
Being Agile at a Small Agency

How to Apply Agile Principles in a
Not-So-Iterative Environment

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Getting Started

A small, growing agency is always searching for ways to work more efficiently and effectively.

Agile approaches attempt to address a lot of the challenges a small agency might face.

One of the key aspects of an agile approach -- an iterative process -- is not something you just start doing, and may not be immediately attractive to clients.

How to incorporate agile principles at a small agency?

What is *agile*?

a method of project management, used especially for software development, that is characterized by the **division of tasks** into **short phases** of work and frequent **reassessment** and **adaptation** of plans.

Agile Manifesto Core Values

The Agile Manifesto (2001) is a statement of values regarding best practices in modern software development:

- **Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
 - **Working software** over comprehensive documentation
 - **Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
 - **Responding to change** over following a plan
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Twelve Agile Principles

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through **early and continuous delivery of valuable software**.
 2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes **harness change for the customer's competitive advantage**.
 3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a **preference to the shorter timescale**.
 4. **Business people and developers must work together** daily throughout the project.
 5. **Build projects around motivated individuals**. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
 6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is **face-to-face conversation**.
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Twelve Agile Principles (cont.)

7. **Working software** is the primary measure of progress.
 8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users **should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.**
 9. **Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design** enhances agility.
 10. Simplicity--the art of **maximizing the amount of work not done**--is essential.
 11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from **self-organizing teams.**
 12. At regular intervals, **the team reflects on how to become more effective,** then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.
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Agile Methodologies

Iterative & Incremental Methods

Methodologies that today are called *agile* have been evolving over decades. Some include: Scrum, Extreme Programming, Lean Software Development and Kanban.

They differ widely in terms of complexity and processes, but all are based in some combination of iterative and incremental approaches to development.

- **Iterative:** Prototype and refine
 - **Incremental:** Build piece-by-piece
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Problems With Iterative at a Small Agency

Problem of Iterative Contracts

New clients, particularly those with limited marketing and technology budgets, may not be comfortable with the concept of an iterative approach:

- Uncertain budget
 - Vague deliverables
 - Lack of specifics on which to make decisions
 - No end to the project
 - Less emphasis on design and branding
 - Uncomfortable with perceived imperfections
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Problem of Iterative Process

Like our clients, many of us starting and running a small business will not choose an iterative process when getting started.

- Lack of familiarity
 - Estimates are hard enough for specific deliverables
 - We want to appear experts
 - Entrenched roles and processes
 - Lack of time and resources to develop a new approach
 - May not work with company identity
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As to methods, there may be a million and then some, but principles are few. The man who grasps principles can successfully select his own methods. The man who tries methods, ignoring principles, is sure to have trouble.

- *Harrington Emerson*

Opportunities To Be Agile

Why Be Agile?

Agile principles can address some of the key challenges a small agency faces from business development to project management to human resources:

- Creating better estimates
 - Limiting scope creep
 - Delivering better products faster
 - Nurturing an engaged staff
 - Building long-term client relationships
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Individuals and Interactions

People who make up teams

How roles are defined

Team context

Places/tools we use to interact

- Invest the Whole Team in Project
 - Encourage Different Roles to Work Together
 - Hold Short Status Meetings (where are you, what do you need?)
 - Flexible Workspace
 - Collaboration Tools That Create Value
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Working Software

Functional milestones

Short timelines

Prioritize launch

Collecting data and feedback

- Make Milestones Functional (WP is a great help)
 - Keep Timelines Short
 - Deadlines Over Details
 - QA All the Way
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Customer Collaboration

Evolving requirements
Client involvement
Context for communication

- Define Project Goals Above All
 - Make Project Specifications a Living, Shared Document
 - Require an Engaged Client Project Manager
 - Bring Client Directly Into Process (WP)
 - Launch Is Not an End -- WP training; Initial Maintenance; Analytics Review
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Responding to Change

Change is the norm

Acting on data and feedback

Responsive process

Ongoing projects

- Hold Retrospective After a Stage or Project
 - Build in Feedback Collection Methods
 - Opportunities to Factor In Feedback
 - Clean Code
 - Work Within Parameters (WP)
 - Launch *Days* Instead of *Date*
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Getting to Iterative

Cultivating Iterative Projects and Relationships

1. Integrate agile principles into day-to-day work.
 2. Develop long-term client relationships, and take iterative approaches when possible (analytics and SEM a good place to start).
 3. Identify new clients/projects that would be iterative friendly.
 4. Continue to ramp up agile practices both internally and for projects.
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For More Information

To get more agile in a small agency, start treating client relationships iteratively.

Further Reading

- [Manifesto for Agile Software Development](#)
 - [Agile Software Development](#)
 - [10 Principles of Agile](#)
 - [Choosing an onboarding process for website \(re\)design](#)
 - [10 Good Reasons to Do Agile Development](#)
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Thanks!

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<https://goo.gl/dz10sR>

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