

## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: **The Age of Agile: How Smart Companies Are Transforming the Way Work Gets Done**

Author: **Stephen Denning**

Publisher: AMACOM

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Reviewer: **Amitha Mosapeta, MBA, MS, PMP**

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### Introduction

The Age of Agile: How Smart Companies Are Transforming the Way Work Gets Done by Stephen Denning is for corporations that must radically reinvent how they are organized and led and embrace a new management paradigm. The book also mentions the experiences over decades of tens of thousands of organizations around the world.

In organizations that have embraced Agile management, self-organizing teams are continuously providing new value for customers. Because the work is done in an iterative fashion with continuous interaction with users, sometimes in real time. Agile management permits an organization to flourish in a marketplace that is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous – the so-called VUCA world.

### Overview of Book's Structure

The first part of the book dealt with the positive principles of Agile Management and second part is dedicated to understanding why such cyclical setbacks occur and what can be done to prevent them.

- Chapter 1 - More Value from Less Work
- Chapter 2 - The Law of the Small Team
- Chapter 3 - The Law of the Customer
- Chapter 4 - The Law of the Network
- Chapter 5 - Implementing Agile at Scale: Microsoft
- Chapter 6 - From Operational to Strategic Agility

- Chapter 7 - Changing the Organizational Culture
- Chapter 8 - The Trap of Shareholder Value
- Chapter 9 - The Trap of Share Buybacks
- Chapter 10 - The Cost-Oriented Economics Trap
- Chapter 11- The Trap of Backward-Looking Strategy

## Highlights

Chapter 2 through Chapter 4 talks about the laws of Agile Management (Law of the Small Team, Law of the Customer, and Law of the Network). Chapter 5 talks about how Agile is implemented in Microsoft. Chapter 6 and chapter 7 talks about Operational to Strategic Agility and changing the Organizational Culture. Chapter 8 through Chapter 11 talks about management traps (Trap of Shareholder value, Trap of Share Buybacks, Cost-Oriented Economics Trap and the Trap of Backward-Looking Strategy).

Agile practitioners share a mindset that work should, in principle, be done in small, autonomous, cross-functional teams working in short cycles on relatively small tasks and getting continuous feedback from the ultimate customer or end-user. Highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software. Agile practitioners view the organization as a fluid and transparent network of players that are collaborating toward a common goal of delighting customers.

There are few keys needed to make Agile happen at scale. Some of the keys are to get the right balance of alignment at the top level team and autonomy at the bottom level teams, ensure continuous integration, keep on top of technical debt, embrace DevOps and continuous delivery, continuously monitor progress, need to listen to customer wants but meet their needs, use self-forming teams to encourage team ownership and recognize the team is the product. An organization's culture comprises an interlocking set of goals, roles, processes, values, communications practices, attitudes, and assumptions, many of them unspoken. Single-fix changes, such as the introduction of lean practices or of Agile management, may appear to make progress for a while, but eventually the interlocking elements of the organizational culture often take over.

A firm should focus on and dedicate its management and all employees to making as much money as it can for its shareholders. It is very important to educate investors that a focus on short-term returns and the wholesale use of share buybacks actually destroys shareholder value. Saving an expense may be an upside of tech innovation and investment, but the real goal should be creating value. Agile managers need to understand the preoccupation of traditional economics with cutting costs.

## Highlights: What I liked!

It is the customer who determines what a business is. What the business thinks it produces is not of first importance – especially not to the future of the business and to

its success. What the customer thinks he is buying, what he considers ‘value’ is decisive – it determines what a business is, what it produces and whether it will prosper.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

This book is for companies who wish to grow by leaps and bounds. This book is full of some dazzling examples from firms like Apple, Samsung, Tesla, Saab, Ericsson, Microsoft, etc., of how Agile Management is applicable everywhere.

### **Conclusion**

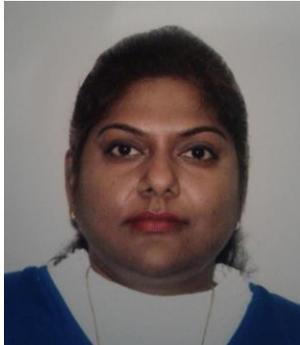
When communications are interactive and everyone is open about what is going on, problems get solved. Innovation occurs. Customers are surprised to find that even unexpressed desires are being met. Work becomes fun.

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For more about this book, go to: [https://www.amazon.com/Age-Agile-Smart-Companies-Transforming/dp/0814439098/ref=tmm\\_hrd\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Age-Agile-Smart-Companies-Transforming/dp/0814439098/ref=tmm_hrd_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

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## About the Reviewer



### **Amitha Mosapeta, MBA, MS, PMP**

Dallas, Texas, USA



**Miss Amitha** is a Business System Analyst (BSA) with extensive experience in business analysis, project management, implementation, customization, and integration for companies in the financial services, manufacturing, and service industries. Amitha has a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Master's degree in Business Administration with specialization in Marketing, Master's in Computer Science and has obtained the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification in 2014.

Email address: [amitha.mosapeta@gmail.com](mailto:amitha.mosapeta@gmail.com)