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AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Making the Development Process Responsive to Business Needs

Analysis without compromise



A Butler Group Strategy Briefing
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Introduction

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Agile methodologies for software development are gaining increasing attention as businesses look to see how they can go beyond the traditional Waterfall approach. Waterfall is a gated method where at the end of each stage sign-off needs to be achieved against delivery, before passing on to the next stage. Sometimes Waterfall is adjusted with iterations that occur between adjacent stages, but generally it is best described as a linear process, or one of baton passing. The main stages are: requirements gathering, modelling and design, software construction, testing, and deployment. The two main problems with this approach is that: a) a large effort goes into the requirements document and sign off before anything is built – for very large scale projects this could be as much as 12 or even 18 months, by which time the technology itself will have moved on, and it also assumes that the requirements are all known upfront; and b) testing is relegated to the end when time is at a premium, schedules stretched, and when making corrections is most expensive (short of discovering faults in the field).

Scrum, DSDM, and to some extent RUP, have gained an

increasing reputation as preferred Agile methodologies for project management, with XP often being cited for actual coding practice. Where Agile wins over Waterfall is that: a) requirements are focused on the known elements of the project and prioritised so that work can begin immediately on these parts; and b) the melding of design-build-test activities and producing deliverables of working software in short bursts, resembles the passing of a rugby ball between team members – a highly iterative process. The result is software that evolves to meet requirements and changes in a flexible manner, and with no surprises at the end of the project, because continual builds ensure always working software.

Scrum and XP are the two Agile brands that have gained sufficient momentum that businesses are now exploring how to extend Agile beyond just application development, and also scaling up to large-scale enterprise projects. This Butler Group Strategy Briefing will explore the implications for business, answering questions such as: how should a business begin to evaluate Agile? How should a business implement Agile, particularly where Waterfall will continue to be practiced? And what can we learn from end-user case studies on scaling Agile out, and up to enterprise-scale projects?

Key Topics

- Agile Software Development is gaining mainstream acceptance by developers: we explore the reasons for success.
- Agile involves greater discipline, not less, and access to process / methodology information can help – we indicate potential sources.
- Application development tools fall into two main groups – those targeting management and those targeting core development. We explain how tools work best alongside Agile practice.