World-Class EA: The Agile Enterprise

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April 2012
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Executive Summary

This White Paper is part of a series of “World-Class” papers generated by the Value Realization Working Group within The Open Group Architecture Forum. The series looks at how architectural techniques and best practices may be applied to drive practical value for an enterprise.¹

The concept of “agile” has recently come to the fore, typically in connection with technical activities, such as software development. Subsequently, the agile approach has been extended and applied to, for example, solution architecture activities. However, we suggest that agile is in fact a way of working, a mindset. It applies to more than just software development, or architecture, or any other one area of activity. The real benefit comes from applying an end-to-end agile delivery approach throughout the enterprise.

Furthermore, an enterprise does not become more agile overnight. Individuals, teams, departments, and lines of business need to develop new capabilities and embed behavioral change. Agile approaches need to be applied holistically to an organization, to avoid inconsistencies in the way an individual versus their department (or line of business) will behave.

The Open Group mission statement enabling Boundaryless Information Flow™ is also supported by detailing how agile thinking can be holistically deployed into an organization.

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Introduction

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Document Structure

In this document we first consider the drivers for change. We revisit four themes, based on industry challenges, which mean that the ways of working which have worked in the past need to be reconsidered.

We then identify the behaviors which characterize an agile approach, and assess how each behavior can assist with the industry challenges.

Having established the benefits of an agile approach, we conclude by identifying the organizational capabilities (people, process, and technology) which need to be developed to put this into practice.

Finally, two appendixes provide more detail on the agile behaviors and specific agile capabilities.

2 While agile in the context of this White Paper may use some of the attributes contained in the “Manifesto for Agile Software Development” (Beck, Kent, et al., 2001), we are not using this specific definition here.
Industry Challenges

When considering the transformation of an enterprise to more agile ways of working, an obvious question is to ask “why bother?”. Many enterprises are not agile today, and indeed there are advantages to operating stable processes and rigid control systems. These approaches may previously have served well, and have allowed an enterprise to achieve success in the past.

However, previous work\(^3\) has analyzed the implications of an increasing pace of change across a number of industry sectors. From this analysis have emerged four themes which are common across all industries, and which tend to drive behavior of an enterprise.

To reprise, these themes are:

- **Customer-Centric**: The goal of this theme is to attract new customers and leverage the existing customer base. The business challenge is to provide a positive, seamless, and consistent customer experience by instantly recognizing each individual customer, their current situation, and potential needs during each interaction that a customer has with the organization. The organization will need to show that they really care and consider themselves to be in a partnership with their customers.

- **Internal Efficiency**: The goal of this theme is to focus on quality as the primary driver within an organization. The business challenge is to optimize all internal processes as part of a Total Quality Management (TQM) system within an organization.

- **Product-Centric**: The goal of this theme is to increase innovation and reduce development lead times for new products and services. The business challenges are to co-ordinate the product R&D processes that look at re-use and lessons learned, and validate the customer demand and return on investment (ROI).

- **Regulatory Requirements**: The goal of this theme is to meet all legal and compliance requirements in order to continue to stay in business. The business challenge is to identify all the relevant stakeholders, agree objectives for compliance with the regulators and other compliance bodies, and ensure that auditable evidence is captured in order to prove compliance.

In the following sections we consider the implications of these themes in more detail. We look at how applying agile behaviors can contribute to addressing their challenges, and then consider the organizational capabilities needed to put this more agile mode of operation into practice.

\(^3\) White Paper: World-Class Enterprise Architecture (W102), The Open Group, April 2010; refer to: www.opengroup.org/bookstore/catalog/w102.htm.
Agile Behaviors

Experience with agile best practices reveals a number of behaviors which characterize an agile approach. In this section, we introduce these behaviors – describing each one, and illustrating how it may be applied to each of the four themes outlined in the previous section.4

Responsiveness to Change

A flexible approach which anticipates and explicitly plans for change. Typically involving short iterations and frequent reprioritization of activities.

- **Customer-Centric:** To be customer-centric requires responding to the market – acting rapidly to adjust based on customer priorities and feedback.
- **Internal Efficiency:** Efficiency is typically aided by stability; therefore, these objectives may sometimes be in conflict. However, where the environment is unstable then it is important to design for change. An optimized but static process quickly becomes highly inefficient when the environment changes – only by constantly adapting can efficiency be maintained.
- **Product-Centric:** Markets are increasingly volatile – products must respond to change and quickly evolve to meet customer expectations and competitor developments.
- **Regulatory Requirements:** Where the regulatory environment is slow-moving, then this behavior may not be relevant. However, in other cases, particularly in innovative product areas, regulation may be developing and/or the emphasis quickly changing based on public and media attention.

Value-Driven

Activity is driven by delivering value. Priorities are continually re-assessed to deliver high-value items first. Work on intermediate products and documentation is minimized.

- **Customer-Centric:** Here the emphasis is on maximizing the “face-time” of skilled front-line staff with customers. Work on internal process and bureaucracy is minimized as far as possible.
- **Internal Efficiency:** There is a clear and direct link between internal efficiency and the elimination of low-value work on intermediate products.
- **Product-Centric:** Products are brought to market more quickly by ensuring that features are linked to customer needs and value. “Gold plating” and features of marginal value are avoided.
- **Regulatory Requirements:** The value (and/or risk) relating to each aspect of new regulation is assessed. Work is focused on the priority items first.

Practical Experimentation

A preference for trying things out and learning from experience, as opposed to extensive theoretical analysis. Sometimes characterized as “fail fast”.

- **Customer-Centric:** New service processes and promotions are constantly trialed and evaluated (for

4 See also Appendix A: Agile Behaviors for a more complete definition of each agile behavior.
example, using small samples of the customer base).

- **Internal Efficiency:** New techniques and processes are trialed, measured, and adopted or discarded based on the results.

- **Product-Centric:** Product innovation is encouraged, with a wide range of new products being trialed early with real customers. A process of “natural selection” enables successful products to emerge.

- **Regulatory Requirements:** Regulation is an area where careful analysis and right-first-time implementation may be essential – particularly in, for example, safety-critical areas. However, in other cases some experimentation may be possible; for example, regarding the merits of different implementation approaches to a regulatory requirement.

### Empowered, Self-Managing Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skilled, multi-disciplinary teams work closely together, taking responsibility for their own decisions and outputs.</th>
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</thead>
</table>

- **Customer-Centric:** Customer-facing teams are empowered to organize their own work in ways that serve the customer best.

- **Internal Efficiency:** Production teams have responsibility for managing and optimizing the production process.

- **Product-Centric:** Product development is accelerated by cohesive multi-disciplinary teams, as opposed to bureaucratic hand-offs between specialist departments.

- **Regulatory Requirements:** The implication of new regulatory requirements is rapidly assessed by a skilled team from all relevant business units working together on the impact assessment.

### Customer Communication and Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working closely with the customer and adapting to their needs. Valuing collaboration and feedback over formalized documentation and contracts.</th>
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</thead>
</table>

- **Customer-Centric:** Clearly this behavior is central to the customer-centric theme. Customers are contacted and consulted as opposed to relying purely on forms and second-hand information.

- **Internal Efficiency:** Here the “customer” is likely to be another downstream internal department. By better understanding the downstream department’s challenges and needs, the efficiency of the end-to-end process is improved.

- **Product-Centric:** This behavior is clearly central to the product-centric theme – ensuring that customer feedback is sought directly and ensuring customer input to product development decisions.

- **Regulatory Requirements:** In this context an important “customer” will be the regulatory body. Often new regulatory requirements have areas of ambiguity, and adoption may be phased. By developing a strong working relationship with the regulator, misunderstandings can be avoided.
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Continuous Improvement

The internal drive to improve the way an organization performs.

- Customer-Centric: Customers will quickly come to consider any service improvements as “normal”. Continuous improvement is necessary to avoid complacency and loss of customers to competitors.
- Internal Efficiency: Constant small improvements (kaizen) is proven as a highly effective approach to driving operational efficiency.
- Product-Centric: Few products are perfect in their first version. More often the ability to adapt and improve a product over time drives its success.
- Regulatory Requirements: Regulatory requirements are often extensive and difficult to implement in a single step. Additionally, it may be necessary to put in place ad hoc manual processes initially and gradually incorporate into business-as-usual.

Respect for People

People are put first, above process and tools. They are treated with respect; flexibility, knowledge transfer, and personal development are high priority.

- Customer-Centric: Respect for the customer is the basis of good customer service. However, respect for and development of the organization’s staff is equally important, with the attitude of staff being reflected in their dealings with customers.
- Internal Efficiency: While processes and tools are also important, it is the people operating them who are in the optimum position to understand and suggest improvements. Respecting, developing, and harnessing their abilities and ideas is therefore a powerful driver for efficiency improvements.
- Product-Centric: Products are developed by people – their skills and commitment are directly reflected in the product quality.
- Regulatory Requirements: While the aim may be to create watertight processes and controls, it is generally the case that educated, vigilant, and committed employees play an essential role in regulatory compliance.
Organizational Capabilities

Having outlined how the application of agile behaviors can provide value in addressing the industry challenges, in this section we consider the organizational capabilities required to put these new behaviors into practice. These capabilities span the aspects of people, process, and technology and, while all aspects are important, the priorities typically vary across each of the four themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer-Centric</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Efficiency</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product-Centric</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory Requirements</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**People**

People need to be developed to understand agile ways of working – accepting the importance of communication and collaboration, and the greater initial ambiguity as to the final result.

**Process**

Processes need to be adapted to allow for agile approaches – in particular, the more iterative approach and the greater emphasis on interactions over documentation.

**Technology**

Technology investments have historically had a long lead-time; therefore, new approaches to technology development and acquisition are needed.

Technology can also act as an enabler, automating mundane activities and facilitating collaboration.
Conclusion

In this White Paper we have examined how benefit may be gained by applying agile concepts not just to technical activities such as software development, but holistically to the entire operations of an enterprise.

A set of behaviors which characterize an agile approach have been identified, and these linked to the contribution they can make to four key themes based on cross-industry challenges. The organizational capabilities needed to put these new behaviors into practice have then been considered.

To reiterate the introduction, we consider that agile is a mindset rather than a specific technical approach. We suggest that the application of an agile mindset is essential to meeting many of the business challenges which face enterprises today.
## Appendix A: Agile Behaviors

What are the behaviors that characterize an agile organization?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Cautions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to change</td>
<td>A flexible approach which anticipates and explicitly plans for change. Typically involving short iterations and frequent reprioritization of activities.</td>
<td>Pace of change is increasing; for example, driven by markets, technology developments, legal, and regulatory demands. Approaches which assume a static environment are at risk of methodically delivering an outdated solution which no longer meets the real business need.</td>
<td>If the environment genuinely is static, then well established linear approaches may be simpler and more predictable. Need to distinguish between innovative, volatile areas highly suitable for an agile approach, and stable supporting infrastructure which may not need it. However, a linear approach to the delivery of any technical solution always carries the risk that assumptions will prove to be wrong and until at least partially developed and tested the issue will not be discovered until too late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-driven</td>
<td>Activity is driven by delivering value. Priorities are continually re-assessed to deliver high-value items first. Work on intermediate products and documentation is minimized.</td>
<td>Obvious need to maximize the value of the organization – the agile approach provides a way to do this. In an environment where the available time or budget is uncertain or constrained it ensures that the available resources are used to best effect.</td>
<td>Needs a clear strategic vision to clarify a common view of what constitutes “value”. Need to ensure that the definition of “value” allows for delivery of long-term enabling components, and not just immediate tactical priorities, and remains balanced against the management of risk and alignment to other strategic goals. Need to ensure not misinterpreted as “no documentation”. Documentation can be valuable if it meets a clearly understood need; e.g., for education, support, or compliance purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical experimentation</td>
<td>A preference for trying things out and learning from experience, as opposed to extensive theoretical analysis. Sometimes characterised as “fail fast”.</td>
<td>Increasing understanding that complex environments and challenges cannot be understood by theoretical analysis alone. Practical small-scale experiments provide a much faster route to understanding, and increase confidence and reduce risk of a large-scale failure later.</td>
<td>In some environments the stakes (e.g., financial, regulatory, safety) are too high for experimentation – and careful up-front analysis is essential. However, not all “experimentation” needs to be deployed, so the use of proof-of-concepts for use within the delivery team can significantly reduce risk and allow the team to learn-fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribute</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Cautions</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowered, self-managing teams</td>
<td>Skilled, multi-disciplinary teams work closely together, taking responsibility for their own decisions and outputs.</td>
<td>Improved commitment and morale when teams are responsible for their own work. Faster and better decision-making. Remove the need for project managers to tell people how to do their job, keeping the project manager focussed on the removal of obstacles and managing the stakeholders.</td>
<td>Need to consider wider governance environment and limits of team responsibility. Potential need to make use of specialist external expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer communication and collaboration</td>
<td>Working closely with the customer and adapting to their needs. Valuing collaboration and feedback over formalized documentation and contracts.</td>
<td>Need for true customer satisfaction – giving them what they need, not just what they said they wanted.</td>
<td>Consideration of contractual relationships; for example, with appropriate contracting mechanisms, shared risk-reward, etc. Demands a high level of customer involvement – may not always be possible, but can be achieved with customer proxies. Need to appropriately prioritize customers – some may not justify this level of collaborative effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
<td>The internal drive to improve the way an organization performs.</td>
<td>An understanding that the current &quot;way of working&quot; is not necessarily the ideal/optimum/perfect/etc. way, and that there are always ways to do things better. Reflecting on performance more regularly than at end of phase or release, to make a difference within an iteration or release.</td>
<td>Important to be able to determine (both subjectively and objectively) how well things are working. Without that, there won't be a way of telling whether things are getting better as a result of making a change. Measurements can also help determine whether a change is &quot;cost&quot;-effective (may not be a financial cost). Changing things for the sake of change may be destructive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for People</td>
<td>People are put first, above process and tools. They are treated with respect; flexibility, knowledge transfer, and personal development are high priority.</td>
<td>In a development organization, to excel we need to &quot;out-learn&quot; the competition.</td>
<td>Need to ensure people keep &quot;on-track&quot;. Off-track work is permitted but is strictly time-boxed or otherwise controlled. However, as long as the team keeps performing and improving each iteration, the need to control this learning activity should be minimal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Agile Architecture Capabilities

What are the key architecture capabilities where agile behaviors should be applied?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Maturity Level</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy Development</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Strategy teams need to find more effective ways to make their point of</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>differentiation over the “noise” of business-as-usual.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Too often seen as singular (Strategy) rather than plural (Strategies); different business opportunities and challenges require different strategies; some need to be adaptive. Strategies need to match or even anticipate their targeted opportunities and challenges. Traditionally seen as a top-down prescriptive activity; however, increasing focus of more recent management thinkers on bottom-up and adaptive approaches. Development of adaptive strategies requires active participation from a broad base of an organization’s personnel.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Maturity Level</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Governance</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Modern best-practices clearly recognize the benefits of iteration and frequent staged delivery. However, these are not universally applied, and thus the need for up-front planning and budget approval can come into conflict with agile development practices. Formal/mandated stage-gate processes insist on a level of up-front documentation that is at odds with the agile approach. Governance boards typically meet infrequently and slow down the decision-making process. Work closely with the governance teams, understand the essence of what they are looking to observe from project delivery, help them see that the early demonstration of working solutions provides a far increased level of confidence in the project's ability to deliver than any heavy-weight set of documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Level/Software Engineering</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Many agile practices have originated in the field of software engineering. Some of the more recognizable and successful frameworks include XP, Scrum, and RUP. The successful agile implementations have the common trait of being pragmatic and picking appropriate practices from the kitbag of agile methods and frameworks with feedback mechanisms to allow the teams to adapt and evolve their ways of working. Start with a small stable core set of practices and incrementally adopt practices to address your scaling issues. Focus on the core values of being agile – collaboration, empowerment, the value being delivered. Measure progress, and act on the measurements.</td>
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</table>
### Enabler: Third-party Contractors/Procurement

<table>
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<th>Maturity Level</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Despite the development of many innovative procurement techniques, in many organizations it remains a highly traditional and legalistic activity. In the public sector this is typically reinforced by mandatory tendering processes. Contracts with third-party software companies generally look like a contract to procure goods with predefined attributes (requirements are fixed). Software development is a creative activity, and so the procurement is for the creative abilities of the supplier to solve the customer's problem. Agile contracts look like a provision of services. Service provision requires a framework contract, so that instances of service delivery can call off the framework. In software, this could be per release or per iteration. Contracts are for capacity to deliver a service, not the actual details of the service. For it to work effectively, the customer needs to contractually commit resources to the engagement to determine the features needed for each call off the framework agreement. In software, the customer (product owner) needs to determine the business priorities of the features when necessary. The services model embraces changes in future direction with usually no contractual changes (contractual changes tend to be limited to fundamental shifts rather than business environment evolution). Measurements and KPIs will also need to be different to help collaborative behaviors to flourish.</td>
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### Foundational Architecture Capabilities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Maturity Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Architecture has traditionally been seen (incorrectly) as a waterfall-based approach, which follows a prescriptive process and/or framework, and generates large volumes of up-front documentation. However, the practice is increasingly maturing with leading practitioners applying techniques such as framework tailoring, partitioning, stakeholder analysis, and iteration to rapidly deliver high-value outputs. Value-focus – clear scoping and prioritization of activities to meet stakeholder needs. Tailoring – prioritizing the architectural artifacts created and omitting unnecessary items Iteration and partitioning – rapid iterations to identify areas of most value and focus detailed work where most needed. Process integration – linking architecture and development teams; for example, integrating leading practices such as TOGAF and RUP.</td>
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### IT Business Trust and Shared Values

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Maturity Level</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>The IT and business communities must be comfortable with a low ceremony architecture development method. This requires a degree of trust and knowledge that both share the common goals of the organization. Trust-focus – both IT and business must sign up to a clear articulation of goals and vision for business and IT community; spot inspection rather than rigorous sign-off processes will ensure the balance of quality assurance and agility is maintained (Matthew Vel).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Security

<table>
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<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Maturity Level</th>
<th>Guidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>The Jericho Forum has proposed a set of “commandments” about how security can be agile. These encourage practitioners to move security controls from the “infrastructure” level where they are hard to modify and hard to relate to business drivers, to the application level, indeed as close as possible to the data being protected. The Jericho Forum's position is that it is not a security-driven initiative, but rather the security response to a wide range of business initiatives, including de-perimeterization, consumerization, outsourcing, and cloud computing.</td>
</tr>
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About the Authors

Mick Adams is the Chair of The Open Group Value Realization Working Group and an ex-Vice Chair of The Open Group Architecture Forum. He is the Chief Business Architect for Ernst & Young within Asia Pacific. He has worked in a variety of industries including financial services, oil and gas, and the public sector. He is an Open CA Distinguished Profession Leader within The Open Group Open CA program. Mick is currently working on the next definition of business architecture within the Architecture Forum.

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Peter Haviland is the Chief Architect and Head of Business Architecture within Ernst & Young’s Advisory Services practice globally. In this role he works with CIOs, chief architects, and heads of architecture to address challenges common to these roles, such as optimizing and communicating strategy, driving change, managing reputation and value perception, measuring success, and managing risk. He was a key contributor to TOGAF 9 and is a Distinguished IT Architect within The Open Group Open CA program; as such he has extensive experience working with clients on how best to leverage TOGAF 9 within the enterprise, and set up architecture functions for success.

Jamie West has delivered “World Class” architectures to organizations around the world. Jamie has a comprehensive background in architecture development and execution, including his contribution to the TOGAF 9 specification. He is a lead facilitator of TOGAF 9 courses and has successfully delivered training across the globe to multi-nationals including Telecommunications, Banking, Oil & Gas, Government, and Local Governments. Jamie has recently set up and mobilized the Association of Enterprise Architects NZ Chapter and is the acting Chair, where he is currently working with The Open Group and local universities at embedding Enterprise Architecture into the core syllabus.

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