

Our team. Your advantage.

A Word of Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their support to produce this report on the state of Agile in South Africa.

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Introduction

For a while now, it has been a personal dream of mine to survey the local marketplace in order to understand the context and state of Agile adoption in South Africa.

Finally, the time has come.

Research Methodology

In this, the inaugural IQbusiness Agile Report, the objective was to report on the maturity of Agile software development within South Africa, and the opinions the IT industry currently hold. The goal was to better understand the affect Agile is having – is it providing the benefits it purports to – and where it can be improved, for current and future organisations. We surveyed 276 people from a range of company sizes, industries and levels and supplemented it with in-depth interviews, with industry experts, including leaders in organisations going through Agile adoption as well as consultants. The results are interesting to say the least.

Key Findings

While overall the adoption of Agile practices is approaching maturity within IT, there still remains a significant number of larger organisations who appear to be lagging in the move to Agile. This is not altogether surprising, given how resource-intensive and inherently risky large-scale changes can be to large organisations; most of them are already heavily invested in traditional business processes.

Small to medium-sized organisations remain the strongest

advocates for Agile, given that they are typically younger, and staffed and tooled for flexibility and innovation; therefore change comes much easier to them. The results for those who have embraced Agile are certainly a net benefit.

Curiously, the results many organisations have experienced do not completely align with their expectations prior to adoption. Many organisations have experienced substantial increases in their ability to adapt to change, project visibility and productivity, but significantly fewer experience a reduction in time to market. There is no doubt that agility and visibility are imperatives for any organisation looking to compete in a rapidly changing marketplace like South Africa. However many start out by adopting Agile as a means to accelerate product delivery but end up realising other, often unexpected, more valuable benefits.

As the report will show, Agile is having a positive impact on many teams who have made the change primarily within the IT space, and other areas are now starting to adopt the approach as they are starting to see the value that they can derive from Agile. The hope is not only to improve adoption and Agile's success rate across the organisation, but to make it less taxing for change agents tasked with implementing this new mindset.

Biase De Gregorio

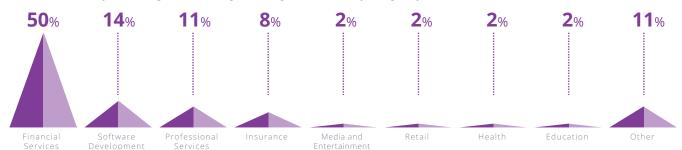
Head of Agile - IQbusiness

Who did we speak to?

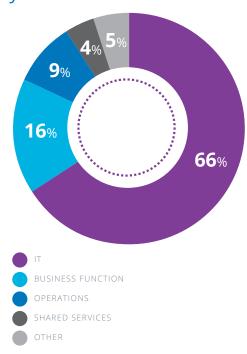
What is the size of the company, in terms of the number of employees?



What is the primary industry that your company operates in?



Which functional area do you work in?



What is your role within your organisation?

Product Owner





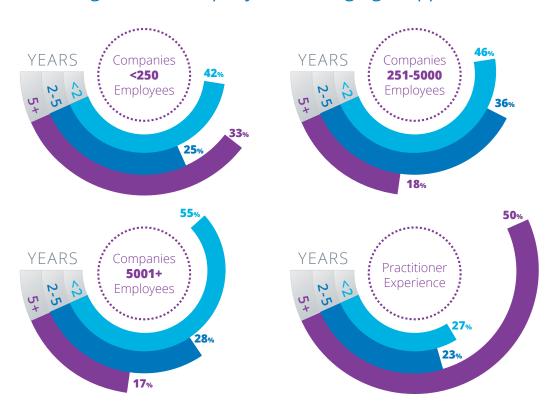
What is the rate of Agile adoption?

While Agile adoption within IT appears to have "crossed the chasm", enterprise agility is lagging.

The Agile Report shows that South African organisations are approaching maturity with regards to their Agile adoptions, particularly among small and medium-sized organisations. Although Agile was formalised in 2001 through the introduction of the Agile Manifesto (and even before that with frameworks such as Scrum and XP), most large corporates – more than 5000 employees – indicated that they have only been using an Agile approach for less than two years (55%), or between two and five years (28%).

Interestingly, practitioners who took part in the survey had more experience with Agile approaches (50% with 5+ years) than the companies in which they worked. This may indicate that larger organisations are currently recruiting practitioners with the necessary experience to expedite adoption.

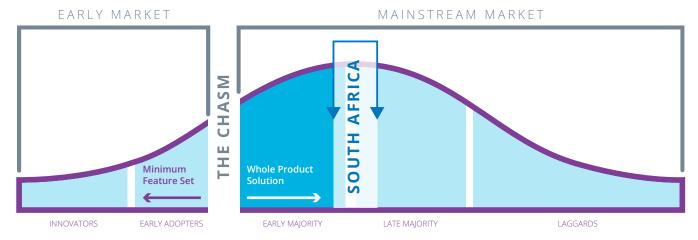
How long has the company been using Agile approaches?



Our research indicates that as their competitors continue to adopt an Agile approach, larger organisations feel pressured into adopting an Agile approach of their own. However, not all organisations are motivated by the fear of missing out. Instead, they are propelled by the urgency to

challenge their existing way of working.

Based on our research findings, we would place South Africa at the very top of Geoffrey Moore's Technology adoption lifecycle curve (between early to late majority).

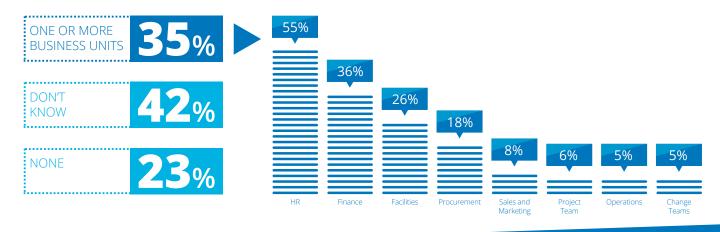


Source: Crossing the Chasm, Geoffrey A. Moore

Based on the data, it is safe to say that Agile adoption within the IT departments of large organisations has indeed "crossed the chasm", however, Agile in other business units does seem to be lagging. Our survey found that although there are promising signs of an Agile mindset

spreading throughout the organisation within the supporting functions (Human Resources, Finance etc.), many of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of whether Agile was being adopted outside of their function.

Are any other business functions within your organisation using or planning to use Agile?



What about Frameworks?

The focus appears to be on processes (and related practices) at the expense of engineering-driven frameworks and practices.

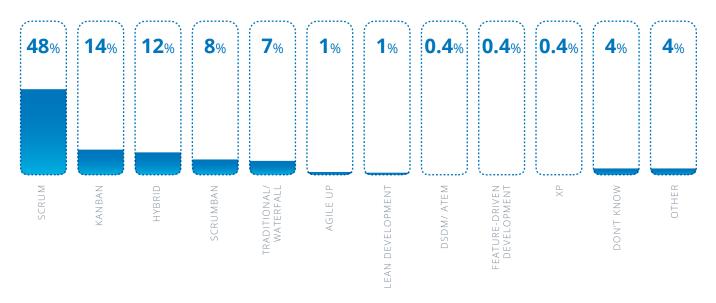
When referring to the frameworks, tools and techniques used, it is evident that South African Agile practitioners focus on process-driven options, such as Scrum (48%) and Kanban (14%) and their related practices and tools. This is in line with international surveys, where Scrum is the most popular – e.g. VersionOne's 11th State of Agile Report (2017) found that 58% of Agile organisations use Scrum.

Our findings show that hardly any Agile practitioners (0,4%) are using engineering-focused frameworks, practices and

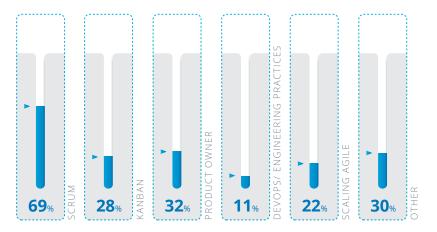
tools such as extreme programming (XP) and feature-driven development (FDD). Frameworks such as XP focuses on practices such as continuous integration, refactoring, test-driven development (TDD) and pair programming.

The high percentage of organisations still using Hybrid (12%) and Waterfall (7%) techniques is indicative of organisations on a journey where some teams are still using traditional approaches and integrating with Agile teams.

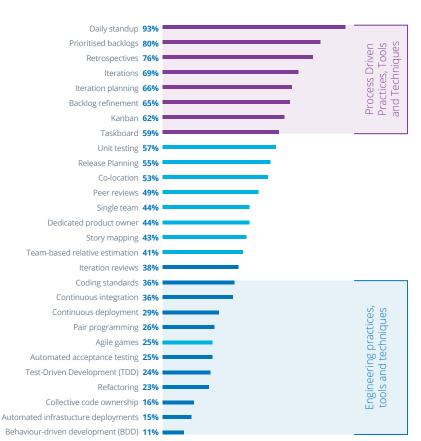
Most closely followed frameworks



Training attended by agile practitioners



Agile practices, tools and/or techniques used (multiple mention possible)



Respondents indicated that the focus of their Agile training was on frameworks (Scrum) and Agile—specific roles (such as Scrum Master) with very little focus on engineering training (such as DevOps). 69% of respondents had been on Scrum training and the majority of this training had been certified. DevOps or engineering practices, by contrast, was the least attended type of training. Only 11% indicated that they had been on some form of engineering training in the past, and it does not seem to be have been certified training.

In a bid to focus on engineering, DevOps is being added to the agenda of many large organisations. Initiatives such as the biannual AfricaDevOpsDay, has begun sharing DevOps insights with the broader community, is a prime example of this growing trend.

This is again indicated in the practices, tools and techniques, where these are lying at the bottom end of the adoption. Besides Agile games, engineering practices such as Coding Standards, TDD and Refactoring are used by less than 36% of the respondents. By neglecting these practices, teams will struggle to improve their velocity and quality of software delivery, impacting their ability to be Agile.

Why adopt Agile?

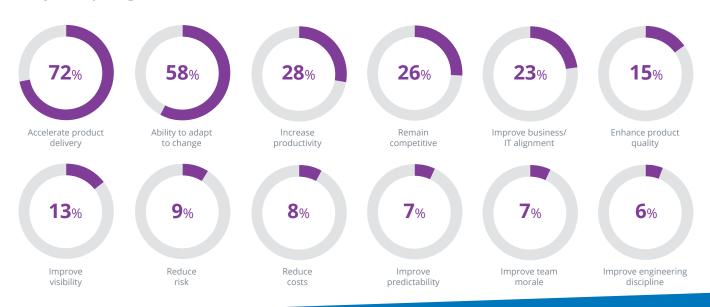
The key driver for Agile adoption is business relevance. The ability to respond more efficiently and effectively to changing customer needs through prioritising business value, sometimes at the expense of speed-to-market, is crucial to success.

The perception of speed

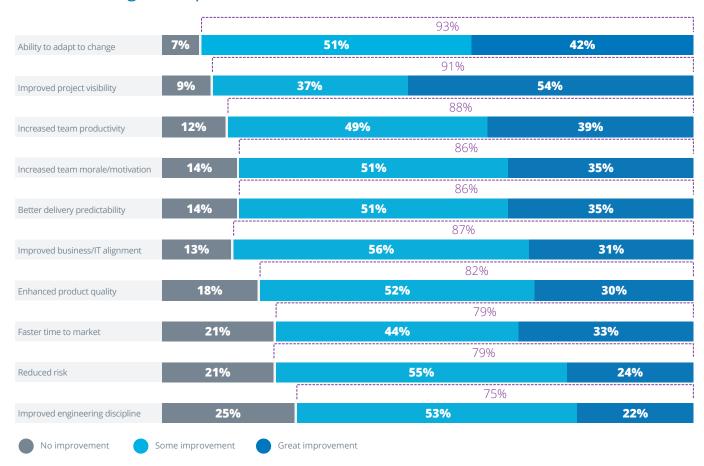
The number one reason for adopting Agile is the belief that Agile software development will result in faster product delivery (72%). This is followed by the ability to adapt to change (58%), as well as the need to maintain a competitive advantage (26%). With the fast pace of change in markets and increased competition, organisations feel pressured to deliver products and services faster than ever before. Although, the idea of accelerated speed-to-market is rather appealing, this specific benefit of Agile adoption is not always realised. South African organisations are operating under significant pressure due to a rapidly changing marketplace and the need to accelerated product delivery.

"...our competition is changing and the market is changing, so how we are going to compete has to change, with our ability to be able to compete based on our ability to deliver as quickly as possible... change needs to happen, so whether you call it Agile or adaptable flexible delivery, it doesn't really matter, but there has to be some change in the way we deliver."

Why adopt Agile?



Benefits of Agile adoption achieved



When we compared the reason organisations adopted Agile against the actual benefits realised, Agile's ability to accelerate product delivery ranked significantly lower than the other benefits realised, such as the ability to adapt to change. Interestingly though, 21% of respondents saw no improvement in their speed-to-market following the adoption of Agile.

Organisations often start an Agile journey because they want to improve their speed to market but most often the greatest benefit they achieve is the ability to adapt to changes and enhance their flexibility.

"I don't think agile as a methodology is a silver bullet that will make things go faster, but if you just think about making the most valuable decisions based on the most value to our clients, with that, you'll go faster."



By enabling autonomy, employees are motivated and engaged, thereby improving productivity. However, this requires line-of-sight of the organisation's goals, and alignment between personal goals and organisational goals. Leaders will also need to provide the boundaries and conditions for employees to feel empowered in achieving these goals.

Better collaboration and productivity

Survey respondents reported an increase in productivity both within teams as well as across the entire organisation, following the adoption of Agile in their immediate business environment.

Improved productivity ranked as the third highest among the reasons for adopting an Agile approach (28%). It is interesting to note that the survey respondents reported an 88% improvement in achieving this goal.

While the correlation between improved employee morale and increased productivity is well known, only 7% of respondents listed improving employee morale as the primary driver for adopting Agile in their area. 35% of survey respondents reported having seen a great improvement in employee morale, and 51% achieved some improvement. The expert qualitative interviews shed light on how, when working in an Agile manner, employee morale is bolstered:

"... understanding the concept of trust, empowering people to make decisions and having self-managed teams is something totally alien to a lot of people. Leaders want this culture change, they want this transformation, this transparency... it's so nice to have this massive focus on culture."

Agile frameworks and methods encourage collaboration through practices like co-location, self-organisation and creating small, cross-functional teams to deliver the value to the customer. This is reflected in the improved business/ IT alignment response (87% improvement). This is achieved by breaking down corporate 'silos' beyond IT and optimising coordination across the value stream, enabling better prioritisation decisions for the organisation.

"...you need to orchestrate all kinds of priorities between the different teams, so that we can achieve (customers' needs)... is human beings that integrate. It all depends on the people. You can make any structure work, if the people make it work."

It's worth noting that although improved software engineering practices, or in other words better quality products, is among the key values of Agile, it is not among the main benefits realised from agile adoptions.

Improved engineering discipline and reduced risk are the aspects most strongly correlated to improved product quality, according to our findings. The two aspects are also among the benefits least likely to be realised within organisations. It is, of course, not surprising that engineering improvements are rarely realised to their full extent, considering the lack of focus in the adoption of engineering frameworks and tools that were noted earlier in the report.



Visibility to the organisation, especially through frequent feedback, provides recognition for work done. Openness is one of Scrum's values, promoting visibility and transparency within and outside of the team. This promotes better decision making and empowers the team to effectively deal with issues.

Tips for improving team productivity in an Agile environment include:

- Removing impediments Scrum masters must be accountable for removing impediments to help the team stay focussed
- · A smaller team is better
- Avoid multi-tasking limiting work-in-progress allows the team to focus on delivering the highest value item first
- Continuous improvement through inspect and adapt cycles – through reviews and retrospectives, the team reflects on ways to improve the product and the process

The issue of reducing costs

While cost saving is a well-received and expected by-product, is not the primary reason for adopting Agile. According to our survey findings, only 8% of respondents chose cost savings as the main reason for adopting Agile. This is further validated by the interviews.

"Cost was the hopeful, call it by-product, of doing things differently. So, we never went in to say, I want to save so much, but we knew we would get a cost-saving if we do it. So, we wanted to do the right thing and then cost will follow."



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OPINION

If organisations adopt Agile to save costs through restructuring the organisation, the adoption of Agile may be challenged. For example, creating cross-functional feature teams will require an initial investment in the recruitment of core skills that have traditionally been shared across teams, but that now needs to be integrated into each team. Having said that, cost benefits will come from delivering products and services that customers value through better prioritisation, improved feedback loops and closer collaboration with the customer, thus removing waste in the system.

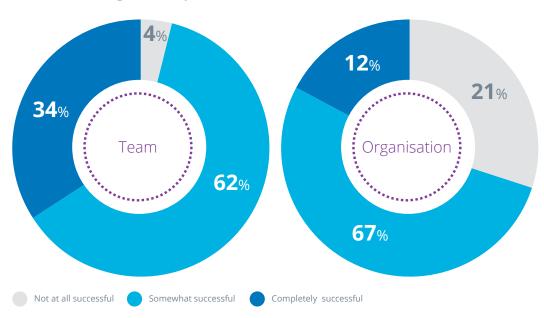
What drives successful Agile adoption?

It appears easier to implement Agile on a smaller scale; the bigger the transformation, the more difficult the task becomes.

Agile adoptions at a team level are often more successful than at an organisational level. Our survey found that only 12% of Agile adoptions are considered completely successful at the organisational level, compared to 34% at a team level. In fact, as many as 21% felt that Agile adoption failed at the organisational level. This seems to indicate, in the

less complex context of a team, Agile principles and practices have been successful. However, as soon as this is extended beyond the team, there are more challenges. But even with the relative success of adoption in teams, there is still room for improvement.

Success of Agile adoption



What are those challenges?

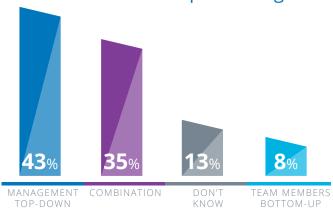
Lack of Buy-In throughout the organisation

Our findings, indicate that change is most often driven from the top (43%) and that only 8% of Agile adoptions originate exclusively from within the teams. Qualitative interviews affirm that because Agile adoption can be difficult, it is essential to have the support and buy-in from within the organisation. This often requires courage from those implementing it.

"Agile principles are really diagonally opposed to the beliefs that we've held in business for quite a few years. So, it requires real courage, real vision and real dedication as a leader to strike out in a new direction with purpose, when actually everything they've ever done in their lives has given them reason to believe that this is not going to work, and that requires a lot of learning and blind faith that things can be done differently."

"It's not only the top Exec leadership that needs to buy into these ideas. It's also the layers below them, and in some cases, that may require radical restructuring in organisations, which not a lot of companies are willing to do... finding the right place to house the people in the middle layers is quite a challenging problem."

Who initiated the adoption of Agile?



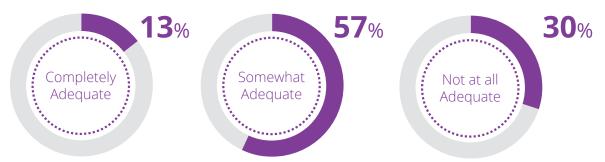
As illustrated by the interview quotes, it appears that culture and structural changes are also needed and will require leadership support and a significant change in mindset in order to successfully embed Agile practices. Agile is counter-intuitive to traditional corporate culture, structures and approaches and therefore requires changes to embedded these habits. In order to change the culture of the organisation, this must be enabled from the top-down, driven from the bottom-up and supported by middle management.

"We want to start fostering a culture where people are comfortable with change and they are very good at quickly reflecting and improving where they need to and comfortable with changing priorities with client needs."



A shared vision for the change and collaborative and participative change approach, where a combination of top-down and bottom-up drive adoption, is recommended to make it sustainable. Daniel Mezick, who's well known in the Agile industry for applying Open Space to Agile adoption, is convinced that mandated change seldom works, leading to resistance and failed adoptions.

Change management activities during adoption



Lack of resilience in change management

Change management forms an important part of changing the corporate culture and structure. Based on the results of the survey, only 13% believe that change management during Agile adoption was completely adequate.

The following responses to interviews provide further insights into these challenges:

People expect immediate results, but there may be a lack of understanding with regards to any new change, resulting in slower than expected progress.

"The adoption has been slow, based on the impact on the values that we need to put in place and are very counter-intuitive to large corporations. So, we have had some support to a certain extent, but then again, that support has been limited by the understanding of those individuals of what Agile is and what it entails."

Slow progress and difficulties in change management can be soul destroying for Agile champions, leading to burnout and disappointment.

"It's not the sort of change that's going to happen overnight – for every three steps forward it's two steps back. That's not easy to cope with at the best of times, but looming deadlines and high expectations will leave you overwhelmed and despondent; it's not healthy." "Perhaps hardest of all is how difficult it can be to see the progress that's been made from the inside."

"When you look back, when you have context again, you'll see that you've played an important role in the future of your organisation. Hindsight is 20/20 after all. But that doesn't make it any easier. I struggled with that the most... how do you keep going when it gets really tough?"

Traditional roles, especially those in management and leadership, are challenged and may be a barrier to the change process.

"...think that in an organisation like ours, traditionally there have been numerous layers of management or leadership. I think what you see now is that people who in the past had less say in the organisation, but where a lot of the insight and intelligence and actual skill and capability lies, they now have louder voices to speak to people who are making decisions."

Some tips to make you a more successful Agile change agent:

- Remind yourself that this is a journey that will test you
- Do not get caught up in the negative
- Reflect on and celebrate the victories no matter how small they are



Difficulty in building the right capability

Nine out of every ten survey respondents indicated that they were trained in one or more Agile-related frameworks or roles. Scrum (or Scrum Master) training and Product Owner training were the two most popular types.

This is further validated by data taken from the Scrum Alliance website, stating that in South Africa there are over three times more certified Scrum Masters than Certified Product Owners (some may hold both certifications). Respondents replied that the product owner role is twice as difficult to find suitable candidates for compared to the Scrum Master role. Product Owner empowerment through training, coaching (and perhaps) certification, should most likely receive greater focus to fill the evident gap in the market.

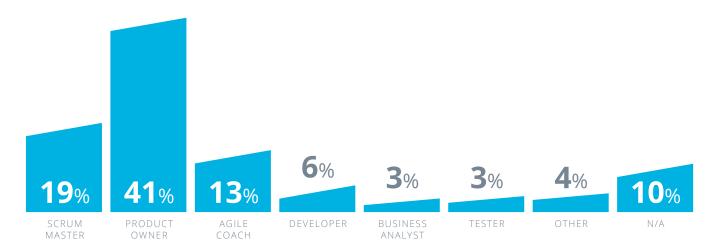
Businesses are most likely to fulfil this important role, as this comment from the interviews illustrates:

"...there can be challenges to fulfil the product ownership role if the business doesn't buy in or believe (in the value of the role)... and the other challenge is that their current role prevents them from taking full ownership of the (Product Owner) role..."

38% have certified Scrum training

12% certified Product Owner training

Most difficult positions to fill





Agile transformation is more than just training everyone in the organisation. True transformation requires the creation of skilled and competent Agile practitioners within the organisation. Trained but inexperienced practitioners cannot differentiate between Agile theory and Agile practice. Experienced practitioners understand where people are and what they need to do in order to support Agile adoption, by assisting the organisation to embed the right principles within their context. Focusing on the Scrum Master and Product Owner roles and ensuring that they have the necessary support, training and coaching to perform the role, is critical.

Limited career path for technologists

The importance of creating a career path for technologists was highlighted during the qualitative interviews:

"...a technical career path for our people is extremely important... what does that technical career path look like? So, you can actually move from a developer, to a senior developer, to a distinguished engineer role. Become a fellow around the technical excellence that you possess."

If the change in roles is not supported and enabled by leadership and human resources, it may lead to ambiguity in the roles people play within the organisation.

"Current management levels might provide resistance, and it's important to clarify the roles of traditional management and the specialist technology roles."

"So, those two new ways of working and a technical career path really needs to walk next to each other, otherwise we will have resistance from middle management, because there's uncertainty..."

The role of management could change as the technology specialists take over certain roles within the Agile team, which may traditionally have been management roles.

"Management is responsible in making a team successful, making sure that they build the competence and mastery of the technical teams, and that moves away from actually dishing out the work or managing the flow of work..."

IQbusiness OPINION The role of management, especially middle management, is often challenged in organisations that are undergoing an Agile transformation. Agile requires less top-down management and encourages self-organisation and decentralised decision-making. Organisations often lose their highly skilled technical individuals to management roles as they climb the corporate ladder, as they inevitably move them away from their specialist skill and into the role of managing people and budgets. These "technologists" are not always necessarily suited to management positions, but this is often their only option for career progression.



Agile transformations should be based on a set of core values and principles. Once the organisation understands these principles, the selection of the appropriate frameworks, practices and tools should assist in entrenching the principles and thereby improve the culture.

For example, the Spotify model is often replicated in large organisations, but may not fit that specific organisational context. Spotify themselves warn against following their model being blindly replicated without using the principles as the departure point. This is also relevant when scaling, as scaling frameworks have congruent principles that can be applied regardless of the framework.

One size does not fit all

Organisations need to understand their specific context and start with a set of aligned principles. Once this is in place, you are then able to tailor the approach to meet specific needs.

"...it's about really understanding the environment and really tailoring your approach for the specific needs... In terms of growing and scaling, how much of a repeatable process do you know."

"...look at a problem holistically and use whatever we have in our tool boxes, whether it comes from SAFe or whether it comes from something else. We should be able to apply our Lean and Agile thinking to the problem that's in front of us and work with the mindset... the problem lies in the mindset, the problem does not lie in the tool that gets chosen."

Scaling frameworks should not be used for rolling out Agile across the organisation. They should be used when organisations need multiple teams to align and synchronise on a single value stream or product.

"I think the biggest issue with scaling is, they don't know the problem itself; they don't understand the issue they are trying to resolve. So, I find that they are scaling for the wrong reasons."



What is the future of Agile?

The future of Agile rests in leveraging its transformative impact beyond IT into the entire organisation, fundamentally leading to a change in the culture.

From IT focus to organisation-wide

Organisation should move from a functional IT focus (process and practices) to the holistic adoption of Agile values and principles, embedding these into the organisational culture.

"I think Agile 2.0 will be less software orientated and more culture orientated. The future of Agile is not necessarily calling it Agile 2.0, but the culture which Agile brings... for me it's the culture revolution over the delivery revolution."

This will have a impact on both an organisation's customers and its employees.

"We have to, as leaders, want to engage with people and what they think, be that our customers or people in our organisation. We have to think about individuals and interactions over process and tools."

Achieving real inclusivity through engaging the customer (upstream) and operations (downstream), by focussing on the entire value stream, will deliver business benefits.

"I think that people are going to start saying, let's do some work upstream, let's sort out requirements and business cases and design and project prioritisation, and then DevOps. Whatever comes after DevOps is going to be downstream innovations, and then your users and your customers will start to see processes around them start to be innovative."

Other departments and business units (eg. human resources, procurement, finance etc) will see the value of Agile and the way IT operates and begin adopting these principles and practises in the way they function.

"I think the other part that is happening as we speak is Agile for Business. So, for example, we've rolled out Agile for marketing; next, we'll run Agile for all non-IT functions."

A business mindset, not just a label.

"They don't want Agile, they want the benefits. So, rather focus on getting them the benefit. You can use Agile to do that, and Agile has a lot more impact, but you don't necessarily need to call it Agile."

This implies that being agile is much more than following a set of processes and frameworks. The Agile behaviour and mindset becomes embedded throughout the organisation; in its business practices and processes.

"...from a business perspective (we're) displaying some great agility. And if we look at some of the ways that we are pushing some of the agendas... (there's) evidence of agility at play, but maybe not in the way we would look for it, or in the way we try and label it."

This shift in mindset is an organisational reality and will be further enhanced by large organisations undergoing a "digital transformation". The Agile way of working supports the digital transformation that is happening in these organisations; in its business practices and processes.

"In the IT industry in general, it's in a way the digital revolution, which is machine learning, big data, AI, all of those type of things, which if you talk to the real deep thinkers, call it the digital revolution. They say, digital's not a technology, it's a mindset. Which, again, is an Agile mind-set."

Conclusion

If we compare the results of the local report to those of international reports such as VersionOne (2017), South Africa are not lagging behind the rest of the world with regards to Agile adoption and maturity, as many would believe.

Agile software development tends to create local optimisation (in other words focusing on one team or area), resulting in global sub-optimisation (the entire organisation, including people, processes and technology). In reality, in order to achieve the true benefit of agility, the organisations going through this journey need to embrace a holistic approach, focusing on the entire business.

The Holy Grail for organisations is business agility. This refers to distinct qualities that allow organisations to respond rapidly to changes in the internal and external environment without losing momentum or vision.

Business agility is enabled by applying Agile values, principles, practices and tools throughout the organisation, including all the supporting functions in order to deliver what is best for their customers.

The reality is that by extending Agile adoption beyond IT is going to take significant effort and focus on the change management activities, as the challenges mentioned in this report will be amplified. Growing intenal capability through the use of experiences practitioners will make the journey easier and more sustainable. A good place to start is applying Steve Denning's Radical management principles. Remember, change is hard, embrace it.

Business Agility will move away from the focus on software development to a set of principles that can be applied across the organisation. Steve Denning highlights 7 key principles in creating an agile organisation in his book – The Leader's Guide to Radical Management.

This can be summarised as follows:



The goal of work is to delight client: this is the focus on creating client centricity, where we make the customer at the heart of everything we do, moving from an inside-out organisation to an outside-in organisation.



Work is conducted in self-organising teams: creating smaller, cross-functional, self-organising teams allows autonomy and empowerment to individuals in decentralised decision making.



Teams operate in client-driven iterations: moving away from larger, monolithic projects and programmes to breaking down initiatives into smaller iterations, focussing on valuable client requirements.



Each iteration delivers value to the client: at the end of the iteration, we would want to deliver a product or service to the end client, so that they can derive value from it receiving continuous feedback.



Managers foster radical transparency: openness and trust is encouraged through creating high-levels of visibility throughout the organisation. This enables continuous improvement.



Managers nurture continuous self-improvement: creating safe-to-fail environments, where teams and individuals can experiment as an opportunity to build-measure-learn, in order to improve the processes they adopt, which will improve the products and services they deliver to market.



Managers communicate interactively through stories, questions and conversations – authentic, genuine communication, both up and down the chain of command.

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About IQbusiness

IQbusiness is the leading independent management consulting firm in South Africa, helping clients overcome their business challenges and achieve better results. Since 1998, we have been enabling banks, insurance companies, retailers and others to take their products to market faster, improve customer satisfaction, upskill teams, eliminate waste and strengthen governance and compliance.

Drawing on our core strengths - consulting, research and contracting - we solve clients' problems by providing innovative, faster and more cost effective services and solutions, backed by teams with real expertise and experience.

Although proudly South African, our perspective is international through the experience of our people, our clients and our business partners. IQbusiness is privately owned and fully empowered with a level 4 B-BBEE certification.

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Our Agile services are specific to your organisational environment and can be customised with the objective of getting you agile fit.

With the largest Agile practice in South Africa, our teams are best placed to help you drive organisational change, improve your customer experience and create better business value.

About the IQbusiness Agile Survey

The inaugural IQbusiness Agile Survey 2017 seeks to assess the maturity of agile adoption in South Africa. Using quantitative and qualitative research techniques, we targeted over 276 Agile practitioners from a variety of business types and sizes, across industry sectors. This report is a compilation of the key findings stemming from the research coupled with insights from our Agile team.

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