

Now on Now: How ServiceNow Uses Agile to Deliver Faster Results

How IT is cocreating value with our business stakeholders using Agile Development

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Adopting Agile

Using the Now Platform® for an integrated Agile approach

Until recently, ServiceNow IT was delivering business applications using the waterfall methodology, which couldn’t keep up with the company’s fast growth. While the traditional waterfall project management method was thorough in gathering requirements at kickoff, by the time we delivered the final product, new requirements had surfaced.

We needed a product delivery method that could keep up with the rapid pace of change but provided tracking and governance to keep projects on time and budget. We decided to align to a single Agile framework. By adopting [Agile Development](#) and running it on the [Now Platform](#) using ServiceNow [Project Portfolio Management](#), we could achieve our goal of quickly cocreating value with our business stakeholders. Following a successful pilot phase, IT is moving to Agile for all its projects.

Challenges

IT manages a portfolio of more than 200 software product deliveries and enhancements a year. With this rapid growth, ServiceNow faced a dilemma. The traditional waterfall approach for development was not scaling to meet our needs. We needed a way to develop, deliver, and adapt software quickly while ensuring the production code quality remained high.

We also sought to reduce the risks around project delivery. Although some teams were using Agile, it was not being used consistently across our teams. Another factor was our commitment to improving satisfaction across all stakeholders, whether it was the development team, product managers, or IT project managers.

Agile to the Rescue

To reach our goal of getting faster at cocreating value with our stakeholders, we recognized we had to adopt Agile as a development methodology. Agile is useful for managing product and software development with unique processes and high innovation requirements. It is ideal for managing the backlog of tasks and increasing visibility throughout the software development

lifecycle, from inception through testing and deployment. Agile promised faster time to market, higher productivity and better code quality, as measured by defect reduction.

Agile and SAFe

Choosing the Agile project management software was not straightforward. We needed to scale our development efforts to accommodate larger products, more teams, and longer timelines than most Agile projects.

A core team of Agile experts evaluated different options, including waterfall, Agile scrum, and Scaled Agile, and narrowed it down to the ServiceNow Agile Development technology:

- ServiceNow Agile for small, simple projects involving one scrum team and a narrow scope
- Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe®) for large, complex projects where product management's ongoing input was vital, such as our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system conversion

Our projects have many of the characteristics that suited an Agile mindset: constantly changing requirements, tight delivery deadlines, unproven value outcomes, and unpredictable returns on investment. This type of project requires continuous involvement by the business to guide their success.

Agile and SAFe work the same at the team level, with the backlog of stories awaiting assignment to a sprint, the sprint planning board to assign stories to sprints, and the sprint tracking board to monitor the progress of individual stories. Once we assign stories to sprints, development teams implement the sprints using the same practices as in Agile.

What's different is that SAFe adds a second layer of visibility for product management, business owners, and other customers in the project. The program level enables product managers to add and modify the product roadmap and see the impact on the development lifecycle. It also extends the development timeframe over multiple product releases for a more expansive view.

Both Agile and SAFe are integrated with ServiceNow Project Portfolio Management, an application for project prioritization and planning. Project Portfolio Management gives us visibility from idea to execution. Combined with Agile management, we can improve our service delivery.

Implementation

Once we decided to move forward, we faced a deployment decision: a big bang cutover or pilots. We chose the latter, launching three pilots where IT was the beneficiary and delivery was scheduled for early 2019.

From the start, we recognized that organizational change management was critical to our success. We had to master the Agile and SAFe tools and methodologies, including a new vocabulary. We had to train our development teams, product management, and IT project management on the new tools. We had to create awareness plans to inform all those affected.

"Agile gathers everything onto a single platform for my team instead of us having to use multiple tools. I can drill down and see the defects for the entire project. That's a big win."

ServiceNow Pilot User

"We can operate in a dual mode of hybrid project planning as well as manage an Agile team's velocity. It has helped our transition from waterfall to Agile."

Rani Pangam, Director, IT PMO

Transparency was vital for measuring our success. Investment planning was different, with an emphasis on continuous planning, not block funding. We brought in coaches to provide rigor and structure to our implementation and exploit the potential value as quickly as possible.

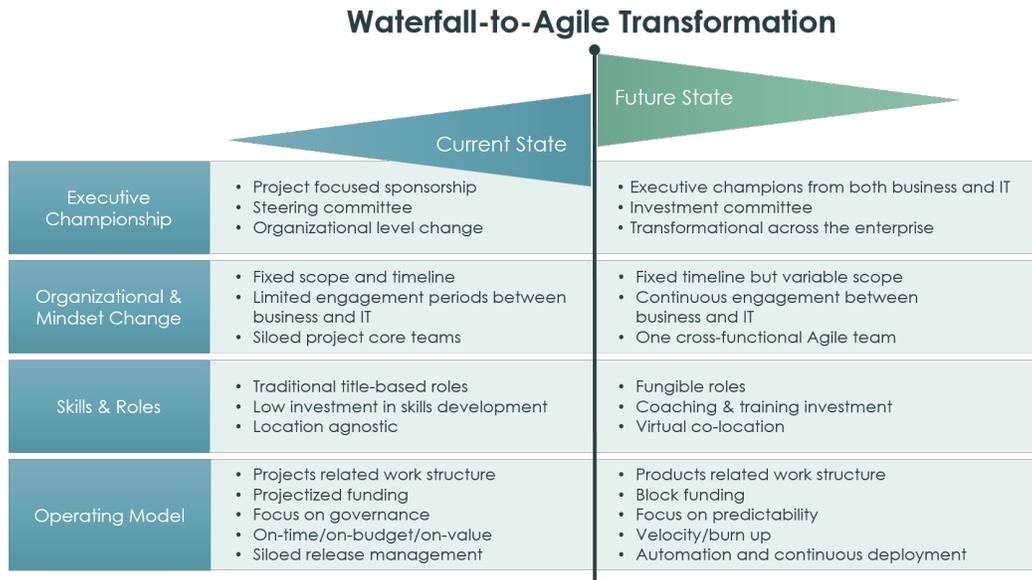


Figure 1 To transform from waterfall to Agile required changes across the organization.

We launched the three pilots in the first half of 2019. First, we activated the Agile and SAFe plugins. Then, in our first pilot, we upgraded from Agile 1.0 to Agile 2.0. We used out-of-the-box (OOTB) reporting. The other pilots included:

- Major Incident Management (Agile).** Our customer was IT Apps, which had a sales workflow with a small scrum team. We used OOTB reporting. Sprint grooming and backlog management sessions were easy. Agile coaching helped drive our success.
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (SAFe).** Our customer was Sales IT, which used SAFe for development of the approvals/remediation portion of our CRM conversion. The project had multiple scrum teams in two locations. We used the application OOTB with a few modifications. The Now Platform made it easy to learn and adopt SAFe features. The executive sponsors made an investment in training and change management to help jumpstart the successful transition.

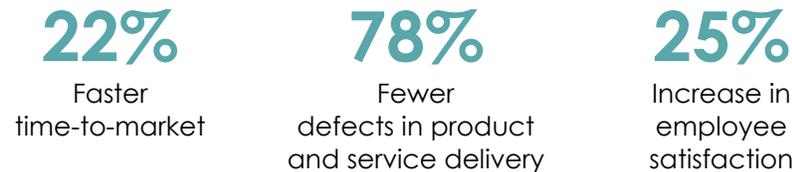
“Agile Development is very pictorial. The visuals help me figure out my current stories and backlog. It displays the interdependencies so I can clearly see the links among various stories and scrum teams. That was hard to see in the past.”

ServiceNow Pilot User

The Agile Center of Excellence (COE) provided another layer of support. Users could access the COE service catalog for information on Agile and SAFe, training, project and program delivery dashboards, and governance policies.

Outcomes

Before launching the pilots, we identified areas for improvement during the pilots: time-to-market (completion timeframes), quality (number of defects), and engagement (satisfaction). Each area showed significant improvement following the pilots' completion.



We are also seeing several qualitative benefits. Our project planning is much easier with all the data on the Now Platform. Improvements in velocity and defect reduction are easy to track. Other benefits reported by users include:

- The tools are easy to use, with good pictorial views and layouts and easy to sort stories.
- We have better visibility into sprint capacity, dependencies, what we are delivering, and overall progress, making project management far simpler.
- Collaboration is better, especially in sprint grooming sessions and managing backlog.
- SAFe streamlined planning and coordinating across scrum teams, especially as teams began trusting the validity of the stories in the tool.

"It's a much better planning tool. I prefer the building block approach instead of a large project plan where you guess what the future holds. It's easy to play what-if games in Agile using the drag and drop features. I can easily visualize the impact of different processes."

ServiceNow Pilot User

Lessons Learned

Although we were pleased with the pilot phase, we also learned a few lessons that we are applying as we expand our Agile adoption. Most of the lessons learned point to more upfront preparation prior to the cutover.

- *Business partnerships.* To get the most out of Agile, we needed our business partners to understand their new roles and be as educated as we are about Agile. Success comes from us being able to work in lockstep.
- *Frequent check-ins.* Unlike waterfall, Agile requires more frequent check-ins with our partners, which can feel burdensome at first. Once we could operate at a constant pace, we began to deliver value faster than we did before.
- *Detailed instructions.* The more detailed the guided setup instructions were, the faster our teams could adopt the new processes and workflows.
- *Change management.* Expect user resistance in both Agile tool and framework adoption, so invest in change management early and throughout the process to make sure the transformation goes smoothly.

Next Steps

We have about 30 products in IT that we will be transitioning to Agile. Many scrum teams have been trained, with more to come. Over the next two years, we will continue to focus on improving our results and anticipate seeing other benefits over time:

- Required skill sets coalesce to a singular focus on execution.
- Teams iterate rapidly, thriving on fast feedback to improve outcomes.
- Decision-making becomes easier as managers can see the current status at any point in time.
- IT and stakeholders collaborate better as they increase their trust in the tools.
- We see fewer defects as teams focus on continuously improving methods and processes.

"After adopting Agile, the CRM project was able to deliver a minimal viable product (MVP) within four months. With waterfall, it would have taken more than a year."

Duncan Glover, Director, IT Sales Capabilities, ServiceNow

Our Agile transformation is a journey that takes time, patience, and practice. It balances the need to react to change and deliver value with the discipline of using the same tool across the enterprise. Now that we use Agile to guide our tasks and goals, we can develop workflows that are functional and innovative.

For our next step, we plan to deploy Agile Development throughout IT and implement investment funding and innovation management to improve our results.

You can find out more about the ServiceNow [Project Portfolio Management](#) and Agile Development [here](#).

How SAFe helps deliver faster outcomes during our CRM conversion

As ServiceNow converts to a new CRM system, the team adopted the Agile framework and SAFe toolset to create business value quickly.

“We were able to introduce and deploy SAFe to our scrum teams in a matter of weeks even though they were new to the methodology. Following one full program increment in the tool, the feedback from the teams has been very positive,” said Duncan Glover, Director IT, Sales Capabilities.

A consultancy coach guided the team through the Agile transformation, including working sessions with the scrum teams to understand the methodology and separate meetings with the product teams to educate them on envisioning the CRM features backlog.

Glover appreciates how easy the tool is to use. “It’s easy to navigate from a high-level overview down to the team level. If there is an issue, I can login into the tool, find the story, and assess the story and tasks. I can make decisions using facts and not rely on opinions,” he said.

“SAFe has helped simplify the challenges inherent in handing off work between scrum teams in different time zones. When team members arrive for the day, they can see the stories, the acceptance criteria, and the tasks associated with the stories. They can then complete the tasks, update the tool, and the next team can pick it up from there. It’s eliminated a lot of the confusion around the handoffs,” said Glover.

Product management has been very receptive to the change. “They listen to their customers, prioritize the requested features, then feed it into the roadmap. They can immediately see the impact of the request on the roadmap. Seeing the big picture gives us more confidence that we are investing in the right features for the future,” said Glover.

“Agile is our single source of truth. As we increase our experience and the teams gain more trust in the stories, we should see even more benefits,” he added.

ServiceNow

ServiceNow is changing the way people work. By defining, structuring, and automating work, we are creating a modern service experience for everyone in the enterprise. Our customers have demonstrated that service management isn’t just for IT — it is a discipline for every service domain. It’s possible now.

Now on Now is about how we use our own ServiceNow solutions to work faster, smarter, and better. With Now on Now, we’re achieving true end-to-end digital transformation. To learn more, go to: www.servicenow.com/nowonnow