

The background of the top half of the page is a close-up photograph of a dragonfly. The dragonfly is positioned vertically, with its head at the top and its abdomen extending downwards. Its wings are spread out, showing a complex network of veins. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting. The overall image has a slightly grainy, halftone-like texture.

White Paper

The Five Stages of a Successful Agile Transformation

Providing you with:

- ✓ An understanding of Agile's key principles and processes
- ✓ Advice on defining an effective transformation strategy
- ✓ Tips to safeguard your success



Introduction

In a fast-moving digital landscape, optimising the speed and flexibility of your organisational processes is crucial if you want to take advantage of emerging trends and opportunities.

It's no surprise then that Agile methodologies - centred on iterative, collaborative ways of working - have grown significantly in popularity in recent years. In fact, 94% of software development organisations now practise Agile, with 45% reporting that the majority of their teams have adopted the approach (source: Version One).

While Agile may have originated in the world of software development though its influence is spreading, and more and more organisations from a diverse range of industries have begun their own journey towards Agile transformation. A recent survey conducted by Scrum Alliance confirms this shift, with 23% of respondents working in areas outside of development and IT - a trend likely driven by the increasingly important role software plays in driving improved business results.

Agile however is more than a generic set of instructions to be followed without question. To safeguard the success of your initiatives they need to be underpinned by a clear and detailed transformation strategy, informed by and tailored to your specific requirements, goals and context. In this guide, we'll walk through the steps you need to take to define this plan effectively, as well as provide advice on putting it into practice, to make sure your Agile transformation delivers measurable, real-world results.



1

Conducting an 'as-is' audit

Before you embark on the road to Agile, it's important to understand exactly where your organisation is currently. Conducting an 'as-is' audit is vital to deliver the required overarching view of your key processes and practices - not only providing you with a benchmark against which you can measure the impact of future initiatives, but also enabling you to understand your cultural fit for Agile. This often-overlooked factor is critical to a successful Agile transformation, with 42% of organisations naming a company philosophy or culture that's at odds with core Agile values as a reason their Agile projects fail, and 36% blaming project failure on a lack of support for the cultural transition (source: Version One).

Begin your audit by looking at your current processes, to identify the blockers and pain points that your transformation will need to address. These can come in many different forms, from unclear requirements and priorities that delay crucial deliveries and an absence of testing leading to inferior-quality products, to a lack of collaboration resulting in deliverables that don't effectively serve user and business needs. Also, be sure to take an organisation-wide approach to your assessment, as this can reveal silos and areas of misalignment that may be harming current performance, and could hinder implementation if not tackled early on.

The findings from your audit, whether carried out internally or by an objective and independent third party, should be augmented with direct insight from your team captured through a staff questionnaire or collaborative workshop. Revealing how much team members already know about Agile, and its relevance to their specific roles and responsibilities, this will enable you to identify any gaps in skill or understanding to be covered in your training plan (more on which later).

2

Defining your approach

Agile is an umbrella term that encompasses many different frameworks, and once you've built up a picture of your organisational situation you'll need to identify the most suitable approach for you. Popular frameworks include Scrum, which employs two-week sprints of work and rituals such as daily stand-ups and regular demonstrations, and Kanban, which focuses on creating backlogs of tasks and limiting work in progress. However, there has also been a move towards an approach known as 'Scrumban', which combines elements from both of these frameworks - retaining the rituals of Scrum, but not necessarily limiting sprints to two weeks.

While Scrumban may not necessarily be the right choice for your needs, it does reinforce an important point about Agile, which is that it isn't always about picking one framework and sticking to it rigidly, but rather understanding and embracing those elements that suit your particular requirements.



To take the Scrumban example we have in the past worked with an organisation that, due to the nature of their work, would have found sticking to two-week sprints a challenge. Here, the hybrid approach enabled them to work to their own planning schedule, while still benefitting from the iterative and collaborative aspects of Agile. In other situations, distributed teams may make co-ordinating daily stand-ups and other key meetings difficult, so you might need to tailor the format of these rituals to enable team members to participate remotely, or contribute their updates through another channel entirely.

It's also important to recognise that different departments and projects may have different goals and constraints, so stay adaptable - shoehorning every project into the same framework is likely to negatively impact your transformation initiatives, not to mention going against

the principles of flexibility and responsiveness to change that are at the heart of Agile. At the same time, though, remember that this focus on flexibility isn't a license to do whatever you like. Rituals such as the daily stand-up, story mapping and sprint planning sessions, demonstrations, and retrospectives are all crucially important, but to get the greatest value you need to not only do Agile, but be Agile too - so make sure these activities are conducted in such a way that they can be truly embedded into your organisational culture.

3

Creating a training plan

Once you know how you're going to approach your Agile transformation, you need to equip your team with the knowledge and skills to put this approach into practice - and to do that, you'll need a training plan. Your early assessments should have provided you with a list of specific areas, roles and tasks to prioritise, but to ensure Agile is truly embedded within your organisation you'll need to make sure all team members are fully aware of its core principles and processes, as well as the specifics of how it will be rolled out in their environment as part of the wider transformation.

We'd also recommend taking a 'top-down' approach to your training, in order to engage key stakeholders in the process at an early stage - something that's been found to be instrumental in getting Agile initiatives off the ground, with 38% of organisations citing a lack of management support as a reason for project failure (source: Version One). Securing buy-in from these individuals at the outset will smooth the path to organisation-wide adoption, helping minimise waste and increase the rate at which you'll start to see returns.

And no matter who's taking part in your training, it's important to make sure that they come away from the session with tangible value - so keep the focus on relevant, real-world situations, to enable lessons to be swiftly put into practice.

With this in mind, an example training programme may include:

- "Sheep dip" training for key stakeholders that provides a high-level introduction to collaboration, iteration and other key Agile principles, while remaining focused on the business benefits that can be realised through Agile adoption



- Scenario-based workshop sessions for management to identify issues, understand specific constraints, and start to identify solutions
- Training for teams based on the output from the management sessions - this can cover both traditional and conversational training methods, and should be full of practical exercises, questions and discussion

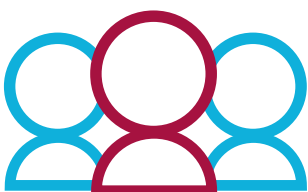
4

Trialling the approach

With everyone on your team up to speed with Agile techniques, there's nothing to stop you from getting started immediately (for example, after we delivered training to several departments across [Cardiff University](#) they began their first sprints the very next day, with great success). However, if you're planning on rolling Agile out across your entire organisation, it's often a good idea to trial the approach with a single department or team first, rather than jumping straight in with everyone.

Careful selection of your trial group is an important first step in ensuring you get the greatest possible insight from this initiative and you should be looking for those teams that stand to gain the most from adopting Agile so that any impact can be clearly seen, analysed and measured. To help streamline the transition process, you may also want to approach teams that are already using elements of your chosen approach. Whoever you choose though, make sure the group is relatively small and well-established, and therefore more open to working collaboratively and finding solutions. This is what will allow you to focus on optimising the approach rather than spending your time removing internal blockers.

Remember too that Agile projects are centred on continual inspection and iteration, driven by activities such as sprint and project retrospectives. Likewise, your trial should incorporate regular follow-up sessions to assess how well the approach is working, giving you the chance to raise and resolve any issues that have been encountered practising Agile 'in the wild'. As has been mentioned previously, these kind of tweaks may be required where the theory - which often assumes an ideal situation - does not accurately reflect real-world constraints and environments.



5

Rolling it out

By investing in a small, and contained, trial project prior to a wider organisational roll-out, you'll be able to provide teams with a proven example to follow when embarking on their own Agile journeys - giving both team members and senior stakeholders greater confidence in the ultimate success of any further initiatives. Importantly, you'll have also nurtured a group of Agile evangelists that can champion the approach to others, drawing on their own first-hand experience to respond to questions and concerns.

We've seen for ourselves the benefits of having this example team in place, after having delivered coaching to the research and development department of a leading education institution. This 'trial' team of theirs is now seen as the gold standard for Agile implementation within the organisation, and is a constant reference point for additional teams as they transition to the new approach.

The retrospectives conducted during your trial period are another great source of support as other teams make the move to Agile - highlighting which elements worked well, along with any areas that proved challenging, they can be used to generate ideas for further improvements and refinements to the approach at the outset. Of course, it remains vital that you continue to conduct individual retrospectives for each team, tailoring the techniques of Agile to meet their specific requirements, while also carrying out wider 'transformation retrospectives' to assess how effectively the approach is serving the business as a whole.

Conclusion



With market disruption from lean and nimble challengers rife - just think about Uber, or new banks such as Starling, Atom and Monese - introducing Agile ways of working into your organisation is becoming ever-more important to achieving and maintaining competitive advantage. We've given you a framework here for assessing its relevance to your organisation and then executing an implementation plan, but if the rest of your organisation isn't so convinced you may find the following information useful:

- 49% of Agile adopters believe that it has increased customer satisfaction while 43% say it's shortened their time to market, and 42% have reduced development cost as a result (source: HP)
- 87% of software development organisations that have implemented Agile say that doing so has improved their ability to manage changing priorities (source: Version One)
- 58% of organisations from software development and beyond have improved the frequency and predictability of releases through the use of Agile, with an additional 54% also seeing a greater predictability of results aligned with requirements (source: Forrester)
- 87% of Scrum practitioners agree that the Scrum framework is improving the quality of work life for their teams (source: Scrum Alliance)

And if all else fails, why not try an introduction to Agile from some real-life practitioners? At Box UK we've helped software and non-software teams alike unlock its benefits - and we can do the same for you. Visit the [Agile Transformation](#) section of our website to find out more, or [get in touch](#) to speak directly with a member of our team.

Further Reading

[Agile in a nutshell](#)

Jonathan Rasmusson

[The 9th Annual State of Agile Survey](#)

Version One

[The Biennial State of Scrum Report](#)

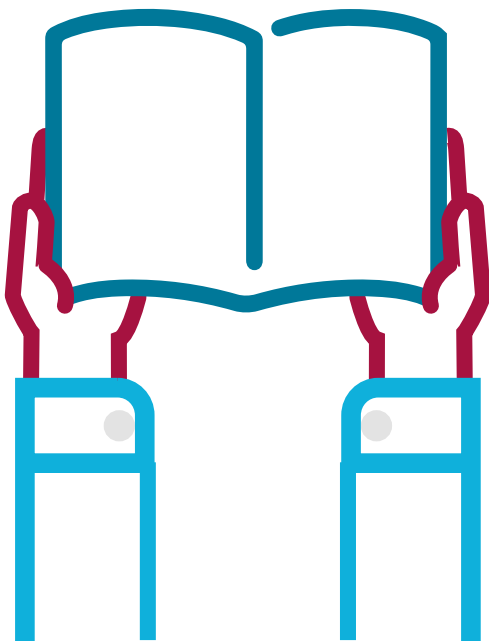
Scrum Alliance

[Agile is the new normal](#)

HP

[The 2015 State Of Agile Development](#)

Forrester





Simply brilliant thinkers making software brilliantly simple



**Strategy &
Planning**



**User Experience
& Design**



**Software
Consultancy**



**Software
Development**

At Box UK our team of simply brilliant thinkers, consultants and application developers mastermind simply brilliant solutions to the world's toughest web and software projects.

It's why blue chip organisations around the world, from airlines to car manufacturers, international banks to global charities, choose to trust us with the execution of their digital strategies, from the development of enterprise-level custom software platforms to the delivery of award-winning multi-channel experiences.

So if you want an effective, compelling software solution, talk to us.

agile@boxuk.com • +44 (0)20 7439 1900