

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Managing Offshore Development Projects: An Agile Approach***

Author: **Upadrasta Venkatesh**

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Reviewer: ***Andrea Carter Barbain***

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Introduction to the Book

This book is based on the Agile project management methodology experiences of the author, Upadrasta Venkatesh. Venkatesh provides very detailed information on how to use the Agile approach to manage offshore development projects. The basis of the book discusses how a large number of companies are outsourcing software development projects to other countries such as India. Due to utilizing more offshore resources, companies must find effective ways to communicate and minimize projects risks as a result of having project resources in various locations with time zone differences. According to Venkatesh, the agile approach can be used to improve the success of offshore software project performance, communication, and success. The key is selecting the right project that can efficiently utilize the agile model and processes.

Overview of Book's Structure

The structure of the book is very unique and well thought out. The author starts with an acknowledgement section discussing how he is grateful for the interactions through his experiences and people who supported him throughout the book process. The main portion of the book is divided into ten sections.

The following are the ten sections:

- A study of the engagement model: How it all started
- How to select a project for Agile
- Resourcing
- Reduce documentation and create user stories
- Architecting and designing
- Setting up the team environment
- Extended programming and testing
- Agile quality process
- Case studies
- Leader's orientation

The book begins by discussing the engagement model of how Agile started with background information on the reasons that led to creating the process. Venkatesh discusses how various other methods are used today, such as Waterfall and RUP, for software development projects, but highlights how Agile can streamline the process if all team members are available and engaged. He continues to explain the selection process, resourcing, documentation, and uses several case studies and examples throughout to provide the reader real life situations that can benefit by using the Agile methodology.

Highlights: What's New in this Book

Before I read this book, I was aware that the Agile process existed but was not familiar with how it really works. I feel this book sheds some new information for people interested in learning about the method. The author uses real life examples through the case studies and his experiences.

Highlights: What I liked!

There were several points in the book that caught my attention. One of the first highlights I read, which is important to remember, is agile focuses on extensive interactions rather than processes and tools. The key to the success of agile project is all team members are available to meet and discuss requirements and address questions throughout all interactions of the project. This includes the business sponsors.

I also enjoyed learning how the requirement user stories are created. In other processes such as Waterfall, the requirement specifications are long and detailed. With the Agile process, it focuses on user needs and benefits versus specifying UI layouts, for example. Each user story has a business owner and must be prioritized after discussing the technical and functionality of the system.

The author gives several examples to explain how user stories could be written.

Shortfalls: What was Missing!

Of course, one book cannot cover everything. If a reader is interested in learning more about Agile, they should find additional sources or see if there is a project he/she can work on that utilizes the method. I feel this book shows the reader a good overview but there is much more that could be learned.

Who might benefit from the Book

Several people could benefit from reading this book. Anyone who works on software development projects (project managers, business analyst, developers, solution architects) would identify with the details discussed, experiences, and case studies. Whether all project resources are onshore or offshore, this book would be a great read especially if you are unfamiliar with the process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this book gives a great overview of how Agile can benefit companies developing software products. It can be difficult managing projects with resources in different time zones which can lead to requirement misunderstandings and quality issues. However, if a project has key resources that are available throughout the project interactions, then this book shows how it can benefit from using the agile process. Very easy book to read, and I recommend it to others.

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Andrea Carter Barbain works in the Information Technology (IT) organization at Texas Instruments for 11+ years. Andrea is an IT business analyst for various sales and internet marketing projects. Throughout her career she has held several IT roles from UNIX administration, IT team leader, and project manager. She has a BS degree in Computer Science from Jackson State University and a MS degree in Computer Science from North Carolina A&T State University. She is an active volunteer of the PMI Dallas Chapter. In addition, Andrea teaches IT college courses during her extra time as an adjunct instructor and enjoys giving back her time and service to others. Andrea can be contacted at andrea.carterb@att.net.