Can Agile ease the disruption of change management?

Change happens. At some stage of their organisational cycle, associations go through change. Whether due to external shifts in the environment they operate in or stakeholder demand, associations often face incremental changes.

These changes may impact their culture, stakeholder engagement or even morale. The true challenge is that no one really wishes to change. What people desire is progress.

Committed change leaders should be progress ambassadors. Their focus should lay on inspiring members, and leading the way towards future-proof associations.

To navigate change and embrace its disruptive effects, association leaders must build flexibility and resilience into the organisation's DNA.

"Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage."

- Agile Manifesto

IN COMES AGILE
In principle, Agile is an approach to project management. While originating from software development, at its core, Agile is based on the premise that conditions change as a project develops. That is why, within the duration of an Agile project, the phases of planning, designing, development, and testing are circular and subjective to adaptation. In line with performance and feedback, they continuously alter as the project takes form.

THE TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL CHANGE LEADER
A successful change leader is the one who shows clarity in the face of complexity. While change management may create obstacles, it is the change leader's role to smooth its disruption and manage resistance. The key to minimising turbulence is onboarding; using tactics to engage and involve the stakeholders in the rationale and benefits of change management from its early stages.

Leading by example takes change management a long way. Change leaders can build trust and confidence in

upcoming transformations through their own behaviour.

THE TRAITS OF AN AGILE MASTER
Like the change leader, an Agile master needs to boast adaptability, and a strong sense of inclusiveness.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
This is where people-centricity takes centre stage. This trait is all about the ability to understand and relate to others, giving them confidence to explore possibilities and empower them to find solutions.
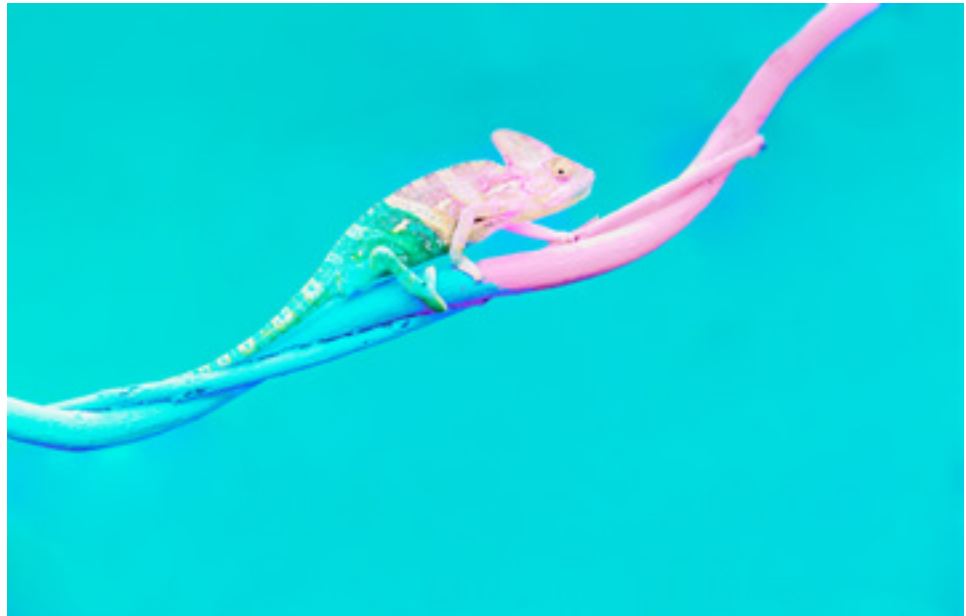
INTERACTION
Active listening and collaboration are at the core of Agile, as opposed to plain contact negotiation. Feedback and open communication channels across all project phases are at the forefront of the Agile approach.

COMMON OBSTACLES WHEN BLENDING CHANGE MANAGEMENT WITH AGILE

Looking at the interplay between transitioning to Agile and managing change, associations may stumble upon some challenges:
- Lack of understanding of the benefits and processes of change management
- Increased pace and high volume of radical change that can cause resistance
- Pre-established change management templates might no longer be applicable, as projects adapt and are constantly reformed
- Less room to standardise and formalise processes due to continuous adaptability

So, can association leaders ease the potential disruption?

FROM THE TRADITIONAL MODEL TO AGILE
Agile, like change, does not happen overnight. The transition to Agile must be gradual, not rushed. As long as the shift happens moderately, then all members have the time to adapt, understand, and increase efficiency. Hence, the impact of potential obstacles is minimised. After all, Agile is not about carrying out projects as quickly as possible; it is about completing projects in a way that allows everyone to hop onboard and work smoothly towards value-driven goals.

Is Agile the answer for a future-proof association? This approach is indeed becoming one of the most popular strategic approaches to project management. It has proven to have successfully shaped the way tech organisations drive business results and impact. Can associations benefit the same way?

As long as the shift happens thoroughly and progressively, it can facilitate problem solving. Many organisations, in their effort to become Agile as quickly as possible, have fallen into the trap of hindering its benefits and being Agile in name only. It is crucial to take time and evaluate how Agile can add value to your association, and once that is established, gradually move towards its implementation.

About MCI Amsterdam
MCI Group is a global leading provider of strategic engagement and activation solutions. The Amsterdam office has adopted the agile methodology and services both the institutional and corporate markets in the Benelux region. Since 1987, through association management, conferences, meetings and events, we help clients build unforgettable online and offline experiences that foster change, inspire, educate and enhance business performance.

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