Agile vs. Traditional Project Change

How many times have you been part of a project that started in one direction, but, by the time it was finished, it looked completely different? Changes are part of projects. Problems arise, standards change, more needs are realized. How you handle those changes are what will make or break the project.

This month we will complete our journey examining some differences between Agile and Traditional project management by looking at change management. The process for dealing with changes is vastly different for these two approaches.

It is first important to dispel the myth that Agile allows for changes at any time in the project. That is false. One point of the Agile Manifesto states the desire to "respond to change over following a plan". An Agile environment welcomes change, even late in development, but doesn't allow it to control the project. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage by delivering the latest requirements. Changes are not scope creep, but the reason why you use Agile.

Agile uses adaptive planning and incremental project delivery. Adaptive planning is the idea that there is no fixed plan for the entire project. The plan will evolve iteration by iteration and is connected to the value it brings to the customer. Adaptive planning is useful because the customer's needs change during a long project and they gain a clearer understanding of their needs as the project evolves.

Incremental delivery means the project is broken into iterations with each delivering part of the required functionality and highest priority requirements are included in early increments. This process allows the project to adapt more easily to change. It is important to note that once an iteration begins, there will be no changes to it.

Agile also holds to the thought that an environment that views changes in the primary project plan as negative creates inherent delays in dealing with the issues that prompted the changes. The customer takes the responsibility for the risk associated with change management. For example, the cost of the iteration might go up, the cost and value might be out of balance, or the customer might not be able to receive all of the features or functionality desired.

Traditional project management holds to a more formal approach to change management. Before the project begins, the project management plan is created. The scope of the project is detailed in this plan. For traditional projects, any desired changes must use the Integrated Change Control process to ensure that scope creep doesn't occur. This is the process of reviewing all change requests; approving changes and managing changes to deliverables,

> *Pessimists calculate the odds. Optimists believe they can overcome them.*
> *Ted Koppel*
> *News anchor*

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planned before you begin? When a change surfaces, can the project team approve it or must it go through the Change Control Board? You will have fewer headaches during your project by understanding up front which method your project should use.

I hope you've enjoyed our look through some differences between Agile and Traditional project management and learned a little along the way. I know I did!

organizational process assets, project documents, and the project management plan; and communicating their disposition. It allows documented changes to be considered in an integrated fashion while reducing project risk, which often arises from changes made without consideration to the overall project objectives or plans. While changes can be made by any stakeholder, they must always take a formal written format and be processed through the Change Control Board. This board consists of:

- Consultants
- Stakeholders
- Customers
- Sponsors
- Professional and technical association
- Industry groups
- Subject matter experts
- PMO

Knowing how your project reacts to change will determine how it should be planned. Is it acceptable to plan incrementally or should everything be

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