

Agile.Everyware

Interview with Scott Ambler

So in 2001 a group of 17 software developers got together at Snow Bridge, Utah to discuss best practices in software development. They had gotten together out of frustration I guess you would say. There was this trend in the industry towards this greater level of bureaucracy, and they were observing it wasn't working very well. All this extra process was actually decreasing the success rates of project teams, not increasing them. Project teams were building systems that really didn't meet the status quo needs. They might have been building something to specification, but they didn't build things that people actually needed. The goal of the agile movement was really to promote these lightweight, more effective approaches to software development. They wrote something called the "Agile Manifesto", the "Agile Manifesto" defines four values and a set of 12 principles that support those values to describe what works, what doesn't work, and to focus on the things that work. And then what's happened over the last 10 years, Agile is being applied in a wide range of environments now by a wide range of organizations, because it works better. So Agile teams work in a highly collaborative manner, they work closely with their project stakeholders, and every few weeks what they will do is they will produce more working software to show. And it's not just software sometimes it's hardware, they might be changing a business process, and as a result they provide the stakeholders the opportunity to provide complete feedback to steer the project. This makes Agile project easier to govern. There's a much greater level of discipline, a greater focus on quality, and they achieve greater levels of ROI.

We're seeing Agile applied across the board from fairly simple websites to complex enterprise class applications. We are even seeing Agile applied on system engineering projects. The goal of IBM Agility at scale, is to help organizations understand and apply Agile methodologies in more complex situations, on large teams, on globally distributed teams, in regulatory environments, and so on. For all the discussion we hear about white boards, and post it notes, to stuff like that, they are not going to work so well when the team is geographically distributed. So instead they are going to have to start using tools that reflect realities of geographic distribution, such as Rational Team Concert, it really is a one-stop shop for distributed Agile development.

There's no more of this cobbling together of a bunch of point specific tools, but instead it's all built into one. It really gets out of way of people and allows them to collaborate effectively. So for developers it integrates right into their IDE's making it easy to use and easy to access. For other people there's a web based interface, allowing them to interact with a team in a simple way that they already understand.

Organizations that have adopted IBM Rational Team Concert are seeing a wide array of benefits. One of our customers who recently reported that RTC will reduce your overall project over run costs by upwards to 20%. Another customer has seen a 30% productivity gain on their goal projects. Another customer has seen developer productivity improvement of 50%. IBM Agility at Scale is the only approach to Agile delivery that allows teams to meet all their requirements of software development, regardless of the complexity that they face, and to work the way that they want to work. IBM has several services that can help you adopt Agile effectively. At jazz.net you can download a fully functional version of Rational Team Concert. For teams of up to 10 people completely free of charge with no time limit on it so you see if Agile Software Development is for you. I also suggest that you talk to IBM for an evaluation of your needs and to help you understand how to adopt Agile effectively.