A PROJECT MANAGER’S JOURNEY TOWARDS AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Dr. Ir. Marian Bosch-Rekveldt, CITG, TU Delft
Prof. Dr. Hans Bakker, CITG, TU Delft
Drs. Jolien Ubacht, TBM, TU Delft
Drs. Martijn van Nierop, KWD Resultaatmanagement

Based on MSc thesis Annelot Verbruggen in collaboration with KWD Resultaatmanagement
The journey of today

- **Context**
- Research set-up
- Findings
- Implications
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Further research
Context

- Our world is changing: ICT components everywhere
- Disappointing project performance
- Influence of the project manager on project performance
- Changes in project management approaches
- Agile developments: how do these affect the role of project manager?
- Initiated from research drive KWD Resultaatmanagement
Context

**Traditional**

**Project manager**
- Managing time, money and the scope
- Supervises the work until the result is achieved

**Agile**

**Product owner**
- Value of the product
- Product vision

**Scrum master**
- Effectiveness teams
- Facilitator and coach

**Development team**
- Self-organised
- Shared responsibility for product development
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Research set-up

• MSc study Annelot Verbruggen, collaboration TU Delft and KWD Resultaatmanagement

• Theoretical framework (leading to sensitizing concepts)
  • Project management methods
  • Role of the project manager

• Case studies
  • 10 software development projects
  • Semi structured interviews
  • 25 program managers, project managers, scrum masters, product owners and developers
Research set-up: the main question

• How does the role of a project manager change, comparing an agile project management approach to a traditional project management approach in software development projects?

What is a traditional PM approach?

What is an agile approach?

What is the role of the project manager?

What is happening in software development projects?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Roles of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Replacement and development of a transport application</td>
<td>Transport and logistics</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Program manager, Project manager, Scrum master</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Development of a new digital working environment</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Project manager, Project leader/ Scrum master</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Development of a system for collocation of data</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Road manager, Product owner</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Development of a system for registration of persons and the migration into this new system</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Project leader, Project manager, Scrum master / lead developer</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Transport planning software application</td>
<td>Transport and logistics</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Program manager / head line organisation, Project manager/ product owner, Scrum master</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Digitalization and automation of procedures</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Project manager, Chief scrum master, Product owner</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Development of an application for receiving, processing and controlling declarations</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Project manager, Developer</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Development of data analytics applications</td>
<td>Utilities and energy</td>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>Project manager / Scrum master, Scrum master, Product owner</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Development of an information system for personal data</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Project manager, Senior designer</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Transition to a new financial system</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Project manager, Functional financial consultant / team manager</td>
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</table>
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Findings: traditional waterfall methods

Plan-driven: change is a threat for meeting the plan

Setting fixed requirements at the beginning: without fully understanding the needs

Linear development: it often takes several years to finish a project, risk of delivering the wrong product
Findings: agile methods

Value-driven: change is an opportunity to increase the value of the product

Requirements are set during the project: the user may not know exactly what he wants at the beginning

Iterative development in short cycles: frequent delivery of value in small time-boxes (2-4 weeks)
Findings: comparing the two
Findings: methods vs changing role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Management Aspects</th>
<th>Agile Project Management</th>
<th>Traditional Project Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with the team</td>
<td>Self-organising teams</td>
<td>Traditional teams</td>
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<td>Decision making and authority</td>
<td>Decentralized decision making Pluralist decision making Shared decision making Shared authority</td>
<td>Centralized decision making Managerial decision making Hierarchical decision making Positional authority</td>
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<td>Leadership / management style</td>
<td>Leadership-and- collaboration Shared leadership</td>
<td>Command-and-control Traditional manager</td>
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<td>Managing resources (Iron triangle) and value delivery</td>
<td>Value delivery through fixed resources and time and responding to change</td>
<td>Value delivery through fixed scope (solution) and adhere to the plans</td>
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</table>
Findings: role elements

“HARD” ELEMENTS

- Authority
- Accountability
- Responsibility & tasks

“SOFT” ELEMENTS

- Collaboration with team
- Decision making
- Leadership & style
- Managing resources & value delivery
- Competences
Findings: the sensitizing concepts

1. Project management approach: 
   *Agile context*

2. The “hard” elements of the role: 
   *Responsibilities*

3. The “soft” elements of the role: 
   *Behaviour*

4. The changing role: 
   *Implications*
Findings: 1. how agile is an agile project?
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>PHILOSOPHY</th>
<th>ORGANISATION &amp; MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>DEVELOPMENT PROCESS</th>
<th>PEOPLE &amp; TEAM</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGY</th>
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<td>Agile</td>
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Findings: 1. project organisation variants
Findings: 2. “hard” elements
Findings: 2. “hard” elements of the role within the boundaries of a project

1. THE AGILE PROJECT MANAGER
   ➔ The basis project manager is focused on reporting, time and budget

2. THE CHIEF SCRUM MASTER
   ➔ Helping the development teams and product owner(s) to create high-value products

3. THE STRATEGIC PRODUCT OWNER
   ➔ The project manager as strategic product owner is facilitating decision making about the product value
Findings: “hard” elements of the role in the transition towards agile

1. THE ROAD MANAGER
   → The project manager as informal influencer and strategic product owner

2. THE FACILITATING MANAGER
   → The project manager forms primary a connection between the organisation and the autonomous self-organized teams

3. THE AGILE TRANSITION MANAGER
   → The project manager becomes a change manager, guiding the agile transition
Findings: 3. “soft” elements

1. The traditional project manager becomes a facilitating human-centric leader

2. The project manager as connecting link changes to a facilitating project manager, connecting people

3. Pursuing transparent value-related communication instead of planning-related communication

4. From individual ownership to shared ownership
Findings: 3. “soft” elements

5. Finding a new balance between creating conditions and creating room for the teams

6. Communication through planning documentation changed to regular face-to-face communication

7. Intensified collaboration on definition and distribution of the work

8. From formal influencing towards informal influencing
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Implications

**Vertical agile transition**
- Different organisational structure
- Large impact role of the project manager

**Horizontal agile transition**
- Further integration of the software development life cycle stages, projects and business units
- From a project-view to a product-view of the project manager
Implications

- No one-size-fits-all implementation
- Situational agile PM role found
- The role of project manager is not required in agile organisations!
Implications for practice

1. Be aware that an agile approach is not for everyone
2. Be agile as a project manager
3. Be an agile expert as a project manager
4. Be creative in agile methods tailoring
5. Be aware of the desired behaviour and attitude as a project manager
6. Be open for an agile future and change in function
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Discussion

• Limitations of the research: 10 projects

• Redefining the definition of a project?

• Agile: hype or holy grail?
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Conclusion

- How does the role of a project manager change, comparing an agile project management approach to a traditional project management approach in software development projects?

  - Situational role
  - Tendency towards other roles
  - More focus on behavioral aspects
  - Various future scenario’s
  - Role of PM not required in an agile organisation
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Further research

1. Additional research on the changing role of project manager in an agile project management approach
2. Understanding an agile project management approach at project-level
3. The impact of agile development on organisations
Thank you!

• Follow up questions:

m.g.c.bosch-rekveldt@tudelft.nl

or

luuk.ketel@kwdrm.nl