

November 2021 | Blog post

THE FUTURE OF AGILITY or the art of reinventing the system

By Géraldine Piquion



The year 2021 marks two years since the outbreak of a global pandemic forced us to redefine and even reinvent our known world and how we interact. Over a short period, we have been pushed to question the way in which we work and communicate. We have reevaluated the importance and interdependence of each of the elements that make up our daily lives (family, work, leisure, environment, social exchange, etc.).

Uncertainty and fear have also become part of the daily lives of business leaders and team managers. Since the goal is not only to stand upright, but also to maintain balance, most businesses

have had to quickly redefine their approaches and work methods in light of an evolving and changing environment and an unprecedented acceleration in the pace of business.

Strangely enough, 2021, the year that follows this great upheaval, also marks the 20th anniversary of a manifesto that, in its own way, aimed to bring about change in the business world and in **management** and **project management** in particular.

In the mountains of Utah, 17 computer application development experts defined and drafted the **Agile Manifesto** in 2001.

The manifesto is summarized in 4 values and 12 principles defined by these experts to guide the actions and behaviours of people who implement and use Agile approaches. Over the past 20 years, this manifesto has given rise to many frameworks.

Agile methods can offer effective management models for crisis or transition and they can also help prioritize processes. However, it is important to understand that **Agility** is first and foremost a state of mind, philosophy and way of being. Like every other philosophy, it asks questions, examines the answers and proposes a systemic vision inspired by a world or specific reality. When the context changes, Agility evolves, becomes dynamic, creates new approaches, rethinks and redefines itself. It is the opposite of rigidity and relies on movement and fluidity.

Agility cannot therefore be viewed as a perfect formula that we can apply to any structure, but rather as a perspective when defining and viewing the specific approaches of a project or business model.

AGILE TRANSFORMATION AND GENERALIZATION TRENDS

"Agile transformation is a holistic approach that involves profound cultural transformation since whoever wants to transform must first know who they are and where they want to go. They must know what is important to them and what they believe in. The agile transformation we are talking about is therefore a quest for meaning within the business."

Jean-Claude Grosjean,
author of *Agile Culture*

One undeniable fact it is that when Agility is correctly applied, it generates value for a business. Among other things, it allows for needs prioritization, delay reduction, minimizing the impact of errors, making better use of resources and, to a certain extent, improved productivity.

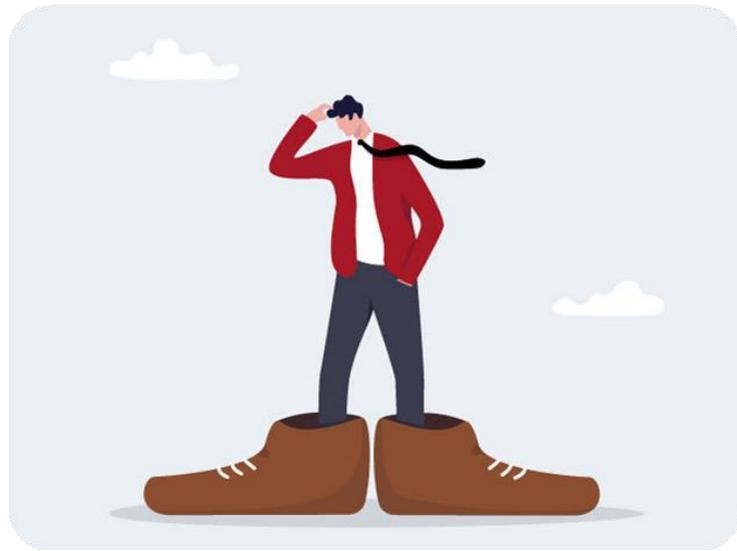
Whether right or wrong, adopting an agile approach is seen by companies as a direct path to success and an indisputable indicator of their ability to adapt to change.

However, in reality, Agility is still misunderstood and, above all, poorly applied which makes certain structures more complex and certain practices or approaches even more counterproductive.

Alain Benoit,* Director of Agile Practice and Agile Coach at [Agilia solutions](https://www.agiliasolutions.com) for over 10 years tells us how the desire for performance and the pressure to succeed pushes some businesses to adopt approaches or **frameworks** that may be comforting, but are entirely unsuited to the business.

Among other things, he deplores the introduction of practices guided by a desire for speed and efficiency, but which are not accompanied by indepth reflection or analysis of the business context, team profiles or physical environment, for example.

While Agility may be viewed as an increasingly popular trend or fashion, it is not ready-to-wear. For Agile to be effective, the **values, principles** and **agile practices** to be adopted must be aligned with and guided by the business culture and environment.

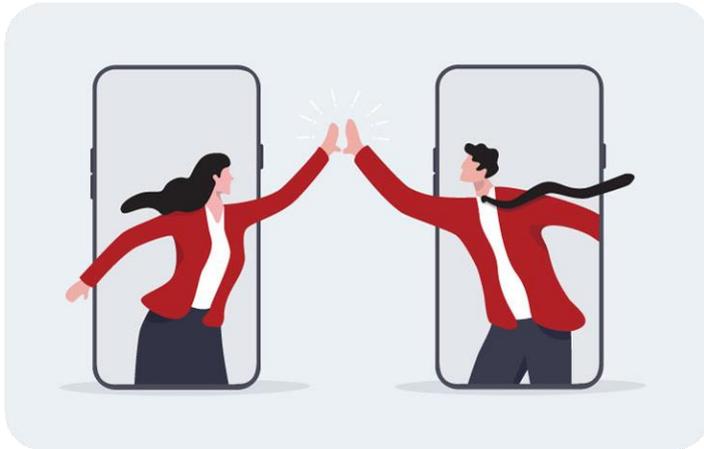


As an example, Alain Benoit explains that many companies implement certain **Scrum** practices, such as daily scrum

meetings without really understanding the intention behind these practices. In the medium term, this form of generalizing the practice results in a loss of time and adoption at a team level and creates a breeding ground for widespread demotivation and frustration.

“Since Agility is based on individuals and their interactions and on teams, the changes that occur in the way we work (remote, hybrid or in person) have a significant impact on the future and require us to review our practices and question our way of doing things.

The challenge is not only to ensure **value creation** and constant **productivity**, it is also and above all to guarantee a business’s ability to prioritize the well-being of its employees and **mobilize its teams**.



To do this, we must be able to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the formal and informal **new communication channels** in order to restore confidence and security to the key players in Agility,” adds Mr. Benoit.

We could talk at length about frameworks, methods or various practices to tackle the new challenges of

modernity, but there is one undeniable truth: human beings will always be at the heart of the business process. There are two sides to creating a product or service: **those who create** (the teams) and **those for whom we create** (the clients).

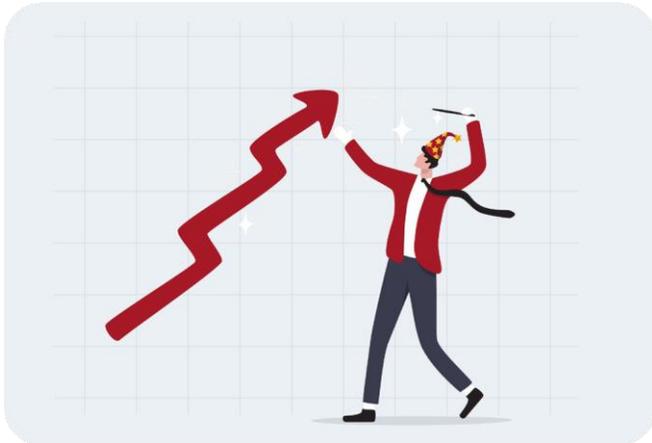
While there are so many ways to “**Do Agile**,” there is really only one true reason to “**Be Agile**” and that is not to ensure a business’s competitiveness, because that is rather a sought-after effect.

The reason behind “Being Agile” is to give those who create value the power to choose the **methods, practices** and **communication tools** adapted to their reality that can boost their effectiveness. Members of an agile team who are able to evolve in a non-prescriptive but inspiring and circular framework will feel fully invested in the progress and improvement of the product or service that they deliver.

Then the presence of an agile coach will be relevant and their role will not be to apply a perfect recipe, but rather to support and encourage managers and teams to develop an agile and autonomous approach, which will be expressed in both the decision-making processes and strategy operationalization.



AGILITY, THAT MAGIC FORMULA THAT'S SO SOUGHT AFTER!



There's no doubt that an increasing number of businesses will adopt Agile, as demonstrated by the heightened interest in conferences and workshops offered during the [Agile Tour 2021](#). Many managers will participate with an inner hope of finding miracle solutions to their need to perform and adapt to the latest challenges.

The role of agile evangelists of the future will be to align these managers and teams towards creating the conditions for success through applying the methods. The creation of a work environment or, better yet, an ecosystem that encourages and stimulates collective participation (remote, in person or hybrid) will be a key element of Agility in the future.

As Alain Benoit reaffirms at the end of our interview: "Frameworks such as **Scrum**, **Kanban** and **SAFe** and movements such as **DevOps** will continue to flourish and offer solutions to boost performance and productivity. However, they remain tools and objectives for a vision of creating value and mobilizing people while taking into account all that is required in terms of collaboration, communication and maintaining psychological safety within teams. Where the process does not match a business's specific culture, the miracle of transformation will be a mirage and all the efforts will be in vain."

In an entrepreneurial future where each new piece of data and each new player becomes a tectonic plate with the power to shake the economy as a whole, overcomplicating a system can significantly affect a business's capacity to respond and, to a lesser extent, the tendency to generalize successes and create formulas.

Finally, we must bear in mind that the very essence of Agility is to simplify processes and it is part of a continuous movement at the heart of which each unique and complex individual must find their place.



***Alain Benoit, Director of Agile Practice at Agilia Solutions**

Alain Benoit is an Agile Coach with 15 years of experience who advocates putting people back in the heart of the system. He helps businesses to create environments where people feel comfortable unleashing their potential and creativity. He believes that Agility is first and foremost a question of people, interactions and value creation rather than the application of a framework or the introduction of practices!