

Executive Summary

The Making of the Agile IT Executive

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As an IT executive, imagine a scenario in which you have accurate and reliable information on your organization's most challenging IT projects; you have reasonable certainty about your next project's schedule and reliable knowledge about recently completed projects; and you know the location of current "in-flight" projects and whether these projects can make deadline.

Now imagine that you have access to the tools and skills necessary to solve interpersonal conflict at the individual and organizational levels, a rich resource of negotiation and mediation skills, the ability to overcome and navigate through the unfair use of leverage by tough adversaries, and the ability to manage difficult interactions with ease.

The agile IT executive has these skills. Combining her knowledge of software measurement and estimation science with modern conflict management techniques, the agile IT executive is highly valuable to the modern organization. She leads effectively, armed with practical knowledge about how to manage today's high-pressure IT projects, and uses metrics and modern negotiation techniques skillfully.

THE AGILE IT EXECUTIVE

When it comes to strategic decisionmaking, the agile IT executive is adaptive and efficient; having developers practicing agile software development isn't enough. When it comes to high-stakes

decisionmaking in the world in which these developers live, VPs, CIOs, and other executives also must be quick and agile. When both groups are adaptive and agile, the outcome is a powerful and competitive organization unmatched by its rivals.

From a metrics perspective, the agile IT executive has several abilities:

- Instantly knows the organization's productivity level for various classes of IT work across the organization
- Armed with this information, knows which functions to outsource and which to retain inhouse
- Works within an organization that can produce reliable project cost, schedule, and staffing estimates — within 90% accuracy — in hours, not days or weeks
- Has a proven track record of enabling an organization to meet its deadline and budget without the pandemic overruns common to less mature IT organizations
- Knows the "green-," "yellow-," or "red-light" condition of any in-flight project and can reliably forecast the remaining trajectory on cost and schedule with perhaps 90% accuracy

From a negotiation perspective, the agile IT executive has these skills:

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- Is fluent and comfortable in all negotiation scenarios; difficult negotiations involve less stress for the agile executive than for her opponent
- Quickly generates options and project tradeoffs to efficiently negotiate fair deadlines, staffing levels, and budgets
- Can aggregate information instantly for budget planning
- Has rapid access to objective standards such as a company's own metrics database, industry benchmarks, and other forms of precedent to negotiate project scenarios
- Has strong working relationships and the respect of peers whom she does not supervise but whose cooperation is vital
- Makes better deals because of a strong command of data, has an understanding of negotiation leverage, can neutralize unfair tactics, and when faced with deadlocks and stalemates, efficiently employs breakthrough strategies
- Can handle difficult conversations and difficult people, understands how ingrained perceptions influence negotiations, and can manage the strong emotions of each side

OBJECTIVES OF AGILE MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORKS

In many of today's organizations, there is a diseconomy of energy. The fast pace of transformation has given rise to greater conflict. Friction from conflict in IT organizations saps energy, destroys creativity, and results in a loss of direction. The agile executive can accomplish the following primary objectives:

- Rapid decisionmaking and economized energy within the organization
- Effective negotiation and conflict resolution
- Incentivizing healthy behavior

- Creation of a learning organization
- Enabling the early detection of potential problems

In spite of rapid technological advances, the successful management of software projects remains elusive. Agile executives can change that.

NEGOTIATION AND THE AGILE EXECUTIVE

Negotiation, especially in IT, is difficult. Often, the IT manager is faced with "Internet speed" project deadlines. During periods of economic belt tightening, the difficulty is compounded dramatically. From a software and IT perspective aggressive deadlines and resource constraints can produce a "perfect storm."

Added to these pressures are new and constantly changing demands for functionality. Under these new strains, traditional project management methods collapse.

More than ever over the past decade, IT managers face difficult negotiations and conflict-laden conversations. Most have not had much training in negotiation outside the school of hard knocks.

So how can agile IT executives negotiate successfully *and* avoid the traditional win-lose negotiation game? They change the game by using metrics to create negotiation leverage. Metrics and data are a shield and a sword: a shield against unfair tactics and a sword to break stalemates.

SOFTWARE MANAGERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Today, organizational success depends on software; and in coming decades, the role of the agile executive will be highly important. With a mastery of information about project productivity and behavior, the agile executive understands how to make an organization efficient. Because the agile executive has accurate and reliable

metrics information, she can make the right decision about deadlines, staffing, scope, and budgets. Management decisions are efficient and wise because of skillful and effective use of modern negotiation techniques. And the organization produces the best possible software on time and within budget to create healthy and vibrant companies in the global economy.



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