Trends in Agile
Perspectives from the Practitioners

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THE AGILE CONFERENCE (www.agilealliance.org/agile2016) is the largest global conference on agile software development, catering particularly to practitioners. Agile 2016 had a record 2,500 participants. Here, we report on two keynotes and a new IEEE Software conference initiative.

Keynotes
In the first keynote, Jurgen Appelo, known for his work on agile leadership, including Management 3.0 and the Management 3.0 Workout, discussed “managing for happiness,” based on research showing that happy workers are more productive. He shared the following concrete practices for happier organizations.

Personal maps is an exercise to better understand people by capturing what you know about them into a personal mind map. It improves collaboration by helping people get closer to others and better understand their work.

Delegation boards and delegation poker build on situational leadership and a responsibility assignment matrix containing seven steps to empower through delegation. Delegation boards provide an overview of the current delegation situation, focusing on moving forward. Delegation poker helps people understand how others handle the same situation. These two tools let management clarify the difficult task of delegation and empower both management and workers.

Merit money is an alternative to traditional compensation. Paying people for work without destroying their motivation is one of the most difficult management challenges. Merit money is based on real merit instead of imagined performance. For example, earnings can be based on collaboration as measured by peer feedback during performance reviews.

Celebration grids visually report successes and failures in a positive atmosphere to foster learning from practices, experiments, and mistakes. All too often, organizations live day by day, from one crisis to another, and forget to take note of the good things that have happened. Celebration grids help focus on the positives, even in mistakes and failures. Figure 1 illustrates a celebration grid.

Appelo believes that managing for happiness is relevant for managers and everyone concerned about the organization. Organizations have a happier environment when people manage themselves and lead by example through experiments and learning. All creative workers are expected to be servant leaders and systems thinkers. For more information, see www.slideshare.net/AgileME/managing-for-happiness.
In the second keynote, Joshua Kerievsky, CEO of Industrial Logic, talked about Modern Agile (http://modernagile.org), which emphasizes the need for agile principles rather than practices. Over the past decade, innovative companies, software industry thought leaders, and lean or agile pioneers have discovered simpler, sturdier, and more streamlined ways to be agile. The focus has shifted from following rituals to producing meaningful outcomes. He argued that although there’s timeless wisdom in agile, practitioners would do well to bypass outmoded agile practices in favor of modern approaches.

Modern Agile has four guiding principles (see Figure 2):

- **Make people awesome.** Ask how you can make people in your ecosystem, including those who fund, make, sell, buy, or use products or services, awesome. Then, discover and deliver what makes them happy.
- **Make safety a prerequisite.** Safety is a basic human need and a key to unlocking high performance. Establish safety before engaging in any work, and endeavor to make collaborations, products, and services resilient and safe.
- **Experiment and learn rapidly.** Learn rapidly through frequent experiments that are safe to fail, so that there’s no fear of conducting more experiments. Being stuck or not learning indicates the need to experiment more.
- **Deliver value continuously.** Anything valuable that hasn’t been delivered isn’t helping anyone. Try to discover small pieces that might be delivered safely now rather than later. Ask, “How could we deliver the right outcomes faster?”

Companies such as Google, Amazon, Airbnb, and Etsy are proof of these principles’ power. Kerievsky also discussed how Modern Agile addresses key risks while targeting results over rituals. He concluded by revealing how to update the 2001 Agile Manifesto to reflect Modern Agile’s four guiding principles.

### The Practitioner Conference Outreach Initiative

At Agile 2016, IEEE Software inaugurated its practitioner conference outreach initiative to increase the magazine’s visibility and recognition among practitioners. In collaboration with the Agile Alliance (www.agilealliance.org), IEEE Software chaired the Future of Agile Software Development track. Here we report on two of the track’s five presentations, which drew more than 700 participants.

#### The Future of Scrum

Dave West from Scrum.org gave a talk on Scrum’s future. Noting that Scrum forms the basis of most agile implementations in industry, he identified several pervasive problems related to both practical Scrum implementation and enterprise-level agility. In practice, many Scrum implementations become trapped in traditional organizational processes, turning into “water-Scrum-falls” rather than real agile Scrums.

To aid organizations in Scrum and enterprise implementations, Scrum’s creators have recently published several improvements and additions. These include the addition of values to Scrum, the Nexus framework for scaling Scrum up to nine teams working on the same product, and a set of metrics for evaluating Scrum implementations. In the near future, they’ll release a Scrum software developer’s kit, which will provide help for Scrum implementations in areas such as the definition of “done,” practices,
tools, development standards, and environments. Finally, Scrum Studio provides a new approach to enterprise agility by separating agile products from the traditional IT organization to free them from existing organizational values and processes. Scrum Studio can be seen as complementary to Gartner’s bimodal IT and the ideas in John Kotter’s book *Accelerate (XLR8)*.2

**Digital Disruption**

Robert Woods described the digital disruption that has emerged in organizations trying to become adaptive, collaborative, agile, and innovative without fear of failure. This disruption includes innovations that change the landscape of successful modern businesses.

Conversely, there appears to be a troubling lack of ability to adapt and change when digital disruption occurs. You could argue that the agile mind-set created digital disruption that’s forcing people to be more agile. Woods described several agile trends that will compensate for digital disruption, including

- malleable frameworks that adapt to the teams using them,
- tools that adapt to how a team works as opposed to dictating it,
- a focus on short-term metrics because rapid change results in obsolete metrics,
- globally dispersed teams that can collaborate and function just as well as collocated teams, and
- agile financials that focus more on quickly delivered value rather than year-long or multiyear financial commitments.

In summary, he believes that although digital disruption has been considered a new trend, soon it won’t be considered disruption at all. It will be how business is done. The world just has to be more agile to keep up with it. For more information, visit [www.matrixres.com](http://www.matrixres.com)/resources/blogs/2016-01/digital-disruption-the-future-of-agile.

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**References**


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