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AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Exceeding the budget and timing are the main problems in the implementation of a project. But these problems are not always connected with low professionalism of a programmer or designer. The problems are more often connected with wrong project management. An accelerating methodology, called Agile, can improve management of creating projects. It minimizes risks through short (2 - 3 weeks) cycles or development iterations. This approach originated in the IT field, but then it became popular in other areas such as industrial engineering and artificial intelligence [1].

Let's consider the main characteristics of Agile:

1.   Adaptive Planning. Agile assumes that we shouldn't follow strictly the previously created plan during the realization of the project. Focus on the constantly changing conditions of the external and internal environment and taking into account the feedback from customers and users are very important. It makes developers and designers to experiment and search for new solutions [2].

2.   Blur roles. Work in such team is like an operation in a small startup. People regardless of role or title do whatever it takes to make a project successful. On an Agile approach a narrow role of a programmer, tester, analyst does not exist as in the traditional sense. People must have not only core competencies for their work, they must widen them [2].

3.   Retrospective. People who deal with such approach generally say that regular retrospectives are a very useful practice. «Retrospective» according to the Latin language means «a look back» a look into the past. In an Agile methodology context, team members look back on the past and draw conclusions that can be used to improve future results [2].

4.   Verification of scope. Agile deals with the old and well-known situation of having not enough time for all tasks. By fixing budget, quality and time and being flexing around scope, members of Agile teams maintain the integrity of their plans, work within their means [2].

5.   Iterative development. Iterative development is a key practice in Agile methodology. Iterative development is the process of creating a project that is implemented in small steps, during which the analysis of intermediate results are carried out, new requirements are introduced and the previous stages of work are adjusted [2].

There are several Agile methodologies available. Today the most popular are Scrum, Crystal, Lean, Kanban, Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM), Feature-Driven Development (FDD), eXtremeProgramming (XP). Let's consider Scrum and Kanban methodologies. They are widely used in Belarusian business [4].

Scrum is a "structural approach". Main participants of a project are a universal team of developers and specialists, a scrum-master and product owner [1].

A product owner connects the team with the customer and monitors the development of the project. He is not a formal team leader, he is a curator.

A scrum-master helps a product owner organize the business process. Usually he holds general meetings, solves everyday problems, motivates a team and monitors compliance with a Scrum approach.

A Scrum approach divides workflow into equal sprints. Sprint is a length of time that is taken to perform a specific (limited) list of tasks. It is recommended to take 2-4 weeks (the duration is determined by the team once). Sprints are very convenient to compare with each other; this makes it possible to control the efficiency of a team.

Kanban is a "balance approach". Its main task is to balance the work of different specialists within a team.

There are not roles of a scrum-master and product owner in Kanban methodology. The business process is divided into specific stages of the tasks (planning, development, testing, etc.).

The main indicator of an efficiency in Kanban is the average time of the task execution. If the task is passed quickly, a team worked productively and smoothly. If the task is delayed, we need to think at what stage and why there were delays and whose work should be optimized [5].

Agile can deliver business benefits, but to deliver these consistently, the organization needs to become an ecosystem in which an Agile culture is grown: "If a great seed is planted in the wrong environment it will not grow» [6].

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CURRENT ISSUES OF INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT

International management allows companies to develop not only within one country, but also in other countries and states. Therefore, specialists in this field are so popular. However, this popularity requires huge efforts from the employees and clear, deep knowledge.

Today, an international manager may face certain problems. It is considered, that they can create inconveniences and difficulties both in work of the enterprise, and also in promotion on a career ladder. To explain what difficulties an international manager may face, the aspects of this speciality will be given below.

1.   International manager as a cultural analyst.

The manager must understand the cultural peculiarities of the country in which his/her company-employer wants to place its offices.

Actual problems of this aspect are communication and cultural awareness. Working with people from different countries, an employee should be able to find a common language with them. He/she must not only know a foreign language, but also cultural values of the people with whom he/she is going to work.

2.   Perception.

Each employee has his/her own beliefs and opinions. National traditions also impose a certain imprint on the methods and quality of the manager's work.

3.   Stereotypes.

Everyone has his/her own stereotype. He/she can hang labels on other people, no matter if there is a woman or a man. Or maybe, this employee will be prejudiced against representatives of his/her nationality. It can affect the quality of the work performed.

4.   Circumstances of time and place.

This paragraph reveals the following danger which warns the international manager. Namely: changing the meeting time for partners, changing a pre-agreed negotiation program, an attempt to start discussing suddenly emerging topics. All this can not only interfere with the manager's work, but also lead the negotiations into unnecessary directions.

5.   "Strategic optimizer" of international business.