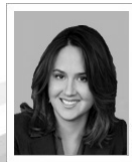


Five Common Challenges for Product Managers in Agile Teams



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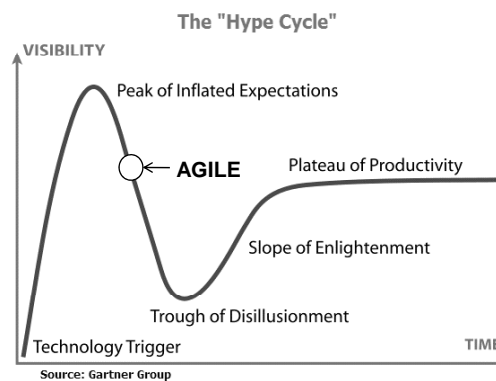
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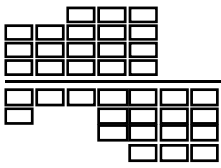
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Agile & Commercial Software Products

- Everyone is doing Agile right now.
- Most are seeing good results, but:
 - ▶ Not as much as they expected
 - ▶ Initial gains might not be sustainable



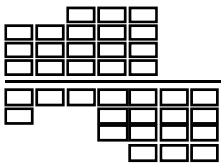


The Source of the Problems

- Agile methodologies originated in custom software development....
 - ▶ One product for one customer
- ...not in commercial software product development.
 - ▶ One product for many customers
- Product Management does not fit cleanly

Agile's Potential Benefits

- Product Managers should be cautiously optimistic that Agile will help with:
 - ▶ Predictable release schedules
 - ▶ Higher product quality
 - ▶ Fewer half-baked features
- But Agile won't ensure the right features are built. That's Product Management's job.



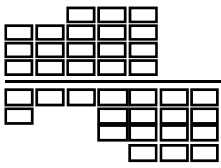
Five Common Challenges

- There are no easy solutions to any of these challenges!

Challenge #1: Avoid Getting Sucked into Engineering's Vortex



- If you're in the War Room all day, you're not visiting customers.
- Possible Solutions:
 - ▶ Team Product managers with Product Owners
 - ▶ PM office hours
 - ▶ Empower Engineers to make sane decisions.



Challenge #2: Being Strategic in the Face of Constant Short-Term Demands



Solutions:

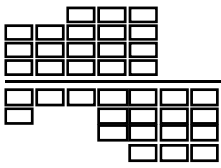
- ▶ GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE!
 - Product Strategy
 - Prioritized backlog
 - Release plan
- ▶ Discuss early & often with Dev Leads

Challenge #3: Not Starving the Architecture



Solutions:

- ▶ Iteration goals for non-code activities, like research.
- ▶ Discuss issues months ahead
- ▶ Keep the long term vision in mind...
- ▶ ...but don't over-engineer!



Challenge #4: Getting In-Release Feedback from Typical Customers

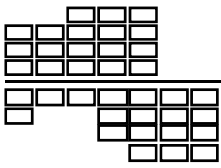


- The Helpful / Convenient Customer is NOT the Typical Customer
- Possible Solutions:
 - ▶ PM review
 - ▶ Open milestone builds to all
 - ▶ Preview webinars
 - ▶ Blog, video, social media

Challenge #5: Understanding Agile is not a License to Constantly Change Your Mind



- The PM needs to provide consistent direction and vision.
- Otherwise, you'll lose credibility and kill Agile.
- Solutions:
 - ▶ Do your strategic work
 - ▶ Layout vision with Dev Team
 - ▶ Attend the daily stand-up
 - ▶ Communicate with Dev leads



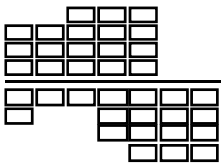
Challenge: Being too Dogmatic about the “One True Agile Way”



- Be Agile about the way you do Agile!
- Adapt to the realities of your situation
- Strive for constant progress, not perfection

Agile Do's for Product Management

- Be the true voice of the MARKET (not just the customer)
- Make time to plan. Plus communicate.
- Keep an eye on the big picture, because the short term will be Very Tempting
- Respect how Agile teams organize themselves.
- Maintain good relations with Agile dev leaders



Agile Do's for Product Management

- Learn to write good user stories.
- Mind your MMFs (Minimum Marketable Features)
- Advocate for keeping teams intact over many releases
- Each iteration, work on improving 1 or 2 things in your Agile process.



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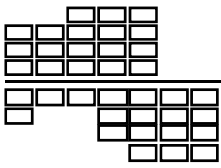
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Contact Sue Raisty-Egami of Sure Product Consulting, Inc.
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