### Talk to Me!

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# Agile Solution Delivery

*Accelerate transformation through user centric design and rapid delivery!*

As project leaders, we may be asked to deliver a solution to meet a major business need very rapidly. If we don't have the project management tools or development processes in place to meet this challenge, we need to improvise. I've experienced this and shared a case study on Agile Solution Delivery. It's a story about a global acquisition integration, the need for an immediate solution for workforce restructuring and the team that led the effort to quickly deliver a solution to thousands of managers.

Project leaders have access to many PM tools and methodologies, including Agile, and it's important to build skills across these to better meet challenges. The acquisition in my case study took place prior to the widespread use of Agile but the solution delivery approach used in the Workforce Management Initiative reflected many agile concepts as we built process and tool functionality through a series of iterations. Since I'm now certified as a Scaled Agilist, I've used terminology and concepts reflecting the SAFe Framework.

If you have limited experience with Agile, this case study will give you some ideas for applying those concepts.

## Design Thinking Focused on Users

For Agile Solution Delivery, having a clear understanding of the problem and designing an end-to-end solution is critical. The case study describes how this was done as we engaged individuals with global Workforce Management (WFM) process knowledge from within each company, along with WFM reporting leads and HR Information Technology leaders to become part of a core WFM Taskforce.

One of the first steps of design is understanding the current state including existing policies, processes, procedures, systems, data elements, and reporting. After understanding the current state in both companies, we were able to recommend a realistic global WFM solution. Having a clear definition of data fields was particularly important within this initiative to ensure we were capturing accurate information across both companies and measuring performance appropriately through executive reporting.

Another important success factor is to look at the solution from an end-to-end perspective and to engage a team that embraces a shared responsibility for the solution. With shared responsibility, appropriate end users will be involved in gathering requirements across the full solution and in establishing priorities for design and development in each iteration. Within this case study, the WFM Taskforce had responsibility for the end-to-end WFM solution, allowing them to rapidly drive all aspects of design, development and deployment.

## Develop on Cadence

By developing on a regular cadence, an organization becomes more flexible in product development and delivery. This cadence of iterations provides a continuous flow of value to end users and the timing of releases can be tuned to fit their needs.

In this case study, the WFM solution had a design, develop, and release cycle of 7-10 days. A baseline solution was developed and then for each subsequent iteration, the WFM Taskforce identified a chunk of critical capability required for global restructuring, and went through a process to:
* Capture end-to-end requirements globally.
* Design the end-to-end solution, conduct demos, and complete development work across process, tool, content, and reporting.
* Ensure timely testing, integration with other systems and completion of supporting activities to deploy an end-to-end solution.

An Agile approach managing projects recommends very structured roles and responsibilities and well defined team and stakeholder engagements through stand-up meetings and workshops. In my case study, I describe a regular cadence of meetings with various groups to accomplish our goal of rapid design, development and deployment of the global WFM solution. This included WFM Taskforce meetings several times per week with representation from global process leads, global reporting leads, and HRIT leadership. In addition, we had multiple meetings per week to engage regional and country representatives to capture requirements, senior leadership to secure approvals, and global partners and stakeholders to communicate and validate solution functionality.

## Continuous Delivery

Establishing an approach of continuous delivery means working across all aspects of solution delivery, including, exploration and design, development and integration, deployment and change management, all the time. This is one of the most important elements of Agile Product Delivery in the SAFe Framework.

**Exploration and Design** encourages innovation and design thinking, constantly looking at what users need and then setting priorities to build capability that meets those needs. As outlined in my case study, having a robust requirements gathering approach was important to capture innovative ideas from a broad set of users and organizations, and having that information available for rapid design in each iteration.

**Development and Integration** ensures a quality product is delivered by developing, testing and integrating work across multiple teams for each release. Delivering frequent solution demos during the development process helps engage team members at a tactical level to effectively integrate and align work. In addition, having a team with shared responsibility for the end-to-end solution is important to support integration. Within the case study, this integration was facilitated by the deep engagement of WFM process and reporting leads who

attended the weekly meetings.

**Deployment of end-to-end solution capability and Change Management** ensures managers are able to use the solution upon release. In my case study, we were rapidly deploying iterations of the WFM solution because the business need was immediate and critical. Our primary concern throughout the program was keeping functional users, managers and senior leaders informed about what they could expect at each iteration. We were fortunate to deploy a vast majority of functionality within 3-4 iterations, allowing thousands of managers across the combined company to complete restructuring work. Later iterations were focused on the integration of financial data and the refinement of executive reports which impacted a smaller group of leaders.

There were many lessons learned in executing this business initiative, however, the most valuable to me was experiencing how the structured engagement of users and the use of iterative, rapid design and development can deliver a crucial solution in a short period of time. If you are interested in learning more about Agile Solution Delivery and reading the end of the story, read my case study.

## Are you new to Project Management?

Key concepts in this blog relate to the Lean/Agile approach of leading projects.

• Understand user's critical business requirements.
• Use time-boxed iterations or sprints to deliver value to end users
• Consider the end-to-end solution in design, development and deployment

Learn More about Lean/Agile and other PM Essentials.

## Additional Resources

Read the Agile Solution Delivery case study.

Learn Change Management steps in an Agile environment in my blog Surviving Agile Change

Watch this 5 minute SAFe 5 video on the SAFe Framework and business agility.

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*About Annette*
*Annette is a business transformation coach working with executives to create more effective operations and greater business value. Both vision and execution are key to motivate people to transform work. She guides leaders to develop transformation vision and strategy, structure implementation projects and roadmaps, and she mentors project teams to be successful. She also shares tips, resources and leading practices as a PM mentor and through her Transformation Tips blog.*

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