type of adoption requires potentially significant investments. So, how do you measure the value of the newly perceived agility?

We recommend using an evidence-based approach to measure agility in order to make rational, fact-based decisions, elevating conversations from preferences and opinions to logic and insight. The application of direct, objective evidence in key measurement domains, such as ability to innovate, time-to-market and current value, will enable you to make well-informed decisions in your agile transformation process.

A good analogy is how a doctor evaluates a patient's health. The physician could base his or her care decisions on knowledge acquired in medical school or on a general gut feeling. Or, in line with evidence-based approach, the doctor could use patient-specific direct evidence like blood tests and family medical history to help inform decisions about treatment.

An evidence-based approach allows organizations to continuously learn and improve the value derived from software investments, enabling them to control the risk of disruption, and to be more competitive.

Conclusion: Recommendations for agile success

- Start with a careful evaluation of whether agile is right for your organization, and make sure you are 'going agile' for the right reasons.
- If you do decide to embark on an agile transformation, accept that it will require significant cultural change, and that it will take time.
- People are critical to the success of an agile journey – invest in training, mentoring, and coaching programs.
- Remember that complexity kills – even when scaling agile for the enterprise, keep agile assets high-impact and concise, while considering the broader business context.
- Use an evidence-based, neutral approach to measuring the success of agility.

Client case study: Australia Gas and Light (AGL)



Agile isn't just for startups any more. In recent years, increasingly large enterprises have turned to Avanade to implement agile projects or to help them in their agile adoption, enabling them to act with a speed that belies their size. Avanade has implemented agile on behalf of some of the world's largest financial services, energy, technology, food and beverage, and utilities companies.

For Australia Gas and Light (AGL), agile was key to both differentiating from energy competitors and improving customer turnover rates. AGL's new customizable platform consolidates 50 business websites and gives customers the ability to easily pay their bills, view account activity and manage their energy consumption.

As a result of these new features, home page visitors are 47 percent more likely to go directly to AGL's energy plans page to consider AGL as their energy provider.

By employing agile project management techniques, Avanade ensured the solution could be rolled out quickly and effectively in a crowded and competitive energy market.

"Adopting Agile seems to be the only practical approach to managing the rapidly changing, evolutionary nature of Digital."

Nigel Page, AGL Digital Lead

Partnering with Scrum.org: an industry thought leader

Avanade is the first to have a distinctive partnership “in principle” with Scrum.org, an agile industry thought leader. The partnership works to improve the profession of software development, to promote agile and Scrum values, and to foster transparency internally and with our clients.

“We believe having collaborative global teams that do more than just talk about Scrum and Agile, but live it every day, creates a stronger environment which enables our people to deliver more value to our clients.”

John-Paul Edwards, Senior Vice President, Global Delivery, Avanade.

“Scrum.org’s collaboration with Avanade commits us to work together within the values and principles of the Agile Manifesto. I look forward to a long and fruitful relationship.”

Ken Schwaber, CEO of Scrum.org and co-founder of Scrum.

Is agile right for you?

If you need to become more flexible in response to constantly changing requirements, respond better to an ever-changing marketplace, or gain a competitive advantage, then agile might be the right approach for you.

Avanade by the Numbers: 2015 and Beyond



300+

CERTIFIED IN
PROFESSIONAL
SCRUM MASTER (PSM)

200+

CERTIFIED IN
PROFESSIONAL
SCRUM
DEVELOPER (PSD)



13



PROFESSIONAL
SCRUM TRAINERS

2000+

TRAINED AVANADE
SCRUM DEVELOPERS
& SCRUM MASTERS

HU_Y'UMjcb

To learn more about Avanade’s experience with agile, or to discuss how your organization could benefit from adopting agile, contact AgileAtAvanade@Avanade.com.

For further reading

[Working with Avanade](#)

[Avanade teams with Scrum.org](#)

[Agile videos](#)

[Global delivery at Avanade videos](#)



About the Author: Karel Deman

Karel's passion for all things agile makes his role as Avanade's Global Program Lead for agile a perfect fit. Since 2011, Karel has worked to build and nurture a comprehensive agile training and certification program, continuously promotes awareness across Avanade, and supports and mentors agile customers and internal teams around the world. Karel is a certified Scrum.org Professional Scrum Trainer, Evidence Based Engagement Manager, Professional Scrum Master, and Professional Scrum Developer. He believes that agile allows our clients to achieve value faster and with the flexibility required to stay ahead.

Read Karel's [blog](#).



About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud-enabling services, business solutions and design-led experiences, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 29,000 professionals in 23 countries. Visit us at www.avanade.com.

©2017 Avanade Inc. All rights reserved. The Avanade name and logo are registered trademarks in the US and other countries. Other brand and product names are trademarks of their respective owners.

North America

Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
America@avanade.com

South America

Sao Paulo
LatinAmerica@avanade.com

Africa

Pretoria
Phone +27 12 622 4400
SouthAfrica@avanade.com

Asia-Pacific

Singapore
Phone +65 6592 2133
AsiaPac@avanade.com

Europe

London
Phone +44 (0) 20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com