

allan's blog - Agile & Digital Business

I help companies and teams that create software.

Sunday, March 05, 2017

Whats Next? - Agile disruption

A question from a LinkedIn follower, I thought I'd share my answer with readers:

"Hey Allan,

I'm giving this a shot reaching out to you. I recently was exposed to agile in the workplace (I am in a field now that I did not study) and am learning more about the process. My company introduced it to me. I have found a couple notes pulling it back to you with your experience. My questions are:

- What do you think is next after Agile?
- Where should I start with learning about this?

And do you have any advice for me, I am just now being exposed to software/electronic development and this process and would like to be able to contribute to our company?

So first things first: great you have set about reading up on it yourself! Ultimately Agile is all about learning and taking it on yourself to learn more about it is a great first move - you will go far!

What is next after Agile? - Cynical me thinks that people who ask that question are hoping *agile* will go away or looking to leapfrog it to the next thing. When posed inside a company I wonder if it is a form of resistance or obfuscation. Still ... I do think "what next" about myself...

At a day-to-day level the next thing is already here: **Continuous Delivery**, although for those of us who started with Extreme Programming (XP) this is very much "back to the future."

What is next after Agile? - that is a question that has been asked many times in the last few years. I've taken a stab at it myself over the years - like my "[Future of Agile](#)" presentation from 2009. In retrospect that presentation was both right and wrong on two counts. It was right because it has become clearer and clear over the years that Agile is Lean, *Agile Software Development* was our Lean revolution. Over time Agile has absorbed more and more Lean ideas.

The presentation was wrong on the first count because Lean has not, and I think will not, displace Agile. The Kanban insurrection has done a great in breaking the Scrum hegemony but Agile is here to stay - albeit infused with more and more Lean. (Take my own [Xanpan](#) for example.)

More significantly I was wrong because the thing that comes after Agile is not a replacement for Agile, rather it builds on Agile, Agile is building block - or as I put it a couple of weeks ago, *Agile was the midwife*.

Consider Toyota, they have been "lean" for decades, what came after "lean" for Toyota? It isn't "Lean 2.0" or "Super Lean." Lean enables them to do things like the Prius. Lean allows Toyota to pursue their strategy, Lean allows Toyota to produce almost as many cars as VW with half the workers.

Increasingly I don't even think Agile has even replaced "waterfall" (aka "traditional") software development. Big corporations still largely practise a form of waterfall with an Agile vinaigrette dressing. I don't like it, it drives me nuts but fundamentally the vast majority of large corporations that exist today are incapable of pure Agile because they have been built for a different world.

That doesn't mean they can't borrow some things form Agile, it doesn't mean Agile techniques can't help them be better than they are but it does mean they will never truly be Agile - but then, it is wrong to say every company must be truly Agile, or be truly Agile in the same way. (For those Agile folk who can stand the madness there is good money in selling unsafe fast cars to the middle aged.)

But what does this mean for the future?

Contributors

- [Allan Kelly](#)
- [allankelly2015](#)

My books

- [Continuous Digital: the alternative to projects](#)
- [Xanpan](#)
- [Little Book of User Stories](#)
- [Business Patterns](#)
- [Changing Software Development](#)
- [Agile Reader](#)

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Agile Dice Game
TechCityCoffee: 25 July 2017
2pm-4.30pm at Near Old Street Roundabout

Evolving Project Management for the Digital Age
Unicom: 21 September at London

Planning for Value
Private: 15 September at Oxford

Agile Cambridge

widjet@surfing-waves.com

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Well... traditional incumbents are increasingly vulnerable from **Agile disruptors** - companies which challenge them with new products and services which are only possible when technology is build in an agile fashion.

And that is what comes next: **Agile Disruption**.

Only we don't call it Agile Disruption, its called Digital.

This is happening now... our technologies are making all sorts of new business opportunities possible but exploiting those opportunities are only available to the Agile company.

Only with an Agile process can firms truly harness the power of modern tools like Amazon Web Services, Ruby and Clojure, etc. etc. Processes designed in 1970 are a poor fit for 2016 tools and technologies. Its a bit like an airline using the operating processes it had for DC-3s when introduced Boeing 777s.

As computers get more powerful the opportunities they can address are greater, if a company can turn that opportunities into money they have a business. To understand this you have to consider Moore's Law: Computing power doubles every two years.

The computers of today can address problems twice as complex as those two years ago.

The computers of today can address problems four times more complex than four years ago, eight times more complex than six years ago and 16 times more complex than eight years ago.

To put it another way, the next increment of Moore's Law will increase computer power by more than all the previous increments added together.

You get the picture?

I was recently inside a large bank. It takes them over a year to get a new idea into production. If I recall correctly, 27 months is more normal, that is over two years. In other words, processing power has doubled in the time it takes the bank to get out of bed.

So Agile isn't going away but the focus will be elsewhere. This is playing out in a number of ways.

Right now being Agile is table stakes. Continuous delivery is cutting edge but will soon be the minimum required. (If you are competing with Amazon it already is, if you aren't competing with Amazon today just hope they aren't eyeing your market.)

The discussion of "digital business" is the obvious one. Another is the rise of the #NoProjects/#ProjectLess movement I'm closely associated with. Underpinning both of those is continuous delivery.

Which means, if you want know more about what happens next:

- Start keeping your eyes open for anything to do with digital business - most of it is rubbish but among the noise there is some good thinking
- Read #NoProjects/#ProjectsLess
- Learn about Continuous Delivery

A word warning here: I'm guessing you work in more traditional company. As you open your mind to all of this you are likely to make yourself unpopular with your colleagues as you try to implement these ideas and warn them. Unfortunately most existing companies have a Mayor of Rotterdam problem.

And naturally, keep reading my blog!

Posted by Allan Kelly at 6:43 pm



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Anna Filina
@afilina

Pro tip: if your method is 225 lines long, then you should probably refactor your code ASAP. I frown at methods over 50 lines.

18h

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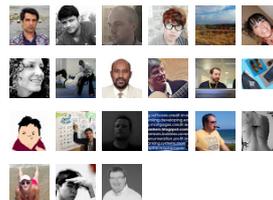
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Huw Lloyd 3 months ago - Shared publicly

Well, if it is the hand-maiden then perhaps it goes like this:
plan, build -> status, execute -> build, plan

Which would imply that you only want to do agile on top of linear planning (once that it understood...) and NOT on top of building to take a plan which would be a regression.

Reply



Allan Kelly 3 months ago

Hand-maiden? - I suspect it is some popular culture reference



Huw Lloyd 3 months ago

+**Allan Kelly** Ah, now that was an inadvertent re-phrasing of 'midwife'. But I think I see why, when the organ of change is subservient to the future development, rather than aside to it.



Aljaž Prusnik 4 months ago - Shared publicly

I'm bothered quite some time now (but have not voiced it anywhere) by the fact that software world is comparing Toyota's lean production with the whole software process (incl. analysis and design). You stated that Toyota's lean production allows them to build cars with half the workers to those from VW. But we are talking about production here and not research, concept and design phase. This references your

Reply



Allan Kelly 4 months ago

Aijaz,
There are two forms of Lean:
- Lean Manufacturing (see "The Machines that changes the world", Womack, Jones and Roo)



Marcel Baumann via Google+ 4 months ago - Shared publicly

Worth reading if you are again asked what comes after agile!!!

Reply



Holger Paffrath 4 months ago - Shared publicly

I think the next thing after Agile is DevOps. Not the DevOps that vendors try to sell you, but The DevOps of the Phoenix Project, of DevOps Days conferences. It still incorporates Agile/Lean thinking and just getting better at getting better, but adds Continuous Delivery. Infrastructure as code, sharing of knowledge and most importantly about the people. Helping them grow and get better.

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Nick Poulten 4 months ago - Shared publicly

Food for thought Allan thank you :o)

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