

»Becoming agile means that you have to become more structured first in order to become more flexible then.«

To start with agility, it is very helpful to sort out some basic principles for your organization. The first thing we need to realize is that agile is the opposite of ad hoc. Where agile is a way of managing processes or projects, ad hoc is just institutionalized chaos.

So, where is the difference in the setup? One of the main objectives in Agile Project Management is to synchronize your project partners and members. It helps to differentiate times for planning und prioritization and times for the team members to focus on the tasks. Even if this sounds easy, both management level and customers are involved in this process and everybody needs to understand exactly when and how they are asked to make decisions and set priorities. To achieve agility, you need to adhere to some basic principles:

- Stick to an agreement when your agile project team meets and synchronizes.
- Set dates for your customers to review the project progress and prioritize the next steps.
- Commitment and trust from management are essential; leadership has to avoid order and command when things get sticky.

Implementing agile methodology

An often-heard request is: »We need an agile coach because we want to run agile projects.« For a quick start, many organizations can create necessary conditions quite easily. We know from experience that Agile Project Management is more a question of some basic agile principles, some helpful tools and common sense rather than frameworks and sophisticated methodologies. Indisputably, SCRUM or DevOps will exploit its strengths in certain projects. But very little is needed to run a project in an agile way, while the increase in outcome and productivity can be enormous. Our agile starter kit covers the four most important topics:

- Create a defined workspace, physical as well as virtual, like a »war room« or project corner.
- Visualize work with a project board (Kanban).
- Synchronize project working times and stick to meetings, e. g. weekly status every Wednesday at 10:00 sharp.
- Let self-organized project teams work; in agile projects, there is neither need nor time to micro-manage colleagues.

Learn to improve

Organized learning is one of the most important tasks for agile structures. While learnings in SCRUM are gained through retrospective, Kanban focuses on continuous improvement. It is essential to regularly learn and reflect on what happened and how to improve as a team. This is the key to enhancing productivity. The best performing teams are those who have organized their learning best. I can highly recommend the film »Groundhog Day« in this context; you have most likely already watched Bill Murray become an expert through continuous improvement and endless repetition.

Where to start

Actually, there is never or hardly ever one right project to start with. Most often, the question is what situation an organization is currently in. Agile Project Management is neither a new miracle cure nor will it replace your traditional approach immediately. Agile Project Management is an additional competency, coming in handy for situations where we face a lot of uncertainty. A further advantage is producing far less overhead in situations when agile teams decide as they go. It saves resources for project management, which are often rare. We will be happy to hear from you if you need a hand replacing ad hoc with agile in your organization. ●