

MYTH BUSTING SCRUM: SIX KEYS TO AGILE **SUCCESS**

How the Right Outsourced IT Team Can Speed
Your Transition to Agile Software Development



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AGILE AND SCRUM

Your Key to Competing in the Digital Marketplace

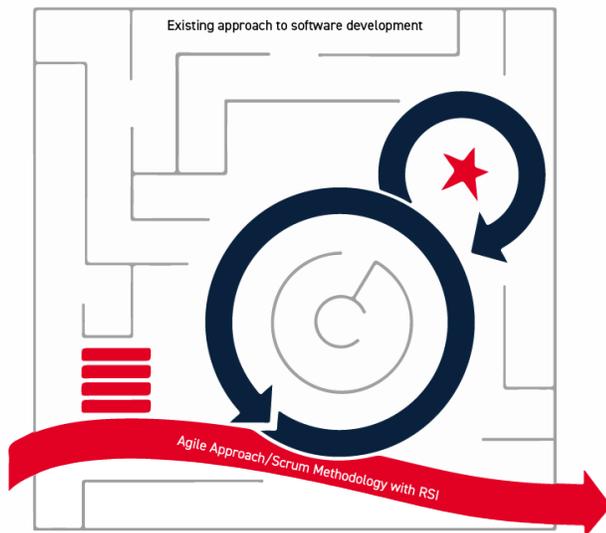
Today's digital age is creating a new playing field for enterprises: one that rewards agility in a shifting business climate, is driven by a deep understanding of consumer demands, and has the prowess to stay relevant in an evolving technical environment. Traditional software development models simply can't keep pace in what has become a very competitive digital marketplace.

The Agile development philosophy delivers value incrementally in an environment where requirements and solutions evolve through customer collaboration between self-organizing, cross functional teams. According to Gartner, Agile development is seen as a way for enterprises to adjust to new, fast-paced ways of doing business, and analysts strongly recommend that IT leaders and executives adopt this approach.¹

Multiple methodologies have arisen to enable adoption of an Agile approach, the most popular being Scrum, which is based on concepts of self-organization, non-hierarchical leadership, rapid iteration and expecting/embracing change. It uses defined roles, timeboxed activity and key artifacts to generate iterative, rapid results.

Although the Scrum methodology and Agile development model have been around for nearly 20 years, the pool of talent well-versed in the model is still not large enough to meet growing demand. And it's impossible to adopt an Agile approach without the right talent. Recruiting IT talent has, therefore, become more competitive than ever, as companies look to differentiate themselves. And one of the hottest IT topics of the last decade has centered around the best ways to connect an Agile philosophy with software development outsourcing.

This whitepaper outlines the most current core concepts and tenets of the Agile philosophy and Scrum methodology, examines the potential hazards and myths that face organizations attempting the transition to a Scrum implementation of the Agile model, and explores the critical role that the right outsourcing partner can play in helping businesses avoid those hazards to better compete in today's digital marketplace.



Adoption of the Agile approach/Scrum methodology can be difficult – unless it is supported by the right partner

¹ Loeb, Leo, Informationweek, "CIOs Need to Embrace Agile, Gartner Finds," July 2, 2015.

CORE AGILE AND SCRUM CONCEPTS

Any IT development model or architecture that enters the mainstream quickly becomes an industry buzzword, which often leaves a clear definition up to multiple interpretations. Today's Agile model is no exception. It's important to define some of the core concepts surrounding the Agile philosophy, Scrum methodology and adoption trends.

Key Tenets of Scrum

Embracing Change

In today's world, business requirements constantly change. An Agile model expects and encourages that change, instead of wasting time trying to solidify IT requirements. This enables companies to achieve a final product that truly matches what they need – even though the end result often looks quite different from original expectations.

Frequent Iterations

Software is delivered early and frequently via sprints (set periods of time during which specific work has to be completed and ready for review) that usually range from one to four weeks. At the end of a sprint, the development team demonstrates a potentially shippable piece of software. This iterative process naturally leads to a design cadence in which requirements are modified and enhanced to realize the greatest value.

Self-Organized Team

The development team is the heart and soul of Agile. Teams are self-organizing and many team members often contribute multiple skill sets. These teams are not led in the traditional sense, with one member "taking charge" and/or "assuming responsibility" for the whole. A Product Owner leads the process, communicating vision and priorities, and a Scrum Master facilitates the process, removing obstacles to team productivity.

Communication

Interaction with the development team is encouraged daily. Team members communicate with each other continuously.

Continuous Improvement

At the end of each sprint, the team comes together to review their process, the resulting software, and determine how to become more effective. This retrospective event is crucial to the long-term success of a Scrum team.

In their first update to the Scrum Guide since 2013, Scrum co-creators also clarify the importance of five values – Courage, Focus, Commitment, Respect and Openness – which must be embraced by team members to ensure success.² It's easy to see how the Agile approach and Scrum methodology, when appropriately implemented, can deliver a competitive advantage. Traditional approaches assume that developers should create software similarly to the way in which an architect might create a building – by establishing a linear plan and following it, step by step. But changes in technology, market conditions and even expectations for what a given software product should do occur quite often, rendering that carefully crafted, linear plan obsolete before it can be completed. Developers who work with the assumption of changes and the value of an empirical approach can better align projects with evolving needs, deliver usable components faster, stay ahead of the competition and generate a more rapid return on investment. By contrast, organizations that do not implement this approach run the risk of falling behind.

² Sutherland, Jeff and Ken Schwaber, The Scrum Guide™ (ScrumInc. and Scrum.org) July 2016, p. 4.

How Key Roles Support Agile Development- Project Manager? Scrum Master? Both?

Definitions:

Scrum Master

A Scrum Master holds responsibility for the development process, facilitating the product development team's efforts, removing obstacles to progress and protecting the team from unnecessary distractions.

Product Owner

The Product Owner represents stakeholders and is the voice of the customer, clearly communicating product vision and priorities to the team. The Product Owner typically works on the business side of the project, and should not interfere with team members on the technical aspects of a development task.

Project Manager

A Project Manager holds responsibility for the product and is responsible for leading a project from its inception to execution. This includes planning, execution and managing the people, resources and scope of the project. The Project Manager also ensures clear, continual understanding between stakeholders and team members, reorienting each as project parameters change. While this role is common in traditional development processes, it does not exist within the Scrum methodology

Although the Scrum methodology does not define a Project Manager role, professionals performing this role in a traditional development process can often become successful as Product Owners or Scrum Masters.

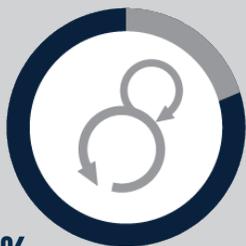
The dichotomy between the Scrum Master and Project Manager role is apparent when a company partners with an outsourced vendor already implementing an Agile process. Scrum Masters can best be compared to bassists in a jazz band – they understand what the team has committed to accomplish in its given sprint time, and essentially set the pace, rhythm and underlying tone of Agile projects, while also ensuring harmony between team members.

Scrum Masters should be co-located with their respective IT project development teams so they can keep the group focused on their daily activities. They are singularly dedicated to clearing obstacles for team members (e.g., computer issues, vague requirements, stakeholders who are difficult to contact) and shielding them from distractions (i.e. company politics). As chief facilitators, Scrum Masters also take on all the necessary administrative and coaching duties.

When Scrum Masters come from the client organization, their ability to objectively facilitate the process and steadily execute the project can be compromised by conflicting priorities and agendas within the organization, as well as arbitrarily imposed deadlines, politics and internal pressures.

By contrast, a Scrum Master from an outsourced partner should be unbiased and objective about a client's politics and agendas – and therefore, can better empower the Agile project team to stay on task.

SCRUM IS GROWING



Percentage of organizations that currently use Scrum practices at some level.

42%

Companies using scrum exclusively.



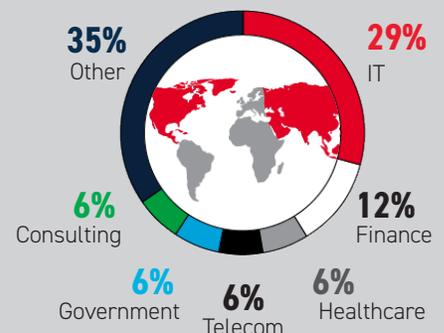
50% +

Amount of time companies spend on Scrum-based development.



WHO USES SCRUM

Mostly North America and Asia



OVERCOME WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK

The traditional development model – with its incomplete components, long development cycles and continual change requests – is expensive and inefficient. However, even well-established successes using the Scrum methodology aren't enough to enable many companies to fully embrace the approach. Even when the Agile philosophy makes sense on paper, it's still a different way of thinking. Shifting from an inefficient but highly familiar approach to a new and different approach – even if the new approach is more intuitive – can be difficult or even intimidating. Moreover, the hazards of a poorly or ineffectively managed Scrum implementation are significant and include lower quality products, the inability to measure productivity, difficulty keeping up with and communicating project status, and an inability to make the transition and deliver value.

In short, it is crucial that companies seeking the benefits of a Scrum approach to Agile development identify and pursue ways to manage the transition as efficiently, effectively and productively as possible.

A Better Approach to Scrum Turns Hazards into Myths

Leadership from an objective, highly experienced, third-party Scrum Master can enable organizations to avoid and overcome potential hazards, essentially negating them.

Myth #1: Products developed using Scrum are of lower quality

Fact: It's true that product quality can suffer if organizational leaders cannot effectively transition from development direction to process-oriented facilitation; without that, teams will likely not embrace self-organization, expectations of change and personal responsibility for quality in each iteration. However, experienced Scrum leadership will enable the team to expect requirements to change along the way – and embrace those changes. They will ensure that team members are always thinking about quality-oriented issues, collaborating according to requirements, with demonstrations taking place on a regular basis as quality checkpoints.

Myth #2: The abstract nature of the Agile/Scrum structure hinders productivity measurement.

Fact: Inexperienced Scrum leadership may find the fluid, seemingly abstract nature of Scrum development overwhelming – especially when addressing internal politics and conflicting agendas. However, a highly experienced, third party Scrum Master will be able to not only identify implementation obstacles, but will help the team overcome them quickly. Highest value product features will be developed and delivered first. And the use of time-boxing and sprints will help break projects into manageable pieces, keeping the team focused on delivering value with each iteration. This eliminates unnecessary work and allows for proactive troubleshooting along the way, making it easy to measure productivity.

Myth #3: The Scrum approach offers no tangible way to regularly communicate project status.

Fact: Experienced Scrum leaders know that even though the Scrum team is self-organizing and team members work amongst themselves, their work must be driven through planning tools such as time-boxes, sprints, release planning and road mapping. Additionally, the inherent transparency of the Scrum approach allows business stakeholders to view project status as they desire, rather than waiting on traditional status reports to be created and released.

Myth #4: Making the transition to Agile is too difficult and will involve more work than ROI.

Fact: Moving to Agile does call for big change, and change often adds a degree of risk that can result in significant costs in time, effort and dollars if not managed properly. However, experienced and effective Scrum managers already know how to help teams get up and running quickly, avoid risks, and deliver faster development that delivers measurable value.

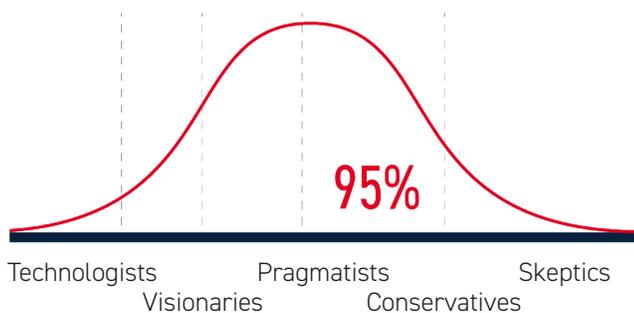
CONSIDERING AGILE AND SCRUM? THE TIME IS NOW

More than likely your competition has already adopted Agile and Scrum in some form or manner. A bell curve has already been established as proven results have moved outside the early adopters into the mainstream.⁵

Scrum is expanding beyond software development projects into a variety of business areas, from operations to research and development. Scrum is also increasingly being used across a variety of industries to successfully streamline product development cycles and produce high-quality outputs – on time and on budget. Major digital trends, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), are also destined to significantly impact and shape the Agile landscape and are likely to intensify the demand for resources and professionals with the necessary skills.

By selecting an experienced domestic outsourcing partner with efficient and knowledgeable U.S.-based teams working in an Agile software development environment, you can mitigate any risk associated with a change in philosophy and spur the cost-effective delivery of higher-quality products to market faster.

If the traditional methods of software development aren't producing the results your company needs, then it's time to start the journey to Scrum and explore an alternative approach that offers you a competitive edge in today's digital marketplace.



⁵ Scrum Alliance, "The 2015 State of Scrum Report," July 2015.

Seven Qualities to Seek in an Outsourced Scrum Partner

Of course, not all third-party Scrum partners are the same. To help simplify the search process, we recommend this checklist of the top qualities to seek in a Scrum partner:

- 1. Deep Agile/Scrum Partnership Experience.** Obviously, this is essential. You want to work with a partner that can share examples of key capabilities, such as the ability to:
 - » Ease communications between team members and stake holders
 - » Facilitate team productivity
 - » Ensure collaboration and communication
- 2. Loyalty to Your Business (not politics).** You want to work with someone who understands the kinds of political, interpersonal and other agendas that can impede productivity – and avoid them, rather than be caught up in them.
- 3. Familiarity with Your Business Processes.** You want a partner who understands what your business does and needs to be successful. Beware of an overseas outsourced partner that may not truly understand how businesses in the U.S. work, communicate and get things done.
- 4. The Ability to Speak Your Language.** Since communication is such a fundamental component of a successful Scrum methodology, you want to be sure that any partner you work with understands the accents, idioms and communications styles of your employees, as well as your company's acronyms and business terminology.
- 5. Accessibility and Availability.** Whenever possible, you want a partner that can be available whenever you are – something that's more difficult to achieve when you're working with people in overseas time zones.
- 6. Non-Distributed, Co-Located Team Members.** While it is possible to accomplish Scrum processes with geographically scattered team members, look for a partner who can provide team leadership – or even complete teams – all in the same place, near you, for more helpful interaction.
- 7. A History of Success.** Seek out a partner who can share case studies of multiple Scrum projects that they have supported.

ABOUT RURAL SOURCING

Rural Sourcing Inc. (RSI) is changing the IT outsourcing experience with a cost-effective, Agile approach to software development, support and maintenance of critical business and cloud applications. By providing an alternative to offshore outsourcing, RSI eliminates the obstacles of time zones, distance, language, and geopolitical risks. With development centers strategically located throughout the United States, RSI leverages untapped, highly skilled IT resources in tier two and three cities to provide world-class solutions for Fortune 1000 clients across various industries including consumer & retail goods, financial services, healthcare, hi-tech, and pharmaceutical. For more information, visit www.ruralsourcing.com.

To learn more, or if you have any questions or concerns about a transition to Agile, contact us at inquiries@ruralsourcing.com or 877-887-4774. Additional information may also be found at www.ruralsourcing.com.

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