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The Age of Agile
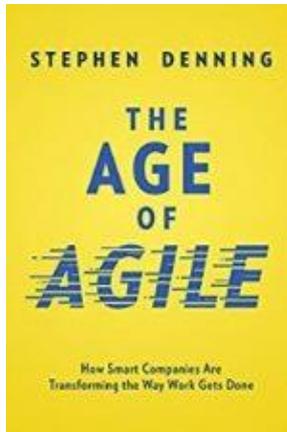Author: Stephen Denning
Reviewer: Alvin Keen

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: *The Age of Agile*

Author: **Stephen Denning**

Publisher: American Management Association

List Price: $28.00   Format: Hard cover, 336 pages

Publication Date: Feb 2018   ISBN: 9780814439098

Reviewer: **Alvin Keen**, MBA, MPM, SCPM, LSSBB, GB, CCIM, CFM, FMA

Review Date: August 2018

Introduction

The *Age of Agile* is a book that is very relevant and applicable for all industries that are dealing with change in their markets, customers, competition regarding product development, implementation, support and continued evolution of product lines.   It addresses how Agile evolve in the software industry and is both morphing and impacting product lines (both hardware and software) in other industries as to the rate of product development and implementation timelines.

As one reads Agile, you will think of many firms that floundered, failed, and equally many that are presently struggling transforming their organizations and products to be more Agile for increasing customer demands.   The customer now no longer has longevity in loyalty with products if these do not meet increasing functionality capabilities to support the Customer.   Companies now face competition that can erode established market presence through faster compressed product development and implementing to catch the customer's attention.   Welcome to the Agile World.

Overview of Book's Structure

The Age of Agile book is organized into two main sections which are Agile Management and Management Traps.

Section One --- we get some background history of Agile evolution in software. The background of Agile is to harness through collaboration, smaller work pieces, rapid implementation, smaller and tighter team cohesion, and sharing-learning through cross functions (reductions in silo's) to help fuel the Agile team culture and performance.

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The 3 main laws in Agile are identified as:

- *Law of Small Team* – smaller autonomous teams, smaller work batches, and adaptive learning attitude

- *Law of Customer* – Customer is "**now the center**" for business universe to focus upon to produce products with the "wow" factor in fit, form and functions for customers.

- *Law of Network* – adaptive, evolution, cellular networks for organizing, resourcing, and supporting teams.

Section Two – discusses management traps and how firms deal with these in an Agile climate. These traps are:

- Trap of Shareholder Value --- too much focus upon just finances and short-term focus by not making the investment decisions to develop products that may take longer than quarter to achieve.

- Trap of Share Buyback – short term strategy for a firm that focuses on shareholder primarily; and not the customers that buy products and generate sales and cash flow for firm. Many customers buy a product but are not shareholders.

- Cost Oriented Traps – examines factors of off-shoring and out-sourcing that were easy cost savings to achieve but have other consequences for consideration.

- Trap of Backward Looking Strategy – evaluating a strategy must be adaptive, robust, non-linear, fluid, and yes must consider that the competition does get to impact your strategy when you least expect it.

The Epilogue captures the essence of Agile which is transformation that is faster, more disruptive, destructive all toward producing products and services for the Customer.

Highlights

Several figures and tables help to show and explain Agile components and examples for the reader. These are good areas for additional sharing and discussion with colleagues on Agile concepts.

The case analysis of Spotify, Microsoft, Dell and other product and services companies are employing the Internet of Things (IoT). The IoT is how business organizations are evaluating what products and services they can connect with their Customer through Information Technology --- smartphones --- as the primary

platform for delivery and connectivity to continuously improve and rapidly adapt to retain their Customer.

Highlights: What I liked!

I enjoyed Agile for it helped to frame and examine some of the concepts that I see as both professional and Customer in many areas.   It helps to reinforce that Agile is more adaptive and impactful to businesses that may incorrectly think that Agile is only for Software firms.

I see how the 3 Laws in Agile and the example of Copernican revolution from astronomy applied in Agile is that businesses are not the center; but rather the customer is the center for businesses to revolve around to attract and retain.

Agile is about ongoing transformation change in how organizations structure and approach product development and support now in compressed intense competition.

Who might benefit from the Book?

This book as 3 major audiences:

First, is the reader that wants to learn more of general concepts about Agile.

Second, is the manager-leader-PM that wants to be able to share Agile concepts to management on why the "must" adapt and employ Agile.

Third, is the internal coach, facilitator, or agent of change that see their organization resisting these 3 Laws of Agile.

Conclusion

The Age of Agile is a book that captures the essence of what people and firms are experiencing and being impacted by today's economic forces. The transformation forces that Agile was developed to help the Software industry respond to as most disruptive forces did not just stay in Software; but has expanded to impact and change hardware in various products and services.

The Internet and rapid connectivity via smartphones, Apps, information technology is how Agile is helping businesses to produce faster and more competitive products and services.   Now the message for all organizations is to adapt, compete, survive to keep the Customers as they continuously demand "what is next best and faster product and why can't I have it tomorrow?"

For more about this book, go to:
http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814439098

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About the Reviewer

Alvin Keen

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Alvin Keen has earned a MBA in Finance, Master of Science in Project Management, Stanford Certified Project Manager (SCPM), DOD DAWIA – Level II Program Management and Level II in Contract Management certifications, Graduate of DOD Program Manager College.   He earned Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and Green Belt (LSSBB and GB) and has served in project management in aerospace, oil and gas, and military industries. He currently serves as adjunct professor teaching corporate finance, project management, quality systems, and organization theories.