

Manage an Agile Portfolio

Improve project oversight without imposing old-school command-and-control.



Project portfolio owners want to make the organization as a whole more strategically agile and responsive.

Project portfolio managers find themselves squeezed between

Old-school IT governance



Fast-moving agile project teams



Despite significant spending on **project management offices (PMOs)** and governance, our members report that their PMO does not produce usable and current information about project investments and the organization's capacity for more projects.

The traditional portfolio has defined success based on the quality of prediction: who will deliver what, when, and at what cost? The long-term value of the work was less important than the accuracy of those predictions.



Portfolio management and project management are **separate concerns**. The portfolio management methodology needs to interface with projects (and vice versa) but they have distinct goals, terminology, and methodology.

Business and portfolio agility aren't necessarily tied to Agile projects. *Agile project management is necessary but not sufficient for portfolio business agility.* Many organizations leave benefits on the table by failing to support Agile projects with Agile practices around the portfolio and strategy.

Steps for Success

Step 1

Make the case for managing an Agile portfolio

Agile was brought into many enterprises by developers who saw it as a more effective way to work. The business case for Agile in the enterprise is often made in terms of efficiency and risk reduction. It's easy to forget that the Agile Manifesto always emphasized delivering value to the customer. In other words, **Agile has always been about making better strategic decisions**.



Step 2

Assess the current state of the project portfolio

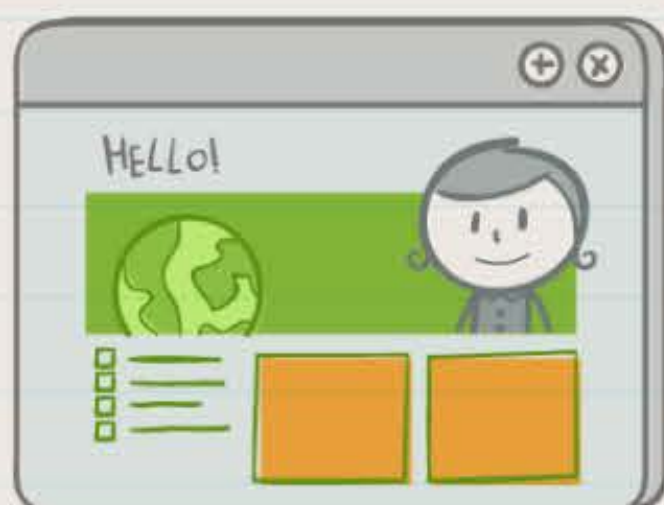
The **two most effective ways to improve project portfolio management (PPM)** with relatively low effort are to **improve the frequency of current reporting** and to **limit the number of "active" projects** by reducing approvals to be more aligned with actual capacity for new work.



Step 3

Establish a strategy and SOP for Agile portfolio management

Different types of projects and methodologies are difficult to compare. Taking the time to define and manage a value standard makes it possible to compare projects regardless of methodology or project management style.



Step 4

Build and implement an Agile portfolio dashboard

New projects need to be assessed in terms of value. This is unrelated to the ability to start the project, which depends on the availability of resources and the relative value of other competing ideas. Subsequent tasks will demonstrate the outputs and activities required to fully optimize project benefits.

Step 5

Manage and optimize the Agile project portfolio

Maintain consistent management and usage of the reports and dashboards to ensure the validity of this information. Project managers and their teams learn very quickly to keep the information current when reports are used, and they learn very quickly to ignore information that is not being used.



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