It’s Not About the Stand Up: Why Agile Isn’t Working for You

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Disclaimer: The opinions here are my own and I am not speaking on behalf of IBM
Agile myths

“Agile is about the practices”

“Agile managers are agile leaders”

“Agile is all you need for success”
“Agile is about the practices”

“Agile managers are agile leaders”

“Agile is all you need for success”
A tale of two stand-ups

- Shared understanding
- Common goals
- Offers of help

- Report on assigned tasks
- Good impression on boss
- No requests for help
A tale of two backlogs

- Priorities from users & market
- Adjustments based on new information

- Defect-driven priorities
- Adjustments based on business mandates
A tale of two showcases

- Invite stakeholders & users
- Share work in progress
- Feedback as a gift

- Not ready for users
- Focused on questions, problems and blame
Agile isn’t about the practices

Values and Beliefs

- Respect
- Empathy
- Openness
- Trust
- Courage
A global team has 30 minute stand ups a few times a week.

A designer is not fully dedicated & does not attend stand ups.

A squad stops delivering for 3 sprints so they can invest in CI/CD.
Why isn’t agile working for you?

“right” practices but wrong values

“wrong” practices but right values
Agile values predict success, not the practices

• Is the team more focused on the “right” practices than the agile values?

• Is the team adopting practices the “wrong” way, but still following agile values?

• Does the team understand the reasons behind their practices?
Agile myths

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“All you need is Agile for success”
An agile manager

- Move faster, deliver more
- Organize & reorganize
- Education is the answer
- I’ll just do it myself
An agile leader

- We need to try this
- Establish a vision for org
- Multi-disciplinary squads
- Experiment & feedback driven
- Full transparency
Why isn’t agile working for you?

All Agile Managers do not behave as Agile Leaders.
Agile leadership behaviors

Agile leaders:

• Are servant leaders, putting the needs of the team first

• Act as coaches, not commanders - let the people closest to the job figure it out

• Start with Why

• Value transparency and feedback

• Set teams up for success – form teams, distribute work, measure what matters

• “Remove boulders and carry water”
A manager asking how many story points did you complete this week

Executives creating 3 layers of PO roles to manage the teams

A manager using standups to compare and push his agile squads
A manager creating a small agile workspace for the team

A manager sharing his personal leadership assessment with his organization

Senior exec sponsored training then asked how things will change as a result
How leadership affects the bottom line

- High-performing teams have leaders with the strongest transformational leadership behaviors.
- A good leader has a measurable impact on profitability, productivity and market share.
Strong agile leaders predict success

- Fear might be the motivating factor
- Education is not enough
- Reward agile leadership behaviors
Agile myths

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Is something missing?

✔ Agile practices
✔ Agile values
✔ Agile leaders
✔ Continuous integration & deployment

☑ Profit
Three-part equation for success

Winning in the Market

WHY we Deliver

PRODUCT MGMT

Rapid and Iterative

AGILE

HOW we Deliver

DESIGN THINKING

Delightful User Experiences

WHO we Deliver To
Winning awards and losing money
Winning in the Market

WHY we Deliver

Rapid and Iterative

AGILE

WHO we Deliver To

Delightful User Experiences

DESIGN THINKING

WHAT happened?

??
A one-click update

versus
Winning in the Market

WHY we Deliver

PRODUCT

MGMT

AGILE

Rapid and Iterative

Delightful User Experiences

WHO we Deliver To

What happened?
A successful pivot

“We’re chomping at the bit to get it, to start using it, and to help it be successful.”
A 3-part equation predicts success

Winning in the Market

WHY we Deliver

PRODUCT MGMT

Delightful User Experiences

WHO we Deliver To

DESIGN THINKING

AGILE

HOW we Deliver
A 3-part equation predicts success

- Do teams use Design Thinking?
- Do Product Owners understand the market needs?
- How can we align people, processes and practices?
Agile is about values, not practices

Not all agile managers are agile leaders

Agile adoption alone doesn’t equal success
Questions?
It’s your turn to share!

- Divide into groups
- Brainstorm: What factors do you think predict success or failure for agile teams?
- Share and discuss
- Group similar ideas
Thank you