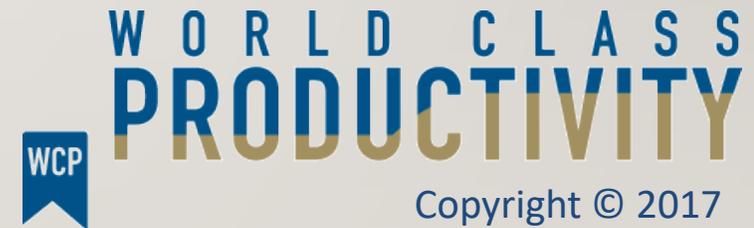


Debunking Five Agile Myths

KIRON D. BONDALE, PMP, PMI-RMP, CDAP, CDAI

Senior consultant, World Class Productivity (WCP)



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Myth #1

Agile is only for technology projects

While it's true that a catalyst for the agile project delivery movement was the 2001 publication of the Manifesto for Agile Software Development, the four value statements and twelve principles which make up the Manifesto are relevant to any type of project.

Agile has a solid foundation in lean – value is in the eyes of the customer, elimination of non-value add activities and focus on flow. Agile principles are being used in traditional industries such as construction to deliver value early and regularly while confronting critical risks early in a project's life.

Even specific agile methodologies such as Scrum or Extreme Programming which were designed for software development can be adapted to support other domains. Pairs programming is a practice from Extreme Programming, but it is really just one type of non-solo work. That approach can be used for almost any type of knowledge work.

Myth #2

Agile is undisciplined

Folks uttering this falsehood have usually experienced agile gone wrong via sponsors who are solely focused on speed or delivery teams who don't appreciate that the twin sibling of customer value is high quality.

Unlike with a traditional project where defects might be undetected for long periods of time until thorough inspection is done in a later phase, agile encourages delivering value early and regularly which means that evidence of poor quality comes home to roost much quicker. If a short sprint-based approach is used, there is little time for sloppiness if we expect to conduct a successful demo with our customers.

As agile moves the paradigm from individual to collective ownership, undisciplined behavior reflects poorly on the entire team.



Myth #3

Agile doesn't scale

While it might be simpler to transition to the use of agile approaches in small companies or projects, multiple frameworks such as SAFe, LeSS and Disciplined Agile have been developed for scaling agile to support large enterprises and big projects.

Agile ceremonies such as daily Scrums can evolve in larger projects to Scrum of Scrums. This should not be taken to mean that agile transformation in large companies is simple as the complexity of doing so does not scale linearly!

Myth #4

Agile requires collocation

There's little doubt that working in close physical proximity with our team members can improve the effectiveness of communication, accelerate the development of psychological safety, and reduce the volume of formal documentation. But few large companies or project teams have the ability to collocate everyone, nor will this scale effectively. Fortunately, technology solutions have evolved significantly since 2001 to facilitate virtual collaboration. Whether it's video conferencing, instant messaging, platforms for enabling collaborative information creation or physical meeting avatars, we have the means to overcome geographic distance to still work effectively in an agile manner.

Myth #5

It's just a set of
new practices
and tools

As usual, tool vendors don't do us any favors – they promote the latest development toolkit as the silver bullet to help us go from waterfall to agile in no time flat. It's crucial to recognize that agile starts with mindset and behavior. Effort spent in introducing new tools or practices without tackling the mindset and behavior changes required at all levels of an organization will not provide a solid ROI.

What this means is that coaching services which are usually brought in to support Agile delivery teams should be brought in much earlier to work with senior leadership and middle management.

I hope that this information has helped to clear up some misconceptions around Agile Project Management.

If you'd like to learn more about agile, I encourage you to visit our website and check out our Agile training and consulting offerings!

Have comments or questions?

Email kbondale@wcpconsulting.com
or call me at 800-214-8096 ext. 109



Kiron D. Bondale
PMP, PMI-RMP, CDAP, CDAI
Senior Consultant,
World Class Productivity (WCP) Inc.
www.wcpconsulting.com

About The Author



Kiron Bondale is a Senior Consultant with World Class Productivity who specializes in Agile Project Management and Risk Management.

Kiron regularly publishes articles on project and project portfolio management in both project management and industry-specific journals.

He has delivered over a hundred webinars and has presented at multiple conferences.

Kiron has been blogging weekly about project management since 2009. His blog has been frequently recognized in top fifty project management blog rankings.