

# Agile Business Development in Practice

***“Companies in today’s world are facing similar issues with regard to constant disruptions and changes like the software industry decades ago.***

***Our mission is to assist business leaders to adopt the relevant principles, tools and practices in order to thrive in tomorrow’s business arena.”***

*Rhys Marc Photis, MD @ OnO-Line LTD*



[www.OnO-Line.com](http://www.OnO-Line.com)

## Whitepaper

## Agile Business Development in Practice

Continuous changes in market conditions and customer requests, employees wanting to work in a more flexible way and a faster pace generally fuel the need for a more agile organization. One that can respond faster to the challenges of surviving and thriving in today's global economy.

This also motivates the workforce, which would need to be actively involved and empowered to become valued components of an agile organization.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, **88%** of executives cite organizational agility as a key factor to their company's global success.

Half of top management say that agility is highly important and a core differentiator.

MIT studies have shown that agile firms grow revenue 37% faster and generate 30% higher profits than non-agile ones.

In the 2014-15 Towards Maturity Benchmark report, companies using agile techniques indicated a 56% improvement in cross-organizational productivity and nearly 50% saw a significant contribution made to increasing overall revenue.

### Introduction

When it comes to implementing strategies that will allow organizations to become more agile, some challenges and barriers arise. The main purpose of this article is to share our experience gained whilst working with a wide array of multinational companies, shining a light on key trends and best practices for implementing agility within an organization.

### Let's talk Agile

For many industries Agile Business Development is a new concept. Not so for the software and technology industry that have been using the methods, tools and principles since the 80's when they

realized that a classical business structure would not give them a competitive advantage, with development happening at such a fast pace.

Look at ITV, the largest UK commercial television network. It announced in 2010 that it was to embark on a 5-year Transformation Plan. Part of this plan was to move from physical to digital files. At this scale, the project was the first of its kind. Consulting firms originally quoted £15-30 million and a 12-month timeframe to develop a solution.

ITV decided to put its trust in an agile team. It took just £2 million and 4 months to build a 'good enough' working solution. In the words of Paul Clark, ITV Online CTO: "ITV moved to digital files at a fraction of the original cost thanks to agile methods".

## So what is Agile Business Development?

Agile Business Modelling is a new, lightweight approach that combines business development with agile principles to build a flexible organization capable of reacting fast to unpredictable changes. The organization also supports itself during the transformation. The modelling approach is iterative and delivers just enough architecture and roadmap to prevent chaos.

In simpler terms Agile Business Development puts the client experience at the heart of the work strategy.

This is achieved through 3 general aspects:

1. Individuals have growth mindsets and are allowed flexibility, continually focusing on improving the delivery process;
2. Teams and groups have strong communication skills, allowing them to adjust rapidly;
3. The entire organization is willing to respond and adapt its structures and processes.

## How does it work?

Agile Business Development utilizes key principles and complex adaptive systems used in complexity science to survive and thrive. It is in fact a dialogue with the intelligence of the crowd.

As previously mentioned 'Agile' finds its origins in the 80's in software development companies, which realized that traditional project management methods just weren't cutting it. Nowadays, Agile Development is an output method of choice for many software development companies. However for other sectors it is still a new concept, one that seems far from their current business reality.

Regardless of whether the concept is new or even foreign to some industries, modern business has reached the levels and pace of demand that the software industry reached decades ago. The challenge is to harvest the knowhow and best practices discovered during the software boom. It is time to integrate changeability into the DNA of the whole organization.

Our experience working with clients and through our own agile transformation has led us to understand that Agile Business Development need not be a rigid or prescriptive process but rather a collaborative, evolutionary, organic approach. Its quick, interactive processes will produce high quality solutions at a low cost and time efficiently. Projects are managed situationally, based on the current market needs and demands.

## Introductory first steps

Let's see what agile 'practitioners' say about introducing and implementing agile work principles.

IBM is currently developing around 85% of its software with Agile Business Development methodologies.

Harish Grama, IBM's vice president of Rational Product Development and Customer Support, believes there are 3 important elements to implementing agile systems in larger companies: processes, tools and discipline.

Jeff Sutherland, co-inventor of the Scrum Agile Development Framework and CEO of Scrum Inc., claims agile methodologies can work for companies of all sizes. "There is a lot of nonsense going around about the scalability of Scrum; people are radically ignorant", says Sutherland. "Scrum is a disruptive methodology. Applied well, it makes it impossible for your competitors to compete with you."

Robert Holler, CEO of agile project management tools company VersionOne Inc., notes the impact on communication, culture, human resources and distributed teams. "You have to treat agile transformation as a change management process."

"A good way to introduce Agile is around a critical project with a lot of sponsorship," says IBM's Grama. "The small and medium size business might have fewer of these projects, the enterprise more, but the challenges faced by both are the same."

Strengthening the agile culture by using tools and practices such as Kan-ban or meeting reviews will allow for a more optimum usage of Agile Business Development and management practices.

An initial training seminar or coaching process might be a great way of laying the groundwork towards becoming an agile company.

## Best practices and practical tips for becoming agile

### Laying the framework and clarifying goals

Around the globe, we mainly see two things happening when it comes to change management and progress as a whole. Organizations are either too formal or informal when implementing new business strategies. This is and has always been a waste of important company resources. On the one hand we have "flexible management strategy", on the other an over-governing, micro-managing strategy – one as ineffective as the other regarding overall business results.

The solution is a well-planned framework based on clear principles such as customer-focused thinking, project goals, profitability and sustainability. It is also highly important to show how performance will be measured and to emphasize empowering actions within reason.

## Reviewing early and often

Formal and informal review loops are needed to maintain optimum performance and adjust the project and practices as needs change.

Optimum output will be reached once teams and team members have learned to collaborate within the new framework. This is because they will adapt strategies according to their needs and those of the company.

## Managing interfaces

The main challenge with Agile Business Development strategies is the management of interfaces. Projects are passed on between teams without any taking ownership of the entire delivery cycle. How can we assist teams and their individual members to understand the bigger picture?

The main strategy is to constantly remind teams of the end customer and his needs, and also to remain very vigilant

about the current market situation. This will help counteract the initial impact that change always has on business stability and process efficiency, until it produces its desired effect.

## Making it stick

Using any planning tool for implementing Agile Business Development in any enterprise is a huge myth. The truth is that although most executives are open to the idea of Agile Business Development, they don't have a clear understanding of the transformational pathway. Thus educating executives is as important as their initial buy-in and willingness to implement the agile system.

A good example is that of Dutch care company "Buurtzorg". Its CEO started in 2006 with a team of 4 nurses and has grown to nearly 8,000 nurses in 2014, with teams in the Netherlands, Sweden, Japan and just recently in the United States. The secret is people-centred, agile working principles. "Essentially, the program empowers nurses to deliver all the care that patients need. And while this has meant higher costs per hour, the result has been fewer hours in total. Indeed, by changing the model of care, Buurtzorg has accomplished a 50 % reduction in hours of care, improved quality of care and raised work satisfaction for their employees." (KPMG case study, 2012)

## Final thoughts

It is always hard to step out and separate from the pack, but for those brave enough to do so the reward is a notable increase in their competitiveness. Without strategic vision and true commitment from top management, this could be a recipe for disaster.

Current trends show that companies are making Agile Business Development a big part of their business strategy, allowing small team efficiency to affect big business results.

Performance is key in today's high paced economy, and on the way to reaching the highest levels of performance, a company must perfect its agility and its ability to adapt to market situations.

Even though the need for adaptability is not a new concept, it still remains the trademark of legends.



[www.OnO-Line.com](http://www.OnO-Line.com)

**OnO-Line is a company with people at the heart of its business. We have a great deal of business experience; have seen the good, the bad and the ugly.**

**We assist business leaders to focus on values like transparency, openness, equality, ownership, trust and how to translate them into the business and management context.**

**We are a friendly bunch. Contact us on +44 20 79932980 or [true@agilebusdev.com](mailto:true@agilebusdev.com)**