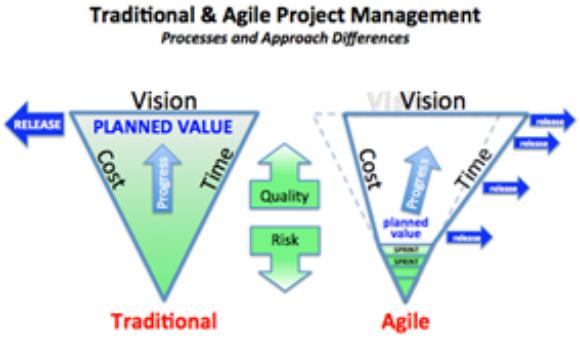
Agile Joins the OPPM Family

The fourth book in the OPPM Series is scheduled for release by John Wiley & Sons on Christmas Day. B&N and Amazon are now accepting advance orders. In addition to vivid color, and continuous OPPM improvements, this book will introduce the Agile OPPM. Therefore, a few comments comparing traditional with agile project management will be helpful. And of course, we need a visual.

The above figure shows the basic similarities between traditional and agile project components.

- Each makes progress over time toward a vision.
- Each requires cost and resources.
- Each strives for higher quality and lower risk.



This second visual reveals that the processes and the approach differentiate these two powerful project methodologies. Suppose the traditional triangle on the left represents a project to build a Boeing 737 aircraft. The 737 entered airline service in 1968 and is the best-selling jet airliner in the history of aviation, with more than 7,000 aircraft delivered and more than 2,000 on order as of April 2012. The vision is clear, we know exactly what we want, and the plan for delivering the value includes the whole vision. Engineering specifications are clear, supply chains are well defined, production costs are precisely known, and manufacturing times are defined and documented. Quality is built in to the process with operational excellence, and the acceptable parameters for risk reducing tests are standardized.

We know what we want, how long it takes, how much it will cost, and how to guarantee high quality with the lowest risk. And, we release a completely finished aircraft, capable and ready to fly.

Now let's suppose that the triangle on the right of Figure 3.3 represents the agile approach to designing and deploying a new in-dash GPS system for New York's fleet of taxicabs. We have a fixed budget and a highly publicized date, 24 weeks away, when the mayor plans to announce the new upgrade.

We have the high-level outline of a vision, yet there is disagreement among various stakeholders on which features are most important. We have selected 20 cabs into which we will place the latest release of our GPS every six weeks. We will plan and deliver it in three 2-week sprints prior to each of four releases. Each release will provide fully working software for a minimally marketable set of features. We will set and reset feature backlogs and priorities along the way by working with cab drivers, customers, and other stakeholders.

As we progress through each sprint and release, we will be adjusting our vision as priorities are repositioned, technology is refined, and learning is acquired by our development team. When the mayor presents the newly equipped taxis to the city in six months, he declares the project on time and on budget, with a final vision a little different than was originally presumed, acknowledging that quality was addressed and improved in each iteration. He is aware of the reduced risks of missing the delivery date of his announcement or exceeding the budget, while continually surpassing stakeholders' expectations, even though those expectations are quite different at project completion than they were in the beginning.

Agile OPPM templates and examples will be made available for download in conjunction with the release of the book.

Clark Campbell, Founder & Author

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