

Agile Methodology requires communication and collaboration to be effective

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The role of Quality Engineering and Testing is vital when developing new products, systems and applications. However, as this process has traditionally taken place at the end of the development cycle, any flaws or identified causes for consumer dissatisfaction have often resulted in development teams going back to the drawing board and starting all over again.

The agile methodology has changed that, allowing teams to work in a more collaborative, agile manner, shortening the development cycle, and ensuring the final product is effective, flawless (or as close to it as possible) and has user buy in.

Effective communication and proper collaboration are essential for the agile methodology to work. Businesses need to change and adopt an entirely new mindset in order to shake off the shackles of siloed work processes.

What is Agile?

Agile methodology is a unique approach to project management which has become especially popular in software and app development. This method enables teams to respond quickly and proactively to the unpredictability of developing apps and software by segmenting the development process into incremental, interactive work sequences called 'sprints'.

What makes Agile so effective is that the same development team remains involved from start to finish, rather than separately completing their individual phase of development and handing it off to another team for the next phase, and then, finally, to the testing and quality control team. Testing is done collaboratively during each sprint, in consultation with the team and – often – the end user client consumer. This ensures the contributions made within each sprint are suitable before the product enters the next phase.

Agile methodology enables businesses to achieve a faster time to market. It helps developers identify flaws and resolve them much earlier in the cycle, making it easy and less expensive to remedy the flaws.

What are the challenges?

Despite the many benefits offered by instituting the agile methodology, implementation is not without challenges. Agile works best when business units, or teams, are able to communicate clearly and are all on board with this methodology. Everyone involved in a project needs to be fully committed to working as a team.

Unfortunately, many businesses opt for agile methodology without checking if they are ready for it.

Working with the agile methodology is a cultural shift. As the first step, organisations need to ensure that their business is ready for an agile implementation and that an adequate change management framework has been put in place. Every member of a team needs to be trained to work in an agile manner and needs to understand their role and the effect of their role on the entire development cycle.

Implementing Agile

The journey to agile cannot be prescribed; it requires a fundamental shift in culture and mindset. Agile methodology can only be introduced with the right change management and an open platform for communication between management and employees.

The first step is to ensure agile methodology is right for your business. Agile works best for businesses where change is a constant, such as software development. For businesses with entrenched methodologies that don't necessarily affect the end outcome, agile may not be the right course of action. It's key not to opt for agile methodology purely because it is a trend, but rather to ensure it will benefit your business.

Find out if it makes sense to involve the customer in the process. As the end user of the final product, customers' feedback during the process at each testing phase can prove beneficial and could ensure a better, well-received final product.

Finally, when agile has been decided on, ensure that communication and collaboration take centre stage. Communication is absolutely critical for agile methodology to be effective. Management teams need to clearly communicate their reasons for implementing agile and invite interaction on what the concerns or potential roadblocks are. Teams need to be encouraged to communicate and collaborate with management and each other in order for the entire effort to be successful.