User research from ICT2.0, etc

What we learned from ICT 2.0

The UK Government's Digital Service Standard puts user needs first, literally; the first two criteria in the Standard are "understand user needs" and "do ongoing user research". So it makes sense that our work to design a new course and qualification for people developing digital services using Agile methods, should do the same.

Our journey started at the Government ICT 2.0 Conference last year, where the Agile Business Consortium facilitated a seminar on "creating effective Agile governance for digital service delivery".

Many of the challenges raised by delegates at the seminar echoed those identified by Daniel Thornton in the editorial to this ebook:

- Governance needs to become less bureaucratic, more flexible and more focused on setting clear goals, delegating decision-making and facilitating cross-programme conversations

- A shared understanding of Agile delivery and digital services needs to be cultivated at all levels, from senior civil servants to ICT developers

- The focus of attention must be on meeting user and business needs, not on the process, and staff need to understand how to select and adapt Agile tools and frameworks flexibly

- People need more support and guidance in how to put the GOV.UK Service Manual into practice

When we reviewed these findings, it seemed clear that there was an educational need that the Agile Business Consortium could help with, and we decided to adapt our widely recognised Agile Project Management (AgilePM®) framework and qualification. This is specifically targeted at digital service development and teaching key elements of the GOV.UK Digital Service Standard and Service Manual.

What we are learning from our alpha programme

Like government digital services, we believe in testing our products with real users, so we've put delegates in both central and local government through a prototype of our new course to find out what works and what doesn't.

We've heard some things we hoped to hear; that the course is engaging and of practical value, that it increases confidence, and that delegates are pleased that the exam will test their knowledge of how their own organisation really works, using language and terms familiar to them.

We've also learned that some of the language we use on the course and in the exams is confusing, and we're working on simplifying things before we launch our beta programme in the summer.

Framework for Public Sector Business Agility

Framework for Business Agility: Enabling public sector bodies to develop and embed business agility at any scale – from a single team focused on a single service, to Agile programmes with many teams delivering complex services. All positioned within a continuously dynamic, strategically aligned portfolio.

Agile Culture and Leadership: Delivering genuine empowerment and flexibility within a robust framework of accountability. Inspiring the public to engage with each other and their service users, collaborating to meet the needs of citizens while preserving value for money.

Agile Strategy and Portfolio: Agile business change scaled to the highest level. Ensuring that change strategy remains under continuous re-view and reflects shifts in the operating environ-ment. Providing a spectrum of coordination and control, from "full-on" Agile enablement at one extreme to a "halfway house" of Agile tolerance at the other. Features include Agile portfolio planning, Agile monitoring and control, active and effective business ownership of initiatives and, where appropriate, Agile budgeting.

Agile Programmes: AgilePgM® is Agile at scale for significant whole-business capability change; embracing Agile and non-Agile projects in a universally applicable Agile framework of governance, coordination and control.

Agile Projects: AgilePM® is a tried, tested and trusted Agile project management approach with more than 60,000 certified practitioners worldwide. For public sector bodies delivering digital services, it is now complemented by a new qualification in AgilePM® and digital services.

Agile Service Evolution: With or without IT enablement or support, business services are at the heart of the way organisations connect with and serve their customers. Agile Service Evolution is an exciting new concept inspired by the pioneering work from UK government digital services and a key element of the Framework for Business Agility.

Agile Product Evolution: For over 20 years, the primary focus of Agile has been software development. Agile Product Evolution will embrace this most popular and critical focus whilst broadening the scope of product evolution to include business products too.

Agile Enablement and Governance: Public sector organisations face a challenging balancing act in adopting business agility, while strengthening public accountability and transparency. We believe the starting point should be governance that engages people with the right knowledge and skills to do the right thing in the right way whilst promoting an environment where truth, trust and transparency is the norm.

AgilePM® and Digital Services

What will the new course allow us to do?

The new AgilePM® and Digital Services course will help organisations to develop a consistent Agile approach, a common language and a skilled workforce (with appropriate accreditation opportunities) for the successful design and delivery of digital services, whether through evolving improvements or step-change transformation.

The Agile Business Consortium has adapted the AgilePM® qualification to explain how its concepts can be easily aligned to the GDS lifecycle and roles, to provide a flexible governance structure to use alongside Scrum, Kanban or any other Agile IT development methodology. The new course will also cover some of the distinctive elements that GDS has injected into Agile discourse, such as "Citizen over Government" and "Assisted Digital". It will also include the tried and tested concepts of alpha, private beta and public beta within the project lifecycle.

Do we really need a new course?

Yes, absolutely. Although there is some good Agile training available, including our own AgilePM® qualification, none of it focuses on how to apply the Digital Service Standard, and the language used is often different to that in use within government departments.

In response to the special complexity of government, GDS has created the GOV.UK Service Standard and supporting Service Manual, which defines a development lifecycle for digital services (Discovery-Alpha-Beta-Live) and provides a set of design standards and a host of supporting guidance. This has produced some excellent results in the design of citizen-facing services (e.g. Tax your Vehicle). However, there is often the need to deliver more complex and far-reaching changes through projects and programmes, and this is where challenges emerge. There is currently no Agile method which effectively addresses the Agile development of Digital Services within a project or programme structure.

More broadly, it's clear from the research we've done that government is struggling to adapt the way it leads and manages change to get the most out of the speed and flexibility that Agile promises. As Daniel Thornton from the Institute of Government observes in the editorial, "Agile development involves decision-making which is swift, and as close to the user as possible. This is not how decisions are made in government, with its overlapping layers of control from the centre and within departments and agencies. Public servants need to learn the specialist skills to do this…"

Who is the new course aimed at?

The course is aimed at all those involved in the delivery of digital services to the public, including central government, local government, the NHS, and the private sector organisations that support them with training and consultancy services.

We want the new course to be useful to both delivery teams and the civil servants who support them as change managers, service managers and product owners. For those with a good grasp of Agile methods, we will introduce guidance on elements that might be new, such as user research, user experience design and digital performance analysis.

At the same time, we will cover the fundamentals of Agile culture and delivery as well as demystify Agile jargon for civil servants and others who are new to Agile.

What is Agile anyway?

Agile is built on simple principles which were radical when they first emerged 20 years ago, and still remain relevant today. Yet they are challenging to put into practice in large, complex and hierarchical organisations like government departments. These ideas are articulated in many different lists – here's a short one:

Agile is collaborative – we have users, technologists, front-line staff and managers working together, often in the same room, throughout the design and delivery of a new service.

Agile is flexible – we know that requirements will change throughout a project, and welcome the improved understanding of user needs that this change represents... we don't hate "scope creep" but embrace change and aim to make decisions quickly and as close to the problem as possible.

Agile is about people, not technology or other "stuff" – we focus on what users and businesses need, and how the people who deliver services can meet those needs – often, but not always, with the help of technology.

Agile is transparent – we prefer showing models, prototypes and the actual product, rather than producing reports, spreadsheets and presentations. We prefer sharing our challenges to hiding them.

How and when can I get involved?

The course is in alpha at the moment (meaning we're trialling a prototype with real people to see how it works), and we'll be sharing those experiences and launching our public beta programme in May 2017.

If you'd like to participate in the public beta programme and get early access to the new course, please email the Agile Business Consortium info@agilebusiness.org .

INNOVATION AND LEARNING OVER THE STATUS QUO.

Challenges for digital government: Still a long way to go

Daniel Thornton at the Institute for Government highlights some of the challenges for digital government, with its complex objectives and legacies

Generations of internet start-ups have transformed services for consumers – starting with search, moving on to retail and banking, and now with the development of new services built on the sharing economy. Citizens also expect public services to be transformed. But while 4 out of 5 adults in Great Britain use the internet every day, only two-thirds have ever transacted online with government.

"Digital transformation" is an expression that's now mentioned a lot in the public sector, but it's <u>often not understood</u>. There's a big gap between where government is and how the best services work in the private sector.

The model of a start-up, which can develop new processes that use digital technology from scratch, looks attractive, but is rarely relevant to government. This is partly because government is often trying to do things that have complex objectives, but also because government has legacies and obligations that are not relevant to the private sector.

There are 6 challenges for digital government:

1. Government needs to recognise the scale of change that is required in services, organisations, processes and ways of working. This will require leadership beyond digital teams and IT departments. Permanent secretaries and heads of agencies need to "get" digital and make sure their organisations are prepared to adapt and work across organisational boundaries. And ultimately ministers need to be prepared to lead change.

2. Government needs to understand how technology can create new options for policy. For example, before automatic number plate recognition was available, creating a congestion charge for central London would have meant toll booths – which would have created more traffic. So understanding digital technology needs to be built in early to the policymaking process, which will mean policy and digital professionals working together in a new way.

3. Government needs to update its technology. Some of the public sector's main services – such as pensions – run on systems going back to the 1980s. These are slow, inflexible and insecure. These systems will need to be updated if the full benefits are to be realised.

4. Government must improve the way it manages digital work. "Agile" development involves decision-making which is swift, and as close to the user as possible. This is not how decisions are made in government, with its overlapping layers of control from the centre and within departments and agencies. Public servants need to learn the specialist skills to do this, and a new approach to risk is needed.

5. Government needs to continue to build centres of expertise outside London, and to develop specialist terms and conditions to recruit digital staff. Recruiting and retaining staff with the skills needed to manage digital transformation is hard, particularly around London.

6. The centre of government – led by the Government Digital Service (GDS) – needs to

be clear about its role and how digital can support everyone in the civil service. GDS's head, Kevin Cunnington, has said that GDS will focus on supporting departments with digital transformation, particularly where joining up services for citizens is failing to happen because departments and agencies are not working together as they should. This is a fine aspiration but it remains to be seen how this will work in practice.

The UK government has over the last few years had a good international reputation for its digital performance, with GDS being emulated in the US, Australia and Singapore, and the code for GOV.UK being used by New Zealand. But a recent study comparing the performance of governments on digital services across the EU found that the UK was a "moderate" performer – behind both France and Germany.

The Cameron government made much of its commitment to digital government. For example, in 2015, George Osborne heralded a 'digital revolution' in Whitehall, and committed £450m of funding to it. The current Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said nothing about this in his first fiscal statement in Autumn 2016. Theresa May has also stayed silent on the subject, in contrast to David Cameron's enthusiastic support. While the hard work of transformation lies in departments and agencies, people notice when an agenda is supported from the top of government – and when it isn't.

It's time for the UK government to redouble its efforts to meet the digital challenge, and bring real transformation to public services.

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Governments must adopt an agile mind-set towards security

Fen Labalme and Robert L. Read of Agile Government Leadership, explain the role of an agile security process in highlighting and preventing security risks

Just as agile software development rapidly iterates on evolving user stories, agile security must rapidly iterate on an evolving threat environment as technology plays an increasingly important role in society. In order to protect against ever-changing vulnerabilities, we must rethink how we approach securing complex government systems.

Existing regulations, such as the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA), represent a static approach to security, requiring voluminous documentation of systems to achieve an official Authority to Operate (ATO) but having no real-time monitoring or verification that the system matches the documentation. This is the antithesis of an agile process, providing no incentive for continuous improvement.

Fortunately, government is working to improve this ineffective approach with the recent mandate for Continuous Diagnostics and Monitoring (CDM) by the Department of Homeland Security. CDM is an attempt to identify risks on an ongoing basis, but it doesn't solve all security challenges for government (and in some ways, it adds new ones).

Ultimately, agencies themselves must adopt a more agile cultural mind-set when it comes to security. As agencies work to implement CDM requirements, they can also work to pivot away from slow-moving, risk-averse attitudes and embrace more agile, effective security. Here are some ways to start:

Have the courage to iterate
While CDM will enable better real-time review of systems and faster response to threats,

agencies must start thinking beyond temporary fixes and demonstrate agility by iterating to new systems more frequently. Government tends to cling to old systems that have been deemed "secure", applying security patches ad nauseum instead of updating to new systems. This makes it difficult for innovative vendors (who are using the latest versions of everything) to safely provide beautiful solutions that work.

Agencies must understand that rapid iteration and fast response to problems is LESS risky than using an old system that was once deemed "secure" after a battery of tests, but is now 7 years out of date. Instead of fearing new systems, governments should embrace updates with an agile mind-set, realising that newer technology provides a more stable foundation that is far more secure (even with bugs) than an old system that is full of holes and patches.

Keep metrics flexible and responsive
One of the goals of CDM is to track metrics and standards of agency IT security (strong passwords, up-to-date patches, etc). But agility is lost when documentation of metrics takes priority over new learnings. For example, two-factor authentication might be shown to be more effective than a strong password, but agencies and vendors are still forced to comply with requirements based on outdated information.

Government should be open to changes in the way security is measured, just as an agile process demands changes in project direction when a better path is discovered. Adhering to outdated metrics because they are in the documentation is like traveling an old, rutty road even when a clear
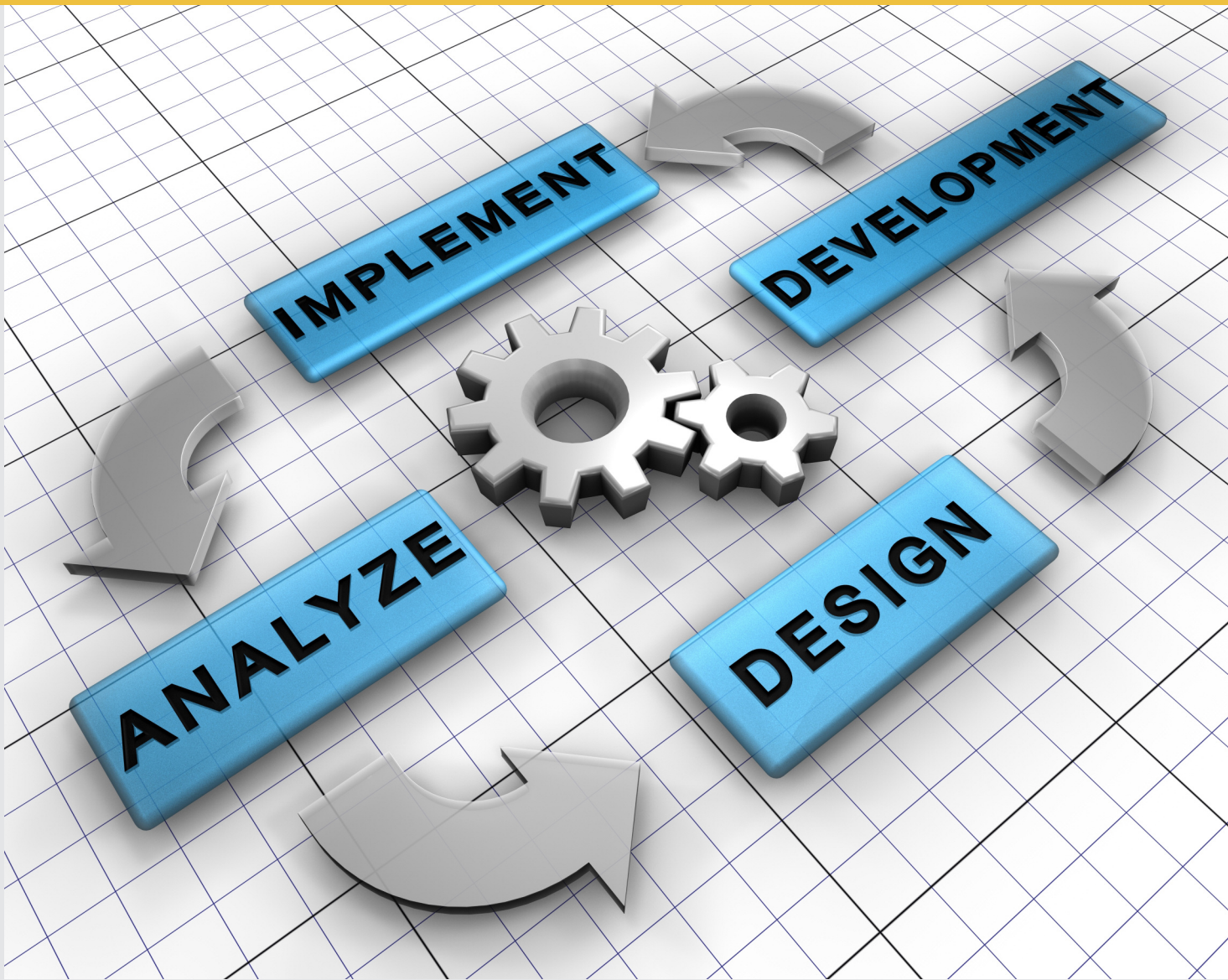
path is within sight, simply because the old road is the only one shown on your map.

Learn from failure

In an agile development process, there is intense focus on what can be learned from the customer or users. An agile security process applies that same intensity of focus to what can be learned from adversaries. Agencies should continually retrospect on any failings in security – not just applying patches, but embracing innovative ways to avoid the problem in the future. Being agile means having the courage to diverge from the status quo in an effort to achieve the highest performance possible.

Embrace open source

Agile technologists and vendors in the open source community are eager to provide solutions to government, but are hindered by the fact that the CDM requirements are behind closed source code. If the Department of Home-land Security would publish the APIs and data

formats required for collecting and transmitting the required metrics, agencies could more easily benefit from the collective knowledge of open source innovators, gaining access to solutions that reflect the most recent learnings.

Security is never "done"

Agencies shouldn't ask "Are our systems secure?" Security is not a destination to be reached or a project to be checked off a list. Rather, agencies should ask "How have we recently improved our security?" That is an agile question that will prompt a re-examination of static approaches and lead agencies on a journey of continuous improvement towards better, faster security.

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