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How to Successfully Merge Management Methodologies

Paul Crosby (</blog?author=55eb4ad9e4b0e16c0cc4eed4>) · April 9, 2019 (</blog/merge-management-methodologies>)

There are hundreds of articles written on the benefits of agile management, its drawbacks and the process of implementing agile into your team. However, many people forget that agile is just one method of project management.

There are dozens that work for companies and none can stand on their own. They all pull from each other to make the company run.

You don't have to give up your entire operations model to go agile or embrace another project management concept. You can merge two ideas, or change your system into its own unique hybrid. You may find that this is easier and better received by your employees.

No One Can Follow One Management Strategy Perfectly

There's a myth that going agile means completely changing how your office runs. While some companies can embrace agile development (<https://www.bobtheba.com/blog/201879/what-is-safe-scaled-agile-framework-and-how-is-it-different-from-agile>) to its maximum limits, these companies are actually few and far between.

“Agile really isn't a single methodology but a set of values and principles, many of which are practiced in development shops using a waterfall methodology,” agile development consultant Yvette Francino (<https://techbeacon.com/managing-agile-waterfall-together>) writes. “In fact, part of being agile includes adjusting and adapting rather than using a prescriptive set of guidelines, so claiming agile is the best approach is, in itself, anti-agile.”



Ulf Eriksson (<https://reqtest.com/agile-blog/agile-waterfall-hybrid-methodology-2/>) at ReQtest says one example of mixing the agile and waterfall methodologies together is the “water-scrum-fall” method. In this way, the project methods are broken apart by the various teams. The business analysis and release management teams use the traditional waterfall method, while developers stick with agile scrums and launches, in an albeit limited way.

In this case, teams use waterfall in the planning process and add scrum elements when it's time to do the work. This method could be particularly beneficial for business analysts (<https://www.bobtheba.com/blog/2018514/the-benefits-of-business-analysis-in-an-agile-framework>) who are worried their jobs are changing because of agile project management.

Esther Cohen (<https://www.workamajig.com/blog/project-management-methodologies>) at Workamajig discusses the pros and cons of opting for a hybrid methodology instead of sticking with a purely agile or purely waterfall process. A few of the benefits include:

- There is increased flexibility as brands can make changes to the system to get the project done faster.
- There is increased structure as you develop a plan that works for your team, rather than hoping one model type meets all of your objectives.

That being said, there are disadvantages with a hybrid model as well. Namely that it requires compromise from all parties involved to determine what to leave out and what to accept in your project management system.

If you do choose select elements of agile project management to use (or any other form of management) make sure you choose these aspects because they are for the benefit of the company, not just you as a manager.

“It can happen that managers preach about the importance of agile but pick and choose which parts they like and apply,” agile trainer Anthony Mersino (<https://vitalitychicago.com/blog/why-going-agile-can-scare-people-agile-transformation/>) at Vitality Chicago writes. “If managers are not changing the culture and team members aren't really empowered, then you are not becoming more agile.”

Most Companies Use a Combination of Project Management Systems

Combining project management methodologies isn't as uncommon as you might think. In fact, the vast

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majority of companies use elements from different management strategies to move projects forward.

A report by online project management software provider, Liquid Planner, found that 74 percent of respondents who said they were highly satisfied with their project management methodology were in fact using a combination of methodologies, IT program manager Andy Makar (<https://www.liquidplanner.com/blog/case-multiple-project-management-methodologies/>) writes. This is because no company or project follows a perfect cookie-cutter plan. Most organizations find their own way and create policies based on what works for them.

Furthermore, a study by KPMG (<https://home.kpmg.com/be/en/home/insights/2017/02/agile-project-delivery.html>) found that companies across the modern economy rely on both agile and waterfall, and neither of these methodologies seem to be diminishing in popularity:

- 76 percent of respondents said they expect agile projects to outnumber waterfall projects within the next three years.
- 74 percent of organizations use agile development at least to some extent, with 26 percent of respondents saying they use mostly agile with only some waterfall.
- 85 percent of respondents think waterfall will survive as a project management method, with most companies using a hybrid model.

Even companies that want to go completely agile have a hard time moving their company over to this methodology entirely.

Most project management guides and books will encourage leaders to choose one method and stick with it, Angela Bunner (<https://www.clarizen.com/manage-multiple-project-management-methodologies/>), PMP, Vice President of Solutions Engineering at Clarizen, writes. However, it's a lot easier to pick a method and then add elements that work for you (or remove those that don't) rather than to try and forcefully merge two elements together.

Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, and you need to find the weaknesses in relation to your business and replace them with a better system.

The team at productivity software platform ClickUp (<https://clickup.com/blog/project-management-methodologies/>) created a guide for eight project management methodologies that your company can test and pull elements from. Your team might love one option in particular, and then find ways to integrate other elements into the process to fill in any gaps.

Choose Your Project Management Methodology Carefully

For some, hearing that they can combine project management methodologies might make them feel more overwhelmed than when just choosing one. It's one thing following the agile bandwagon, now they have to choose multiple systems?

To help you decide what elements or project management methodologies work for your team, Grace Windsor (<https://www.brightwork.com/blog/choosing-a-project-management-methodology>) at BrightWork shares a list of questions you should ask when deciding on a process. In some cases, the methodology might change from project to project or even between departments. These



criteria include:

- What is the final goal of the project?
- How complex do you expect the project to be?
- What methodology does the organization currently use?
- Are there any lessons from previous projects we should consider?
- Do the stakeholders prefer a specific methodology?

This last question isn't to be underestimated. If you require a specific skill set from a team member or stakeholder who favors a certain methodology, then you may need to build the process around them rather than asking them to conform to your preferences.

Take Time Implementing New Elements Into Your Existing System

Once you have an idea for which elements you want to test, you can start to introduce them to your workflow. This is likely the most delicate part of the process.

“Implementing agile methods will take time, and your company needs to be patient through this process,” Christopher Hughes (<http://www.bridge-talent.com/blog/understanding-introducing-agile-methods-team/>) Bridge Technical Talent writes. “There needs to be a desire for change and an overall understanding of open-mindedness.”

It's a lot easier to make a few small changes instead of a completely different management strategy.

Don't Oversell Your Management Strategy

As you introduce the new process, collect feedback from your team and let them know that you're open to change.

Marketing strategist Kathleen McCaffrey (<https://medium.com/lhbs-collection/introducing-agile-to-your-business-cedb9ab3c2e9>) cautions managers from making agile or other PM methodologies seem like a magic bullet solution that will revolutionize the company and solve everyone's problems. “It will seem like just another passing buzzword-bandwagon management have hopped on while it's hot,” she writes.

It's better to introduce new concepts slowly to give your team time learn what's going on and to see the benefits.

Keep Expectations Clear

Whatever project management solution you choose, there are some aspects of the job that stay the same.

For example, project and account managers need to stay vigilant in regard to client expectations, David Taber (<https://www.cio.com/article/3092960/agile-development/4-ways-to-make-agile-and-waterfall-work-together.html>), CEO at SalesLogistix, writes that's easy for various methodologies to get out of hand without clear expectations. This is particularly important if you are trying a new method to complete a



project.

If both parties aren't clear about the expected deliverables, budget and timeline, then any project is doomed to derail in the eyes of the employees or client.

Look for Processes That Promote Transparency and Visibility

A Workfront (<https://www.workfront.com/resources/solve-the-pain-of-mixing-agile-and-waterfall>) white paper addresses the challenges of mixing project management methodologies. One way you can successfully merge two strategies is by staying focused on your goals. You and your team want more information about projects and to clearly see what's going on. It doesn't matter if your team is agile or not as long as your current system accomplishes that.

Identify Employees to Test New Systems

Along with introducing your hybrid system slowly, you want to be careful with choosing who starts using it. You want to minimize confusion and objections from cautious employees.

When introducing agile concepts to waterfall teams, senior software engineer Russell Martin (<https://www.mendix.com/blog/changing-your-companys-culture-from-waterfall-to-agile/>) says he tries to bring in people with different backgrounds for a project test run or small part of the development process. These participants can then share their expertise with the rest of the company and everyone is exposed to the new project management methodology at one time.

"If you can get several people to understand the new methodology, it is much easier to get the rest of the organization on board," he writes.

Team leaders should start with managers and key stakeholders when embracing a new project management tool or model, agrees Olivia Jardine (<https://blog.capterra.com/tips-to-help-your-team-implement-a-new-project-management-tool/>) at Capterra. This doesn't necessarily mean the orders come from the boss to use a new strategy, but rather that certain employees can become ambassadors for change, convincing others to try new methods and see the value in the different project management options.

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