Chapter 10
Agile Management for Multimedia:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The past few years have seen a revolutionary transition in the field of project management that enlightened the strength of agile methodologies as a strategic attack towards the progressively faster development rhythms and growing innovation requirements. In this chapter, the authors present a study developed under this context that aims to discuss the suitability of agile project management to multimedia production through a case study focused on an academic context depleted in management formalities, the Laboratory SAPO/UA. The most prominent project of this setting is the SAPO Campus, and its team is analyzed and subjected to an agile project management model. Consequently, the authors anticipate an enhancement to the studied project and the gathering of arguments that empower a clear perspective on the fitness of agile project management to the context of multimedia development.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the last decade, the growing needs for innovation and the constant turbulence of business markets have forced companies worldwide to change many of their established practices. New product development styles have shifted from "predictive" to "adaptive" and traditional approaches have found themselves continually opposed by the numerous benefits and the increasing use of agile approaches (Highsmith, 2004). And project management did not escape such revolution. The tight association between this area and the society it escorts has always determined its evolu-

tion as a journey of progressive adaptation, where its methods, instruments, and strategies are clearly influenced by the society's multiple dimensions. But what was once a mere set of handy processes, it is now a structured discipline crucial for the survival in the enterprise context and achieving project management excellence became a priority to the majority of businesses (Kerzner, 2010). The need to fight the business market volatility and the awareness towards how a rigorous project management accession is fundamental to that fight are strengthening agile project management as a possible solution. Thereupon, this period brings out the relevance of understanding how can agile methodologies be adapted to the management of a specific type of business where innovation is at its fastest pace: multimedia production. Driven from a greater purpose of discussing such fitness, this case study aimed to comprehend how to specify an agile management model for an academic context. To accomplish such proposition, three specific objectives were defined: to adequately diagnose the management status of an academic context, to respond to it by developing an appropriate agile management model and to validate such model after its implementation. The focus of the study was Lab SAPO/UA, an academic context of multimedia product development which enclosed a set of projects functioning in the absence of any kind of formal management processes or practices. This nonexistence became the starting point for the methodology specification.

Chapter Organization

In this chapter, the Background begins by providing a contextual framing to agile project management, with particular focus on agile values and its relevance to today's enterprise. Then, the Case Study section presents the involving scope of the studied object and describes the different study phases. To attempt a lighter and hence clearer reading, the latter section will combine each phase with the data we have collected during it.

This chronological line will be preserved during the debating of analyzed data in the Discussion section and in Future Research Directions new possibilities of investigation are presented. Finally, the Global Conclusions synthesizes the most relevant aspects of the chapter.

BACKGROUND

The past 10 years have witnessed a non-stopping technological progress that not only transformed almost every little aspect of the common citizen's quotidian as contributed to the increasing volatility of the business industry. In this "rapidly developing digital media industry, only change has been permanent" (Pelkonen, 2008, p. 26) and the next step on the evolution of project management became finding an answer on how to be prepared for the uncertain. According to Cooper, as cited by Highsmith (2004), the ability to quickly and competently mount an attack is critical to win the battle of new product development on this present scenario. Due to a greater vulnerability to the influences of the society's technological progress, this description becomes particularly relevant to the sectors of information and communication technologies and even more so to the specific context of multimedia production. The consecutive modifications that the technological spiral of innovation determines on chains of value and business models are of primary influence on multimedia production due to its central need of producing creative contents and innovative applications (Bruck & Boumans, 2008). The combination of the particular needs for speed in the development and innovation of obtained results and the uncertainty of the economic scenario build a frame against which all the anticipatory methods, linear thinking and prescriptive, fixed processes (that characterized the product development in the past) become inadequate – and progressively adaptive development methods (as agile methodologies), that try to take advantage of the emergent

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