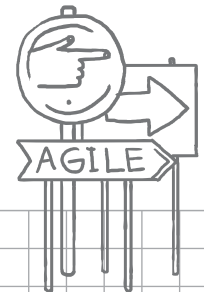# 6 Tips

HOW to SELL

Agile to Your Executives

WHY IT'S A CHALLENGE TO SELL AGILE TO YOUR EXECUTIVES?

#1 FIND AGILE SUCCESS STORIES FROM YOUR INDUSTRY

#2 EXPLAIN HOW PREDICTABILITY IS IMPROVED AND MANAGEMENT IS MORE EMPOWERED IN AN AGILE ORGANIZATION

#3 HIGHLIGHT THE IMPROVED COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT IN AGILE TEAMS

#4 MINIMIZE RISK OF THE AGILE PILOT

#5 TRY TO QUANTIFY THE BENEFITS OF AGILE

#6 BE AWARE OF THE AGILE MYTHS

While you might be fully convinced about the benefits of Agile, you can still find it hard to convince your managers about making a process change. Executives are inherently risk averse, they like clarity and predictability, and they might see Agile as a risk rather than a solution.

What complicates things even further is that Agile is fluid. It's a set of values, principles and practices that you need to first experiment with and then master in order to successfully apply in your unique situation. Like it or not, there is no clear roadmap to becoming Agile and there is no manual you can easily hand over to your executive. While hard, it's not impossible to sell Agile to your managers, and there are a few simple approaches that can help you in this endeavor. Below we provide a checklist that will help you prepare for the meeting with your manager.

AGILE

#1 FIND AGILE SUCCESS STORIES FROM YOUR INDUSTRY

One of the things executives care a lot about is competitiveness and you should leverage this in your Agile pitch. Just do your homework, research the companies from your industry and pinpoint industry leaders who have applied Agile successfully. Gartner has already declared that **"agile is now mainstream"** and these days many famous organizations use Agile (**GE**, **SalesForce**, **British Airways**, **Adobe**, **Allianz**, **British Telecom**, and even **NASA and the CIA**), so it's very likely that you will find a compelling success story from your industry. Here are a few directories listing Agile organizations that you can use:

- ➡ List of **companies using Scrum**
- ➡ Global Province's **Entries for Agile companies** with author comments
- ➡ Global Province's **Company Index** – those marked with AC only
- ➡ CIO's list of **100 Most Agile Companies Honored**

YOU CAN'T AVOID AGILE

"According to those who have successfully adopted agile, the benefits are well worth the effort, and with the recent dramatic increase in agile adoption, the probability of working in or with an agile team has increased for everyone" says Forrester in its report
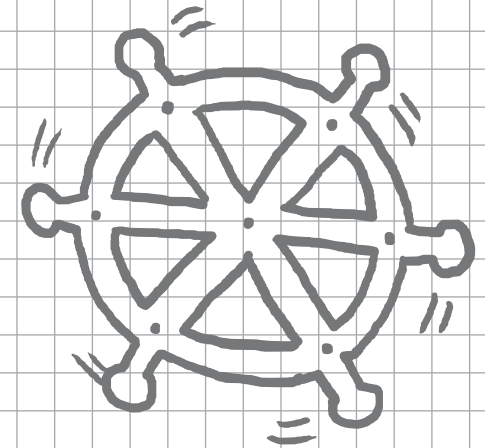
Agile Development: Mainstream Adoption Has Changed Agility

👁 **READ REPORT**

While your managers might think Agile is a synonym of chaos, you know it's the opposite. One of the key advantages of Agile is that you can spot problems early on and take corrective actions, thus improving predictability. In contrast, in a traditional Waterfall project managers might not be aware of a problem until the very release date, when they learn that it's postponed (indefinitely) and this leaves them feeling helpless and angry.
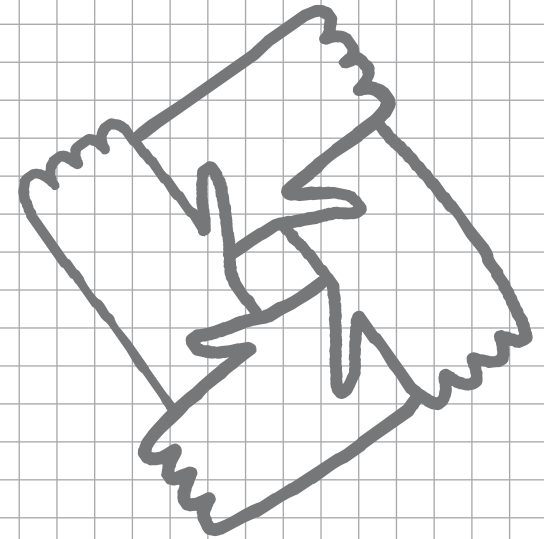
You can make a case that in an Agile organization critical problems are recognized quickly as shippable software is released in short intervals and feedback is solicited immediately from key stakeholders. Thus, executives are more in control of the situation - they can better estimate ROI in the early phases of the project and decide if they want to cut or expand it. That particular benefit of Agile will surely resonate with your executive team.

#3 HIGHLIGHT THE IMPROVED COLLABORATION AND ALIGNMENT IN AGILE TEAMS

Managers value collaboration highly and are always looking for ways to stimulate it as well as eliminate silos. They understand probably better than anyone else in the organization that true collaboration is at the core of improvement and long-term business success.

Therefore, you can highlight to your executive that collaboration is one of the pillars of the Agile methodology - the development team will work closely with all stakeholders. The barriers between different silos will gradually dissolve - the technical team, business team and the client will start working together towards a common goal rather than pursuing individual goals that might be misaligned.
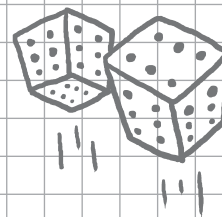
#4 MINIMIZE RISK OF THE AGILE PILOT

Most managers are open to risk only when it's controlled. Therefore, you should assure them if the Agile pilot doesn't work you can easily go back to your normal process. Having a backup option will make everyone feel more comfortable and relieve the pressure.

The project size is also important. If you ask your manager to adopt Agile on a huge project, most likely you will not get buy-in. However, if the project is too small, the pilot will not have enough credibility. As the first project should be able to prove the effectiveness of Agile practices you should try to select a more representational project. Another good approach is to look at big mission critical projects that are not going well and have nothing left to lose. Your manager might be more open to experimenting there, and interestingly, many of the biggest Agile success stories are based on such projects.

If you have the freedom to choose a project, in addition to project size you should also consider the client. The best strategy is to select a project where the client is ready to actively collaborate with the development team. If your client doesn't have time or desire to work closely with you, it will be hard to reap the benefits of Agile and make the pilot a success.

Another step you need to consider is getting an Agile Project Management tool if you don't have one already. Tools that are built on Agile best practices will help you adopt Agile more easily and faster. This **whitepaper** discusses the 7 of the most important characteristics that organizations should consider when investing in a tool that supports their Agile management practices and teams.

How to Sell Agile to Your Executives
is brought to you by
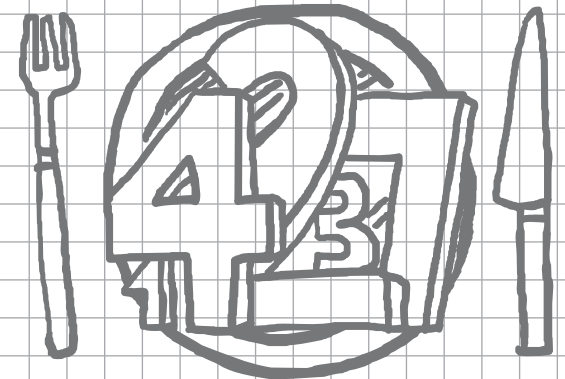Telerik
TeamPulse

Share this whitepaper

#5 TRY TO QUANTIFY THE BENEFITS OF AGILE

Executives trust numbers more than words, so if you have a few numbers to offer them, it would be much easier for you to get their buy-in. Below you can find a few KPIs you can try to quantify/predict. Even though your estimate might not be very accurate, your manager will still get an idea what you are aiming at and how the Agile pilot is likely to affect the budget.

- ➔ **Reduce project cost by x%**
- ➔ **Decrease time to market by x%**
- ➔ **Decrease defects by x%**

Be careful not to overpromise and underdeliver. Try to be conservative in your estimate and keep in mind that even a small increase in the above metrics might sound great to your executive.

#6 BE AWARE OF THE AGILE MYTHS

Since the Agile Manifesto was created and the adoption of agile has been rapidly growing, the myths about agile have also gained a lot of popularity. You can read our free e-book **"Top 30 Agile Myths – Busted"** to get familiar with the most popular ones before pitching Agile to your manager.

If you know he/she has a strong negative bias towards Agile, instead of pitching Agile, you can skip the Agile terminology altogether and just talk about the problems it can solve. Ask your manager the following questions:

➔ "Do you want to make sure that the project team is always working on the right thing and gets your feedback earlier rather than after the project?"

➔ "Do you want to fix your timeline and investment and want to ensure you are getting the highest value from this?"

➔ "Do you want to have short relatively small investments so that you can attempt to realize value earlier rather than longer investments with more uncertain ROI?"
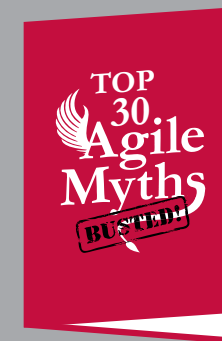
AGILE MYTHS: TRUE OR FALSE?

To help you go deeper into the principles and values of the Agile Manifesto, we prepared an eBook for you –
"Top 30 Agile Myths – Busted!"
It covers:
• Agile Project Management/Process Myths,
• Agile Software Engineering Myths,
• Agile Startup Myths.

GET FREE EBOOK

SUMMARY

Selling Agile to your executives might be challenging, so be well prepared. Make sure you do your homework so you can position the idea in the best possible way as well as address the typical concerns managers have.

Final tip, don't get stressed out. Even if you don't get approval for your Agile pilot, you can still start adopting Agile practices. While getting management's support is always a plus, it's not a show stopper if you don't get buy in. Many productivity-enhancing programming techniques, such as test driven development (TDD) and continuous integration, can be adopted without getting senior management involved.

HOW TO START WITH AGILE

Regardless of your situation or environment NOW there are techniques you can start implementing. Here is a post on **5 Agile Project Management Techniques You Can Start Using Today**

⊙ **READ POST**

FROM ZERO TO AGILE
The host, Philip Japikse, speaks with his guests on various Agile 101 topics that can help you your transition.
Zero to Agile podcast series

→ **SUBSCRIBE TO FREE PODCAST**

Telerik TeamPulse is an agile project management software meant to help your team collaborate more effectively and deliver better software on time.

- Track progress across multiple projects
- Capture customer feedback with the Ideas & Feedback Portal
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- Plan and schedule releases
- Collaborate with your entire team

Additional Resource:

Our ZeroToAgile podcast series discusses many facets of agile software development.

For a regular dose of agile information: **SUBSCRIBE TODAY >>**

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