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Agile Project Management for Business Transformation Success
Authors: Paquette and Frnakl
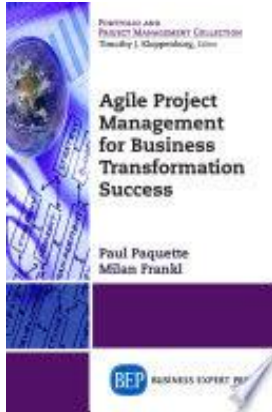Book Review   Reviewer: Charlotte McKenzie

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Title: **Agile Project Management for Business Transformation Success**

Author: **Paul Paquette and Milan Frankl**

Publisher: Business Expert Press, LLC

List Price: $34.95   Format: Soft cover

Publication Date: 2016   ISBN: 13:978-1-63157-323-1

Reviewer: **Charlotte A. McKenzie**, CPLP®, PMI-ACP, PSM, ITILv3

Review Date: April 2018

Introduction

I have been an Agilest from as far back as I can remember; however, I did not realize I was one until May 2013 when I heard my first presentation on the Agile mindset. Adapting to Agile was natural because I inherently practiced the tenets of Agile/Scrum. I also recognized the high failure rate of the Waterfall methodology through reading the Standish Group's Annual Chaos Report which I often referenced in the Project Management courses I taught at the university level and as a volunteer instructor for a local non-profit organization. I studied the traditional project management approach while attending a course at Villanova University. I believed there was a better way.

I became certified as a Scrum Master in July 2013 through Scrum.org when I earned my PSM, Professional Scrum Master, certification. In 2018 I earned the PMI-ACP (Agile Certified Professional) credential. I plan to earn the PMI-PBA, Professional in Business Analysis, certification in 2018. I mention these credentials because these statements support the fact that this book was like "preaching to the choir". I wholeheartedly endorse the author's positions.

Most importantly, reading this book was an enjoyable learning experience. As an educator, continuous learning is an integral part of my value system. I gained additional perspectives on the business value of the umbrella of Agile solutions. Agile can be applied to a wide range of projects, not just software development and not just the PMO organization.

Overview of the Book's Structure

This eleven-chapter book is well organized. Looking at the book through my instructional designer lens, the general to specific organizational style leverages reader retention and is the preferred style for adult readers. The book assumes the

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reader has limited knowledge of Agile. In chapters one through three the authors provide a solid Agile foundation by presenting a detailed description of Agile concepts with comparisons to traditional Waterfall Project Management. In these initial chapters, the authors include detailed descriptions of corporate transformation projects. Armed with the information from the first through three chapters, the reader is better equipped to explore the practical aspects of corporate transformation projects covered in chapters four through ten.

Chapter four focuses on one of the vital success factors for any project: Communications within teams, as well as communications outside of the team. The chapter details are astounding. Chapter five embraces the importance of teamwork. Next, chapter six discusses the Agile approach in terms of the enterprise. How does Agile impact enterprise-wide governance? In chapter seven Agile processes are highlighted and contrasted with traditional Waterfall methods, however, some Kanban processes were not covered. Chapter eight deals with the limitations of the traditional approach of gathering project requirements upfront as well as the inadequate traditional feedback loops. As the authors state, over reliance on predictive planning is the Achilles heel of the Waterfall approach. Chapter nine discusses the major elements in organizational alignment where Agile has a direct impact.

The author makes two direct position statements upfront: 1. Agile addresses the limitations of the traditional project management methods, and 2. Agile has significant advantages in the most important organizational alignment factor, customer satisfaction. Chapter ten outlines Agile resource optimization which is an important enterprise-wide consideration. The last chapter summarizes the key points from the previous ten chapters.

Highlights

Chapter 4, Agile Communications is the pinnacle of the book. This chapter describes the most essential component of any project. Communications is critical for successful project delivery. Communications establishes trust among all people involved in the project, mitigates risk, forges a common purpose, etc. The chapter organizes the information by bulleting the important points and then supporting these points with details and examples. The authors not only tell you what is key, they describe why the points are critical. The implications of not having good communications are also presented. This chapter has universal appeal and use.

Highlights: What I liked!

There were many aspects of the book that I thoroughly enjoyed. I particularly liked how the authors provided environmental context for the book. Understanding the impact of disruptive technologies on our society, ranks the book as a compelling must read. Organizations are in perpetual transformation mode if they want to remain competitive. Hence the importance of successful business transformation places the reader in the right frame of mind for the authors' persuasive arguments.

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As stated, the book is all about positioning Agile as the "premier" strategy, if not the "only" strategy for corporate business transformation projects. The book carefully and logically unfolds the reasons behind the book's premise by presenting detailed arguments from credible sources and not just opinion and supposition. These information sources were clearly delineated using APA style in-text citations and references. I truly appreciated referencing the Standish Group Annual Chaos Report to support the advantages of Agile over traditional Waterfall methods since I frequently used this source in my project management courses.

The authors' in-depth arguments included the following components: core business values, stakeholder perspectives, external environmental factors, internal cultural impacts, project manager's perspectives, time, cost, and scope trilogy, contract negotiations, the impact of early versus late business results, and strategic and tactical communications. The use of real-world examples to describe these concepts added validity to the author's position and kept the reading interesting and relevant.

The authors' expressive vocabulary and style of sentencing offer effective ways of describing Agile concepts. I have recorded these terms and phrases and plan to incorporate them into my professional lexicon. The book includes a helpful glossary of key Agile terms. Business valuation is the cornerstone of the book and thereby provides the language to constructively and effectively describe the advantages of Agile to business minded executive stakeholders. Using terms that individuals can relate to usually results in success.

As an instructional designer, I particularly enjoyed the author's inclusion of adult learning theories to support some of his positions. The author practices the art of repetition to instill knowledge. In most cases adults tend to forget 50-80 percent of new information in a very short timeframe. Recall and adoption of new ideas is more successful when spaced-repetition methods are used. Long-term retention is significantly improved. The book continuously restates the benefits of Agile from a business perspective in every chapter, almost in every paragraph. Thankfully, the author presents his ideas using creative writing techniques. In other words, the authors use a variety of ways to state the same ideas. As mentioned previously, the organization of the book facilitates the retention of the material. The umbrella approach (General to Specific) is a tenet of instructional strategy for adults. The author continuously loops back to key points to highlight the most important elements of each chapter.

Who might benefit from the Book?

Anyone who wants to learn more about Agile will benefit from this book. I believe beneficiaries of this book encompasses more than the PMO, Project Management Office, executives. The applicability of the concepts can be meaningful and useful in smaller organizations as well. Readers will gain additional perspectives concerning Agile. Readers will realize that the benefits of Agile go beyond the boundaries of software development projects. As a trainer, educator, instructional designer, and project manager, I believe Agile concepts and practices can be applied to a wide

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range of disciplines. I am particularly passionate about Agile in education starting with K-12 through post graduate school. I even recommend Agile practices for one's personal life. Additionally, I firmly believe the instructional design lifecycle can benefit from Agile. I hope to write about my ideas concerning the application of Agile practices to these disciplines. This author has certainly inspired me to do so.

Conclusion

I recommend reading this book if you have a direct or even indirect role in Agile. It is not a technical book. The book describes Agile from a business perspective with focus on business valuation. Reading this book was a good investment in my time. I have already realized returns by using the book's vocabulary and concepts in several presentations. Having both an Agile technical and business orientation provides the tools for success on any Agile project.

For more about this book, go to: https://www.businessexpertpress.com/books/agile-project-management-business-transformation-success/

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the PMI Silver Spring Chapter. Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Silver Spring Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Silver Spring Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.net.

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