

## How Full Is Your Agile Toolbox?

"There is no longer any doubt about whether agile approaches to project management work; the only question is how to make them work on a specific project."<sup>i</sup>

– Mike Cohn, author of *Succeeding with Agile*

These days, firms are striving to deliver products to market ever faster while cutting both costs and resources. As project managers, what can we do to foster more efficient project deliveries AND increase our value to the organization? One strategy is to become well-versed in agile project management.

### What Is Agile?

*Besides being the latest buzzword, just what is agile?* In short, **agile** is a project management methodology that provides customer value by delivering key product features in short-term iterations. Characteristics of the agile project include:

- Limited planning before each two to four-week iteration
- The customer identifies and prioritizes key features for the team
- The agile team is self-organizing and decides how the work is to be done

### Adoption and Benefits

*Wait – I thought that only software developers used agile.* This is a common fallacy! While agile methods originated in the software development world, they have been applied successfully to a great variety of projects, industries, and organizations.

*Why make the move to agile?* There is evidence which suggests that moving to agile allows project teams to provide greater value to the customer at a faster pace. Moreover, in a recent survey, 90% of respondents said that “implementing agile improved their ability to manage changing priorities.”<sup>ii</sup>

### Frameworks

*There are many agile frameworks out there. How do I know which one to use?* Indeed, the rubric “agile methodology” includes many frameworks such as scrum, extreme programming (XP), Lean, Kanban, and test-driven development (TDD). Right now, scrum or scrum variants account for 72% of the agile market share.<sup>iii</sup> However, factors such as organizational flux and discipline may impact the choice of agile framework.<sup>iv</sup>

### Value and Opportunities

Whether you are an experienced project manager or are just breaking into the field, expertise in agile methods will enhance your employability and your value to an organization. According to Dr. James J. Stewart, Collegiate Professor at the University of Maryland University College, “Knowledge of [agile] methods and skill in

their application is needed to be a complete project manager.”<sup>v</sup>

Industry experts echo this perspective. Joe Drammissi, PMP, ACP, CSM, Principal at Paceline Consulting Group and VP of Professional Development for the PMI-San Diego Chapter, opines that “project managers who [know] agile will greatly increase their probability of success and will be more valuable to their organizations.”<sup>vi</sup> Dr. David F. Rico, PMP, ACP, CSM, a Washington, DC area PM consultant, trainer, and educator, asserts that in today’s market, “agile project management... is considered ‘pure gold’ when it comes to measurably increasing business value.”<sup>vii</sup>

Dr. Rico also observes that as of 2013, there are over 600,000 agile jobs in the U.S. – in industries such as Department of Defense (DoD), software development, medical devices, and telecommunications – with only 150,000 people qualified and seeking these positions.<sup>viii</sup> *This means that many of these jobs go unfilled and that there are opportunities out there for agile project managers and team members!*

## How Do I Get Started?

There are several pathways for project managers to get more exposure to agile. Whether you are practicing scrum, XP, Lean, Kanban, or some agile hybrid, obviously nothing beats **workplace experience** for augmenting your PM toolbox (and your resume).

Professional associations offer agile-related **certifications**. The Project Management Institute (PMI) (<http://www.pmi.org>) offers the Agile Certified Practitioner credential

(PMI-ACP™) for project managers with agile experience. The Scrum Alliance (<http://www.scrumalliance.org>) offers the Certified Scrum Master (CSM) and Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO) for agilists interested in practicing scrum.

Increasingly, university **project management certificate programs** are including agile coursework as part of their programs. An advantage of taking an agile overview course is that it exposes you to multiple agile frameworks, both expanding your agile knowledge and your ability to select the most appropriate agile framework for your workplace.

## About Berthot Consulting

Berthot Consulting brings PM best practices to firms of all sizes, with particular expertise in healthcare, IT, public sector, and non-profit organizations. We offer a variety of project management services, including organizational assessments, strategic planning, customized training programs, project-specific metrics, and agile/scrum coaching. Berthot Consulting delivers long-lasting results.

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<sup>i</sup> M. Cohn, personal communication, March 15, 2013.

<sup>ii</sup> VersionOne, Inc. (2012). *7<sup>th</sup> annual state of agile development survey*. Retrieved March 1, 2013, from [http://www.versionone.com/state\\_of\\_agile\\_development\\_survey/12](http://www.versionone.com/state_of_agile_development_survey/12).

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iv</sup> Marcus, A. (2005). *Big winners and big losers: The 4 secrets of long-term business success and failure*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Wharton School Publishing.

<sup>v</sup> J. Stewart, personal communication, March 15, 2013.

<sup>vi</sup> J. Drammissi, personal communication, March 18, 2013.

<sup>vii</sup> Rico, D. F. (2013.). *Upswing of agile methods in the workplace as a trend?* Retrieved March 15, 2013, from <http://davidfrico.com/agile-trends.doc>.

<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*