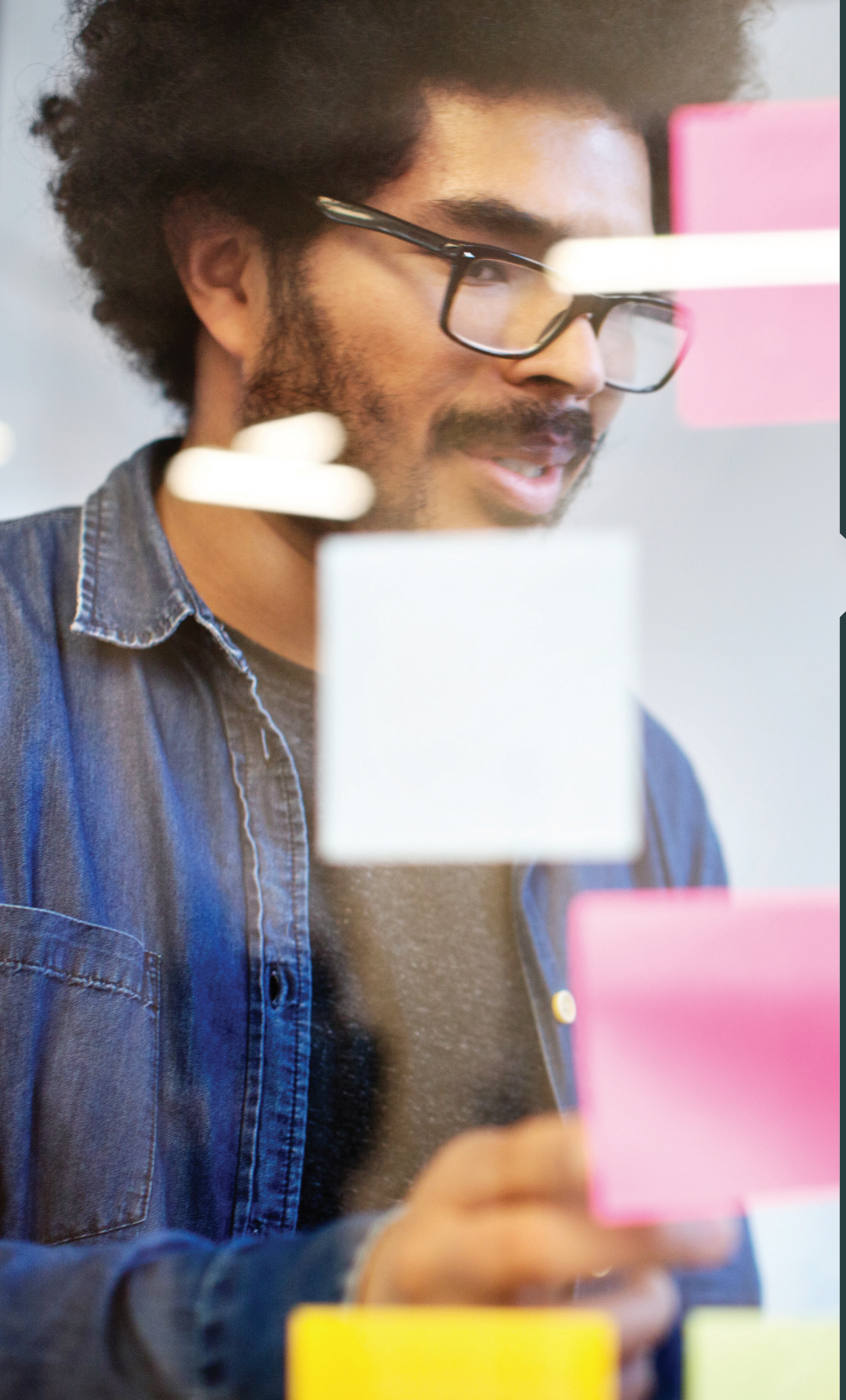

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Agile at scale 101

Your guide for quickly delivering amazing results for your customers

START

Introduction

Market realities and digital transformation make it critical for your organization to consistently identify, develop, and launch the right solutions at the right time. This is never easy. But to achieve success, there is a huge trend to adopt Agile at the project level and to apply it to organizations overall.

Curious about what Agile project management is and the payoffs you can achieve? This ebook will give you a quick introduction.

Agile 101—The basics of Agile project management

In February 2001, 17 independent software engineers met at a ski resort in Utah and changed the way projects would be delivered forever. The result of that meeting was the Agile Manifesto, a statement of how that group felt software development should be accomplished. It identified four statements that the group valued:

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

Agile quickly became a popular way of delivering software projects. Project teams would roll up their sleeves and start building software based on what the customers told them they wanted. They would provide that software to those customers who provided feedback about what they liked and what they didn't. Over time, the solution evolved into something that met the customer's needs and the project could be considered complete.

“

Today, 95% of organizations are using Agile for at least some of the projects they’re performing.

Agile results overcome skepticism

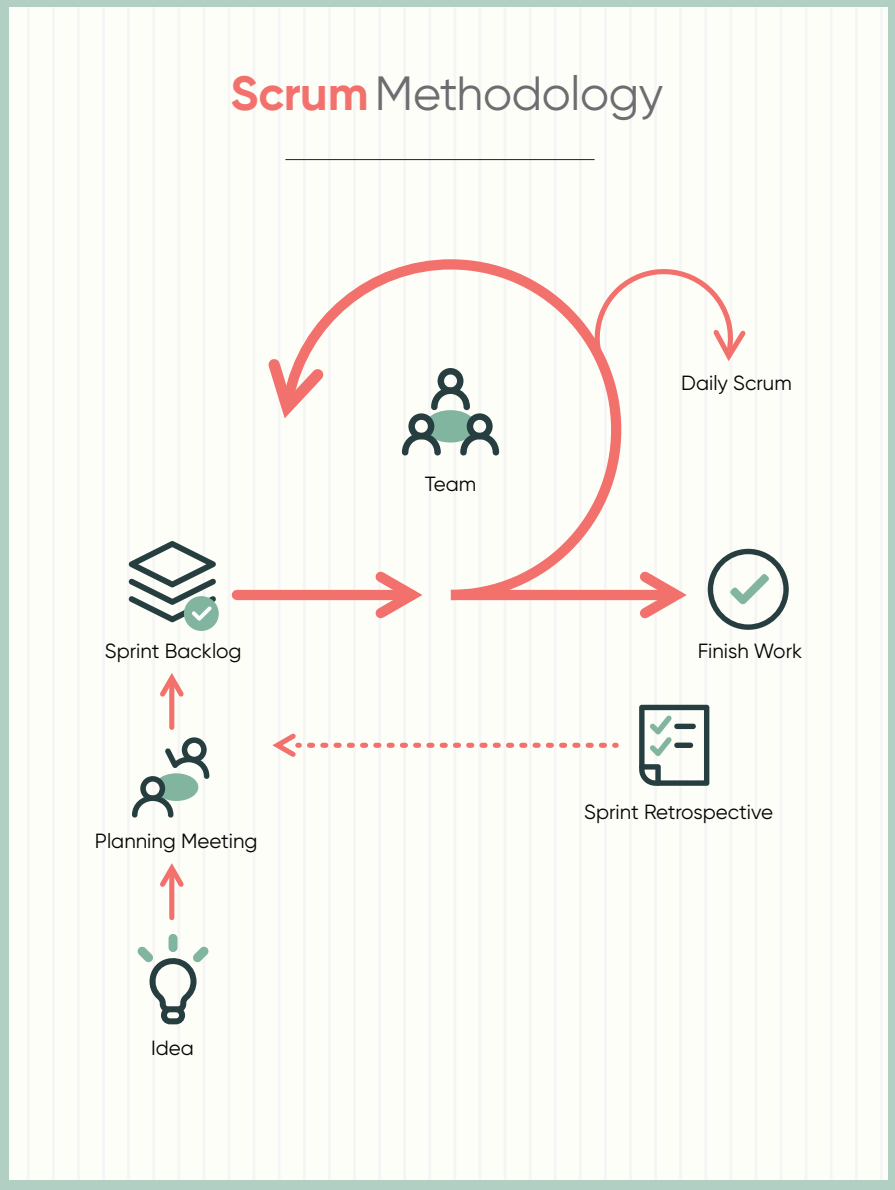
It quickly became obvious that, when properly executed, Agile could result in better solutions for the customer than traditional project methods. Often, Agile arrived at the final solution faster. And the customer and team doing the work preferred Agile to the traditional plan-driven approach where requirements were defined and approved before software development started.

Agile had its detractors. Many business leaders were skeptical of the lack of documentation; they felt there was a lack of planning, no risk management, etc. Status reporting was difficult because traditionally every project was expected to report against the triple constraint of scope, schedule, and budget—none of which naturally aligned with Agile ways of working.

But Agile delivered results. That fact, alone, ensured Agile not only had a future in software development, but that Agile principles could be applied to projects across other business areas outside of IT. In the 20 years since the Agile Manifesto was written, Agile has become a common approach to projects, embraced by most organizations, and recognized by professional project management bodies. According to the most recent State of Agile report, today 95% of organizations are using Agile for at least some of their work.[1]

Over the past two decades, Agile has evolved and morphed. While still delivering successful projects, it is also being applied to organizations as a whole. Let’s look at two examples of Agile in action—one project based, one organizational.

1. Digital.ai, 15th State of Agile Report, July 2021



Where did the term Scrum come from?

The software development term scrum initially appeared in a paper, "The New New Product Development Game" by Hirotaka Takeuchi and Ikujiro Nonaka, published in the Jan 1986 issue of Harvard Business Review. The term comes from rugby, where a scrum is a formation of players, and it was selected because it focuses on teamwork.

Source:
Guntherverheyen.com, Srum is not an acronym, January, 2014
https://guntherverheyen.com/2014/01/09/scrum-is-not-an-acronym/

Scrum reigns supreme

There are many different Agile software development methods, but the most popular is Scrum. Scrum is a framework for developing, delivering, and sustaining products with an initial emphasis on software development, although it has been used in other fields including research, sales, marketing and advanced technologies. **According to that same State of Agile report, 75% of organizations use Scrum either on its own or in combination with other approaches.**

Scrum has many similarities with other methods, but due to its popularity, it's the one we're going to focus on.

The three main roles in Scrum:

The Team	Usually made up of between five and nine people working together as a self-organized team that collectively determines what needs to be done and how to do it.
The Scrum Master	Acts as a coach for the team and helps ensure it's as productive as possible, while complying with Scrum principles.
The Product Owner	Determines the features and functionality the team will build and acts as a representative for the customer's interests.

Sprints are a core component of Scrum

Work on a project being delivered using Scrum is structured into a series of Sprints. These are generally two or three weeks in length and represent a self-contained window of time where a selected number of features are developed. At the end of the Sprint, a version of the solution being developed (also known as work in progress) is made available for the customer to review, though this will obviously be incomplete and only partially functional for much of the project.

The work carried out in each Sprint is based on the product backlog. A product backlog is a prioritized list of work for the team. This is maintained by the Product Owner and represents a prioritized list of features and functions that need to be developed. This backlog is fluid—fixes or changes based on feedback from previous Sprints may be added, and the relative priority of items can change. As a result, the backlog is revisited at the start of every Sprint and only one Sprint's worth of features is selected by the team at any time.

This backlog can contain anything. It doesn't have to be a technical feature of the solution. This is one of the reasons it is so easy to apply Scrum to any number of different project types. The product backlog can contain risk management activities, documentation, or anything else that you might associate with a project, as well as functionality. **This leads us to the idea that Agile concepts apply just as well at an organizational level as they do at a project level.**

Five tips to understanding SAFe
(without drowning in the details)

1. Don't be intimated or overwhelmed by complicated SAFe graphic representations. Nobody understands them at first.
2. Think of Scrum as a foundational level upon which SAFe is built.
3. Focus on concepts and principles, not processes.
4. Keep sight of the goal—improved strategic effectiveness and efficiency.
5. Visualize SAFe as a series of workflows with Agile applied at each level.

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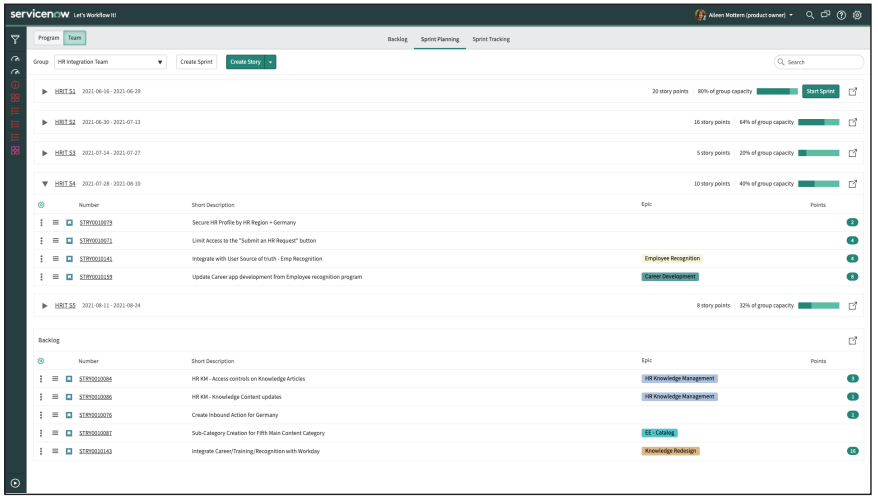
Scaling SAFe across the enterprise

There are a number of models to help organizations apply Agile principles across the more strategic layers of their business, but by far the most popular is the Scaled Agile Framework or "SAFe." To keep it simple, think of it as a series of processes and workflows that allow Agile principles to be applied for various enterprise operations. Each of those workflows can operate independently, but they also integrate together to form an entire enterprise management approach.

Like Scrum, SAFe uses small-scale Agile teams as the building blocks of success and is designed to grow with organizations as they mature and adopt more Agile principles in more areas of the business. SAFe's modular nature enables organizations to evolve towards the SAFe ideal, rather than have to commit to a "big bang" implementation that's likely to be highly disruptive and anything but Agile.



Agile Project Management techniques like Scrum help when:

- Project requirements are uncertain or likely to change
- Operating environment is fast-paced and changing rapidly
- Organizational culture supports individual and team empowerment
- Time-to-solution is a priority
- Formal, highly-structured plans aren't needed

Strategic Agile techniques like those in SAFe can help an organization:

- Improve its ability to adapt plans to changing circumstances
- Create a more direct connection between funding and delivery
- Improve the tie between project management and benefit attainment
- Become more responsive to customer needs

SAFe is sound

If you look back at the basic principles of the Agile Manifesto and ignore the software development aspects of it, those concepts don't only apply to project management. They can apply just as well to anything an organization does. **And as the pace of business continues to accelerate due to shifting customer demand, emerging technologies and increasingly global competition, organizations have found themselves having to become more flexible** at everything from investment management and organizational planning to project selection and organizational change.

Roche

Roche, a global healthcare organization, faced challenges in managing PI planning with an external solution. The data wasn't scalable. To overcome this, Roche turned to the ServiceNow Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) solution—enabling even greater business outcomes.

The teams on-boarded to execute in SAFe were empowered to execute the framework beyond the P1 level and gained:

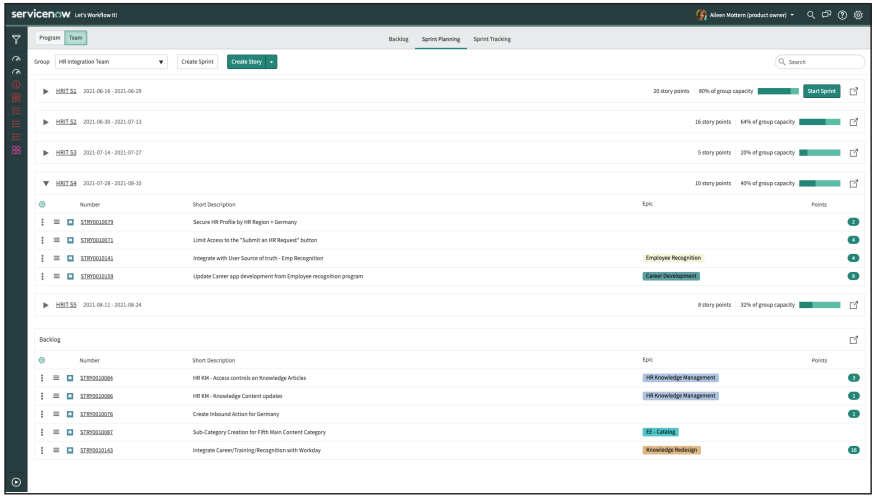
- Faster time to market
- Increased customer and stakeholder satisfaction
- Greater business agility by creating a roadmap to integrate lean demand management processes and executive lean budgeting in their SAFe solution

Getting started: Introducing Agile into an organization/department

1. Understand the basic concepts and identify appropriate test projects.
2. Pilot your Agile method of choice and review the results.
3. Refine and adjust your Agile approach until it delivers the results you expect.
4. Identify an executive sponsor interested in expanding Agile methodologies into new areas of the business.
5. Scale Agile horizontally and vertically, reviewing and adjusting as needed.

The bottom line

The group of individuals responsible for developing the Agile Manifesto couldn't have imagined how things would have developed over the last 20 years. But they came up with the right solution at the right time. Today, that's exactly what organizations like yours need to do for their customers and themselves—consistently deliver the right solution. This can be a tall order, but **adopting Agile concepts at enterprise and team levels makes it easier to adjust to changing circumstances.** And that results in better solutions.



Conclusion:

This ebook offers just a brief overview of Agile project management and strategic Agile techniques. Want to explore more about how Agile can benefit your organization?

Explore

Driving radical business transformation
Creating organizational agility
The 5 Steps to scaling work from traditional to Agile methods

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ServiceNow was founded on a very simple idea: that work should be easier.

ServiceNow is making the world of work, work better for people. Our cloud-based platform and solutions deliver digital experiences that help people do their best work. For more information, visit: www.servicenow.com.