A

gile Development is a group of software development methodologies that has gained many practitioners and advocates in the last decade. There is some debate about the usefulness of project management within the Agile community. Furthermore, Agile followers regularly inquire about how flexible PMAlliance's Duration-Driven® Planning and Control Methodology is within in an Agile environment.

AGILE METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The heart of the Agile Development methodologies is the rapid development and testing of functional software. This is accomplished in incremental stages throughout the life of the Agile project. There is a higher value placed on working software over comprehensive documentation in the Agile approach than other methodologies. The goal is to deliver each working piece of software in weeks rather than months. Iterations of development build upon each other until the complete functionality of the product is delivered. To create software in this environment, a team is comprised with membership from both the technical side and business side of an organization. They are co-located as often as possible to increase accurate communication between team members. This allows quick adaptation to often changing business requirements which are welcomed and embraced in the Agile approach. This is in direct contrast to traditional "waterfall" methodologies, still in practice today, which require a complete list of requirements be delivered prior to the beginning of any software coding or testing.

> # The team is free to describe the work as it best suits the adaptation of their organization's processes

TIEING TOGETHER DURATION-DRIVEN AND AGILE DEVELOPMENT

There are several reasons why the Duration-Driven® approach to project management is an excellent fit for Agile methodologies. It is independent of any development, problem solving, or change management methodology. There are no prescribed activities that must be included in a Duration-Driven® project plan. The team is free to describe the work as it best suits them or best fits the adaptation of their organization's processes. The planning approach is conducted based on "progressive elaboration" – detailing near term activities first and using high-level place holders in the future.

Project sponsors typically want to know when to expect the final deliverable, yet in the Agile approach to software development, all the requirements are not known before beginning software development and testing – by design. This allows the beginning of development earlier in the project life-cycle, however, it can obscure the end date of the project. Duration-Driven® can support both of these seemingly conflicting goals, predicting when the project will be done and beginning the project prior to knowing the complete scope of what it will entail, by using a scalable approach to project planning called rolling wave planning.

DURATION-DRIVEN PLANNING APPROACH

Rolling wave planning is a form of progressive elaboration of the work to be accomplished where near-term activities are detailed at a lower level than future activities. As each Agile iteration commences, the scope of work can be quickly clarified, planned, structured and placed into a control process. This approach can provide the detail required to keep the team on track in the near-term along with the visibility of the project end date at a higher level to project sponsors. One of the cornerstones of Agile methodologies is the use of a highly interactive development team that collaborates on all portions of the work. Similarly, the Duration-Driven® approach to building a plan requires that the plan be built by team members as opposed to any one individual. As a result, the project plan is more accurate because it reflects the team's understanding of the activities, their order, and the time required to accomplish them.

KEEPING THE PLAN FRESH

In many project management approaches, the project plan becomes something that the project manager must complete to satisfy sponsors or an internal governance team but it does not direct the behavior of the team. It looks good on paper but does not reflect what the team is really doing and, therefore, is not a reliable predictor of the future. In this situation project management effort is wasted. Worse yet, it is dangerous for management to make decisions based on this incomplete and often erroneous data. With the Duration-Driven® approach the individual team members have a personal investment in the plan because they built it. They are regularly given an opportunity to update the plan to reflect what is really going on in the project. This makes the plan a more reliable data point for making management decisions.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Duration-Driven® Project Management is not only compatible with Agile development methodologies, it adds value to Agile projects by helping them complete on-time, and ensures that Agile schedules are reliable enough on which to base business decisions.necessary, the team can also recommend an increase in resources to keep the project schedule on time.

DURATION-DRIVEN HELPS AGILE DEVELOPMENT REACH ITS SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION

One of the potential dangers with Agile development is that the project never finishes. The way the Agile methodologies manage that risk is through time boxing. Time boxing requires that the schedule be divided into discrete periods with each part period having its own deliverables, deadline and budget. There are several ways in which Duration-Driven® supports the need for hitting a time target. When team members update the project schedule the impacts of their updates are analyzed to ensure that the project is still on target. If there is slippage in the project schedule, a compression process is followed by the team to determine how to get the plan back on track. The team determines how to change the approach to the remaining activities in this iteration or reduce the scope of this iteration. If necessary, the team can also recommend an increase in resources to keep the project schedule on time.

The Duration-Driven® approach requires the plan be built by team temebers, the project plan is more accurate because it reflects the team's understanding of the activities, their order, and the time required to accomplish them.

ABOUT PMALLIANCE

PM Alliance

Corporate Headquarters
Phone: 770.938.4947
Fax: 770.234.6997
2075 Spencers Way - Suite 201
Stone Mountain, GA 30087

PM-ALLIANCE.COM

PMAlliance is a team of certified project management professionals who have years of real-world experience. We provide training, consulting, and project management office development services for our clients worldwide, from Fortune 1000 companies, to multi-national businesses, to entrepreneurial ventures.

OUR METHODOLOGY
—
Your Success®