



## Agile Methodology

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# 1. Agile – an Overview

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## 1.1 Introduction

Agile and more specifically Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM) is a continuously evolving de-facto world wide standard for developing business solutions within tight timeframes and fixed budgets. It is a framework based originally around Rapid Application Development (RAD), supported by its continuous user involvement in an iterative development and incremental approach which is responsive to changing requirements, in order to develop a system that meets the business needs on time and on budget.

Focusing on business benefit, Agile ensures that solutions incrementally meet the needs of today's dynamic businesses. The simplicity, practicality and flexibility of the approach allows us to apply its framework in a variety of business scenarios and does not limit itself solely to IT encompassed solutions.

Members of the DSDM consortium include high profile organisations such as IBM, Oracle, British Airways, BT, Lloyds Bank and Shell to mention but a few.

In a few words Agile provides a framework for the delivery of business solutions on time and to budget.

## 1.2 Issues and Concerns

Companies today are racing to build **better** products and solutions **faster**. As a result, traditional problems inherent with the development of IT systems are costing companies more and more.

- Technologies are fast moving and continuously changing, making managing your skill set more difficult
- Requirements constantly change and scope creep seems to be becoming inherent to every project
- Product deadlines and targets are missed due to the fact that Testing always seems to be an afterthought and problems and changes crop up at the last minute.
- An 'us and them' blame culture develops within the organization as Users are not constantly involved in the development process

Do any of the above issues seem familiar?

Agile addresses all of the above in a simple yet effective, 'common sense' framework.

## 1.3 The Benefits

The use of Agile has shown to provide the following benefits:

- Reduced time to market
- Improved quality due to the continuous user involvement and increased ownership by the business
- Increased productivity.
- Reduced costs as requirements are prioritised and change is managed more effectively.

In a few words Agile provides a framework for the delivery of business solutions on time and to budget.

Agile is not a short cut to developing systems, nor is it only suitable for small systems development. Agile must not be mistaken as simply another development methodology or a magic wand! It is not a hard and fast set of rules applicable to every project and it is often the case that certain projects would mandate a hybrid or more traditional approach.

## 2. The 6 P Model

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The 6 'P' Model underlying the Agile Framework is as follows:

### ▪ Philosophy

The Agile philosophy is a simple one, it states that in an Agile project the time and resources are fixed while the functionality remains the variable factor. The requirements must therefore contain an amount of flexibility and must allow for prioritisation.

### ▪ Principles

There are nine principles:

1. **Active user involvement** is imperative.
2. The team must be **empowered** to make decisions.
3. The focus is on **frequent** delivery of **products**.
4. **Fitness for business** purpose is the essential criterion for acceptance of deliverables.
5. **Iterative** and **incremental** delivery is necessary to converge on accurate business solution
6. All **changes** during development are **reversible**
7. **Requirements** are base-lined at a **high level**
8. **Testing is integrated** throughout the lifecycle
9. Collaboration and co-operation between all stakeholders is essential

### ▪ People

People are the essence of an Agile team. Agile development teams include people from the technical side as well as people from the business side. Some of the roles recommended by Agile are:

- Executive Sponsor
- Ambassador users
- Advisor Users
- Developers
- Technical Co-ordinator
- Visionary

### ▪ Practice

Agile makes use of a number of tools and techniques. These include:

- Workshop organization. How to plan, organise, run and follow up an effective workshop
- Facilitation. How to facilitate the workshops.
- Time-boxes. A time-box is a unit of time, 2 to 6 weeks long, at the end of which there should be a deliverable. Time-boxes are split into three phases; investigation phase, refine phase, consolidation phase.
- MoSCoW prioritisation. MoSCoW prioritisation is a method used to prioritise requirements. MoSCoW is the acronym for Musts, Shoulds, Coulds, Will not have this time round, the O's are there for fun!

### ▪ Process

The Agile framework is made up of 6 phases. These are:

1. **Clarify Requirements.** The scope of the project must be established and the business problem or business idea must be clearly defined.
2. **Feasibility Study.** Investigate requirements, identify possible business solutions, and propose a business solution.
3. **Business Study.** List prioritised functional and non-functional requirements, identify resources and availability, provide high level estimates for development, define system where development is being made and deployed, define technical standards.
4. **Functional Model Iteration (FMI).** During the FMI phase the users and the developer build the right system together. The main focus here is on the functional requirements.

5. **Design and Build Iteration (DBI).** During the DBI phase the developers are build the system right. The main focus here is on the non-functional requirements.
6. **Implementation.** Train the users, implement the system and review the success of the project.

The phases above are not necessarily a one time pass. Frequent returns may be made between phases 4 and 5. From phase 6 you may also return to any of phases 3, 4, 5.

A project will usually be split into increments that will allow you to return to phase 3 from phase 6 for a second increment

- **Products**

Each of the phases mentioned in section 8.7 above has a number of products attached to it. Although Agile does not define the standards of the documents it does provide a guideline of what should be included in each product.

### 3. About 6pm

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Established in 1996, 6pm is an energetic and dynamic company with an ethos that encapsulates honesty, flexibility, commitment, urgency and transparency. Over the years, 6pm has partnered with its customers across the globe and provided them with tools and techniques to conquer four business challenges, namely, Reducing Time to Market, Reducing Overall Cost, Increasing Productivity and Improving Quality.

Employing more than 100 technology consultants in Malta and the UK, our staff are committed to exceeding the expectations of our clients at all times and their enthusiasm coupled with their “can do” attitude is the envy of many competitors.

Over the last couple of years 6pm has invested heavily in entrenching its position and refining its business offering. Our service offering now ranges from Project Services and bespoke development, Resourcing and consultancy, Business Intelligence expertise and services, support and maintenance, the Testing Factory, and Agile productivity tools and services.

6pm have also launched a suite of products based on Agile processes that enables your delivery team to improve their delivery quality, increase their productivity and reduce their costs. The AXLE™ tools stimulate creativity and encourage empowerment through their unique way of engaging with the business users and IT.

With offices in Malta and in the UK, we have offered IT services to a number of international clients such as Capgemini, Sungard Vivista, Toyota GB, CACI, PRG Schultz, UK Local government, British Airways, the Maltese Government, Storebrand, Fujitsu, Toyota GB and Sheffield Hallam University.

## 4. 6pm Agile Experience

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6pm have carried out various high profile Agile rollouts in the UK, Scandinavia as well as the States and Canada with companies such as the following:

### British Airways

British Airways is the UK's largest international scheduled airline, flying to over 550 destinations. Between 1995 and 2000, 6pm were part of the team responsible for the DSDM roll-out in their Information Management Business Unit. This involved hands on project management, mentoring, training and consultancy.



### Verizon

Verizon is the telecommunications giant in the USA based out of Dallas, Texas. 6pm was commissioned to assist the Methods and Process Manager in building a business case for the roll out of DSDM. During this process we also provided DSDM Training, Mentoring and Consultancy. As an integral part of our service to assist with the building of the business case, we also managed two pilot projects using DSDM. In our management role we also provided facilitation services, systems analysis and design.



### Meijer

Meijer is a giant retailer on the east coast of the USA. At Meijer, 6pm provided DSDM training and facilitated workshops. These workshops were aimed at bringing about consensus on best practices to be adopted by Meijer for their internal systems and solutions development.



### Manulife Financial

Manulife Financial based out Toronto, Canada had their own project framework delivery method. After having reviewed the DSDM framework they decided to map their method to the DSDM framework. 6pm were the principle consultants responsible to do this. During this process we managed pilot projects, facilitated several workshops, provided training, mentoring and consultancy. We also provided Manulife with an automated tool that supported the new development framework based on DSDM.



### Storebrand

Storebrand, a major Scandinavian Banking and Insurance Services group, has made a corporate commitment to adopting the DSDM framework and tools. 6pm was appointed to bring about this change in partnership with Storebrand with the aim of reducing their time-to-market for new products. The roll-out was completed successfully and we ensured that Storebrand became self sustained and coached their five selected internal consultants to become DSDM Certified Practitioners.

