

The HR SCOOP

JULY 2021

Being Agile... It's Not Just for Software Developers

The demands and expectations of HR departments require HR leaders, professionals and support staff to be quick to change.

Think about how quickly HR adapted in 2020 to a workplace that shifted overnight. One day you may have been reviewing COVID numbers and thinking “maybe we should cancel that upcoming business trip” and the next day all employees were working from home. Maybe it wasn’t that drastic for you, but it happened quickly. IT had to figure out laptops and access. HR updated telecommuting and in-office policies, adjusted time off allocations, and looked for masks and PPE. And everything had to happen quickly. Organizations learned how quickly they can adapt and shift when needed.



It was a reminder that the best plans can be pulled out from under us in an instant. Being agile is more important than ever in the fast-paced world we live in.

THE AGILE MANIFESTO

The Agile Manifesto was written for software development, but the philosophy – of being more agile and quick to change course – is paramount in HR today. We live in an environment with continual change in the employment market, an economy and technology platforms. Manager and employee expectations continue to evolve, as does the organization’s expectations of those individuals.



The Agile Manifesto was put together by a team of 17 software developers, looking for a different solution to software development techniques to increase adaptability and agility while working on long-term projects. The Agile Manifesto is included on the following page, as stated at agilemanifesto.org.

Agile Manifesto

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.
Through this work we have come to value:

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

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

HR's systems, processes and procedures are not commonly implemented with the Agile Manifesto in mind. If your organization utilizes the Agile philosophy already in HR, you are ahead of the curve. Because HR is highly regulated with high organizational risk for non-compliance, it is tempting to place most of the emphasis when working on a project on the right side of the bullet points above. Of course we can't ignore the importance of documentation and creating consistent processes in HR. However, HR departments that put an emphasis on the end user's experience (the bolded items on the left) will find more success in the long run.

Adaption of HR-focused technology has exploded over the past 15 years. Employees log into websites to track time worked and time off, enter changes for their paycheck, measure performance, track development plans and actions taken, and attend virtual and online training. Many HR departments leverage technology to streamline processes and minimize paperwork. This use of technology reduces costs to the organization. Incorporating agility into these projects can streamline the process and create a better end result.

The agile philosophy is a way of thinking that helps professionals broaden their scope when looking at any HR process, change or initiative. Have you ever gotten so focused on how a process or technology is going to make things better for HR that you forgot to consider the employee or manager experience on the other end of the process? You might have been really happy with the end product, but managers and employees were frustrated by the new process or technology that provided little added value to them.

Employees are used to using websites that are customized to their experience when shopping, and tend to expect that at work as well. HR technology hasn't been set up this way in the past.



So, how do we implement the Agile Methodology into our projects?

SCRUM FRAMEWORK



You may have heard about, or even implemented the Scrum Framework in your organization. The Scrum process is a way to put the Agile philosophy to work. It is a process of continually checking in with stakeholders and project team members to make sure the project meets customer, employee, team and organizational needs.

Rather than rely on one meeting to set the tone and scope for a long, complicated project, it separates the project into smaller “sprints”. These sprints allow teams to focus on small parts of the large project at a time, delivering value and receiving feedback in short increments.

By chunking out the project, team members can more easily adapt to challenges or roadblocks they encounter and incorporate external shifts and changing needs that occur during the project. Key stakeholders are involved at the end of each sprint and provide feedback and direction for the next Sprint of the project. For more information on Scrum Framework details, visit: <https://www.scrum.org/resources/what-is-scrum>.

WORK USES OF SCRUM FRAMEWORK AND AGILE PHILOSOPHY IN HR

Incorporating the foundation of Scrum and Agile into large-scale HR projects will give space for more insight and adaptability to changing customer and business needs. As projects move forward, the impact of those projects are transparent to the customer (i.e. employee and manager).

HR will benefit in the long run by incorporating key stakeholders into a formalized process throughout the project, and breaking large projects into smaller parts so current needs are addressed and fixed before moving too far into the project. Otherwise, these changes may be an afterthought at best – and the end result will not push your organization forward in the direction it needs to go.

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