

Preface

This book considers agile from a management perspective by focusing on matters of strategy, implementation, organisation and people. It examines the turbulence of the marketplace and business environment in order to identify what role agile has to play in coping with such change and uncertainty. What emerges is a narrative concerning a new strategic orientation based on dynamic capabilities and the renegotiation of meaning within the organisation that lends itself to implementation using appropriate agile project and programme management techniques. This results in a transformative experience for the organisation which must challenge long held beliefs about its own identity and embrace the entrepreneurial spirit of its employees. Accordingly self-organisational paradigms directed outwards towards the needs of customers and teams that possess the necessary autonomy and empowerment become the new order of play. This book, based on observations, personal experience and extensive research endeavours to make clear the fabric of the agile organisation thereby assisting managers to become agile leaders in an uncertain world.

This book is intended for those with decision-making authority within their organisations (e.g., line managers, programme, project and risk managers, senior managers) about whom the assumption is made that the essentials of topics such as strategy, finance, quality, governance and risk management are not only understood but constitute a daily aspect of their working lives. It is also likely that this book will be of interest to those studying advanced management or business administration courses (e.g., M.B.A., M.Sc.), who wish to engage in the management affairs of agile organisations and thus need to adapt their skills and knowledge accordingly. Though operational aspects of agile (e.g., how to create a backlog of requirements or manage a facilitated workshop) are occasionally alluded to they are not the main concern of this book as such matters are covered at length elsewhere in the wider agile literature.

This book opens with a broad survey of agile contrasting and comparing some of the major methodologies selected on the basis of where they lie on a continuum of ceremony and formality ranging from the minimalist technique-driven and software engineering focused XP, through to the pragmatic product-project

paradigm that is Scrum and its scaled counterpart SAFe[®], to the comparatively project-centric DSDM. Each enjoys the following of a vibrant community and all are well documented in detail elsewhere. Though reference is made to each of them, DSDM occupies a special place in this book owing to its comprehensive elaboration of programme and project management practices.

Discussion then moves on to the formulation of agile strategy framed in the language and concepts of the dynamic resource-based view and institutional theory schools of thought that best capture the attitude towards change and uncertainty that agile seeks to embrace. The relationship between agile, innovation and entrepreneurship is also elaborated on before considering matters of financial budgeting and appraisal and the contribution that agile makes to returns on investment and ultimately the bottom line.

A detailed discussion of agile programme and project management using the DSDM frameworks as their basis sets the stage for a series of topics including governance, quality, risk and configuration management. This analysis makes clear the link between strategy and its implementation transposing practices that may already be familiar to readers with a more traditional background in the agile context. Accordingly, there emerges not only a transition path towards more agile ways of working but also explanation of the specific nuances that distinguish traditional and agile approaches to programme and project management.

This book concludes with an analysis of the implications of agile for the wider organisation and a discussion of people factors. It is owing to the central organisational paradigm of self-organised teams that these two spheres are intimately linked. Indeed, self-organisation becomes the arena in which many people aspects find their expression (e.g., autonomy, flexibility) supported by wider organisational learning from which team performance is ultimately derived.

Whilst this book may be read sequentially many readers may find that they can skim material already familiar to them choosing instead to focus on specific details where appropriate. Indeed, the material has been divided into broadly self-contained parts so that readers may opt to focus their reading accordingly. In any event, the impatient reader may consider first reading the “Management Implications” section of any chapter only delving further into details should they encounter something that piques their interest. Since this book is based on extensive research, additional information can be found in the inline citations or in the hundreds of references found in the bibliography.

Managing Agile

Strategy, Implementation, Organisation and People

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