


GOING AGILE

PROPOSING A NEW ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY FOR OPERATIONS

Implementing Agile Methodology

A Practiced-based Project By: **Mosi Dorbayani**

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Executive Summary:

Orenda Inc. is a multinational Management Consulting firm since 1992 with over 400 staff spanning 5 countries. It provides leadership, management, business executive coaching and consulting services to small professional businesses and start-up entities. Up until recently, this firm was mostly operating traditionally, but in order to maintain its market position and meet the speed of its clients' needs, the firm decides to adapt new methodologies and promote the 'culture of agility'. This is to benefit both, the firm internally, as well as its current and future clients.

Strategically, by adopting the agile management system or operations, the firm not only improves its internal processes for external services, but also through its gained knowledge and experience, it can potentially sell similar solutions to other professional firms and offer such implementations to its prospective clients – once it is successfully implemented internally.

Considering the history, size and scale of the firm and its wide scope of services internationally, this project is considered a radical change at every level, including C. level leadership.

Traditionally the management role was to identify what exactly needs to be done, set a guideline including a –to–do list for staff, and then make sure that staff complete the tasks according to the set standard, instructions and framework. Staff were simply to follow the instructions as set



**“The insight gained from
an experience, can create
future opportunities”**

Mosi Dorbayani

forth, trust the judgment call and experience of their senior managers and ensure that the target is achieved accordingly. But now in the new operation system - the agile method, the role of the management is to facilitate and enable staff to reach their full potential. Now managers have to trust the judgement calls and experience of their staff, who are serving clients and permit them to generate values for clients at almost every level.

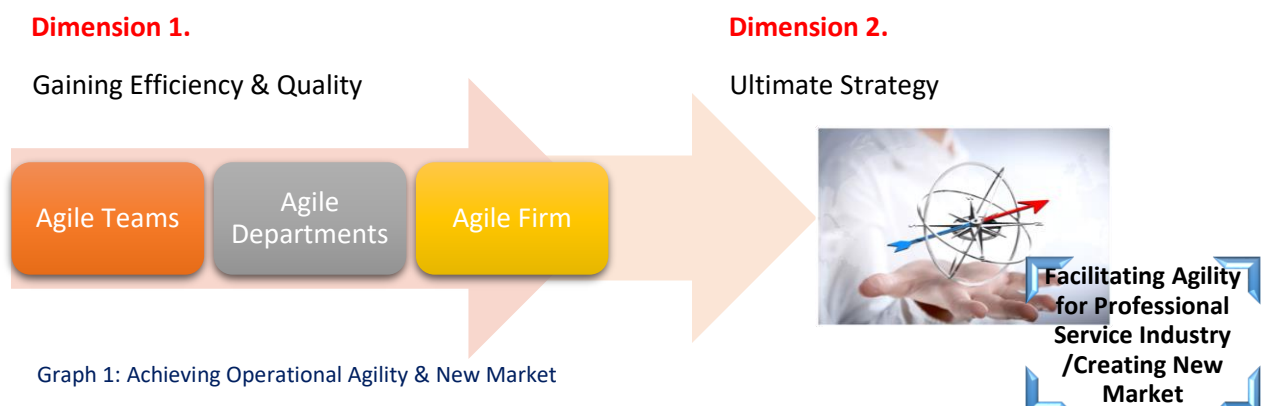
And of course, all of these require the firm to remove any obstacles that may be getting in the way. Because in agile approach and methodology, operation is neither top to down, nor bottom to up, it is **outside-in**. The focus is on creating and delivering values.

Let us now briefly look at 'vision', 'mission' and 'values' that this alternative operation system projects.

Vision:

In a market which is crowded and already well-established, the challenge for traditional method of operation is to be slightly better than the competitors to stay in the game; however, by implementing the agile operation and culture, the firm gets the chance to potentially tap into new market for different services and then immediately with proper planning dominate it. We can say by doing so, not only a greater value and profit margin will be generated, but also the level of staff and client's satisfactions will increase in a value-based environment.

Therefore, while in one hand the 'culture or practice of agile' needs to be established and exercised within the firm (i.e. dimension 1), the firm can benefit exporting and selling its gained know-how to other professional services in its market place (i.e. dimension 2)



Mission:

After a proper communication with the staff, firm initiates the agile operation by experimenting on one team. As more and more teams are adapting the agile operations, eventually the entire department benefit from the new methodology for efficiency and quality. This gradually covers all the departments till the entire firm is agile. Once the firm is fully agile and gained hands-on experience on establishing such operation and culture, then the newly evolved and reinvented firm can strategical shift its focus on opening up new markets and sell agile consulting services.

Values:

"Innovation is what agile is all about. These days most companies operate in highly dynamic environments. They need not just new products and services but also innovation in functional processes." ^[1] - Darrell K. Rigby 2016

Agile operation has several core values. Among them:

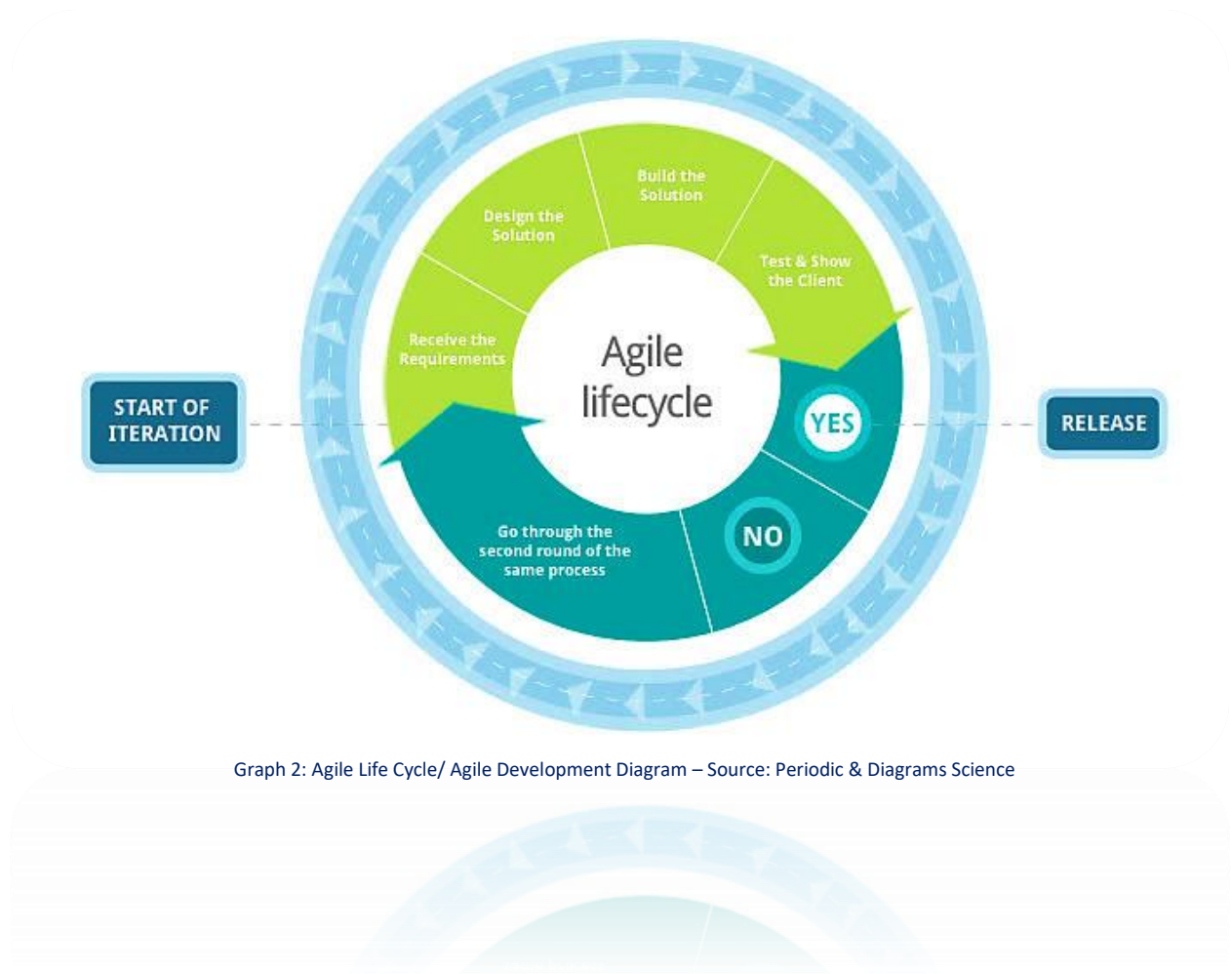
- Individuals and interactions over processes and tools;
- Quality and transparency [using Jira] throughout the operations;
- Customer collaboration over contract negotiation;
- Responding to change over following a fix plan. ^[2] – Beck K. 2011

How It Works (in brief):

In principle this is how it is put into practice:

- Through creative and adaptive teamwork in solving complex problems;
- Lean Development (or 'Muda' of Kaizen Model ^[Appendix 1]), which focuses on the continual elimination of waste; and
- Kanban Scheduling System for Lean Development, which concentrates on reducing lead times as well as the amount of work in process. ^[1]

After gaining an internal confidence and enough practice, similar cycle (graph 2) can be presented to the current and prospective clients:



Graph 2: Agile Life Cycle/ Agile Development Diagram – Source: Periodic & Diagrams Science

Risk / Pitfalls Includes (but not limited to):

- Not all staff will immediately embrace the change, and many may need help adjusting;
- Team may need specialized training and time to acquire skills to close the gaps of operations, technology and agile methodology;
- Documentation may get sidetracked, which may cause new members not to get up to speed;
- During the implementation, this would demand more time and energy from everyone because staff and clients must constantly interact with each other;
- Senior management (those who make the culture) and mid management (those who get things done) both need a long-term vision and constant communication; therefore, absence of this can be a real pitfall.

With view to the above, the firm must be careful not to go overboard with its implementation, and while it makes the processes simple and agile, it should care that they don't become too ignorant and easy, or too architectural or structural.



Graph 3: Adaptive Plan and Adaptive Structure

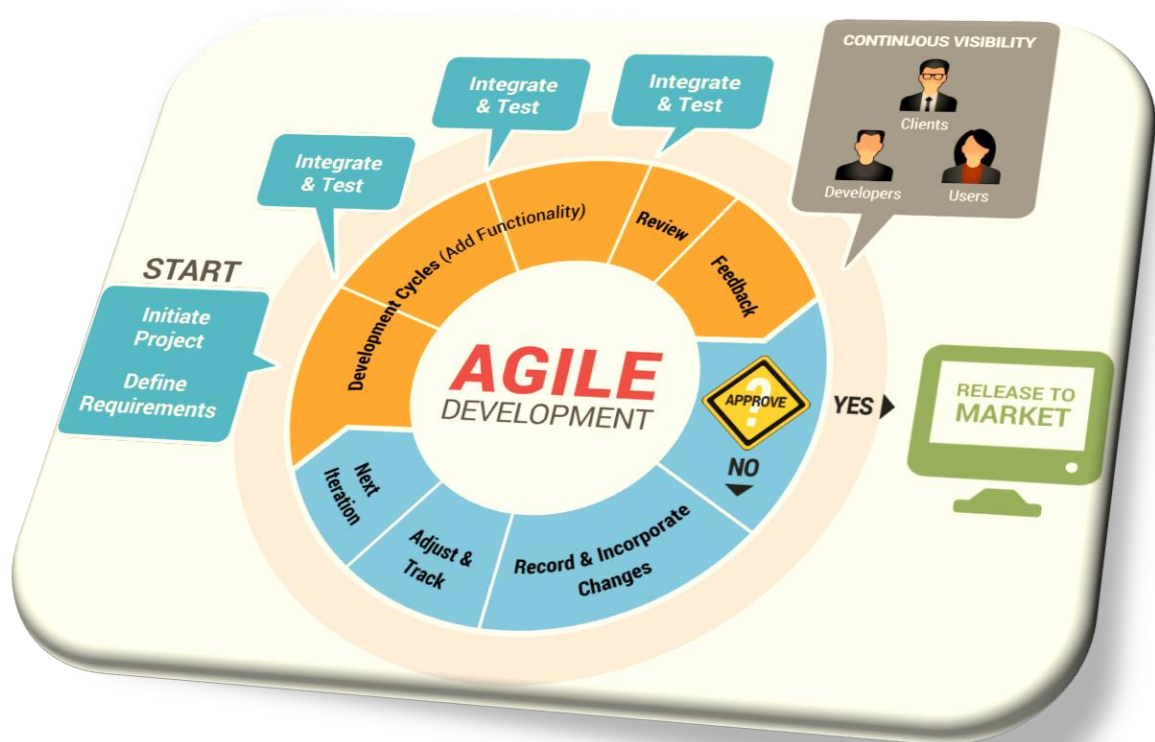
On Dimension 1 - Strategy, Key Decisions and Actions:

The firm needs to adopt an approach, which brings once separated teams together, to act as a single body for a client-focused service organization. Therefore, strategically lean and agile operation models are the best guiding framework.

- **Opportunity:** Firm is falling behind its competition and is spending too much time on internal reports and administrative processes. What firm should be aiming at is to streamline its development practices to focus on value based results.
- **Approach:** Firm is advised to start small, build confidence, and prove success. First it should focus on a small process changes, determined metrics that can be used throughout the transformation. It is highly important that the firm focuses on in-service training, education and team empowerment. This should include facilitating senior managers and leaders to refocus on their job-roles in an agile environment.
- **Actions:** After a brief set of interviews and observations, the firm initiates with a series of workshops aimed at establishing a common understanding and language for teams to use

around agile practices. Some workshops shall essentially equip junior and senior consultants, some are for teams' leaders, and others for executives, and of course the core series of in-service training is for the full support teams and staff at every level.

- **Functionality Test / Evaluation:** Each integration step can be tested through sampling process time, evaluating outcome, reviewing results, and sharing feedback. See graph 4 – Agile Development Diagram below.

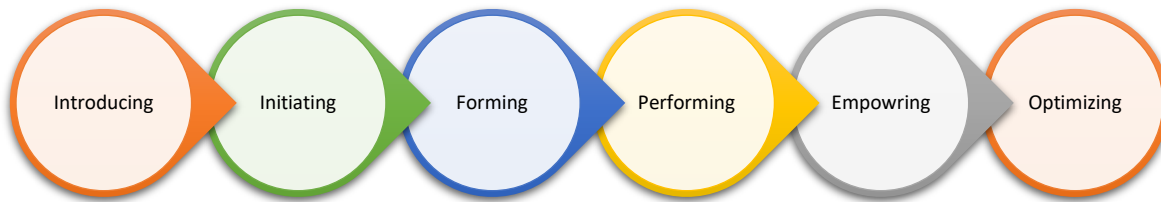


Graph 4: Agile Development Diagram – Source: Periodic & Diagrams Science

With the support of the executives, leaders are to plan and manage change to team structure, service planning processes, communication patterns, etc.- all to serve an end-to-end plan for achieving the full scope of the transformation.

Firm starts with one team in each department, provides on-site coaching, and works closely with other partners and stakeholders. After having a proven success – when the teams' confidence is built, the firm shall begin to coach the entire departments. Once the firm fully and successfully implemented the agile operations, it can advocate it for its clients and open new markets for professional services implementing agile operations.

The Agile Maturity Process:



Graph 5: The Agile Maturity Process

On Dimension 2: Realizing the Ultimate Strategy:

What's The Selling Point?

Companies need experienced executive consultants who are able to provide insights on developing waterfall and agile operations. They need experienced and well-trained coaches to facilitate transitions and to coach their team on agile methodology. As it was mentioned in 'vision' on page two. The ultimate strategy is to provide consulting services on agile operation system to professional service industry and open up new markets – once it is successfully implemented internally.

Here is an overall description on how the firm can benefit from selling its gained experience:

✚ **Opportunity:** Orenda Inc. has an extra ordinary talented team of seasoned coaches and consultants internationally, who have creativity for developments. It is known that delivering new methodologies and alternative operations need help, that's why the firm still exist. With having the hands-on agile experience, it is possible to add transparency to the services and business, remove the outdated administrative processes, coach and train managers and staff to use their time efficiently and effectively, and facilitate them to serve their customers or clients with proper value-based care. *A part from the typical earning fees for rendering consulting and coaching services; once the current and future clients go agile, their agility will increase their profit margin, hence more potential for higher income revenue for Orenda Inc. by delivering such alternative programs, further education and optimization services and training.*

✚ **Approach:** Once the bidding proposal is successful, before any changes are made, it is critical first to understand the organizational needs and gain the leaders trust. To that end, it would be vital to work within the existing processes and show genuine empathy to the client's teams and the challenges that they are facing. After done that, the planning for small changes together with the members can be pursuit.

✚ **Actions:** Things can take effect from starting small and gradually as the confidence is built and results are seen, the rest of the changes can follow until the desired end is achieved [See graph 4]. Basically, a similar approach for going agile internally, but tailored to clients' organizational needs.

Conclusion:

Practicing agile is no different from any other form of practicing. It must be mastered through training, real business life examples, and even case studies. A team which is agile, is self-motivated, self-directed, and it shows a high degree of trust and initiative.

Members of an agile organization are often committed to their common goals and have shared visions. They proactively support the agile operations and constantly empower other members. They are often not shy in making decisions and accepting responsibilities to deliver results.

Establishing agile operations without executive and management's full support is impossible. Fostering agile operations requires accepting change and facilitating new culture.

Like any other type of operations, agile is not risk free and all the team members, managers, and stakeholders should assess the possible common risks duly, and should have effective risk management strategies in place to guarantee a positive and healthy adoption and transformation.

Going agile might be a lengthy process, but most certainly a rewarding one.

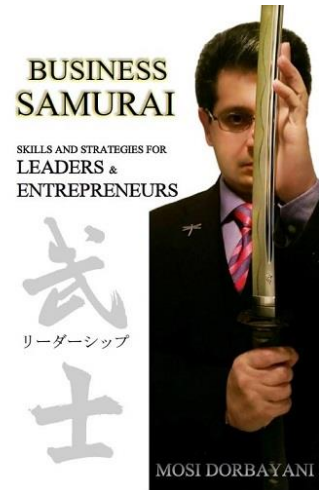
Appendix 1.

To learn more about Kaizen Model and Strategies for Product and Service Development / Enhancement, consult 'Business Samurai: Skills & Strategies for Leaders and Entrepreneurs'.

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<https://www.amazon.com/Business-Samurai-Strategies-Leaders-Entrepreneurs/dp/1543001904>

Also available from University of Salford's library.



About:

Mosi Dorbayani is a Canadian Executive Consultant, an Award-Winning Scholar, Author, and International Songwriter. Educated at Harvard, Aston, and Salford Universities, Mosi is specialized in International Management, Cultural Diplomacy, Entrepreneurial Strategies, HR/Talent Development, Business Economics, and Commercial and Contract Law. His executive experience, leading and working with staff from 20 nationalities have equipped him with a global strategic understanding on the importance of cultural diversity and human capital. His passion for 'personnel development' has enhanced many organizations, practitioners and trainees, and provided them with practical insights to face challenges of their constantly changing environment.

Mosi is one of the pioneer practitioners of 'Co-operative Enterprises for Economic Growth' since early 90s, and as an Economist, he created, developed, and applied 'Coadunate Economic Model / Theory ' — a strategic concept and practice that catalyzes Business Economics, Talent Management, Cross-cultures (arts & creative industry) and Philanthropy to impact Socioeconomic in an emerging multi-polar world.

References:

1. Darrell K. Rigby; Jeff Sutherland; Hirotaka Takeuchi – May 2016 Harvard Business Review.
2. Kent Beck, Mike Beedle, Arie van Bennekum - Agile Manifesto 2001