

Successful Agile Implementation Requires Executive Support

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In their search for faster software deliveries, higher productivity, and more transparency, many software development organizations have switched to agile or are thinking about it. According to *The 10th annual State of Agile™ Report* published by VersionOne in 2015, the top benefits from adopting agile software development techniques are:

1. Ability to manage changing priorities
2. Increased team productivity
3. Improved project visibility
4. Increased team morale and motivation
5. Better delivery predictability
6. Faster time to market
7. Enhanced software quality
8. Reduced project risk

Out of the 3,880 respondents to VersionOne's annual survey, nearly 80 percent identified the above as actual improvements. Ninety-five percent of the respondents practice agile and one-third have five or more years of experience with agile.

But a successful transformation to agile is not a given as another part of VersionOne's report reveals. The same respondents were asked about failures and they identified these leading causes:

1. Company philosophy or culture at odds with core agile values
2. Lack of experience with agile methods
3. Lack of management support
4. Lack of support for cultural transition

In a separate question, respondents identified "ability to change organizational culture" and "organizational resistance to change" as the most significant barriers to agile adoption. So, on the one hand, organizations want the benefits of agile but, on the other, they account for the main causes of agile adoption failures! One takeaway from these findings is that to successfully adopt agile, an organization must align its culture and management with core agile values, which are best expressed in the Agile Manifesto at agilemanifesto.org. In other words, ensuring that the organization values:

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

For example, if the organization trains its software development teams on agile techniques and asks them to start applying them but does not emphasize the importance of individual interactions, working software, customer collaboration, and flexibility, the agile teams may find the transformation difficult. To reduce the risk of failure, organizations should understand what the Agile Manifesto really means,

assess their current cultures, gain buy-in from organizational leaders on any changes needed, and work with them throughout the adoption process to improve alignment with core agile values. By doing so, the organization can reap the benefits of agile while minimizing the negative impact of the obstacles. The changes may be radical for some organizations, but as the government customers Dynanet has helped successfully transition to agile will tell you, well worth the journey.

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