

Waterfall-Teamwork vs Agile-Teamwork (part 1)

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“The future is already here, it’s just not evenly distributed” (William Gibson).

The future of agile-teamwork is already here it’s just not evenly distributed - many leaders, teams and organizations are still stuck in waterfall-teamwork. “Waterfall” vs “Agile” contrasts two fundamentally different modes of teamwork and this two part article will help you understand the difference - look out for part 2 next month.

The future of “Agile” teamwork is already here, perhaps best embodied in the field of “Agile Software Development”, which is already huge. This was born out of a 2001 meeting of software gurus resulting in the 4 core values of the Agile Manifesto: We have come to value:

- **Individuals and interactions over processes and tools**
- **Working software over comprehensive documentation**
- **Customer collaboration over contract negotiation**
- **Responding to change over following a plan**

“Waterfall” is the colloquial name for the old approach to the teamwork of software development on the right-hand-side of each of these core-value statements.

Jeff Sutherland was there at that meeting and in his book, “Scrum: The Art of Getting Twice as Much Done in Half the Time”, he further explains “Waterfall”:

“I first created Scrum, with Ken Schwaber, twenty years ago, as a faster, more reliable, more effective way to create software in the tech industry. Up to that point—and even as late as 2005—most software development projects were created using the “**Waterfall**” method, where a project was completed in distinct stages and moved step by step toward ultimate release to consumers or software users. The process was slow, unpredictable, and often never resulted in a product that people wanted or would pay to buy. Delays of months or even years were endemic to the process. The early step-by-step

plans, laid out in comforting detail in Gantt charts, reassured management that we were in control of the development process—but almost without fail, we would fall quickly behind schedule and disastrously over budget.”

Scrum is at the heart of “agile” and Jeff Sutherland goes on to say:

“To overcome those faults, in 1993 I invented a new way of doing things: Scrum. It is a radical change from the prescriptive, top-down project management methodologies of the past. Scrum, instead, is akin to evolutionary, adaptive, and self-correcting systems. Since its inception, the Scrum framework has become the way the tech industry creates new software and products. But while Scrum has become famously successful in managing software and hardware projects in Silicon Valley, it remains relatively unknown in general business practice.”

In an increasingly [VUCA world](#), waterfall software development doesn’t work! Nor do waterfall business practices! We too must move from waterfall mindsets to agile mindsets. Next month we will explore the differences as they apply to any business, any project and any team.

