



The Case for BAs in Agile Environments

Adriana Beal – February 2012

adriana@bealprojects.com

<http://bealprojects.com>



Learning Objectives

- Explain how smart companies are combining traditional and agile practices to increase the business value of their software projects
- Describe why the BA role is not going away in an agile world
- Understand how traditional business analysis practices may improve the results of agile-inspired projects

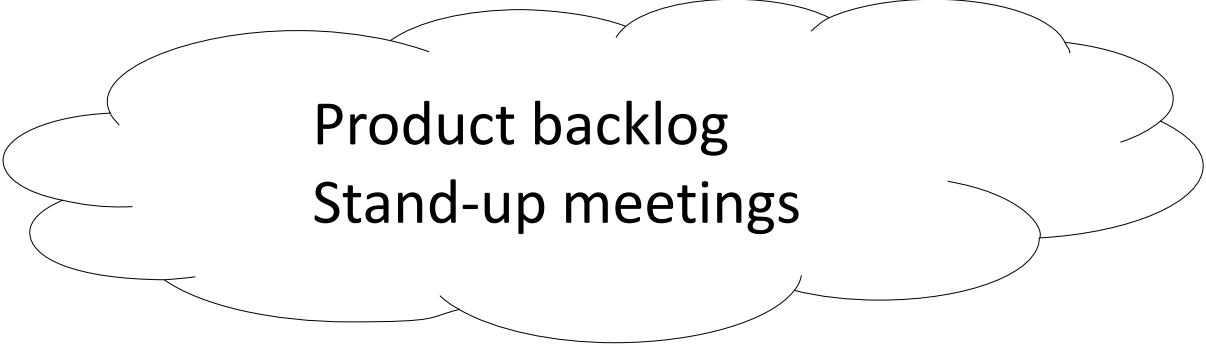
Before we start...

What is “agile”?

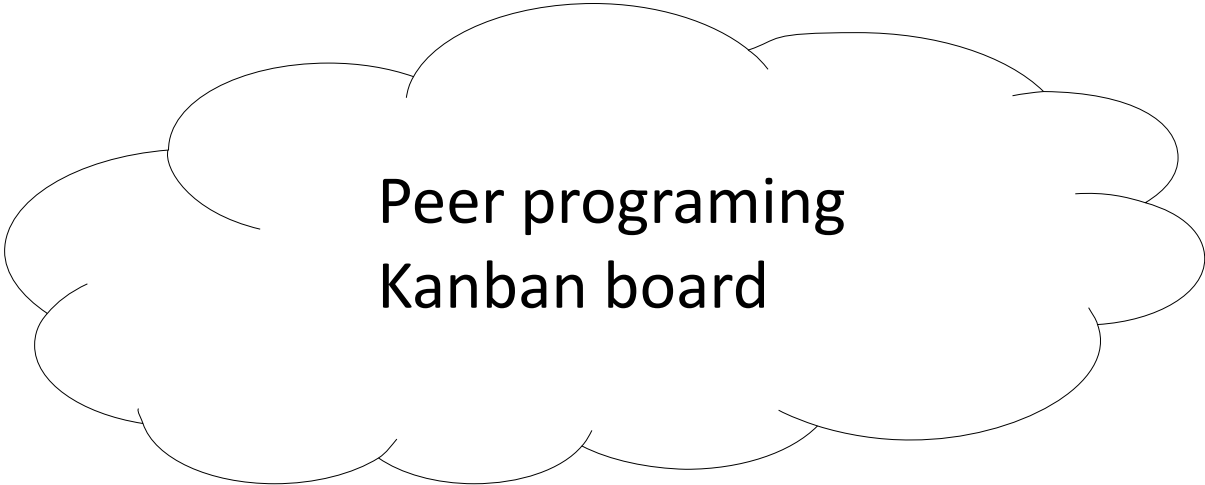
*“Agile is a term used to describe **a number of iterative development methodologies** that have developed over time. Common traits amongst agile methodologies include frequent product releases, high levels of real-time collaboration within the project team and with customers, reduced time intensive documentation, and regular, recurring assessments of value and risk to allow for change”.*

IIBA – The Agile Extension to the BABOK (November 2011 Draft for Public Review)

Agile: a highly multifaceted concept



Product backlog
Stand-up meetings

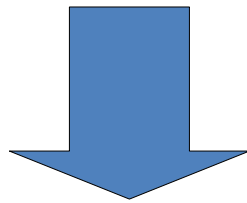


Peer programming
Kanban board

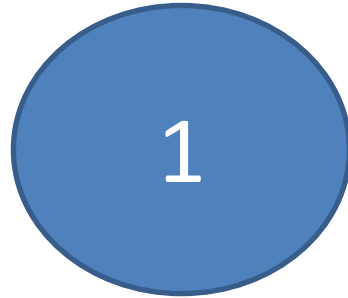
“There are many types of agile methods and many individual practices of agile methods. They are not all created equal and have differing strengths, weaknesses, flexibility, risks, and usage.”

David F. Ricon in *The Business Value of Agile Software Methods: Maximizing ROI with Just-in-Time Processes and Documentation* (J. Ross Publishing, 2009)

Dominating role the industry played in the early years of the agile movement



Discussions centered around industry-driven methods that **share a common manifesto but not the same concept of agility.**



How smart companies are combining traditional and agile practices to increase the business value of their software projects

First step: Focus on the intent behind the agile practices to achieve “real agility”

“Agility: a management approach that facilitates the rapid creation of business value by embracing change and learning from it.”

Adriana Beal in *What's agility anyway?*

<http://www.projectsatwork.com/content/Articles/269069.cfm>

“Agility” can be achieved using agile, traditional or hybrid methods.

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Just because a company decides not to adopt agile methods, **it doesn't mean** the organization is...

Inflexible

Close-
minded

Backward

SLOW

Using
waterfall

How smart companies are combining **agile** and **traditional** practices to achieve agility

Reduce paperwork and focus on face-to-face communication

Short time-boxed iterations

Requirements in the form of user stories elaborated for the next iteration

Produce documentation for knowledge-retention, compliance, and future maintenance purposes

For high-risk areas, longer development cycles to mitigate the risk of regression and performance faults later in the project

For high-risk areas, analysis beyond what is being produced in the next cycle to ensure requirements are understood in relationship to other requirements

In particular for large projects

Elements high in criticality
and stability

Elements high in volatility

common to have



In particular for large projects

typically
what works is

Elements high in criticality
and stability

✓ Use plan-driven methods

Elements high in volatility

✓ Use agile methods



Why the BA role is not going away in an agile world

Erosion of the BA role

“Scrum does not address business analysis activities in detail and many of these activities occur as implicit steps in the scrum framework.”

“While XP does focus on value driven development, it does not explicitly address business analysis activities.”

“Business analysis, like all activities in the Kanban methods, occurs in a constant and continuous flow through the life of a project.”

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Many projects do not fit the “agile sweet-spot”

Small, self-organizing, collocated team with agile experience

Single product owner available for face-to-face communication

Unstable or emergent requirements

Group of end-users (or surrogate users) available to provide frequent feedback

Either small project, or one with few dependencies

Software reliability is not critical

BA contributions to agile-inspired projects

Facilitator

Problem-solver

**Investigator capable of identifying
business and user needs beyond what
is explicitly stated**

Producer of quality documentation



3

How traditional business analysis practices may improve the results of agile-inspired projects

From the Agile Extension to the BABOK:

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- **Where is the evidence?**

From the Agile Extension to the BABOK:

“A general principle with agile is that if a document is valuable enough to be created, it is probably important enough to be automated so that it is part of the living code base. (...)

The agile principle has elevated the value of documentation that is produced by the business analyst. The documentation produced by the business analyst should ideally be automated in the form of automated tests or examples.”

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- **Where is the evidence?**

On the other hand...

- Solid evidence exists that in large software projects, insufficient software architecture and risk resolution have very high rework costs...
... avoidable by more time spent early requirements discovery

“Barry Bohem: “Architecting: How Much and When?”
Software: What really Works and Why We Believe It (Andy Oram and Greg Wilson - O’Reilly, 2010).

TRADITIONAL BUSINESS ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE	BENEFIT
Functional decomposition	Convert business goals into achievable objectives and measures.
Scenarios and use cases	Identify stakeholder roles, clarify scope, provide high-level understanding of user behavior goals, etc.
Benchmarking, brainstorming, business rules analysis, data modeling, focus groups, etc.	Achieve in-depth understanding of the business problem and constraints. Obtain clarity about what a winning solution looks like.
Requirements workshops, structured walkthroughs	Reach closure on requirements. Resolve outstanding issues. Manage conflicts using a collaborative approach.

Final takeaway

- Agility must be measured in terms of the ability to achieve **rapid creation of business value**, not **conformance to an agile framework**.
- There is **no solid scientific evidence** that agile practices produce better results than traditional business analysis practices.
 - Many limitations found in existing empirical studies of Agile methods.
 - Agile methods need more research and **more rigorous methods of research** to support benefit claims.

Dyba and Dingsoyr (2008), Hannay, Dyba, Arisholm, and Sjoberg (2009).

The smart approach:

- Make decisions **at the project level**, based on project profile, about what practices and techniques can help you achieve
real agility = rapid creation of sustainable business value
- Don't hesitate to borrow from traditional and agile practices that make sense for your particular project
- **Adopt higher standards of proof before a concept is accepted as a general recommendation.**

“Currently, the business analyst is facing a change in the approach to software development. There is the onslaught of agile and the perspective of the erosion of the business analyst position as agile development teams work directly with the business stakeholders with no “middleman” business analyst involved. Business analysts who focus on analyzing the business and identifying improvements in the organization’s products and services rather than documenting requirements, have no fear from the agile evolution and will find they have a prominent place at the table.”

Steve Blais, in recent interview for Bridging-the-Gap.com