Learn Agile Project Management In 60 Minutes Flat!

Agile Project Management Overview

Agile Project Management

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http://www.AgileProjectManagementPrimer.com

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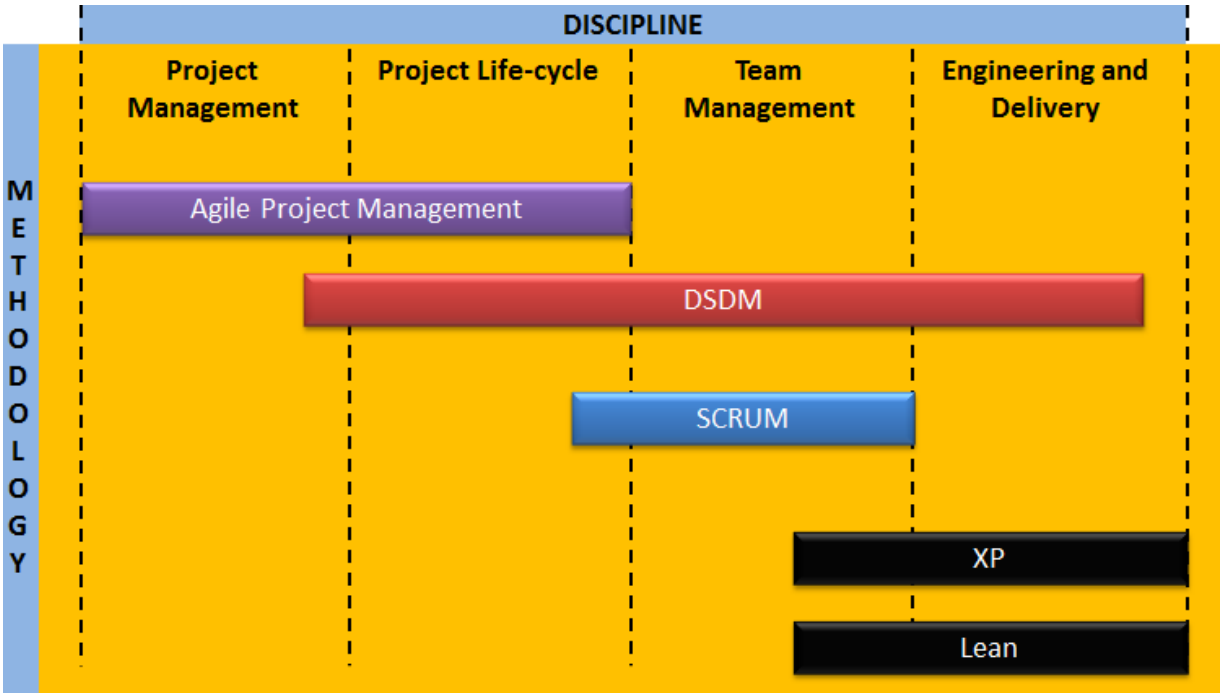
Introduction

The Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM) was created way back in 1995 as an alternative approach to large prescriptive project management methods, and has since become the most recognized Agile project method.

You may have heard of other terms such as Scrum and Lean, so here is the relationship between them all:



In 2007 DSDM released a new free version called Atern, from the shortening of the words 'Arctic Tern' as this particular bird is seen as highly collaborative.

There are several misconceptions about agile methods, the most common one is that you can either use traditional (= the 'waterfall approach') project management approaches (such as PRINCE2), or the Agile approach. This is simply not true and is not the only set of options.

The Agile approach is often seen as a holistic one, rather than a well-balanced set of product delivery techniques.

The second misconception is that methods such as PRINCE2 insist on the waterfall approach which is simply not true and shows a fundamental lack of understanding of PRINCE2.

The truth is that PRINCE2 and Agile make perfect bed-partners and can be harnessed together in very straightforward ways.

Just like PRINCE2, Agile can be used on any project in any industry and for this reason is being seen as the next big leap forward in managing successful projects.

It is vital that senior management understand the key differences that Agile brings and the impact it will have on the project environment.

For example, Agile may deliver a solution consisting of less than 100% of all the stated requirements, and that change will be handled with much less formality. Both the Business Case and specifications will be created and managed in a different way.

The agile manifesto has a focus on individuals, communications and motivation before processes and tools; working software before detailed documentation, customer collaboration and continuous involvement before contracts, and swift responses to change rather than bureaucratic and formal change control systems.

Since 2011, the APM Group and DSDM created the first Agile Project Management qualification, and this is offered in the form of a Foundation and Practitioner exam. My Primer HERE, offers full preparation for both exams. It is expected to be launched at the end of 2013.

Meanwhile, here is a 60 minutes overview of Agile Project Management; let me now take you through the key principles, methodology and themes of Agile Project Management…

Agile Overview

In a traditional project, the Project Manager creates a detailed plan against a detailed specification, and manages performance of the team against these plans while reporting regular progress. The project work is often organized into stages, where each stage must be completed before the next stage can start. This is often called the Waterfall Method.

This evolved from the construction industry, where changes cost a lot of money so requirements were frozen as early as possible.

With an agile project, the agile Project Manager creates a high-level plan based on the outline requirements. From this point onwards the end product is created iteratively and incrementally.

Unlike traditional projects detailed plans for each steps or increment are created by the team members themselves. In this way, the more formal project management command and control approach is replaced by a more facilitative management style.

The Project Manager role focuses on ensuring that the empowered team have also needs to achieve their goals, and only getting involved when an exception is escalated from the team. Risk management is another area that differs on an agile project.

Requirements are expected to change and resolve as the understanding increases, and having a fixed deadline is expected. One of the biggest risks to an agile project is the lack of actual business involvement during the project.

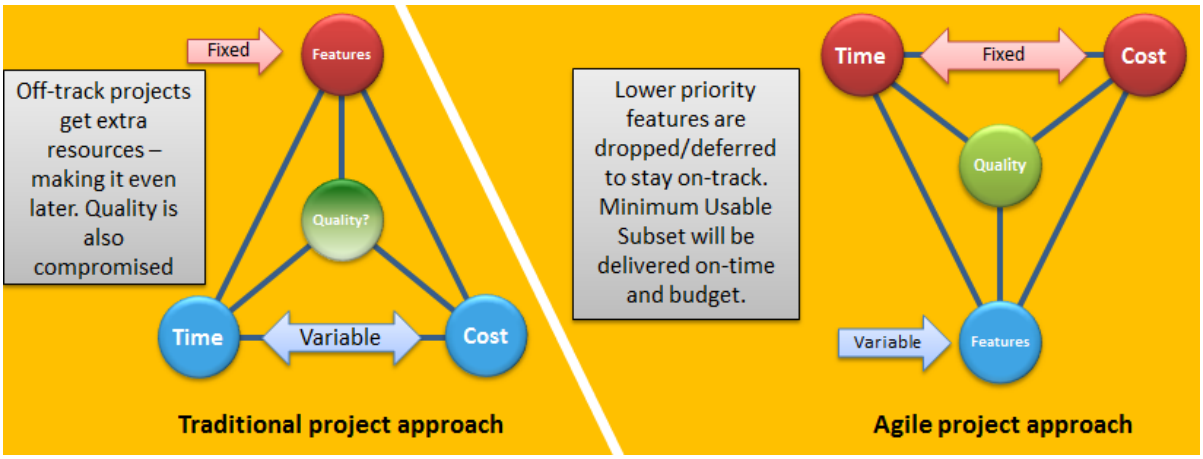
More projects fail as well because of people issues and technology, and hence the agile focus is on helping people to work effectively together in order to achieve the business goals.

The agile assumption is that nothing can be built perfectly the first time but that 80% of the solution can be produced in 20% of the time that it would take to produce the full total solution.

The benefits of using Atern for agile project management are that the users can claim ownership of the solution and that the final solution is more likely to meet their real business requirements.

The application of an agile project delivery framework will ensure that the right solution is delivered at the right time ensuring an early return on investment because work is prioritized according to the business need within an agreed timescale.

Atern does not compromise on quality, but rather, harnesses the knowledge, skills, experience and creativity of end users. It does this by splitting of the project down into short focused Timeboxes, each with clearly specified outcomes with immovable deadlines.



A traditional project fixes the number of features (these equate to requirements or specifications) with fixed time and cost. When the project deviates from its plan, extra resources and cost more incurred and the delivery date ends up getting extended.

Along the way, quality is also compromised leading to a late, over budget and poor quality outcome. Atern however fixes time and cost and quality at the early Foundations phase, and uses prioritization and contingency by varying the features to be delivered.

It does this by prioritizing each feature and in the event of potentially missing a deadline, the lower level tolerances are dropped. Such priorities will have been agreed early in the project, and hence Atern will always deliver a viable solution.

In the same way quality is fixed from the start since acceptance criteria are agreed before product development commences.

The Atern Philosophy is that any project must be aligned to clearly defined strategic goals and focus upon only delivery of real benefits to the business.

This philosophy is best achieved when all the key stakeholders are clear about the business objectives, are empowered to an appropriate level, and collaborate to deliver the right solution within the agreed timescale and set by the business priorities.

The Eight Atern Principles

These principles support the overall philosophy and should be seen as a mind set for the way that you work within an agile project:

Principle 1 - Focus on the business need.

Every project decision should be viewed in the light of the overriding project goal which is to deliver what the business needs and when it needs it.

It is important therefore, to understand the true business priorities, develop a sound business case, while seeking continuous business sponsorship and commitment and be able to guarantee the Minimum Useable Subset (MUS – explained later).

Principle 2 – Deliver on time.

This is met by using Timeboxes while focusing on business priorities so that deadlines are always met. It uses the MoSCoW approach to prioritization.

Principle 3 – Collaborate.

Teams that collaborate gain increased understanding, greater speed and shared ownership, all done in a spirit of cooperation and commitment. Such teams or groups will always achieve higher performance than those that are more loosely associated.

To help make this principle, Atern teams involve the right stakeholders at the right time, ensuring that the teams are empowered, and actively involve the business representatives.

Principle 4 – Never compromise quality.

The level of quality that the project needs to deliver should be agreed at the start. This solution has just to be 'good enough' as long as the features contained within the Minimum Usable Subset have been delivered, then the solution should be seen as acceptable.

The level of quality is built in by constant and regular reviews, with a philosophy of 'test early and continuously'.

Principle 5 – Build incrementally from firm foundations.

Atern advocates incremental delivery in order to deliver real business benefits early, resulting in an increase of stakeholder confidence, in addition to providing a useful source of feedback for subsequent increments.

Atern advocates the style of enough design-up-front (EDUF) by understanding the scope of a business problem in an outline form only, but not so detailed that the project becomes paralysed.

This is supported by continual confirmation that the correct solution is being built, checking the project's on-going viability and reassessing priorities as and when needed.

Principle 6 – Develop Iteratively.

This allows the project to converge on an accurate business solution, as it is very rare for any product to be built perfectly first time. For this reason a pragmatic and informal approach is taken to change control which in turn relies on iteration and produces a better solution.

By accepting the fact that most detail emerges later, change can be embraced by being creative, experimenting, learning, and evolving. Since change is inevitable, Atern allows for change and harnesses its benefits.

Principle 7 – Communicate continuously and clearly.

Atern techniques are designed to improve communication receptiveness since poor project communication is often cited as the biggest cause of project failure.

Atern teams run daily standup meetings, use facilitated workshops, and keep documentation lean and timely while encouraging informal face-to-face communication.

Principle 8 – Demonstrate control.

Atern teams, especially the Project Manager, will use an appropriate level of formality when tracking and reporting and making plans and progress visible to everyone.

Progress is measured on the delivery of products rather than activities and the project viability is evaluated continually based upon the business objectives. Control is done 'bottom-up' by ensuring that the Solution Development Time box level has a fixed end date, and by this, increment level Timeboxes are kept on track and ultimately, the project Timebox level will therefore also deliver on time.

Well defined Timeboxes with constant review points and associated plans helped to follow this principle.

Atern project's success factors

Senior management and the business sponsor must understand and buy-in to the Atern approach from the very start, and this includes handling change dynamically, often resulting in delivering less than 100 per cent of the possible solution.

Senior business management must delegate decision-making to the Business Ambassador who is within the solution development team.

The Business Ambassador and the Solution Development Team itself should be empowered to make decisions within agreed boundaries, without the need to estimating to a higher authority.

Incremental delivery and its reduction in risk allows the early return on investment, and it is therefore important that the organization supports this delivery approach.

The Solution Development Team must have continual and frequent contact with the business roles to ensure optimal communication.

Rich communication between business and technical staff should not be driven primarily by documentation, but rather by face to face communication.

To ensure team stability the core team membership should remain stable, and for this reason the project will be at risk if any staff members are replaced during the project.

Atern recommends that the optimum solution development team size is between five and nine people.

This ensures the minimal formality of communication, minimum management overhead, risk reduction and maximized ownership by the team.

The Project Approach Questionnaire (PAQ).

This helps to identify and confirm that the above success factors and potential risk areas have been addressed. The PAQ is completed during the Feasibility phase and reassessed during the Foundations phase.

The Atern Lifecycle

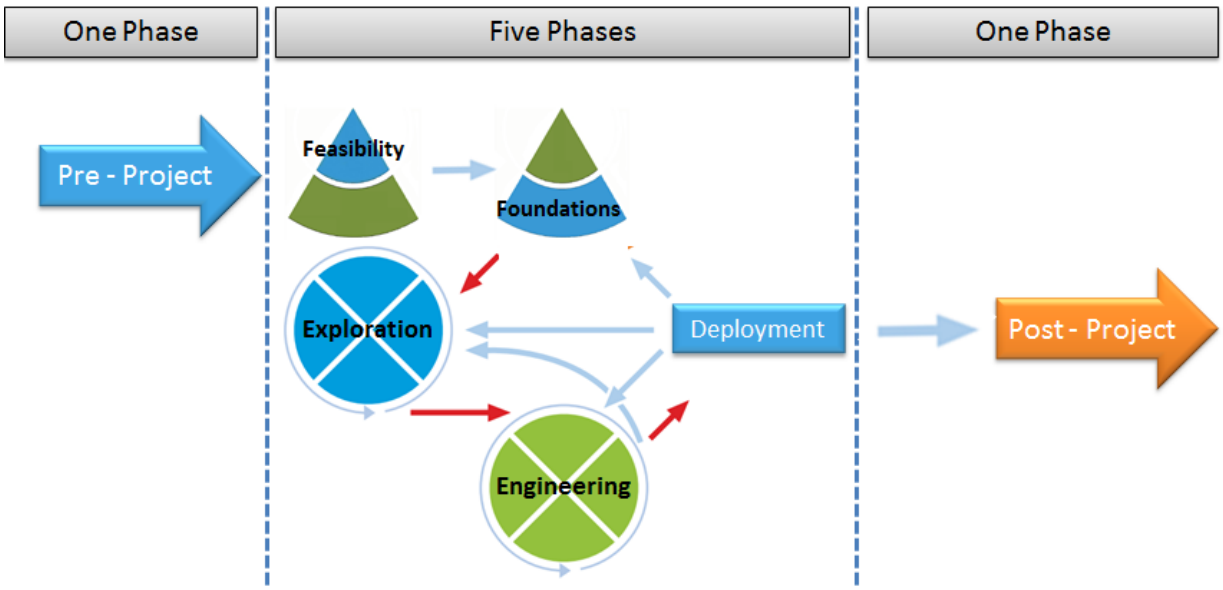
The Atern lifecycle is both iterative and incremental resulting in the fact that the solution may not be delivered to the business in one fell swoop, but rather in a series of increments that increase the breadth/depth of the solution with each delivery.

This allows high priority business needs to be addressed first and the less important features form a business perspective, to be delivered later.

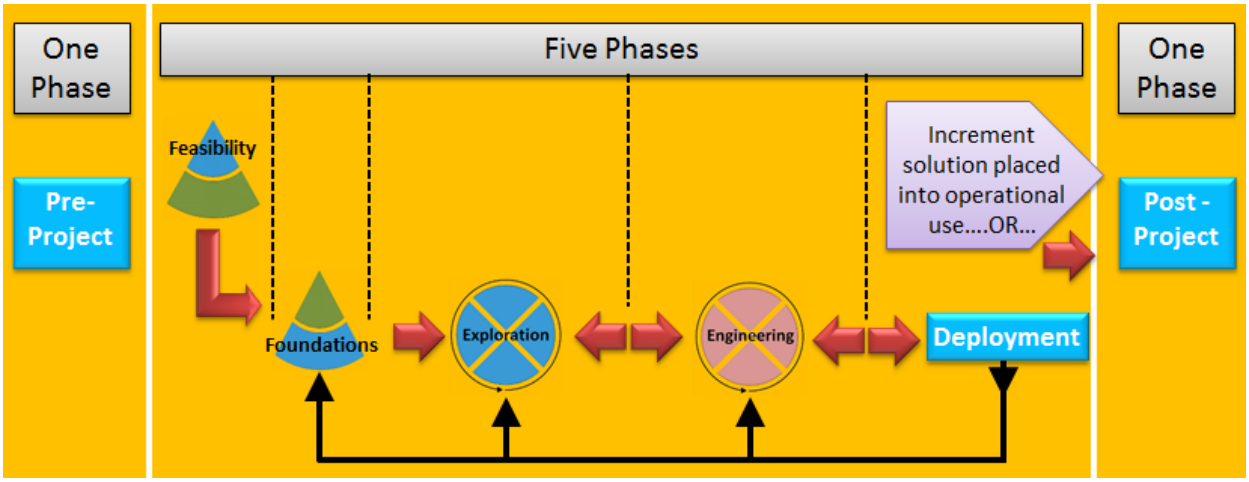
The agile project has seven phases in total (five plus a pre and post project phase):

- Pre-Project
- Feasibility
- Foundations
- Exploration
- Engineering
- Deployment
- Post-Project

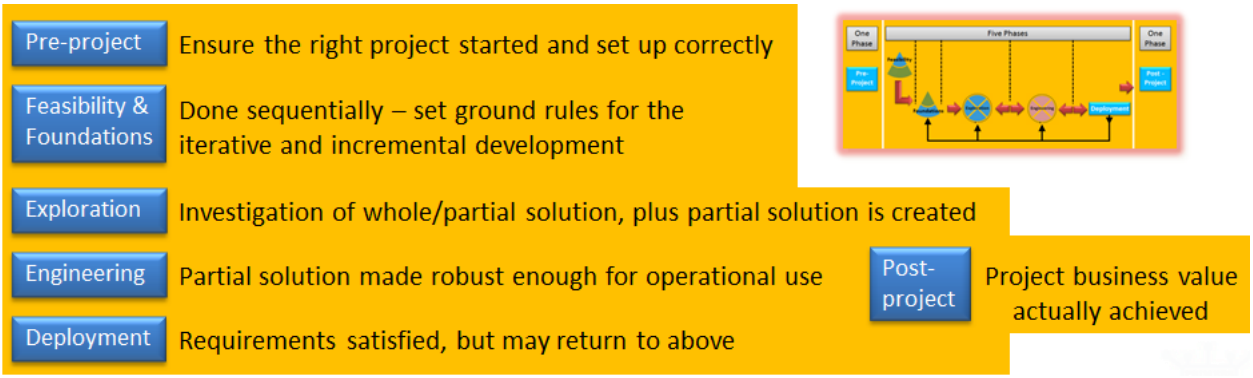
The following diagram is often used to demonstrate the Atern lifecycle:



However, the Iterative and incremental nature can be better seen by redrawing the diagram like this:



Here are the main purposes of each of the seven phases:



Each Atern phase has its own objectives and preconditions, with each phase delivering the products within their agreed level of quality. This is used to assess progress.

Pre-Project phase.

The pre-project phase is there to ensure that only the right projects are started and that they are set up correctly. To this end, the business problem is described and confirmed that it is in line with the business strategy, and the business sponsor and business visionary are identified.

In addition, a plan is created to scope and resource the Feasibility phase. This phase should be short, and it creates the project terms of reference.

Feasibility phase.

This phase decides whether the proposed project is viable from business and technical perspectives, by carrying out a high level investigation of the potential solutions, their costs and associated time frames.

It identifies potential benefits from the proposed solution and outlines possible approaches for project delivery.

Foundations phase.

As its name suggests, this phase is there to establish firm foundations for the project by establishing limited detail so as not to constrain the way the solution involves.

These high level requirements are baselined, the business processes described, technical aspects of the project, as well as strategies for solution deployment.

The business case is created for the project analysis, and a start made to designing the solution architecture, standards, and describing how quality will be assured.

The Project Manager and the technical coordinator are the roles responsible for setting up the management and technical controls.

The Exploration phase.

The exploration phase expands on the requirements detailed within the Priorities Requirements List, and is used to iteratively and incrementally investigate the business requirements into a demonstrable and viable business solution.

This exploration product will be refined further during the engineering phase.

The Engineering phase.

This phase iteratively and incrementally evolves, expands, and refines the Evolving Solution and its products to meet the agreed acceptance criteria.

The expansion and refinement of the products must be able to successfully operate and be supported when in live operation.

The Deployment phase.

The main purpose here is to move the solution into live operational use.
Other activities include user training and documentation, and to assess that the deployed solution is likely to realize the intended business benefits.

Post-Project.

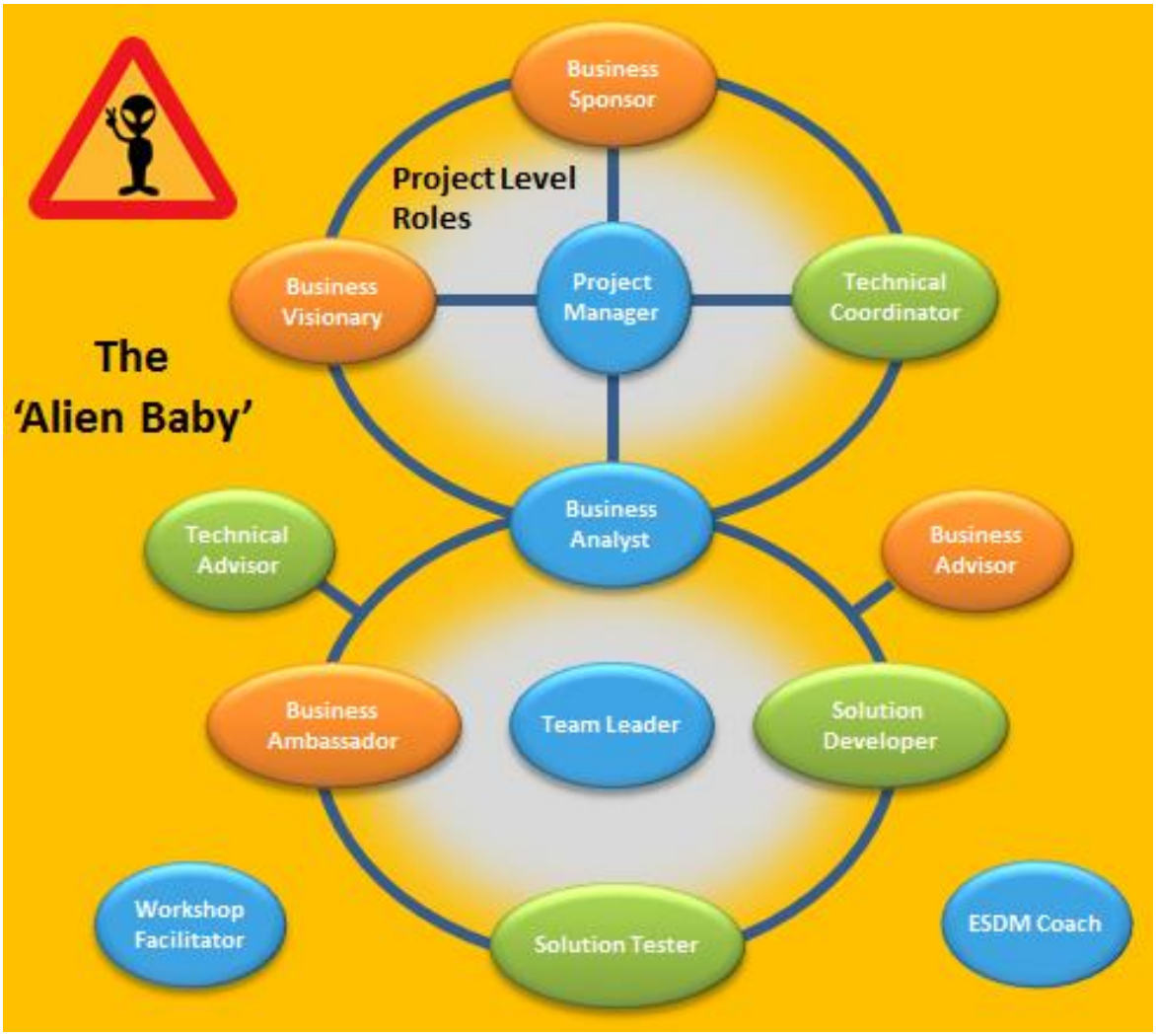
This occurs after the last planned deployment of the solution, and to reflect on the project performance in terms of the actual business value achieved.

The Business Sponsor and Business Visionary are responsible for benefit realization via correct use of the solution.

The Atern Roles and Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities are assigned for each person in the project, and project level roles and the Solution Development Team roles. These encompass both the project customer and supplier sides.

Three broad role categories are; business, project management, and technical development. The following diagram (referred to as the 'Alien Baby' diagram), summarizes the role and responsibility structure:



The project level roles consist of those who direct, manage, and co-ordinate the project work, with the business sponsor providing overall direction and funding.

The Business Visionary and Technical Coordinator represent the customer and supplier sides of the solution excellence respectively, while the Project Manager assures that the funding is used effectively in order to create the business solution.

The development team roles are Team Leader, Business Ambassador, Business Analyst, Solution Developer and Solution Tester. These roles shape and fill the solution while being collectively responsible for day to day development and ensuring fitness for business purpose.

An individual may be responsible for one or more roles. Alternatively, a single role may be shared by one or more individuals.

The Business Sponsor is the senior business role, project champion, owner of the business case and the project's continuing viability, as well as securing funds and other resources.

The Business Visionary is also a senior business role interpreting the needs of the business sponsor and communicating these to the solution development team, and ensures that they follow strategic direction.

The Project Manager.

The Project Manager is responsible for all aspects of delivery of the solution, and provides high-level management direction to the project team. However the Project Manager leaves the detailed task planning of product delivery to the Team Leader and members of the solution development team.

The Project Manager monitors progress against project plans, manages risk and issues, and motivates the team. Unlike conventional projects the Project Manager provides a coaching and facilitating role to the development team.

Technical Coordinator.

This is the technical design authority ensuring the technical coherency of the solution and its products. The role manages all technical aspects including the transition of the solution into live use.

The Solution Development Team.

The team is empowered to make decisions on a daily basis within their agree terms of reference, and comprises the following roles:

Team leader.

This role leads and works with the team to plan and implement product delivery and the detailed level.

Business Ambassador.

This business role comes from the intended solution business area concerned, and provides the business perspective for the solution's fitness for business purpose.

This role is responsible for day-to-day communication between the project and the business.

Business Analyst.

This role links between the business and technical roles and ensures that the business needs are properly analyzed and reflected in the solution products on a day-to-day basis.

Solution Developer.

This role interprets business requirements and translates these into a deployable solution, and is normally a full time role. The solution must meet functional and nonfunctional needs.

Solution Tester.

This role is responsible for performance testing in accordance with the technical testing strategy throughout the life of the project.

Business Advisor.

Normally this role is a peer of the business ambassador, and is often an intended user or beneficiary of the solution. They can provide specific and specialist input to the development and testing of the solution.

Technical Advisor.

Advises the Solution Development Team on operational change management and support, and test scenarios, and provides assurance that evolving solution lines up with the Business Case. Provides post implementation training for operational and support staff.

Other Roles.

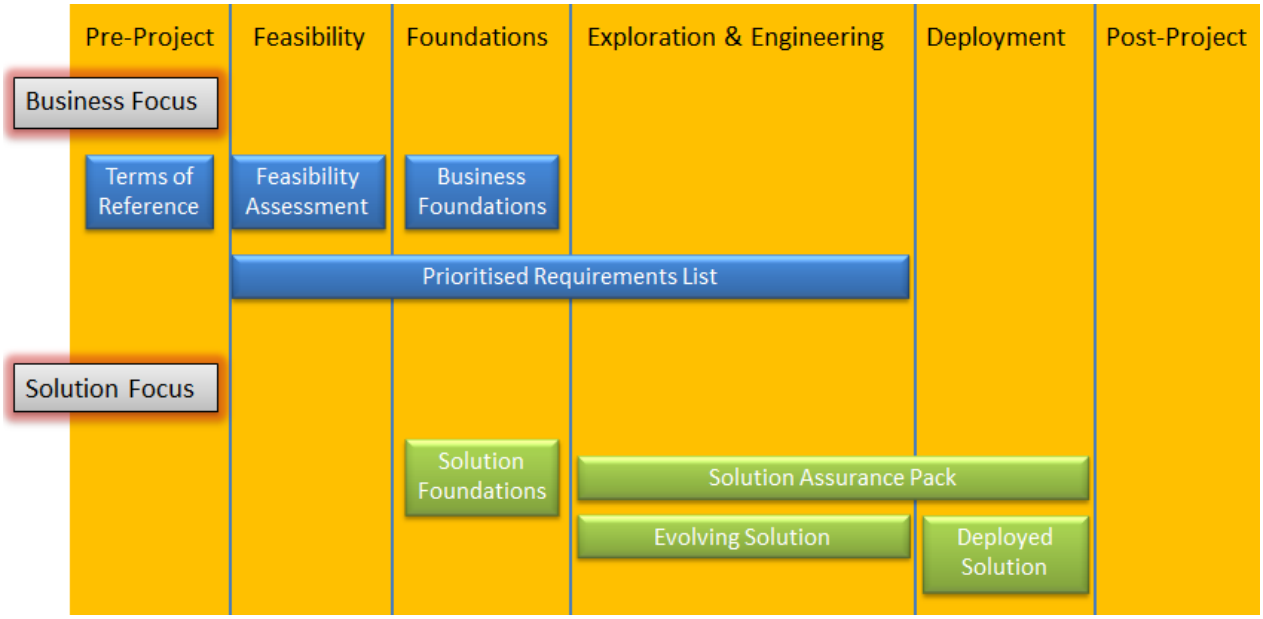
These may consist of:

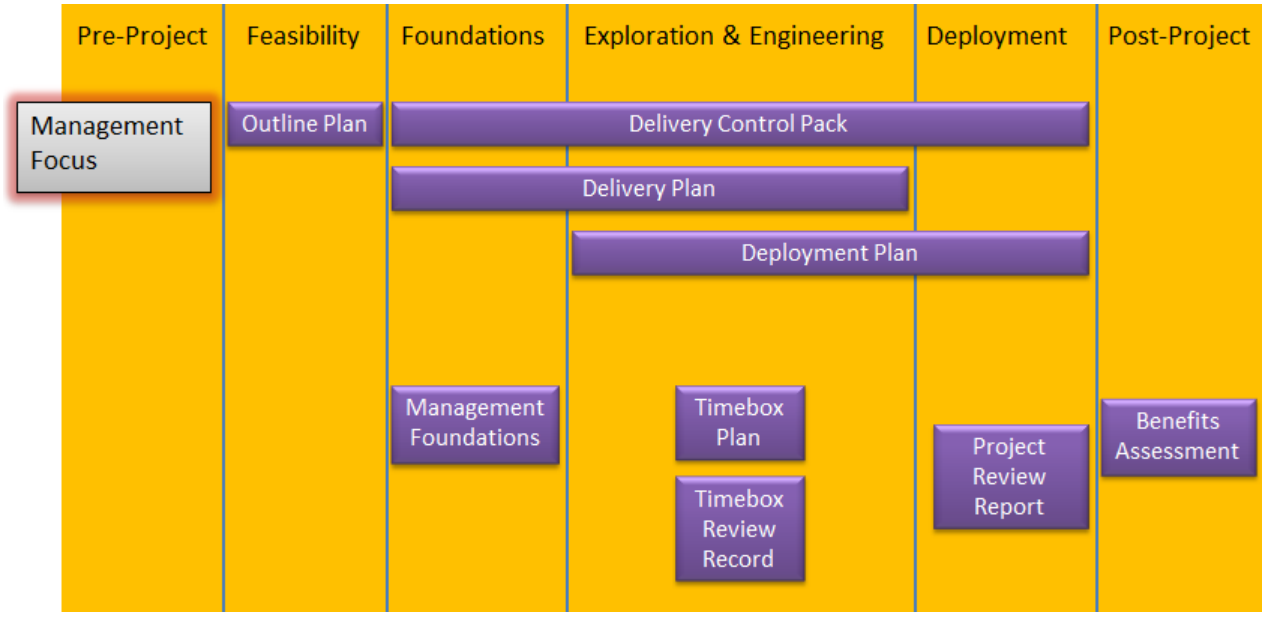
- **Workshop Facilitator** he or she manages the workshop context and process.
- **DSDM Coach** who is an expert to help the team get the most out of the Atern approach.

Specialist roles may need to be brought into the solution development team as needed to fulfill specific functions for any missing skills.

Atern Products

These refer mainly to the documentation deliverables associated with each phase of the life-cycle. The formality of these products may vary greatly based on the environment, size and complexity of each project. The following shows when each product is created, and in which phase, and any additional phases when the products will be used or updated:





The Project Manager and Project Management

Traditional project management assumes that the requirements are fixed and that the Project Manager focuses on protecting specification change so as to prevent schedule and budget overruns.

Atern Project management however, is a focus on enabling constant change while protecting objectives to ensure a fixed delivery date for a usable solution. In addition the Project Manager is there to motivate and support the empowered team rather than micro-managing at a task level.

There is no need for complex monitoring systems as true progress is measured by the delivery of products, and gathering actual effort metrics to ease future estimating.

The Development Team work with clear objectives within each Development Timebox.

The Project Manager will never allow the Timebox completion date to slip, but rather renegotiates the content or deliverables of each Timebox.

The Project Manager must ensure that there is a clear understanding of what is to be delivered in each Development Timebox, and to ensure that detailed requirements are fully understood by the solution development team.

The solution development team members are empowered so that there is no need for day-to-day management by the Project Manager as they are self-directed. The Project Manager is responsible for keeping motivation and team morale high and protecting them from external interruptions.

An Atern project must have informal meetings planned, for example the daily standup meeting.

Should any issues or risks arise that cannot be dealt with by the development team, then these should be swiftly escalated to the Project Manager to either resolve or escalate further. I will briefly mention the three levels of plans that are used within an agile project:

The Outline Plan.

This provides a high level overview of the whole project along with the processes and methods being used. It includes the expected timescale, resource requirements and costs. In addition, it names the proposed deliverables along with their quality and acceptance criteria.

In addition to the above a detailed plan for the foundation phase is also created. This will allow relevant stakeholders to agree the project and to start the foundations phase.

The Delivery Plan.

This is developed using the schedule contained within the Outline Plan and develops that schedule in more detail. It covers all aspects of development and deployment of the solution, including Timebox schedules.

The Timebox Plan.

This is developed from the Delivery Plan that was produced in the foundations phase and provides more detail on the objectives for its Development Timebox. It lists the product deliverables, the activities needed to create them, and the resources required to carry out the work effort.

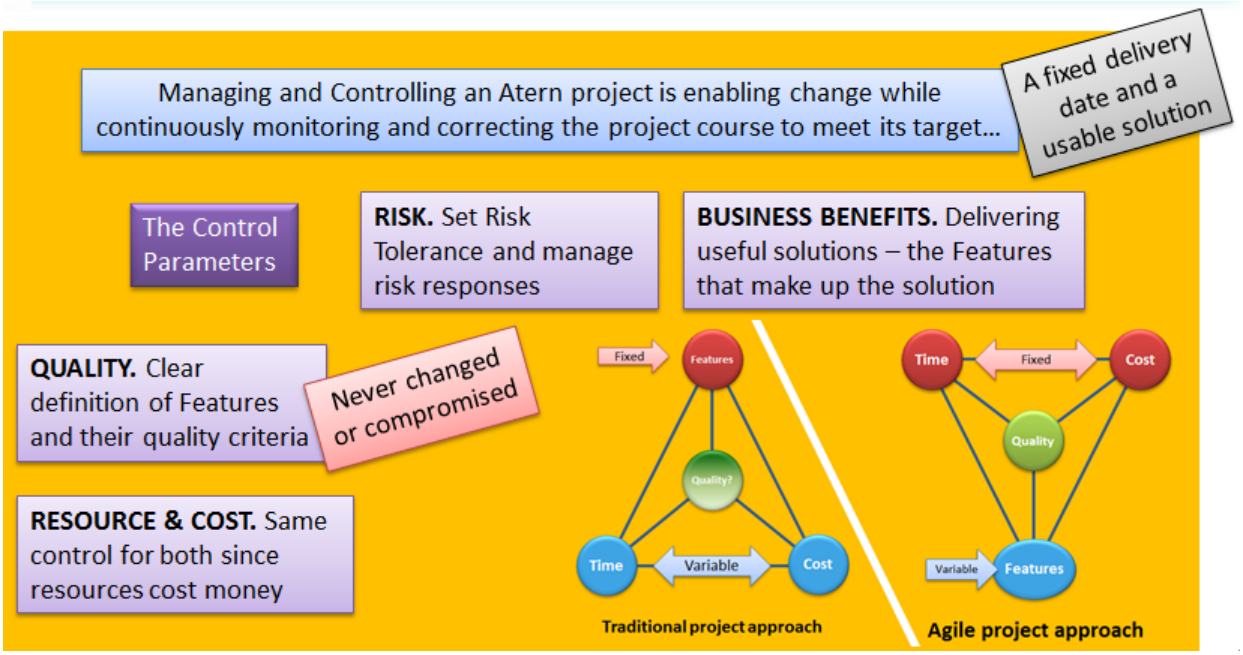
Project Control

The objectives of an Atern Project is a fixed delivery date with a usable solution, achieved by enabling change while continuously monitoring and correcting the project in order to meet its business objectives.

Tracking project progress, taking corrective action if needed, and reporting on it, is vital for adequate control. Atern project managers do not micro-manage the team; rather, they allow the empowered team to get on with their work creating fit for purpose business products.

Tracking project progress is therefore a process of tracking the features, iterations, and completed releases.

The following diagram illustrates what can and cannot be changed:



The bedrock of Atern project control, is that if each Timebox has a fixed non-negotiable end date and agreed prioritized requirements, then this cycle of control will be reflected upwards.

What this means is, if each Timebox within an increment will not slip, then neither will the increments, nor the phases, nor the end date of the project.

In summary, fixing time at the lower level affects the way time is fixed at the higher levels. Since time, cost, resources, and quality are non-negotiable, then features or requirements are the only thing that can be adjusted by re-prioritizing the requirements.

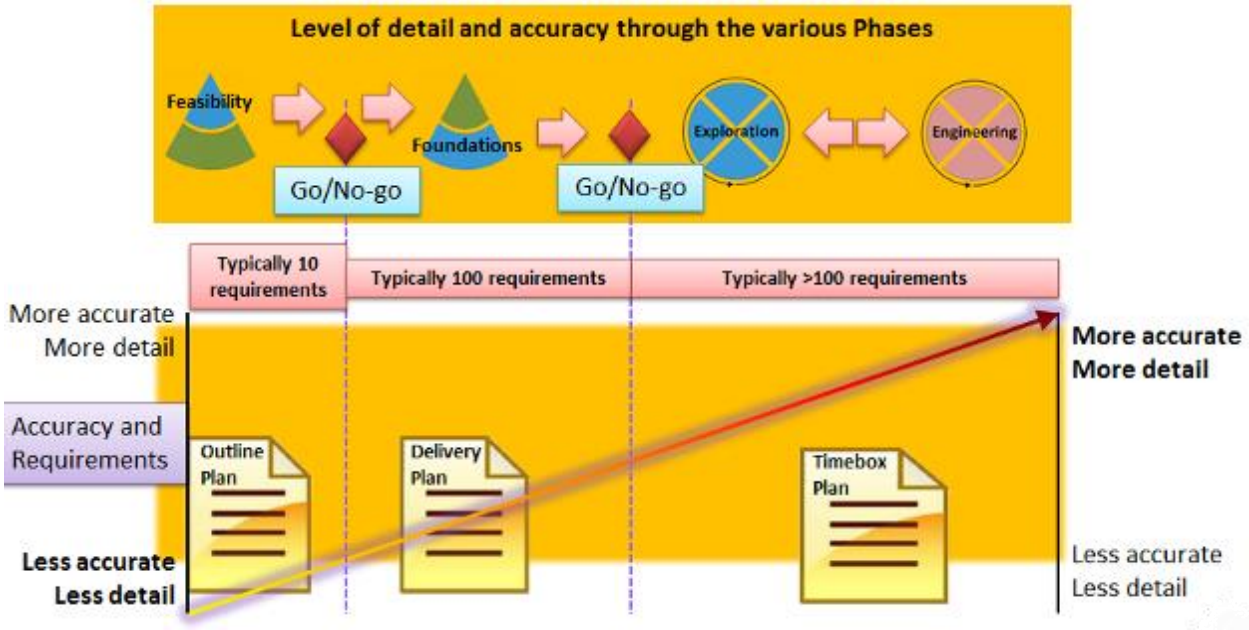
Since poor or lacking communication is a key contributor to conventional project failure, then it is also key to the success of an Atern project.

Effective communication is helped by the daily standup meetings, the use of facilitated workshops, regular review sessions backed up by frequent demonstration of completed products that meet the real business need.

Atern creates a detail plan for each following phase and an updated forecast of later planning steps.

Requirements

A requirement is a service, feature of function that the user wishes the solution to perform or exhibit, and these are captured within the prioritized requirements list.



As the project progresses, requirements become more detailed. All requirements are prioritised using the **MoSCoW** technique.

Features can evolve out of requirements, and there are **two types:**

Functional requirements; these describe what a solution is to achieve, and the features that the solution is expected to have or exhibit

and

Non-functional requirements; these describe how well, and to what level, something is to be carried out. Both need to be prioritized by the use of MoSCoW.

As the project progresses through its various phases, the requirements become more detailed, and hence more accurate.

Detailed analysis of the requirements is deliberately left as late as possible in order to avoid unnecessary rework.

Agile uses workshops for agreeing requirements which is where they are also prioritized. The Business Visionary provides the high level requirements while the Business Ambassadors and the business advisers provide the detailed requirements.

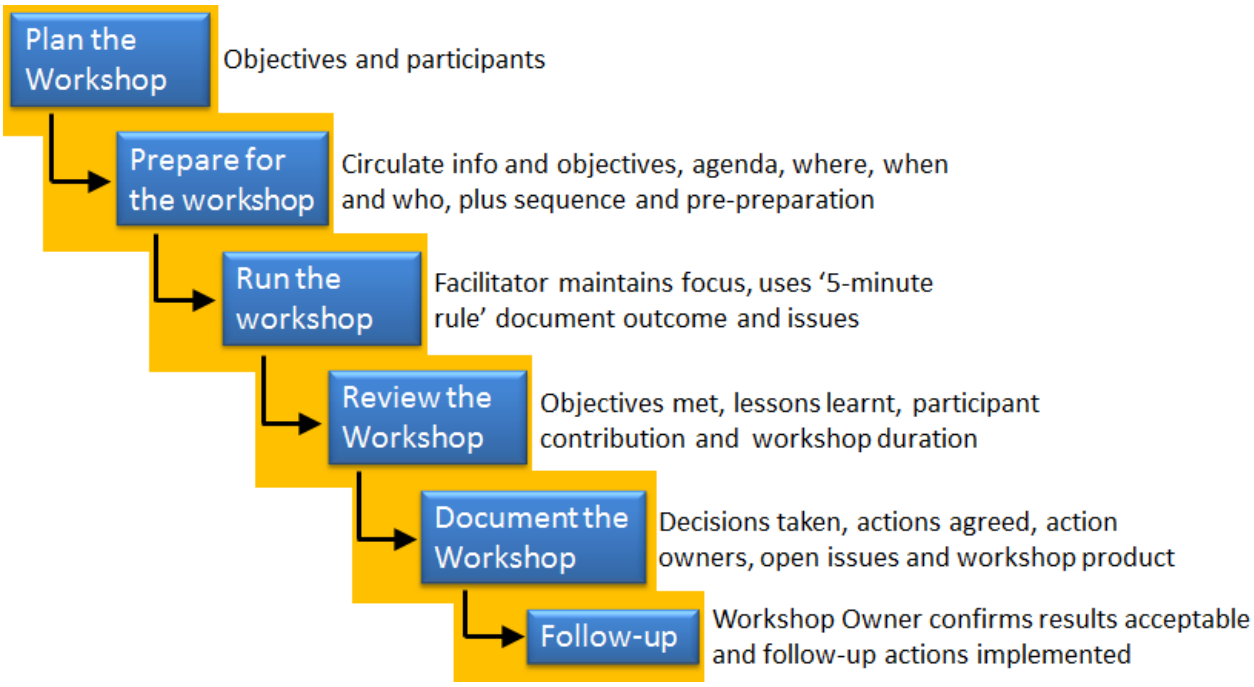
Facilitated Workshops

These ensure a team based approach within which communication and collaboration occurs resulting in a speedy and committed outcome.

It also improves stakeholder buy-in, helping to build confidence and a better understanding, clarify issues and ambiguities, and reach consensus for key the decisions to be made. To help ensure successful facilitated workshops, the following is important:

- Independent and experienced facilitator
- Clear objectives
- Good preparation
- Harnessing previous lessons learned
- Allowing decisions by consensus
- Swift distribution of the workshop report

The workshop uses an independent facilitator, a clear objective, and empowered participants:



MoSCoW Prioritisation

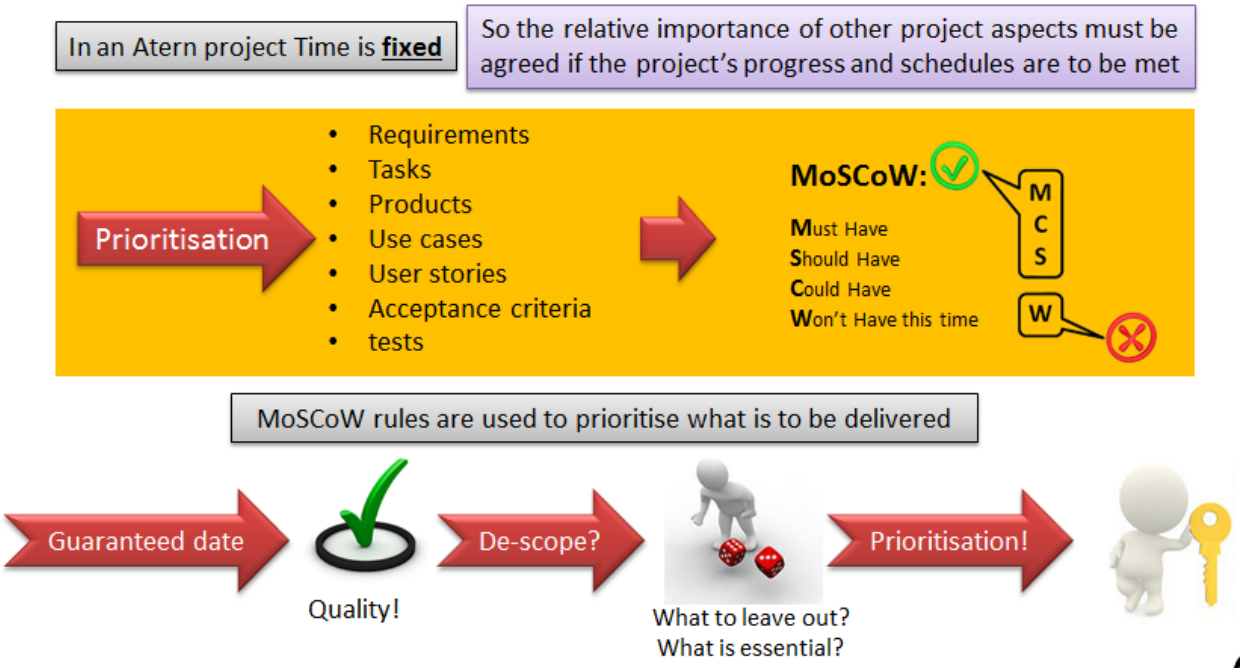
In an Atern Project, time is fixed, and therefore the main variable is to understand the relative importance of project aspects such as requirements, tasks, products, acceptance criteria and tests. The acronym MoSCoW stands for:

- **Must have**
- **Should have**
- **Could Have**
- **Won't Have this time**

The idea is to guarantee the minimum usable subset (MUS) in terms of the 'must haves', and expect to get the 'should haves' and 'could haves'.

In this way, should the schedule be under threat, every priority apart from the 'must haves' can be used as contingency, and hence removal, from the delivered requirements.

Atern recommends that no more than 60 per cent of the work effort must be applied to the 'must haves', leaving 40 per cent for the 'should haves' and 'could haves'.

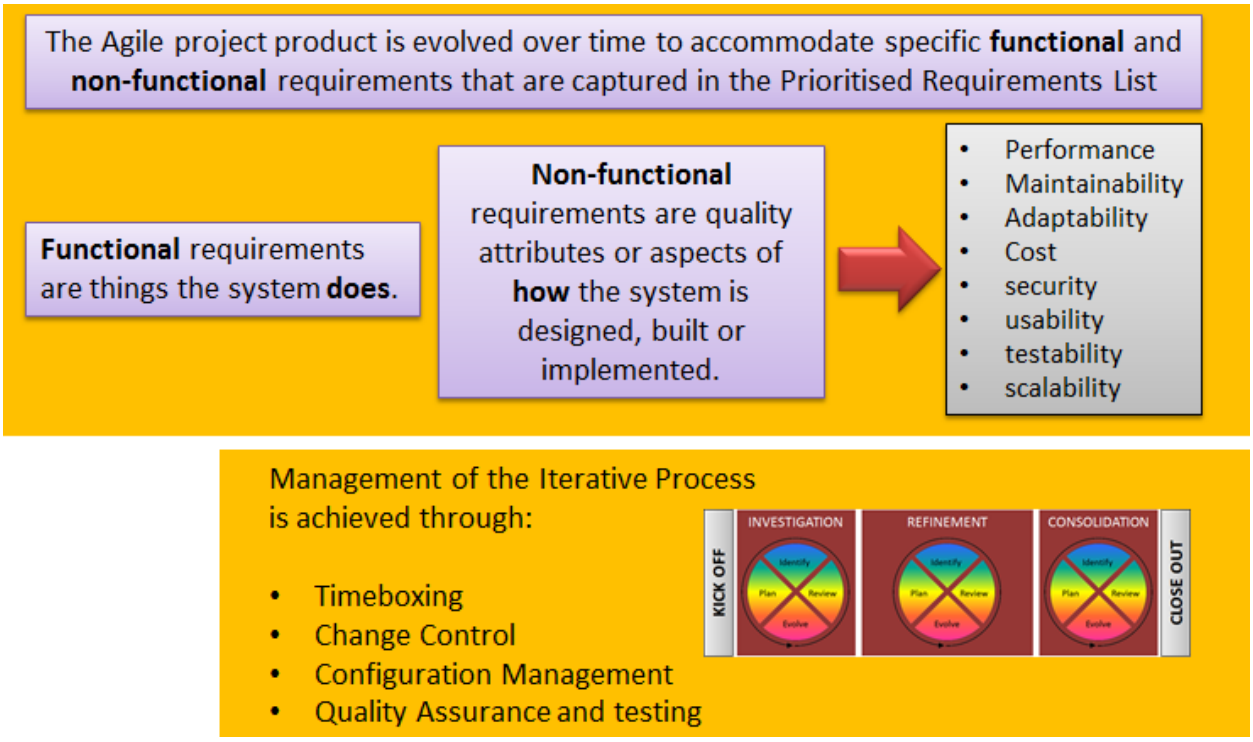


Iterative Development

This allows an increasing understanding as the project progresses, with convergence on an accurate solution.

It uses the cycles of identify, plan, evolve and review within the structure of the solution development Timebox, which also comprises the iterations of investigation, refinement and consolidation.

In this way, an Atern team is able to evolve the project solution products from a high-level idea through to a delivered product:



The iterative development process follows this cycle:

Identify. The solution development team agreed the objectives

Plan. The solution development team agrees what must be done, and by whom so that the objectives can be achieved

Evolve. Here is where the planned activities are carried out by the team

Review. The activities are reviewed to determine if the objectives have been achieved.

If the objectives have yet to be met, then the team will reject the changes and go back to the previous version, after having identified the corrective work with the potential to now meet the objectives.

Iterative development is managed by the use of time-boxes, change control, configuration management, quality assurance and testing. Each timebox uses three recommended iterations:

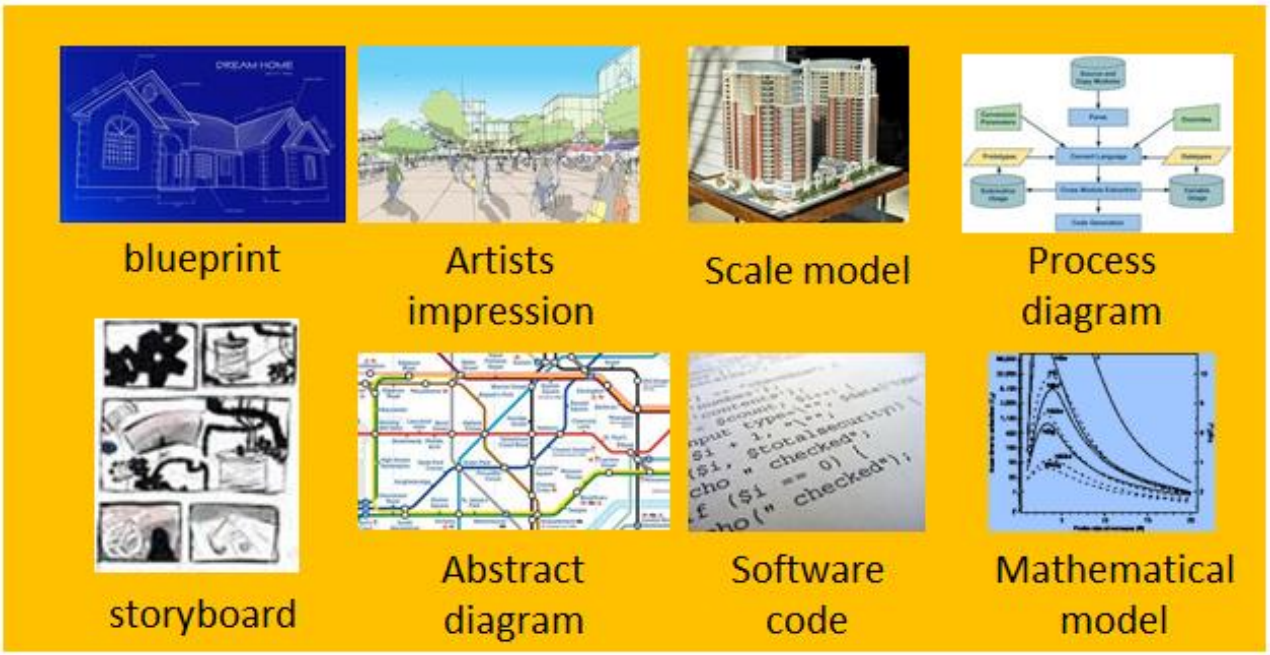
Investigation. This reviews all the products to be created within the Timebox and to understand the requirements along with potential solutions to be developed. This step should take between 10% to 20% of the Timebox.

Refinement. This is where the work will be carried out in accordance with the priorities agreed at the start of the Timebox. This step should take between 60% to 80% of the Timebox.

Consolidation. This is used to complete as many of the products as possible and will typically take between 10% to 20% of the Timebox.

Modelling and prototyping

This technique helps bring benefits in areas such as making ideas, situations, and options clearly understood and agreed by both the creators and the intended audience.



A model can be anything from a sketch through to a partially working deliverable.

A model helps visualize something which does not yet exist, with some detail left out to allow the audience to focus on a particulate purpose. Models often have reduced or non-working functionality.

Modelling also help communication (particularly between the development teams and the business), and workshops are often used to develop these. Models may be temporary, transient, or dispensable.

Models may also be continuously refined until they become the completed deliverable.

Timeboxing

These ensure that the lower level products are developed in an iterative manner and include review control points to ensure that product quality is appropriate, and that the product development process is delivered on time.

On time delivery is controlled by prioritization and continual reassessment of what can be delivered within the agreed timeframe.

The purpose of a Timebox is to control the amount of effort and time taken to complete a piece of work while maximising the effort effectiveness

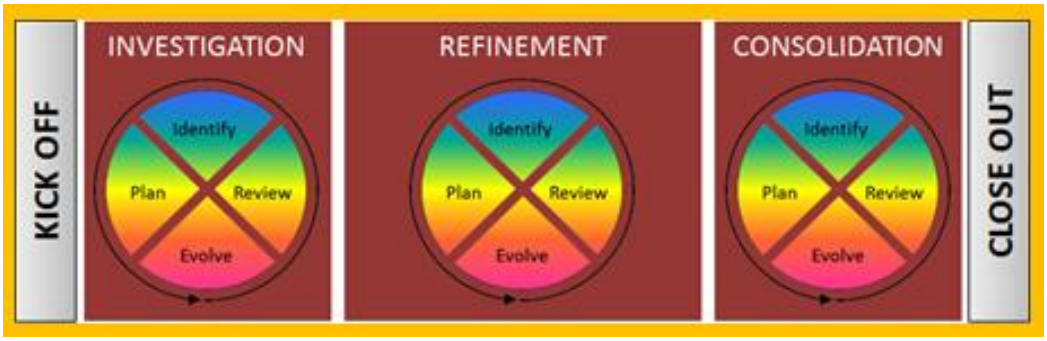
A Timebox is a fixed period of time at the end of which an objective (a deliverable of some sort) has been met

A Timebox is a well-defined process with review points plus checks on product(s) quality

A allows the iterative nature of the work to be controlled and on-time, quality deliverables to be produced

Timeboxes prevent the 'creeping functionality' often found in iterative prototyping situations and the tendency of the development NOT to converge towards a working solution

Project stakeholders must should agree that if time is threatened, the less important features in the Timebox can be dropped



Each Timebox starts with a kickoff to understand the objectives.

The investigation iteration includes gaining agreement of the deliverables and what quantitative measures will be used to approve success.

Refinement is where product development and testing occurs, while consolidation ensures each product meets its acceptance criteria. Close out is getting formal deliverable acceptance by the Business Visionary and the Technical Coordinator.

At the lowest level, the Solution Development Timebox will only be days or weeks in duration and hence provides control at the lowest level.

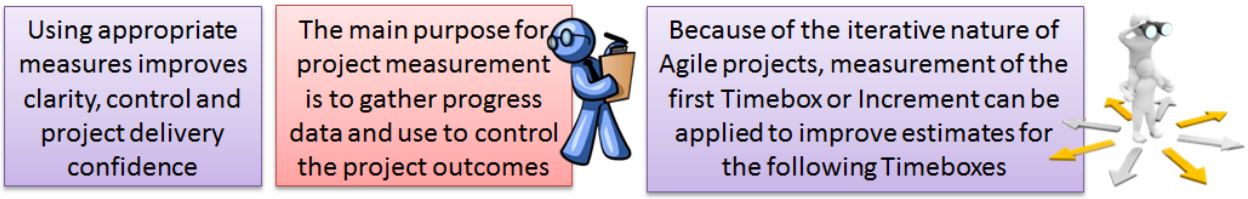
Time-boxes can also be used at the increment level, stage or phase level, and at project level.

The Timebox development team should meet every day for a short standup meeting, normally run by the Team Leader. Its purpose is to catch up progress and identify any issues that have occurred. The daily standup should not exceed 15 minutes in duration.

It is important that team members and the Business Ambassador have the authority to make decisions on changes as the timebox products are being constantly refined by the team.

The control concept here is that if time-boxes complete on time, then so too will the increments, and ultimately the project itself.

Measurement



Measures are collected for each Timebox, and include aspects such as team Velocity and the actual outcome of estimates. These can be used for future Timeboxes to assist in estimation and control.

Velocity uses a points system, and is a simple measure of the rate at which a team delivers business value.

Agile measures business value to demonstrate progress and return on investment, by measuring project progress via the delivery of its outcomes.

These outcomes are primarily successful completion of products within each Timebox.

Other measures include team delivery speed (velocity), quality defects, and of course, cost. Measurement activities enable estimates to become increasingly accurate.

Delivering Quality

There are two aspects of quality to be considered, **solution quality and process quality**. Within this, agreeing what the maintainability level should be for the project is key to ensuring project quality, as it ensures that each feature is able to meet the business need.

Another key aspect of using an Agile project, is getting agreement that delivering less than 100% of the solution is acceptable (due to prioritization of the requirements).

If the project quality along with the functional and nonfunctional requirements, are all agreed when the project starts, there will be a common understanding of what is required.

If quality reviews need to occur during the project, then these must be included within the planning.

Atern identifies TWO areas of quality:

Solution Quality
- Solution delivers customer satisfaction?
- Address business needs?
- Support documentation delivered?
- Level of maintainability acceptable?

Process Quality
- Following accepted best practices?
- Solution meets expected standards?
- Project remains under governance?

- Practices and Techniques lead to solution standards and expectations being met
- Compliance to Must Have quality standards by a defined and predictable process

Atern focuses on an on-time 'fit for purpose' working solution rather than a late-delivered better solution

ROI is delivered in the first increment and therefore meets quality acceptance standard for project quality

Risk Management

Atern uses the Project Approach Questionnaire to gain an understanding of the project risk areas and their mitigation actions.

The whole team as well as the Project Manager should be made aware of risks and to ensure they are managed effectively. Risk workshops can be helpful to identifying risk areas and determine mitigation actions and responsibilities.

Risks should be identified and captured early in the project. Each risk should be evaluated for its severity. Severity should be seen as a risk's probability of occurring, and its impact should the risk actually occur.

For each risk, mitigation actions or countermeasures should be determined, and these normally fall under five categories:

Prevention. This entails taking action up-front to prevent the risk from happening in the first place and/or reduced its probability of occurring, to zero

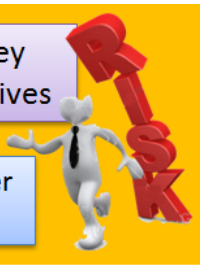
Reduction. This is taking action to either reduce the risk probability or to reduce its impact

Acceptance. This is the 'do nothing' option, usually because nothing can be done, or because the risk severity is low, or because taking some form of action would have a higher impact than from the risk itself actually occurring.

Transfer. It may be that the risks can be transferred to a third party such as a supplier, by taking out insurance, or transferring it to another department within the organization.

Fallback or contingency. In this case, contingent actions are determined, but they will only be implemented if and when the linked risk actually occurs.

A risk is an uncertain event or set of events, that if they occur, will have a negative impact on the project objectives



The **whole team** should be aware of the risks, however the **Project Manager** may drive risk management

Using either an Agile or a traditional approach will affect whether something is seen as a risk or 'business as usual'

Using an Agile approach of 'No Design Up Front' (NDUF), introduces significant risks when the delivered solution is into a complex environment

Using a traditional approach mandating 'Big Design Up Front' (BDUF) restricts flexibility and creativity

Using traditional projects with a fixed end date increases risk because time is used as contingency

Testing

Testing is an important approach to ensure that quality is never compromised. The earlier a defect is found and fixed - the less it costs, and the approach therefore, is to fail fast. To ensure that testing is effective and efficient, all stakeholders should collaborate.

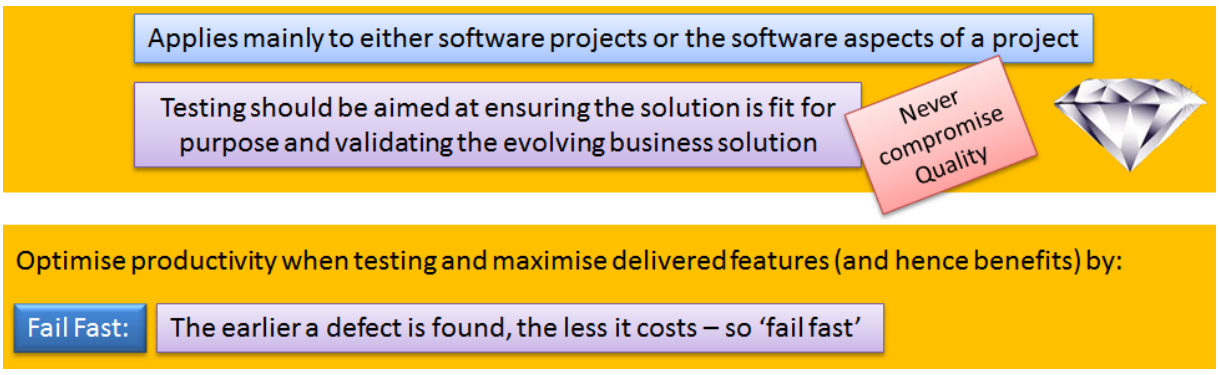
The main objective of testing is to ensure that the solution is fit for purpose.

The sooner a defect is found, the quicker it can be fixed, and this will also reduce the cost. This can be achieved by testing the product even though it may not be fully complete.

All of the products that are created must be tested by an independent individual other than the person or team that created them. By ensuring that business representatives are constantly involved, they can help ensure independent testing.

In the same way that requirements are prioritized, so too should the testing be prioritized, and in this way the testing takes the same priority as its requirement.

The tests for each product should be specified before the product itself is created.



Configuration Management

The main purpose of configuration management is to protect the project assets, which are the products that the project creates.

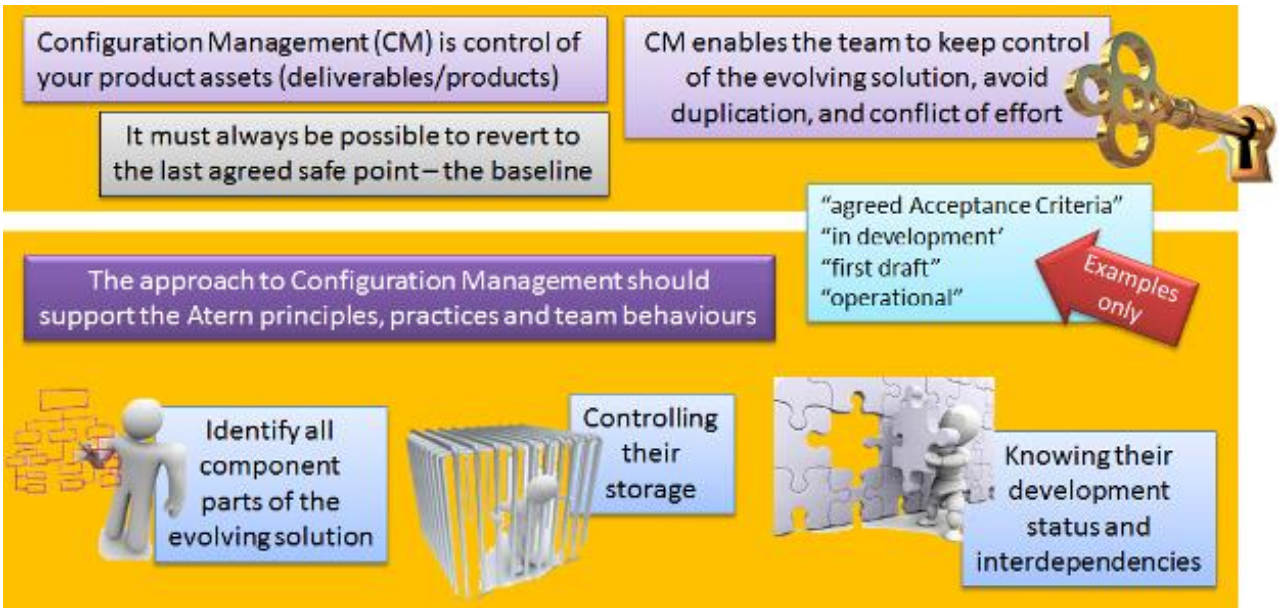
It is important that the development staff within a project are trained in the procedures and tools to be used for configuration management.

Change control is closely tied to configuration management, and the configuration management strategy should include aspects such as how product baselines and change control are to be managed within the project.

Configuration management allows the team to keep control of the business solution as it evolves, in addition to avoiding duplication or conflict of effort.

Care should be taken to avoid excessive formality and documentation of the CM process.

A champion for configuration management and its application to a particular project should be agreed, and this is often the Technical Coordinator role.



Summary

Well, that's it….I hope you found my Agile Project Management Overview helpful…

Your next step is to get yourself up to the APMG Agile Project Management Foundation and Practitioner exams standard.

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About The Author

Dave is an Accredited Project Management Trainer

David spent 25 years as a senior Project Manager for USA multinationals, and has deep experience in project management. He now develops a wide range of project-related downloadable video training products under the Primer brand name. In addition, David runs project management training seminars across the world, and is a prolific writer on the many topics of project management.