




SAGGEZZA



# The Journey to Agile

DELIVERING CUSTOMER VALUE AT  
SPEED AND SCALE

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Engineering

# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF AGILE

Today, business happens faster, competition is fiercer, and customers expect more. Leading businesses' IT organizations that adapt to market and industry changes recognize the power of agile and have skillfully implemented initiatives to drive lasting change. They know agile is not a trend; it is necessary for survival.

## The Benefits of Adopting Agile Today

IT organizations who have successfully embraced agile reap the benefits of transformation as its methodology and culture significantly impacts the ability to release code faster. For these progressive organizations, the agile methodology has created a competitive advantage: higher performing teams and products, increased speed of time-to-market, higher customer satisfaction, and enhanced experiences.

Through agile, teams can innovate faster, improving the company's position in the industry by capturing untapped market opportunities.

Becoming agile requires a shift in the structure and relationship between management and the team by driving decision-making to the lowest level. The bottom-up approach makes the IT organization more

**Companies have turned to agile to realize a variety of benefits, including:**

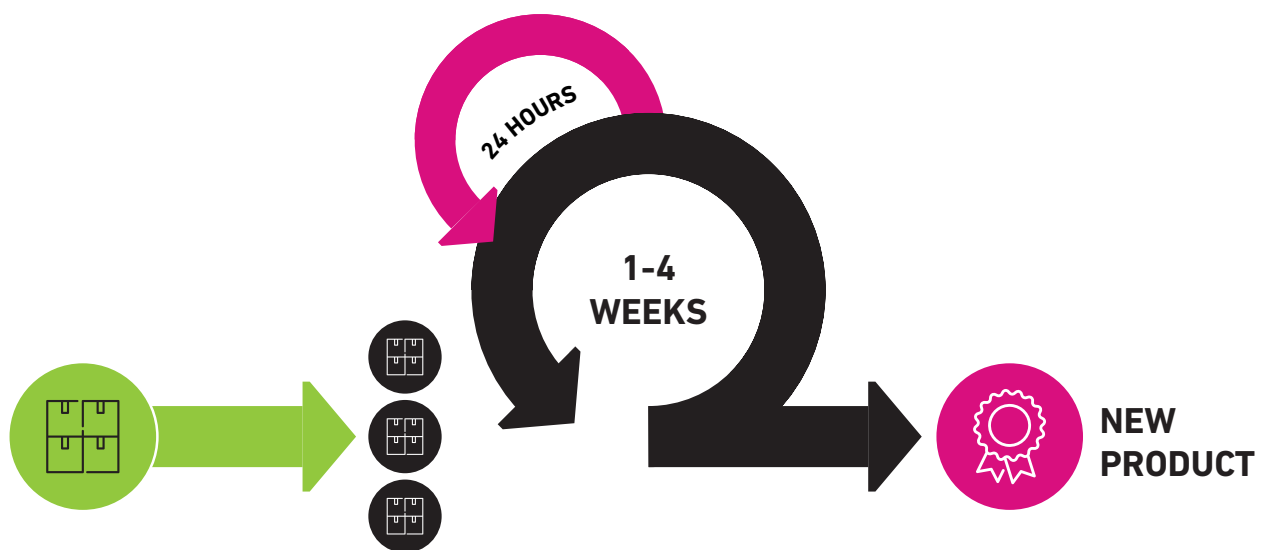
- Ability to manage changing priorities
- Project visibility
- Managing distributed teams
- Business/IT alignment
- Team morale
- Delivery speed/time to market
- Increased team productivity
- Project predictability
- Project risk reduction
- Software quality
- Engineering discipline
- Software maintainability
- Project cost reduction

Source: 13th State of Agile Report

adept and responsive. Agile ultimately becomes the spark necessary for innovation, igniting team collaboration. Teams rely on agile methodology and culture to develop into high-performing units that deliver value throughout the organization.

As agile initiatives grow, IT can continue to increase enhancements and optimize release times. This translates into improved return-on-investment as code quickly moves to production, thereby lowering the cost of failure. Investment increases for those companies operating with lean-development teams. The optimized structure allows for fewer resources and developers.

A benefit of great importance today is agile's ability to support distributed teams. Because the group uses tools that support and track progress, they are able to rapidly increase their ability to work effectively from home. In today's environment, this can mean the difference between failure and success.



### Agile Cycle (Delivery / Product Development)

# WHY AGILE FAILS

While many IT organizations have benefited from agile, others have struggled. With all the hailed promises of agile – improved quality and customer satisfaction, decreased time-to-market, higher-performing teams, increased profitability, and accelerated innovation – why haven't more IT departments realized its benefits?

Some view agile as the ultimate remedy, the magic cure that will solve all their problems. They start down the path, but early into their journey run into obstacles that impede progress. They experience pain and internal strife that lead to disengagement and, ultimately, abandonment of the initiative. What causes this?

One of the reasons for agile failure is the traditional top-down leadership style. Agile is designed to empower at the lowest level, enabling decision-making from the bottom-up. This is critical for speed and innovation. Another reason agile fails is a lack of defined user stories and clearly defined acceptance criteria for enhancements and optimizations.

Understanding why agile initiatives are unable to move beyond these roadblocks requires a deep understanding of **Change, Culture, and Collaboration.**



# CHANGE, CULTURE & COLLABORATION

## Understanding the Three Critical Components of Agile

### Change is Hard.

For many organizations, agile introduces a radically different approach to business and IT. This shift – or change – is hard and can be met with substantial resistance. Agile requires people to change their roles in fundamental ways, and they may not like it. Change can render meaningless the value of someone's hard-won experience and know-how. It can be positive for some people, and negative for others.

Moving to agile can be painful and awkward, as old patterns are broken and new norms established. Many agile initiatives fail because real change is hard to sustain.

### Culture Supersedes.

Agile is more than a methodology. It is a culture and mindset.

As an IT transformation initiative, one of the most important aspects of agile is its ability to shift deep-seated culture. However, if the internal culture is resistant to change, it can slow down the initiative, reduce efficiency, and impede transformation.

When launching an agile initiative, IT organizations whose cultures are fundamentally at odds with the underlying agile mindset are prone to fail. And therein lies the problem.

### Collaboration is Key.

Agile succeeds through teams; it is not a one-player sport. A lack of collaboration, proper training, and management can impede success and introduce pain in the initiative. Additionally, competing methodologies and friction with the business can obstruct an IT organization's agile journey.

Without the necessary collaboration framework, ideas are confined, and a lack of trust develops within the team. This breakdown leads to feelings of isolation and low job satisfaction. Instead of sharing and working together as a team, project success rates plummet.

The back-and-forth nature of collaboration is critical for innovation and continuous improvement.



# THE TRANSITION TO AGILE

## 6

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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1

#### Empower from the Ground Up

Creating an agile culture and mindset requires a shift in the traditional IT structure. Instead of a top-down, command-and-control approach, agile requires thinking from the bottom-up. In this new structure, leadership sets the strategic vision while the individual development teams determine the technical solution and their capacity for work.

Developing trust, autonomy, empowerment, self-governance, and a spirit of enthusiasm and collaboration from the team on the ground is critical to the success of agile.

2

#### Find the Champion

Enthusiasm and energy are critical components of an agile initiative. Find the IT leader – or champion - who is excited about the change. This person should be responsible for coordination, coaching, mentoring, and overall results.

This 'true believer' has the experience and know-how to drive change and the perseverance to overcome obstacles.

3

#### Establish the Framework

Clearly define IT team roles, structures, responsibilities, and decision-making rules. The business should identify areas where the most significant opportunity exists. The development team should then determine the solution and the amount of work to accomplish during a sprint. The product owner should work with the on-site leaders of the global delivery team to identify work using clear success conditions. Setting up a framework for success is necessary for the journey to agile.

4

### **Communication is Key**

Frictionless communication must be enabled across the teams. Noise and complexity in the process should be reduced, and platforms should enable teams to communicate freely and efficiently.

Improve collaboration and prevent mistakes by following traditional agile communication ceremonies like daily stand-ups and retrospective meetings.

5

### **Select the Right Tools**

The right tools are necessary for the IT team to be successful.

These tools include a collaboration platform, source control, a data store, and a DevOps continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD) platform.

6

### **Form Self-Managing Teams**

The least expensive way to develop software is to first solve the problem, then act. Self-managing IT teams that focus on collaboration and concentration are critical to this 'think, act' mindset. They work to solve only the problems that exist before writing a line of code. Self-managing teams eliminate single points of failure and ensure backups are in place.

## IN REAL LIFE

### Achieving a 400% Productivity Increase Through Agile

A large, publicly-traded mobile offices company had a severe productivity problem – it was struggling to get work out the door. In 2019, it only completed three major projects; a small number given its size. The poor productivity was caused by a lack of communication across business units, inefficient resource and staff allocation, siloed work structures and goals, and friction between departments created by a merger.

In December 2019, the company turned to Saggezza for help.

Saggezza's approach began with comprehensive discovery sessions to identify IT's role, understand the project management process, and get to the root cause of low productivity. As a result of these sessions, a new strategy and plan were put in place to solve the problem and rapidly increase productivity.

#### What They're Saying: Feedback from the Team

“Saggezza provided support with a methodology/framework conversion from Waterfall to Agile by engaging knowledgeable professionals and establishing a wealth of best practices. Throughout the transition, the consultants assisted with successfully streamlining our development and release processes to include lean documentation, enhancing collaboration with remote employees, and combining efforts across multiple work streams. By leveraging some of the top Project Management tools such as Jira and Confluence, and the inclusion of collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams, task visibility improved significantly while reducing e-mail clutter and eliminating redundant meetings.”

— **Christin Johnson, Financial Systems and Business Intelligence**



Saggezza implemented a new IT-led structure focused on communication and transparency, which resulted in IT gaining a much larger voice in the feasibility and ROI of technology projects. All staff received training on agile practices so they could complete projects better and faster using incremental delivery. This approach helped the company fail fast, learn from their mistakes, and use those insights to create a better end-product.

Most importantly, the IT department learned how to communicate the status of IT projects to all of the company's departments, critical to getting marketing, sales, product, and others on the same page.

Since implementing the new structure, Saggezza has helped the company significantly increase its productivity. Over the past six months, Saggezza helped it deliver 11 projects and is on track to deliver another four by the end of June – a 400% increase in less than half a year.

## THE RESULTS



### ANNUALIZED INCREASE IN NUMBER OF PROJECTS RELEASED

The increased productivity gave IT a much larger seat at the table and confidence for delivering high quality projects to other business units.

#### Additional Benefits Realized

- Increased transparency across business units
- Increased project efficiency and success rates
- Shift from waterfall to agile project delivery methods
- Easily measured ROI
- Increased cost savings



## NAVIGATING THE PATH TO AGILE

Agile transformation can be challenging to navigate. Real transformation requires a broader way of thinking and sweeping changes beyond delivery teams. Whether an IT organization is embarking on its journey or seeking to take agile to the next level, it requires expertise and guidance.

For those starting, they face the challenge of the unknown, a lack of real-world application, and the proper training.

Those who have reached the initial peak of agile and are looking to the next frontier face the challenge of pushing past the plateau of department-level success to deliver value at an enterprise scale. Moving to the next frontier of agile requires an ecosystem of strategic agility to rapidly respond to changing circumstances.

Agile has the power to infuse value and ignite innovation throughout the organization. But it needs to be done the right way. To increase the chance of success, partner with experts who understand the obstacles, have knowledge and expertise and can guide the IT organization to reach its goal.



## WITH YOU AT EVERY STEP

Saggezza is leading the charge to drive cultural shifts and business value through agile. We help reshape IT organizations at both the delivery and cultural level so that technology becomes an enabler of the business.

Saggezza can help you master the art of agile and successfully guide your organization along its transformation journey. Working with Saggezza, your team can create a culture of collaboration, scale to innovate faster, drive higher quality, reduce risk, respond to new opportunities, and fundamentally transform the way you deliver customer value.


If you're looking to get started on your agile journey or are at a critical point where you need to scale, we're here to help.


## The Journey to Growth and Innovation Starts Today

To learn more about our Agile services, contact us:

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