

How Agile Are You? Get Cheetah Agile.

By Michelle LaBrosse, PMP®, Chief Cheetah and Founder of Cheetah Learning, and Kristen LaBrosse, CAPM®, Co-Author

Some of us are natural-born “planners.” We plan out every moment of our lives in detail, from what we will be doing on the weekend to how many children we want and what their names will be, to how our career will progress – in detail! Others of us are “doers” and are more spontaneous, nervous if too many plans are made for us; we would rather live our lives with flexibility and freedom to make plans as we go. If you sit down and think about how last year’s activities evolved, you will probably be able to determine on which side of the spectrum you belong: a planner or a doer?

What’s great about project management is that it brings both sides of the spectrum together so that planners will eventually execute and *do* their project tasks and doers must first *plan* their project tasks before jumping right in. A relatively new way to do project management has made this merger of “planners” and “doers” even more seamless: Agile principles and practices.

What Exactly Is Agile? Agile is a philosophy that focuses on people, collaboration and shared values to get projects done. The Agile philosophy can be best described by the Agile Manifesto, which was written back in 2001 by a group of software project managers. The Agile Manifesto describes Agile as valuing the following:

<i>Individuals & Interactions</i>	over	<i>Process & Tools</i>
<i>Working Software</i>	over	<i>Comprehensive Documentation</i>
<i>Customer Collaboration</i>	over	<i>Contract Negotiation</i>
<i>Responding to Change</i>	over	<i>Following a Plan</i>

From taking a look at these, it would seem like Agile falls more to the side of the “doers” than the “planners” – and this is partially true. Agile practitioners pride themselves in doing what they say and saying what they do, as well as allowing for and embracing change in project requirements.

But not to worry, planners, there’s plenty of opportunity for you as well in the Agile realm. In Agile, teams plan in “Sprints,” which is exactly how it sounds – planning in small, fast bursts. Before every sprint there is a “Sprint Planning” meeting where the team meets with the products owner and decides what needs to get done in the next sprint. After the sprint the team goes through a “Sprint Review” where the team will demonstrate the incremental value that was attained during the sprint.

Using this method, planning and doing go back and forth in rapid succession to create clear transparency in what everyone is doing and what the project team should be focusing on.

How Does Agile Relate to Traditional Project Management? While the Project Management Body of Knowledge (*PMBOK® Guide* – Fourth Edition) does not specifically mention Agile methodologies, it does not contradict them, either. In fact, the PMBOK discusses iterative approaches to project management, which can be applied to projects managed using Agile principles and practices. Therefore it's not an either/or relationship, but rather that they complement each other. The use of Agile techniques is particularly useful in projects that require quick responses to change along with communication to customers.

Why Should You Care? OK, let's cut to the chase. Why are we talking so much about Agile when this isn't even an article about yoga? In the project management field, Agile principles and practices are topics of growing interest and importance. PMI's research shows that the use of Agile methodologies has tripled from December 2008 to May 2011. In fact, it's predicted that by the end of 2012, Agile development will be used on **80%** of all projects involving software development. But it's not just about software anymore. Agile methods are being used more and more by industries other than software because of its proven ability to decrease product defects, improve team productivity, and increase the delivery of business value.

So what are you waiting for? Don't miss the Agile boat! And find out how to become Cheetah Agile at www.cheetahlearning.com/Dave/agile.

About the Author:



Michelle LaBrosse, PMP, is an entrepreneurial powerhouse with a penchant for making success easy, fun, and fast. She is the founder of [Cheetah Learning](http://www.cheetahlearning.com), the [author](#) of the [Cheetah Success Series](#), and a prolific [blogger](#) whose mission is to bring Project Management to the masses.

Cheetah Learning is a virtual company with 100 employees, contractors, and licensees worldwide. To date, more than 30,000 people have become "Cheetahs" using Cheetah Learning's innovative Project Management and accelerated learning techniques.

Recently honored by the Project Management Institute (PMI®), Cheetah Learning was named Professional Development Provider of the Year at the 2008 PMI® Global Congress. A dynamic keynote speaker and industry thought leader, Michelle was previously recognized by PMI as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in Project Management in the world.

Michelle's articles have appeared in more than 100 publications and websites around the world. Her monthly column, the [Know How Network](#), is carried by over 400 publications, and her monthly newsletter goes out to more than 50,000 people.

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