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AGILE AND PRINCE2® – CAN THEY WORK TOGETHER?

Birds of a Feather session.

APMG Best Practice Showcase August 6 2010.



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BACKGROUND

Can Agile approaches such as SCRUM and XP co-exist on a project with PRINCE2? There is a lot of discussion within companies (and even more on the Internet) about the suitability of applying Agile practices in a PRINCE2 environment.

So can they work together? Absolutely. This paper looks at a couple of areas key to their integration.

Let's start with a reminder of the Agile Manifesto and the PRINCE2 Principles.

AGILE MANIFESTO

1. Individuals and interactions over processes and tools.
2. Working software over comprehensive documentation.
3. Customer collaboration over contract negotiation.
4. Responding to change over following a plan. ¹

PRINCE2 PRINCIPLES

1. Continued business justification
2. Learn from experience
3. Defined roles and responsibilities
4. Manage by Stages
5. Manage by Exception
6. Focus on products
7. Tailor to suit the project environment²

There is nothing in the Agile Manifesto or the PRINCE2 Principles that stops them from working together so let's look at ways of integrating them.

PROJECT ORGANISATION

Both PRINCE2 and Agile approaches describe specific roles and responsibilities. Figure 1 outlines the standard PRINCE2 organisation. The question is how do we move some of the Agile roles such as product owner, Scrum Master etc into the structure.

¹ As listed on www.Agilemanifesto.org

² As described in "Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2"TM

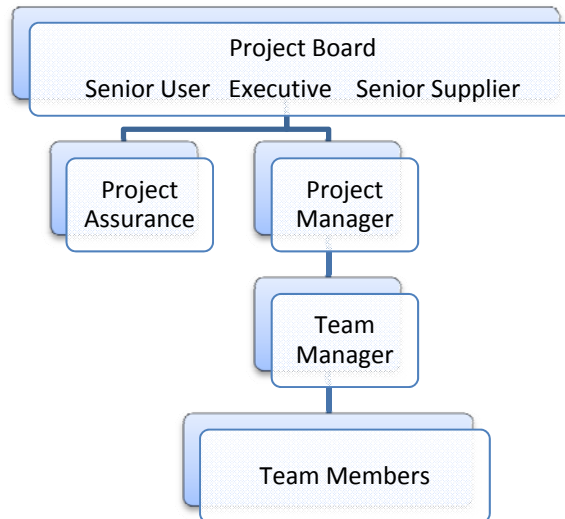


Figure 1 PRINCE2 project team roles

Agile Roles - Possible mappings

Product Owner

Most of the literature places the Product Owner as either the Senior User or the Project Manager (proxy for the Project Board). The Project Manager will only work well as a Product Owner if they have a user/customer focus. If the Senior User is going to take the role they need to be committed to the time investment that is required in the role of Product Owner. It is generally more time intensive than the traditional PRINCE2 Senior User role.

Scrum Master

The Scrum Master for small projects can be the Project Manager. This assumes the PM can move away from a command and control approach to a more facilitating approach.

In projects where there may be multiple teams, multiple sprints etc then it may be wise to have a Scrum Master for each sprint team. The Scrum Master essentially takes the Team Manager/Team Lead role under the PRINCE2 model. In this latter approach we would leave the Project Manager role in place with the overall view of the project.

Team

The Team in an Agile structure will resemble the PRINCE2 Team Members. Typically agile teams are small (5-9) and self organizing. There is no need for a team manager in the traditional sense.

PRINCE2 PROCESS MODEL AND AGILE

One other area that needs to be understood is how the PRINCE2 process model can be aligned to an Agile approach. Again this should not cause significant problems for a

company wishing to blend the two approaches. Figure 2 outlines the relationship between sprints and the allocation of work packages.

In a simple integration of PRINCE2 and Agile methods, the Agile activity can take place in the MP process. Taking this approach you gain the macro level of control that PRINCE2 offers with the micro level of agility that Agile affords. The Product Backlog can be used to plan for the next stage. The Sprint plans will take the place of team plans.

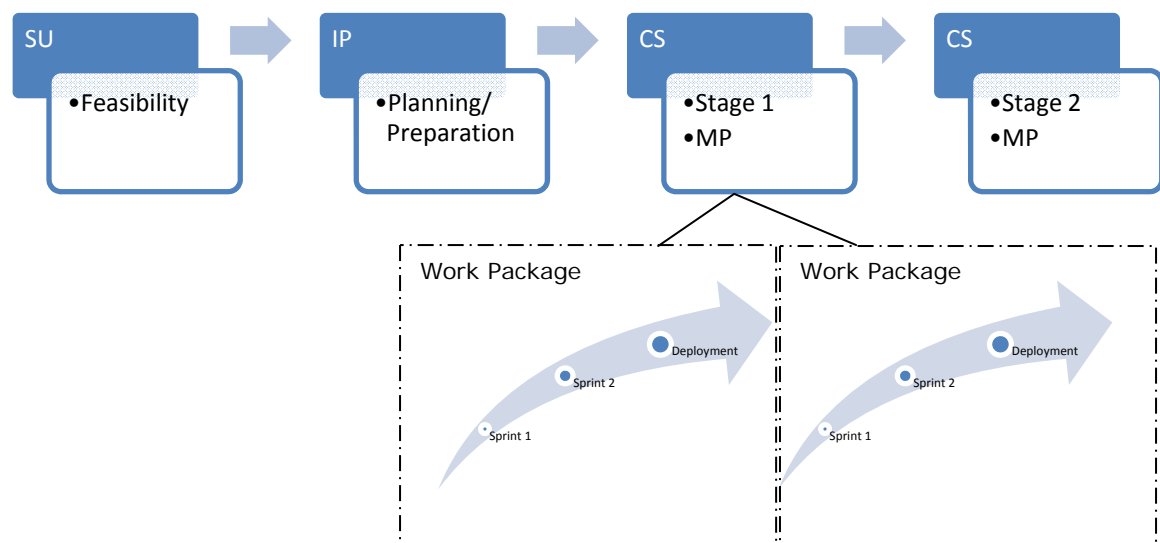


Figure 2 PRINCE2 Process Model with Sprints

MANAGEMENT BY EXCEPTION AND TOLERANCES

One of PRINCE2's principles is that projects should be managed by exception. This involves the use of tolerances. The emphasis on tolerances is usually around the time and cost parameters. A move towards an agile approach means that a shift in thinking needs to occur.

In an agile world, tolerances for time and cost will be fixed for sprints. The tolerance that will be more heavily used is scope tolerance. Exceptions can then be examined against product and sprint backlogs and whether a particular sprint is going to deliver as expected.

SUMMARY

PRINCE2 and Agile approaches can work together. While PRINCE2 is traditionally seen as rigid and "heavy" this is not the case – it can be scaled nicely to work with Agile development at the product level.