



# WORKING THE AGILE WAY: MODERN METHODOLOGY FAD OR NECESSARY TO STAY ON COURSE?

Agile stands for adroitness and flexibility. 'Working the Agile way' is now found everywhere, and not only in IT. It seems as if the "agile" slogan is slapped onto everything. At the same time the question being asked is: why would you want to be agile, why swim with every tide? In this article we explain how we are able to stay on course by working in an agile fashion.

## Do you recognize this?

The IT provider had thoroughly investigated which software should be developed, but when completed it turned out that the system did not satisfy the expectations. Nevertheless, if you still want the system to be modified in order to satisfy these expectations; you will be confronted with high costs and late implementation. The IT provider apparently did not understand your needs in the manner you had intended; you had expected more insight. You are unable to incorporate certain exceptional situations into the system. Certain users were overlooked during the initial analyses. Or you had assumed that the system would come out as you intended, without you having been able to do prior checks and without you having expressed your expectations. These are all valid reasons for wanting modifications.

It is regrettable that, when using traditional methods, these points only emerge after the work has been done. The first feedback only follows after completion. Actually you can never be absolutely sure that one person will see and understand things in the same way as another; you can be fairly sure that there will be differences. So, you know beforehand that what is delivered will not be the end result. Much will still have to be modified.

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### **‘Working the Agile way’**

For those who have heard of Agile but do not precisely understand what it means: the difference between the ‘agile approach’ and the traditional approach is namely the fact that not ‘everything’ is analyzed first and then implemented, but instead this ‘everything’ is divided into smaller chunks and after the completion of each chunk, feedback is given in order to ascertain if this was what was required, after which adjustments can be made.

### **‘In control’**

The goal at Ultimate Software is to bring you ‘in control’ and keep you there. We also want you to have control over what is implemented in an IT project: control over the end result by bringing expectations in line, by being able to provide substantive feedback on the development process and by displaying flexibility when views change. In this way we also want to give you control over the time and money spent. An agile development methodology is plainly a very good methodology for maintaining control over the end result, time, and money.

In an agile methodology such as scrum, development is done in two-week sprints, for example. At the end of a sprint there is feedback. So together we expand on your input. Before the first sprints take place, we determine the scope together with you. You must first understand from each other what has to be implemented. From the stakeholders you will want to know what they expect of the project. An overview of the ‘requirements’ will be made that, after our estimate of the development time, will be prioritized by the customer. Based on that, the budget is established and one can figure out the duration of the project.

### **‘Fixed price’ scrum**

For a scrum project one can also agree on a fixed price. This means that the budget will be monitored together with you. You are in control based on the prioritization; you decide what will be implemented. During the project, reprioritization may occur as a result of new insights. New requirements can be added and less urgent ones can be dropped. In this way management of the project is budget-driven. Unfortunately, a fixed price does not go along with simply adding new requirements, but you do have the possibility of adjusting wishes and priorities according to new insights.

### **Staying on course**

What is it about the agile methodology that makes it so suitable for putting you ‘in control’ of the project? By working in an agile way, you can constantly make adjustments in order to achieve the desired goal – a system that fully satisfies your wishes. Without intervening alignment you run the risk of implementing only partial solutions with the project never arriving at a positive outcome and you not reaching the desired destination.

By showing, in the interim, how we understood matters, and verifying if they are as you intended; we will know for certain that we are building what you really need. Adjustments are necessary since, as more about the system becomes clear along the way, new insights arise and new priorities are set. In the project we are eager to have this flexibility to make adjustments with the participation of users. This improves the end result. We are inventive enough to produce solutions, but together we can achieve better solutions.

### **Navigating as a start-up**

IT implementations are complex by nature, and the market is continuously changing. It is therefore tricky to determine precisely the final goal of the journey. It often happens that half way through the journey you may still decide to make a left turn instead of a right turn. With the traditional methodology, this kind of adjustment would not be possible. But with the agile methodology you continuously check to see if you are still on course, based on concrete user expectations, the changing market, and the resulting changes in the requirements. In this way, your large and cumbersome system becomes flexible so that you can maneuver like a start-up!

The Agile way of working: as far as we are concerned, a fine development methodology to help stay the course! Ultimate Software combines the agile methodology with its know-how and the latest tools and techniques.

### **Do you wish to learn more about this?**

Please contact us at +31 (0)88 42 42 424



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