

Agile Digital Services: A Success Story

**Agile
Business**
Consortium



agilebusiness.org/digital-services

“I believe the creation of the Government unsung triumphs of the last Parliament.”

Agile and Digital Services: A Success Story

There is a continually increasing pace of change in all walks of life but particularly in business and government organisations. Organisations of all kinds can no longer afford either to ignore the changes happening or to react too slowly to them. The successful organisations of the future will be those that are highly responsive to change.

A recent survey showed that 94% of companies now use Agile in some form or another. This is an amazing figure, given that Agile as we know it only started in 2001. It also means that Agile is now an established way of working and can no longer be seen as a “passing fad”. This is further evidenced by the changes in Agile conferences which are well attended and growing events. Their audiences have changed over the past few years, from software developers to senior members of companies wanting to understand how they can implement Agile to be sustainable in their organisations.

So, it is no surprise that so many organisations, including government organisations, are adopting Agile as their preferred way of working. However, to be a real success, Agile adoption programmes must consider the need to change organisational culture and provide rigour and control while maintaining the fast-moving pace, dynamism and effectiveness of empowered, focused small teams.

This is why the Government Digital Service (GDS) has worked on its Digital Service Standard and why the Agile Business Consortium has produced the Agile Digital Services (AgileDS) set of guidance. The mission of the Consortium is:

“Leading, promoting and enabling business agility worldwide”

In this booklet we describe our AgileDS journey and what we have achieved.



UNITED NATIONS E-GOVERNMENT SURVEY 2016

E-GOVERNMENT IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Economic &

Social Affairs

Table 5.2. World e-government leaders with very high E-Government Development Index (EGDI) levels

Country	Region	2016 Rank	Ranking Trendline (2003 - 2016)
United Kingdom	Europe	1	
Australia	Oceania	2	
Republic of Korea	Asia	3	
Singapore	Asia	4	
Finland	Europe	5	
Sweden	Europe	6	
Netherlands	Europe	7	
New Zealand	Oceania	8	
Denmark	Europe	9	
France	Europe	10	
Japan	Asia	11	
United States of America	Americas	12	
Estonia	Europe	13	

Digital Service Standard – an example of good practice

Did you know that the UK was named as Number One in the World e-Government Leaders survey commissioned by the United Nations? The UK also came out as the second most advanced digital nation in the world after the United States, according to research from consultancy Accenture in association with Oxford Economics.

This is all critical groundwork and a solid foundation for the UK’s future economic growth and development.

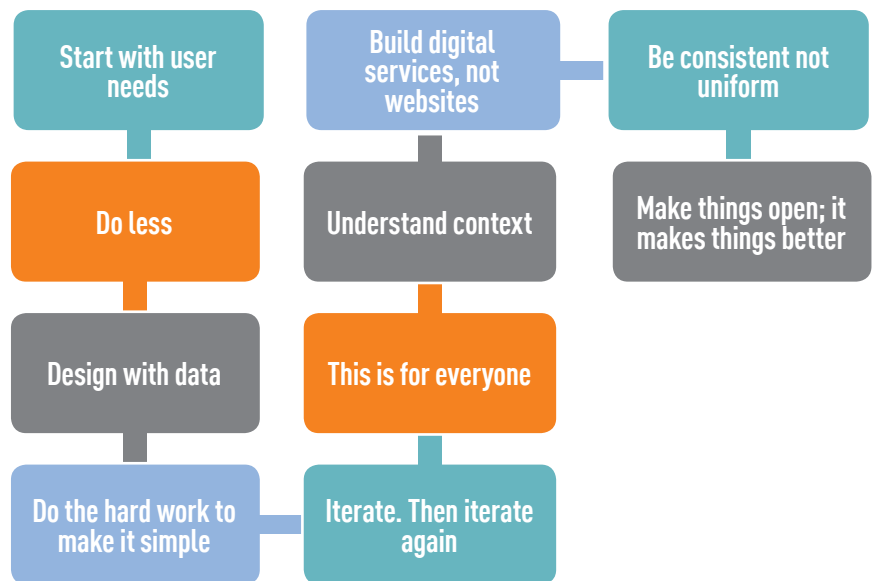
FIGURE 1: 9th Annual State of Agile Report, 2015, VersionOne Inc.

Digital Service is one of the great

- Former Prime Minister David Cameron

Building services not websites

The UK Government's Digital Service Standard is focused on ensuring user needs are met. In fact, the Standard states "start with user needs" and "build services not websites" as two of its design principles, helping government create and run great digital services. The standard is well tried, shown to work, and drawing increasing attention from other countries, so it made sense to use it as a basis for our Agile Digital Services (AgileDS) product set, which now includes written guidance, training and qualifications for people developing digital services.



Who is AgileDS aimed at?

AgileDS is aimed at all those involved in the delivery of digital services, including central government, local government, the NHS, and private sector organisations.

We want it to be useful to all members of multi-disciplinary service delivery teams and those who support them. For those with a good grasp of Agile methods, we introduce guidance on elements that might be new, such as user research, user experience design and digital performance analysis. At the same time, we cover the fundamentals of Agile culture and delivery as well as demystifying Agile jargon for civil servants and others who are new to Agile.

Our AgileDS journey

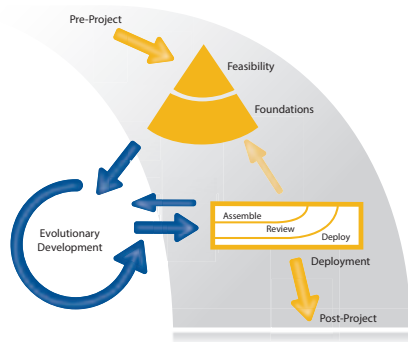
In embarking on our journey to create an effective set of guidance, we adopted the first principle and started with user needs – doing our research, analysis and, most importantly, talking to users to see what people really needed.

Some of main findings that came back from this research were:

- There is a large and growing appetite for using Agile approaches to deliver digital services, but there was a lack of relevant training and development provision
- Accreditation is highly valued by individuals and organisations alike, but the full benefits would never be realised until the exams tested people for knowledge and skills required on a daily basis in the workplace
- Governance needs to become less bureaucratic, more flexible and more focused on setting clear goals, delegating decision making and facilitating cross programme conversations
- People at all levels, from senior civil servants to ICT developers, need to understand the concepts, tools and techniques that must be applied to deliver great digital services
- Digital service development is pushing the concept of multi-disciplinary teams to a new level with all team members needing to know enough about user research, service design, DevOps and how it is possible to deliver software at high pace and scale

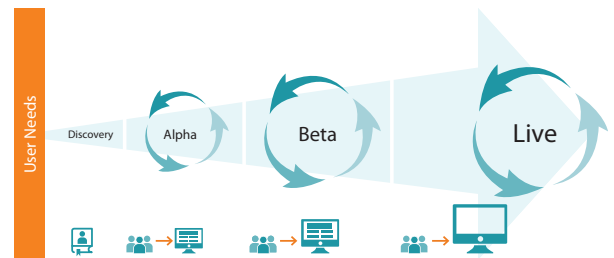
What we have done

This research reinforced the assumed need for further advice and education. The Agile Business Consortium seemed well placed to tackle this, given our experience in Agile and the success of the widely recognised Agile Project Management (AgilePM®) framework and qualification. AgilePM has been very successful, but



AGILE PM

the lifecycle and terminology did not match that of a government workplace. Peter Stansbury, one of the authors of AgileDS explains: "It was an exam nightmare, and not what we would want training and qualification to be. People were doing the qualification, but then needing to 'forget' chunks of what they had learnt when they got back to work. For the government sector, the qualification was testing knowledge that would never be used!"



GOV.UK DIGITAL

The new AgileDS guidance is specifically targeted at digital service development and reinforcing key elements of the UK GDS Standard and Service Manual.

To a large extent the approach we have taken mirrors the good practice defined in the Service Manual. "Often when a course is created," reflects Peter, "course architects disappear into a darkened room for a long period of time, and then finally there is one big reveal when every aspect of the course is completed. We took a completely different route, and consequently have ended up with a very different course to the one that would have resulted from a traditional method. AgileDS is the result of a wealth of user research and involvement and has evolved and adapted through iterative development."

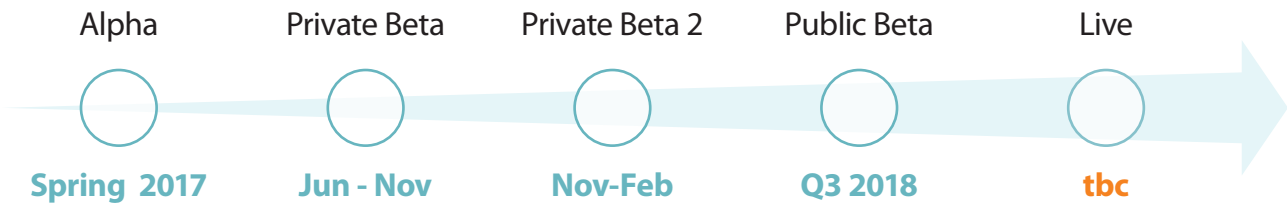
We created early prototypes and undertook alpha and private beta trials to test what we had done. Most of the early trials centred around a series of training sessions for central and local government delegates, using course material that was far from perfect. We are very grateful to our training partners for taking the time to run these.

"The sooner you get stuff live the better."
- Peter Stansbury

Putting the course into live use at the earliest stage as a beta product meant that a lot of valuable feedback was gathered. "If you give somebody something predefined and finished," continues Peter, "they won't comment because they don't think they can make a difference. If it's unfinished, it's easier for them to discuss how they can apply the benefits and what amendments they'd like to be made." Whilst response to the beta course approach was very positive, the content was in need of improvement. These were not improvements that further proof reading would have picked up, but valuable amendments that were unlikely to emerge through any other route. For instance:

- Terminology was still confusing between that used in AgilePM and in the Digital Service Standard. For instance, roles, principles and processes
- There seemed too much emphasis on project management and the links to AgilePM. Whilst this may be required in a lot of cases, it should also be possible to use the guidance without project management
- There needed to be better integration between the printed handbook, digital media, curated websites and blogs (from the Consortium and GDS for example)
- There needed to be clearer distinction between the core components and those that could be included as options and customisations to specific situations

Much of the recent work has concentrated on these points. For instance, the latest version concentrates on Digital Service Standard concepts and terminology, placing links to AgilePM as appropriate. This makes it far less confusing and also enables its potential use without AgilePM, although there is clear guidance on how the two can be used together.



We have prepared the live courses and accreditation in partnership with APMG International.

“APMG is delighted to be working with the Agile Business Consortium to deliver the AgileDS training and certification scheme, supporting the new handbook published by the Consortium.

A great innovation that blends AgilePM, the GDS Service Design Manual, and some emerging thinking from the Agile Business Consortium around business agility.”

- Richard Pharro, CEO of APMG

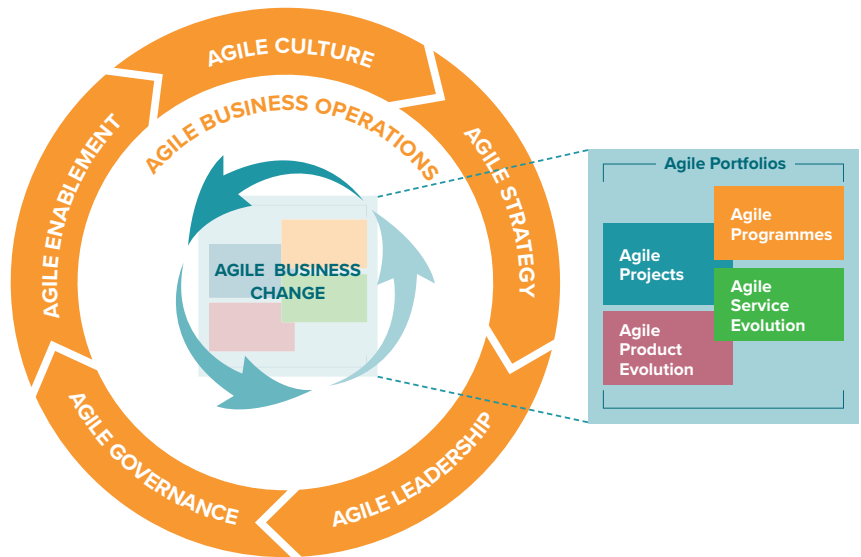
Read more from Richard Pharro in the article at the end of this booklet.

Where does Agile Digital Services fit in?

As an organisation, the Agile Business Consortium is committed to its goal of making Agile concepts part of the DNA of a company, used throughout all functions and for a wide variety of uses. An Agile organisation values and empowers its customers and its employees, and is structured to be able to innovate quickly and respond to change with the urgency required.

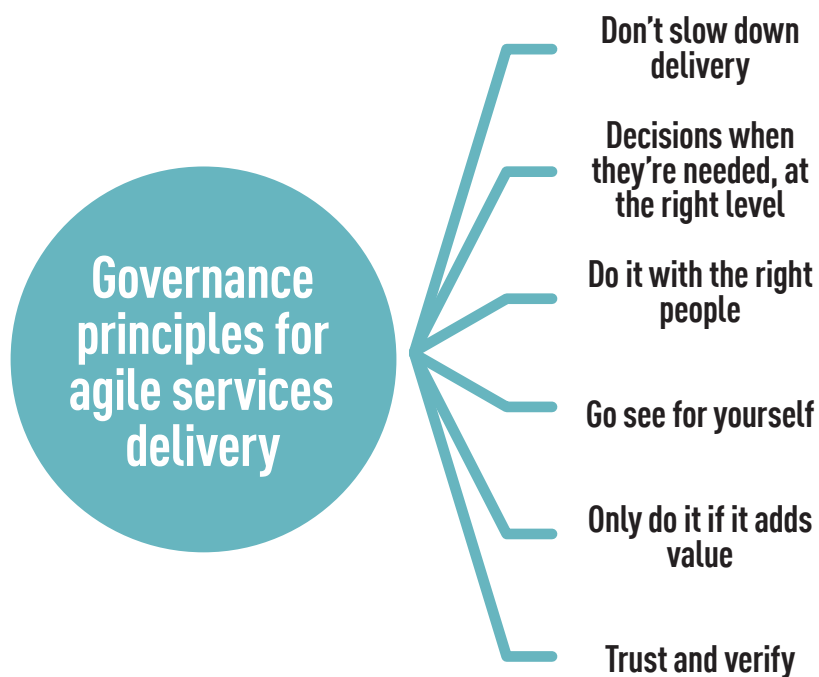
Part of the Consortium’s strategy is providing a set of products that can help organisations become and remain Agile. At a strategic, organisation-wide level we offer products to help with implementing business agility, defining Agile strategies and creating and managing portfolios. At an operational level, there are products to help with Agile programmes, projects, products and service delivery.

AgileDS complements this second operational set as it focuses on developing and continuously improving



services using Agile concepts and techniques. It 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 transformations.

Whilst AgileDS can, and sometimes will, be enough, we have worked hard to identify and explain how AgileDS and AgilePM can be used together. As is often the case, the result is greater than the sum of its two parts. For instance, the often-touchy subject of governance in Agile is tackled and explained in AgilePM, whilst AgileDS adopts concepts such as “Citizen over Government” and “Assisted Digital” and the now tried and tested concepts of alpha, private beta and public beta within the service lifecycle.



Does AgileDS add value?

Feedback from the private betas is very positive.

Although there is some good Agile training and guidance 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.

From the research we've carried out, it can be seen that organisations are struggling to adapt the way they lead and manage change to get the most out of the speed and flexibility that Agile promises. The combination of AgilePM with the excellent principles and ways of working within the Digital Service Standard will enable organisations, and not just government organisations, to reap the benefits Agile service delivery provides while remaining in control and meeting their governance and regulatory requirements.

GOV.UK
provides great
principles for
government
digital services

Training
needs to be
aligned to the
GOV.UK
lifecycle to be
truly useful

The **GOV.UK**
lifecycle has
lessons for Agile
practices outside
government

How and when can I get involved?

AgileDS is in public beta at the moment (meaning we're in the final testing phase before going live). If you'd like more information, please email the Agile Business Consortium info@agilebusiness.org.

Richard Pharro – APMG:

We're living in an ever-changing and increasingly digital world, which is having a significant impact on the very nature of organisations and how they operate. To be successful, organisations need to be Agile and able to react quickly to an ever-evolving business landscape and fierce competition.

And it's not just the private sector. Governments and local authorities have a great opportunity to embrace the shift to digital and revolutionise services they provide to citizens.

From personalised services in health and social care for the elderly at home, to tailored learning in education and access to culture, the tools, techniques, technology and approaches of the internet age offer greater opportunities than ever before to improve services.

The UK has already made good progress and the UN has recognised the UK as the world leader in digital government*. Since the publication of the Government Digital Strategy (GDS), the UK Government and several local authorities have made significant progress in building online services.

Central to the development and delivery of effective digital services is the Agile philosophy and supporting approaches.

APMG is delighted to be working with the Agile Business Consortium to deliver the AgileDS training and certification scheme, supporting the new handbook published by the Consortium.

APMG has been working in partnership with the Consortium since 2009, developing the popular AgilePM (Agile Project Management, 2010), AgilePgM (Agile Programme Management, 2014) and AgileBA (Agile Business Analysis, 2015) certifications and accrediting



training providers around the globe. AgilePM has since established itself as the world's leading framework and certification for Agile project management, with over 85,000 exams sat since its release in 2010.

The new AgileDS handbook has been specifically designed to complement the Government Digital Service (GDS) which, since its creation in 2011, has had a transformative effect on the design and development of digital services in the UK Government.

It's a great innovation that blends AgilePM, the GDS Service Design Manual, and some emerging thinking from the Agile Business Consortium around business agility. It offers practitioners involved in the design and delivery of digital services a mature Agile approach that embraces Agile product and service development in the context of Agile, business change-focused programmes and projects. It allows users to gain the benefits of a rapid, responsive approach without introducing governance and control-related risks.

Alongside the new guidance, APMG has developed an official

supporting syllabus and Foundation & Practitioner examinations to offer practitioners an exciting opportunity for professional development in the field of Agile digital service delivery. Approved training courses are offered by APMG's network of accredited training organisations (ATOs), accredited to highest standards for training delivery.

Both APMG International and the Agile Business Consortium are committed to delivering quality solutions for practitioners. The AgileDS materials and training have been through a rigorous development process, incorporating extensive beta & public testing. This ensures a high quality and valuable training & certification experience, enabling candidates to immediately implement knowledge and practices acquired during training.

AgileDS provides candidates with a structured framework for managing digital projects successfully. We look forward to continually supporting the initiative and the successful delivery of digital services by central and local government.

Creating Generation Agile

*The longest
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annual Agile
Conference
in the world*

One Annual Event
Two Days
Three Powerful
Tracks to Explore

Agile Business Conference 26 & 27 September 2018

Learn more about Business Agility and Agile working at the Agile Business Conference, September 26 & 27, London. The theme Creating Generation Agile will explore routes to agility across three tracks; people, strategy and delivery. Organised by the Agile Business Consortium and now in its sixteenth year, the event is the world's longest running Agile conference.

Tickets available at agileconference.org

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Organised by

