

4 ways to stay Agile without getting caught up

Agility is the power to move quickly, to think and react rapidly. In the ICT sector, today's imperative is to quickly produce the highest quality software and to achieve this, development teams are needing to adapt, decide and code at speed.



Matthew Barnard, executive head of banking at BBD

This can oftentimes be a problem in large corporates where the nature of the beast is to abide by the many processes set in place.

Originally outlined by the [Agile Manifesto](#) in 2001, the approach aimed to change the way the industry thought and create self-organising, self-motivated development teams who are focused on working software instead of overly comprehensive documentation.

Not only does this mindset-shift make for a productive and happy workforce, it results in numerous business benefits to boot. “We have seen a tendency in the industry to focus on the methodologies and enforce Agile processes, rather than understanding and valuing the Agile mindset” states Matthew Barnard, executive head of banking at BBD, a software development firm.

BBD has adopted the Agile mindset. “Although this means that our processes are Agile, we do not enforce specific methodologies such as SCRUM, Kanban and SAFe onto our own project teams. As long as our teams value an Agile mindset and principles over Agile methodologies, we allow them to either align with the client’s practices or in a way that is most beneficial to the client.”

Barnard explains that BBD has however noticed that many of their clients are enforcing specific Agile methodologies and practices, which can sometimes be to the detriment of the project as the teams then focus on the methodology rather than the result.

“Following Agile practices without an Agile mindset is not being Agile.”

Here are the top four ways to stay Agile without committing to specific methodologies.

1. Empowered employees

One of the key Agile principles is to build projects around motivated individuals. For us, that means giving our teams the space and support to get their jobs done, trusting they can handle the day-to-day operations of the project, as well as any issues that may crop up along the way.

Hiring the best, trusting their ability and allowing open communication channels to facilitate easier feedback all assist in ensuring BBD’s employees are empowered and productive.

2. Play to your strengths

It is always easier to trust that your staff are able to perform as they should if you put them in positions where they’re able to play to their strengths. We strongly believe that this approach, coupled with a wide selection of internal and external training opportunities, has allowed our staff to flourish and our business to grow from strength to strength.

3. Death by committee (less talk, more action)

We’ve all been in situations where no one wants to make a decision, but everyone has an opinion, or when everyone wants to make different decisions.

Embracing the Agile methodology means that we’ve actively embraced allowing those with the appropriate knowledge and context on the subject to assess and decide. This is about giving decision makers at different levels of your organisation the autonomy and support to take the lead and run with projects.

This accelerates our internal processes and allows for easy collaboration and for us to act more fluidly. Avoiding death by committee on decisions is vital to maintaining an Agile mindset.

4. Client-centric

While a lot of companies say that they’re client-centric, being Agile means truly focussing your business on the people that make it possible – staff and clients. Another key Agile principle is to value individuals and interactions over processes and tools.

An easy way to do this is to focus on building solid, long-lasting client relationships. BBD ensures face-to-face interaction with our clients through our offsite teams ensconced in the client environment.

This approach to development leads to the fostering of natural client relationships.

Barnard explains that although Agile was originally created for development teams, the logic and practices are easy to apply throughout any business.

“It really is Agile for anyone. Our advice is to try it out and encourage teams to get the core of your business flowing correctly and then build new processes around that if you must.”

He concludes by reminding organisations that small changes often can be much more powerful than huge changes that happen slowly.

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