How Agile Is Reshaping the Project Management Landscape
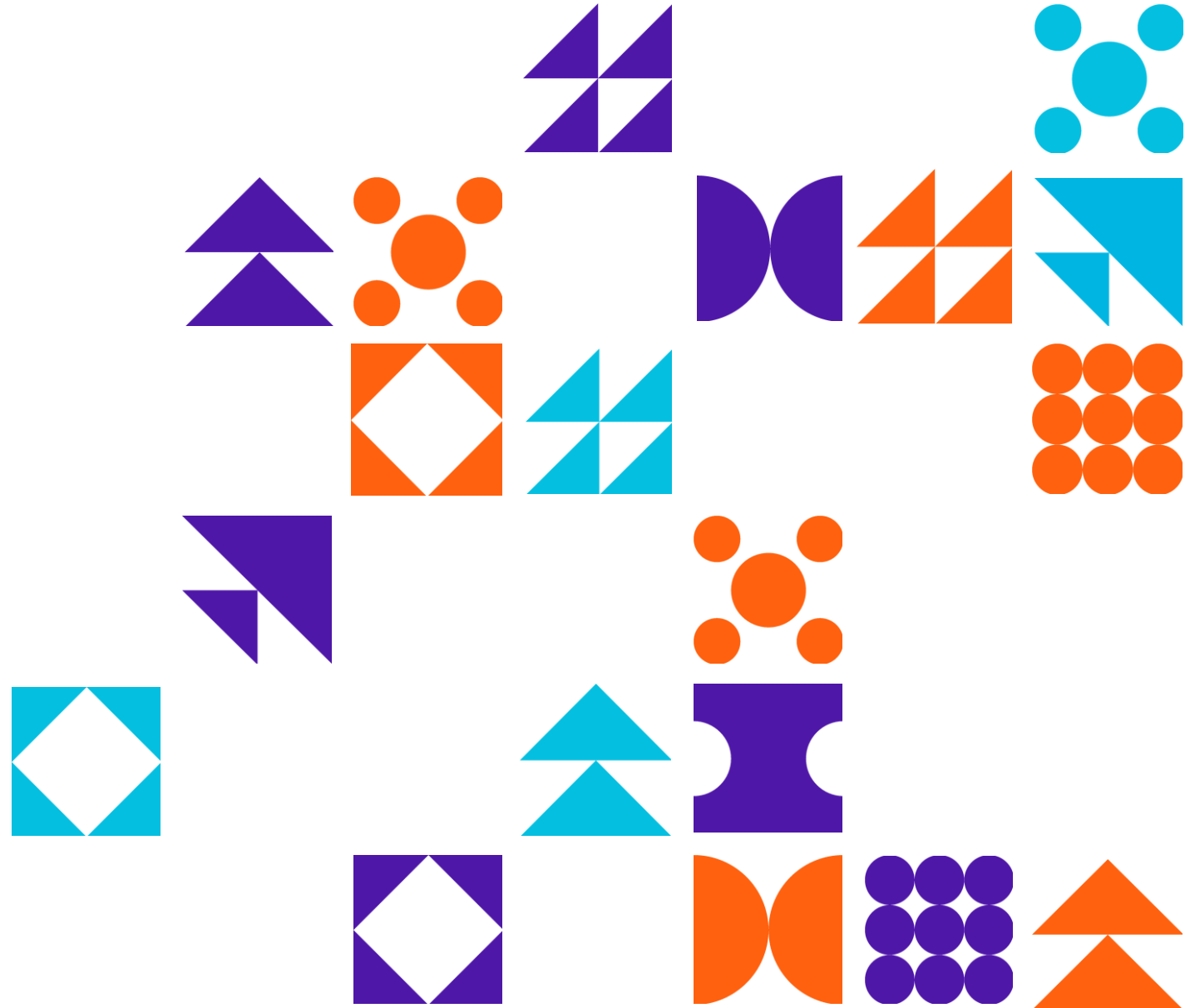
Dan Moran, MBA, PMP, SPC
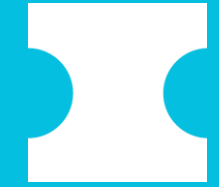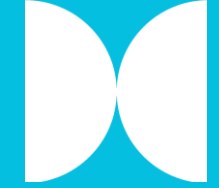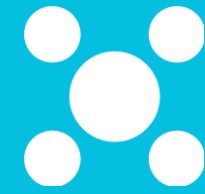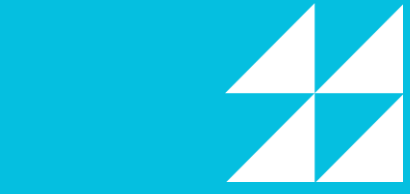
PDD 2024 | PMI-OC

02 24 2024

Introduction
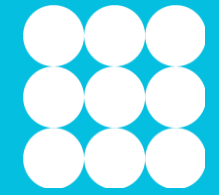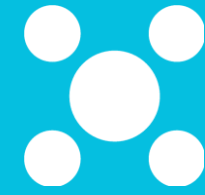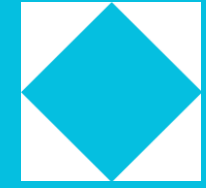
Speaker Bio: Dan Moran

- Background in front-end and middle-tier web application development

- Became a Project Manager at Boeing in 2006

- Started specializing in Agile in 2010

- After Boeing, worked as a Scrum Master / Technical Project Manager at companies like MySpace, Disney, the Auto Club, and SendGrid/Twilio

- Earned the PMP in 2015

- Moved to consulting as an Enterprise Agile Coach with Slalom in 2019

- Joined Capital Group to lead its newly-formed Agile Practice in 2022

What Is Agile?
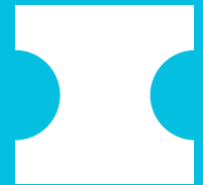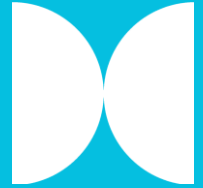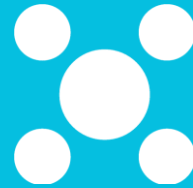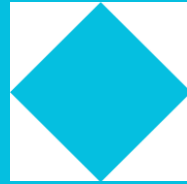
What Is Agile?

Here are some potentially controversial definitions:

Agile is . . .

- A way of working
- A style of project management
- A way to make better products
- A set of frameworks and processes
- Waterfall done iteratively

What Is Agile?

My answer:

Agile is a mindset

The PMI's Definition

"Agile approaches to project management aim for early, measurable ROI through defined, iterative delivery of product increments. They feature continuous involvement of the customer throughout the product development cycle. Although agile has its roots in software and IT, agile adoption is growing and expanding in a wide range of industries."

-- PMI.org

Waterfall in Software Project Management

- The classic "waterfall" project management methodology, characterized by consecutive phases separated by stage gates, had been used in the software development field since its infancy

WATERFALL

Work is done in sequential order within a hierarchical team structure.

PLAN

BUILD

TEST

REVIEW

DEPLOY

Jackson, M. B. (2012). Step by step. *PM Network, 26*(6), 56–61. https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/step-iterative-waterfall-approach-4303
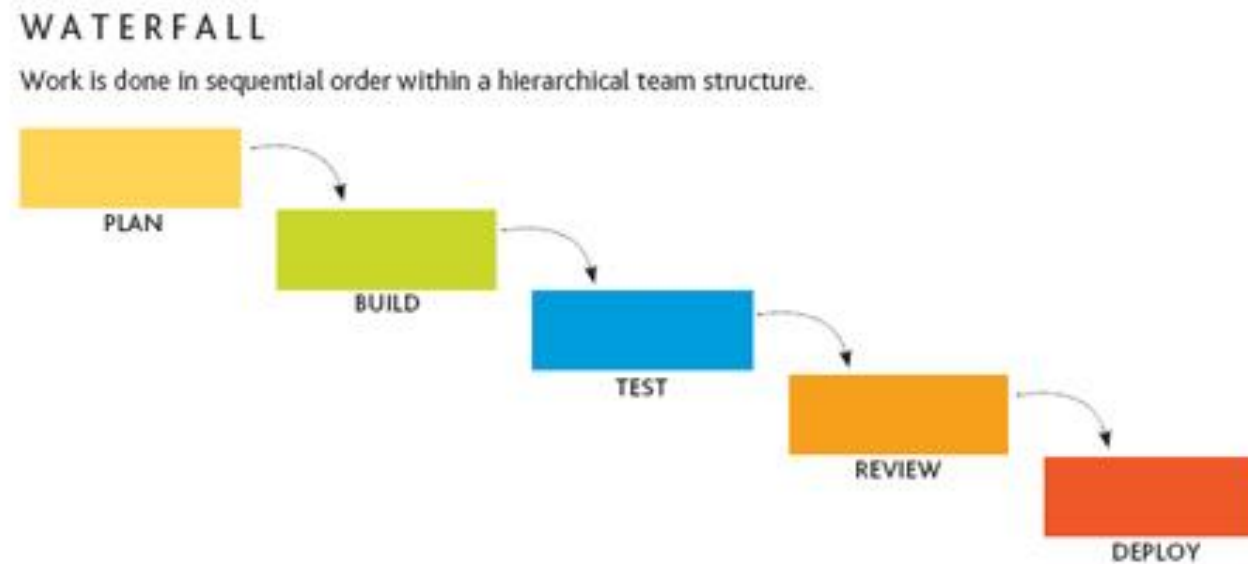
Rise of New Methodologies in 1990s

- In the software development industry, some leaders started moving away from waterfall in the 1990s

- They felt that lighter-weight, iterative development patterns would yield faster and better results

- This led to the birth of methods such as Scrum and Extreme Programming (XP), which would later become thought of as Agile frameworks

The Agile Manifesto

- In 2001 a group of senior software developers and architects met at the Lodge at Snowbird, Utah to discuss better ways of developing software

- This included some of the leaders of frameworks such as Scrum and XP

- Together, they wrote the Agile Manifesto (agilemanifesto.org)

- It defines four values and 12 principles that have guided Agile for the past 23 years

Growth of Agile Frameworks

- In the years after the publishing of the Agile Manifesto, the frameworks that have become predominant are:
  - Scrum
  - Kanban
  - Extreme Programming (XP)

Introduction of Agile Scaling Frameworks

- As Agile has become more popular, the need has arisen to provide multiple Agile teams or even Agile companies ways to coordinate their work and plan more effectively

- These can be referred to as Agile "scaling frameworks"

- The most popular are:
  - Scaled Agile Frameworks (SAFe): built on Scrum and Kanban; quite robust
  - Nexus: built on Scrum; more lightweight than SAFe
  - Large-Scale Scrum (LeSS): similar to Nexus
  - Scrum@Scale: An extension of Scrum
  - Disciplined Agile: More structured than the other frameworks except for SAFe; owned by the PMI

Example Framework: Scrum

Sliger, M. (2011). Agile project management with Scrum. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2011—North America, Dallas, TX. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute. https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/agile-project-management-scrum-6269
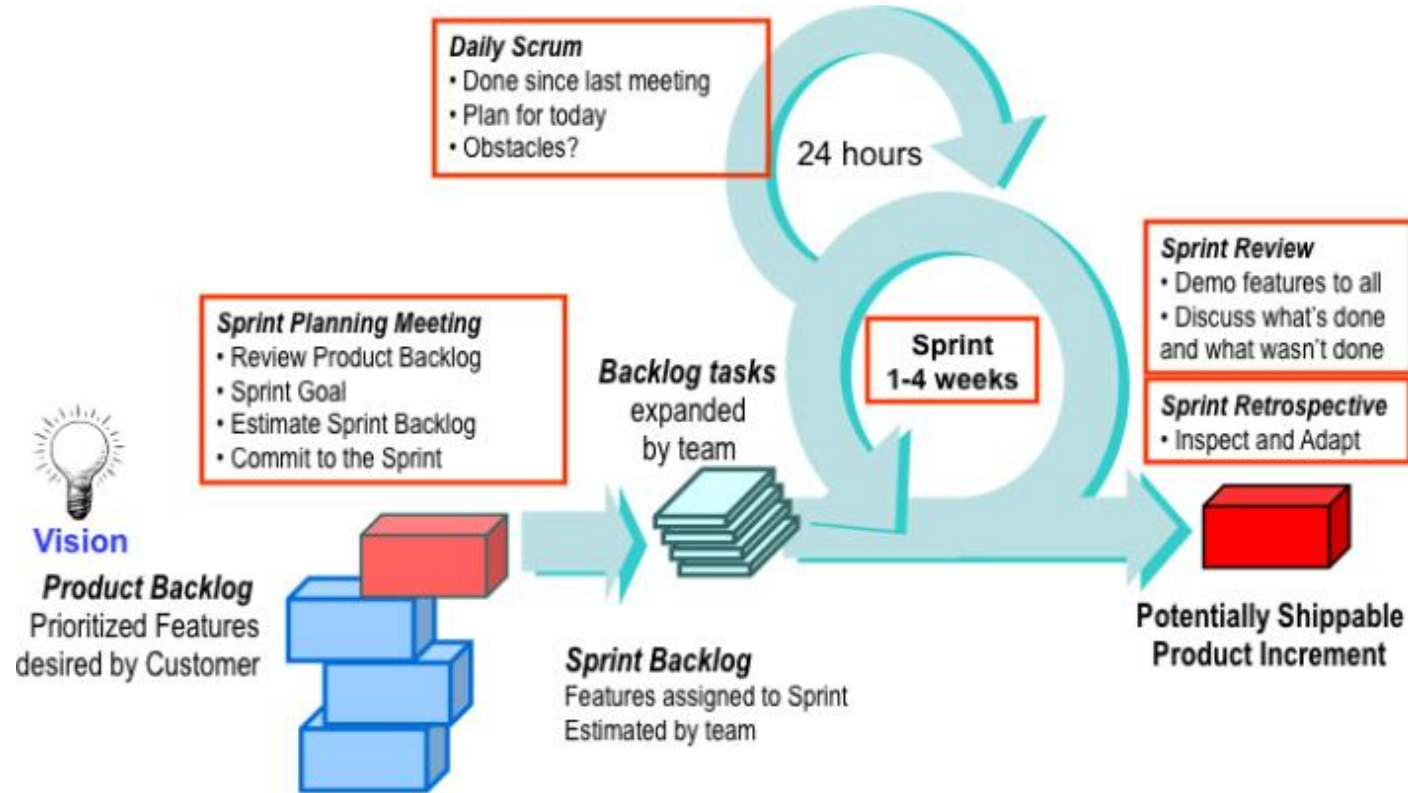
Spread of Agile

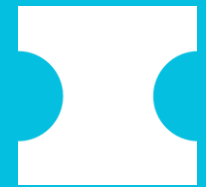- Although Agile started in the software development field, it has become increasingly popular in other areas within information technology and even in . . .
  - Marketing
  - Human Resources
  - Legal
- "Business Agility", the use of the Agile mindset (but not necessarily frameworks like Scrum) has become a common topic
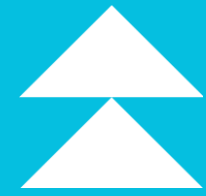
Impact on Project Management
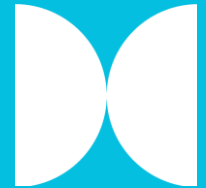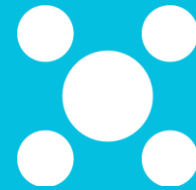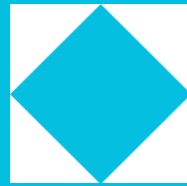
What Is Changing in Project Management Due to Agile?

- Team design

- Roles

- Relationship of PM to the project teams

- Relationship of the PM to the Scrum Master

- How we plan

- Methodologies

- Project Management artifacts and events

- How we budget

- Incentives for PMs

- How we hire PMs

- Stakeholder expectations

Team Design

Project Teams

- Assigned work

- Non-dedicated

- Often siloed by skill

- Often large

- Team members dispersed at end of project

Agile Teams

- Self-organizing

- Dedicated

- Cross-functional

- Small (5-9 people is typical in Scrum)

- Long-lived

Roles

- Agile frameworks can add new roles to teams
- Scrum specifically adds:
  - Scrum Master
    - Focused on "running Scrum" and coaching the team
    - A servant leader
    - But often someone with a delivery focus
    - Sometimes someone with a project management skillset
  - Product Owner
    - Owns the product the team develops and supports
    - Often someone with a product management background, or who is starting a journey towards being a product manager

Relationship of PM to the Project Team

- In Agile, the assignment of work packages is not a central focus of the project manager

- Even the Scrum Master does not assign work

- Instead, the teams self-organize and are trusted to develop their plan and to choose their own work assignments from a prioritized backlog of work managed and by a Product Owner

- The project manager still can still maintain their role around knowledge areas such as risk, communications, integration, stakeholders, and procurement

Relationship of the PM to the Scrum Master

Project managers are traditional leaders that drive project deliverables from start to finish. They initiate, plan, and execute projects using a command style to control scope, schedule, and budget so that projects can be successful.

Scrum masters are agile leaders that serve the scrum team and organization as change agents. They coach scrum teams to be effective using the scrum framework so they can continuously deliver value. Scrum masters not only facilitate meetings, they empower the scrum team to collaborate and self-manage while coaching on scrum principles and values. They promote continuous improvement with each sprint.

-- ScrumAlliance

Can a Project Manager Serve as a Scrum Master?

Yes! If they are willing to move from a "command and control" viewpoint to a "servant leader" way of working

However, if they aren't accepting of the differences between traditional waterfall project management and Agile project management, they (and their projects) will not be successful

I have often had to fulfill both roles. To the team, I was their Scrum Master. But I acted as a Project Manager when dealing with people outside of the team, such as leaders, stakeholders, and external non-Agile teams

Changes in How We Plan

- The Gantt chart that PMs often use is less applicable in Agile

- We don't assume that we know either the full scope of work or the approach when we start the project

- So, we don't perform a distinct planning phase to create a complete project plan

- Nor is the plan created by a person outside the team like a PM

- Instead, the team plans iteratively, with their Scrum Master or a similar person facilitating the planning

- Gantt charts, if used, are very high-level

- More often, they are replaced with product roadmaps owned by product managers

Changes in Methodology

- Early in the project lifecycle or at the launch of a new product team, decisions will need to be made regarding Agile methodologies

- What methodology will the team(s) use?

- Is there a need for a scaling methodology? If so, which one?

- Is there a need for Agile-style governance bodies, such as product councils?

Changes in Project Management Artifacts and Events

Still in Use

- Risk registers

- Decision logs

- Stakeholder registers

Not in Use or Diminished Use

- Gantt charts or other formal project schedules

- Detailed project plans

- Work Breakdown Structures

- Resource plans

- Postmortems (replaced by Retrospectives for teams)

- Project charters (often replaced with Team charters and Working Agreements)

- Detailed status reports (often replaced with Demos)

New

- Product backlogs

- Sprint backlogs

- The Increment

How We Budget

Waterfall

- We either create a quarterly budget (often defining quarterly expenses for several years in advance) or,

- We budget for a project

- Either way, we often budget in "percentages" of resources, since they may be shared among several projects

Agile

- We fund a long-lived product team with all the cross-functional staff they need to deliver a product incrementally

The Project Manager's Incentives

- While projects are underway, Project Managers are typically incentivized to deliver "on time, on budget, on scope"

- In Agile, our incentive is to develop a *product that pleases the customer*

- We need to be able to help lead our teams to be able to pivot as we receive customer feedback about what we have developed

- If we are incentivized to not depart from a plan, it will be challenging to support the team in pivoting

Effect on How We Hire Project Managers

- Many Project Management job postings require Agile experience, often specifically calling for a "Project Manager / Scrum Master"

- Certification such as Certified Scrum Master (CSM) or PMI Agile Certified Practitioner (PMI-ACP) appear on many Project Manager postings

- Some companies are putting less emphasis on traditional certifications such as the PMP

Stakeholder Expectations

- The concept of deadlines changes in Agile

- Since we utilize Agile primarily cases in which we accept that we can't predict what the final scope will be, we don't try to create firm estimates for completion dates

- Leaders need to be "on board" for this change, and will move to seeing on a very regular basis (often every two weeks) evidence of real progress

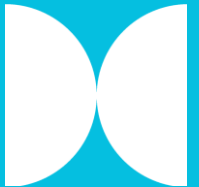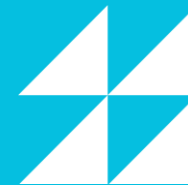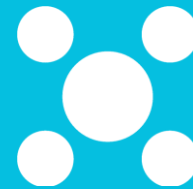- In fact, the biggest challenge for Agile adoption is often lack of leadership support for the Agile mindset
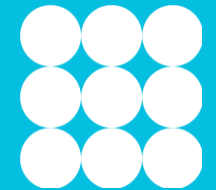
What's Next for PMs?

Dan Moran

Agile Practice Lead, The Capital Group Companies

digitaldanm@gmail.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/dgmoran/
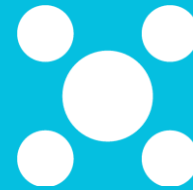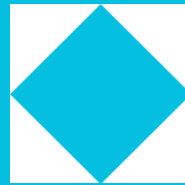
What's the Role of Project Managers in an Agile World?

- Project Managers are uniquely skilled to help guide organizations through an Agile transformation

- Even though in Agile much day-to-day planning and decision-making is pushed down to the team, the Project Manager can be a very effective leader in support of the product teams

- Much of the focus in Agile is on the inner workings of the teams; the external aspects of the work (risk management, stakeholder management, change management) are often ignored; Project Managers have a very important role to play in this area

- The ability to "herd the cats" is still as needed as ever

The Good News

- If Agile scares you, the sky really isn't falling. There will always be many projects for which Agile is simply not the right mindset

- But if Agile sounds interesting, the good news is that it's actually fun and easy to learn (but hard to master)

- If you haven't started your Agile journey yet, I encourage you to learn more and to expand your skillset as a Project Manager
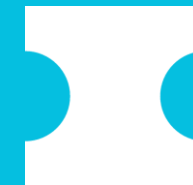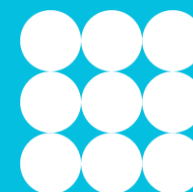
THANK YOU

Dan Moran

Agile Practice Lead, The Capital Group Companies

digitaldanm@gmail.com
https://www.linkedin.com/in/dgmoran/

DAN MORAN

Please scan QR code to get PDU credit and provide feedback.