Agile Excellence Maturity Model

Introduction

In an increasingly dynamic and complex business environment, the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to change is more important than ever. This is where Agile comes into play and it's how Cognizant supports your company in doing and being agile.

Agile is not just a methodology; it represents a mindset that embraces change and focuses on delivering maximum value to your business and the end customer while simultaneously increasing quality and reducing costs. It promotes adaptive planning, early delivery and continuous improvement while encouraging rapid and flexible responses to change. All of this is made possible through a strong feedback culture in short loops where the customer is the focal point.

In today's digital age, customer expectations are higher than ever. They demand high-quality products and services that meet their needs, and

they want them now. Agile helps organizations meet these demands by emphasizing customer collaboration, regular feedback and frequent delivery.

Moreover, in a world disrupted by uncertainty, a fragile global market, resource shortages and new technologies, the need for agility has become even more important. Organizations are required to navigate uncertainty and make quick decisions to survive and thrive in the new normal.

Cognizant can provide a clear understanding of your current Agile maturity and deliver tailored insights to help your organization become more resilient and adaptable. This includes improving product quality, accelerating time to market, increasing productivity, and enhancing both customer and employee satisfaction.

Agile equips organizations with the capabilities they need to succeed in today's fast-paced business landscape.

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Pillars of the Agile Excellence Maturity Model

Many organizations proudly label themselves as an agile company, but in most cases, it's merely agile washing. They adopt new names for existing roles, embrace scrum and sprint, provide training and often overlook the most significant challenge—cultural shift. Proper cultural transformation is essential for organizations to truly embrace Agile principles, enhance their adaptability, foster innovation and maintain competitiveness. At Cognizant, we offer a comprehensive Agile Excellence Maturity Model designed to help organizations assess, plan, and advance their Agile journey. Our model is built on years of experience and industry insights, ensuring a holistic approach to transformation.

Understanding the organization and assessing current practices:

Begin by understanding the organization's culture, structure and business goals, as well the challenges they face and how teams currently work. Evaluate existing practices against Agile principles and values.

Gap analysis:

Identify the gaps between the current context and Agile principles to determine necessary changes.

Recommendations:

Based on the gap analysis, provide recommendations for actionable improvements. This may include changes in processes, tools or culture.

Roadmap creation:

Develop a roadmap for implementing the recommendations. This should include clear steps, timelines and responsibilities.

Implementation:

Start implementing the changes according to the roadmap. Begin with small and gradually scale up.

Review and adjust:

Continuously review progress and make necessary adjustments. Agile is about inspecting and adapting regularly.

Remember that every organization is unique. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to Agile. Our roadmap is tailored to fit the specific needs of each organization.

Agile maturity assessment and excellence roadmap

At Cognizant, we take an empirical approach to the Agile journey. We gather data to understand the current state and maturity of the organization. Our Agile maturity assessment serves as the starting point, helping us identify areas for enhancement to develop actionable steps for progress. We evaluate team agility, organization agility, product agility, business agility, tool adoption and automation, people and culture, and leadership and strategy. We collaborate with the client to establish objectives and key results (OKRs) to ensure the effectiveness of our approach.

Assessment model

Team agility and DevOps

How well an agile team embodies the principles and values of agile and DevOps, and how effectively they apply Agile practices in their daily work?

Business agility

Is the company a customer-centric one? Are there lean portfolio practices or management? Are lean budgeting, Agile HR and change management aligned with agility?

Organization agility

Is the organization structured around value? How well Agile processes have been adopted? Are the processes lean and agile? Is the organization flexible? Has lean governance been adopted?

Tools adoption and automation

How well are the tools and procedures coherent with processes and adherent to teamwork? Are CICD and DevOps present and optimized to help development?

Product agility

How well are teams aware of product quality? Is the business fully aware of customer feedback? Are they data-driven? Is the user part of the development phase? Is the organization a product-oriented one?

Leadership and strategy

How well are the teams aligned to strategy and vision? How does the leadership support teams to create sustainable pace? Are Agile practices such as design thinking, personas and empathy map used?

People and culture

How well are people aligned with the company culture? Are principles such as innovation, transparency and collaboration present?

Our maturity model is designed to help clients set meaningful milestones on their Agile transformation roadmap, providing tangible outcomes to strive for. It's not just about understanding where they are—it's about defining where they want to go and how to get there. This structured approach ensures that the journey toward Agile maturity is well-defined, measurable and aligned with the organization's strategic goals.

Tailored roadmap to enable the next step in the Agile journey

Culture

Be Agile

Continuous improvement

- Tailoring Agile to the organization's need outside of formal frameworks—minimizing waste with the Lean Agile processes
- Full business integration into development
- Customer-centric and value-based culture for guide teams
- Operational excellence, thanks to DevSecOps

Scaled

- Enterprise wide sponsorship and governance in place
- Agile process is used to drive business value
- Rolling wave planning in place
- Continuous integration and automation used by all teams
- Data, metrics and practices drive continuous improvement
- Agile budgeting practices in place

Repeatable

- Value stream tracked and addressed
- Cross-silos integration is emerging
- Enterprise wide sponsorship and governance Is emerging
- Agile roles and practices are defined
- Rolling wave planning has started
- Continuous integration and automation are emerging
- Agile process is measurable
- Ops integration is emerging
- Lack of ops collaboration
- Few business inclusion
- Security and compliance topics are emerging

Stable

- Still silos in organization
- No value stream optimized or tracked
- Some Agile practices in place
- Team Agile roles in place
- Team measurements in place
- Little or no test automation
- Dedicated teams emerging but not stream-aligned
- Poor ops integration or collaboration
- Few business inclusion

Practicing

- Some Agile practices in place
- Some Agile roles in place
- Team measurements emerging
- Little or no test automation
- Poor ops integration or collaboration
- No security by design
- Low business inclusion

Acting

Do Agile

Water scrum-fall	DevOps	Agility
Team	Program	Portfolio

Common pain points and challenges in Agile adoption

Adopting Agile can bring significant benefits, but it also comes with its own set of challenges and pain points.

- **Resistance to change:** People often resist changes. Agile requires significant changes in how teams work and collaborate. This means investing time, effort and resources in new practices, reorganizations, defining roles and training, all while facing challenges to influence behavior.

- **Lack of understanding:** Agile is often misunderstood or partially implemented, resulting in ineffective practices.

- **Cultural shift:** Agile requires a cultural shift toward collaboration, transparency and continuous improvement, which can be difficult in traditionally hierarchical organizations.

- **Inadequate training:** Without proper training and coaching, teams may struggle to implement Agile practices effectively. Often organizations just give some training, expecting everyone will change their way of working. Invest in more practical and pragmatic coaches, support people to fit in the new roles and responsibilities, and reduce the learning curve.

- **Scaling challenges:** While Agile might work well for small teams, scaling Agile practices across large organizations can be challenging. Some frameworks simply don't work well in some circumstances. All organizations are different and copying a model won't work because the context is different.

- **Insufficient management support:** Agile requires strong support from management. Without it, teams may face difficulties in adopting new practices.

- **Neglecting quality:** In the rush to deliver quickly, teams might neglect quality. Agile should not compromise quality for speed. Quality assurance is crucial in these practices.

Benefits and opportunities of this model

Adopting an agile mindset over a methodology offers numerous opportunities and benefits for organizations:

- **Increased customer satisfaction:** Agile focuses on delivering value to customers through frequent and early delivery of working software, regular feedback and customer collaboration. This will lead to increased market share and ROI, reduced repair costs and improved reputation.

- **Improved product quality:** Agile emphasizes quality assurance through practices like test-driven development, continuous integration and automated testing. Improving the process can help mitigate the risks of missing regulatory compliance.

- **Reduced risks:** Agile reduces risks by breaking down large projects into manageable iterations, allowing for early issue detection and resolution. This increases collective knowledge and reduces dependence on individuals.

- **Enhanced team collaboration:** Agile fosters a culture of collaboration, transparency and empowerment among team members, leading to higher morale and performance. This approach will not only reduce your retention rate but also significantly increase employee satisfaction and overall experience.

- **Faster time to market:** Agile enables faster delivery of software by eliminating waste, optimizing processes and responding to market changes. Leave the Business co-create with the developers means build the right thing at the right time.

- **Greater business agility:** Agile helps organizations adapt to changing market conditions and customer needs by embracing change and innovation. Unleashing the creativity and problem-solving abilities of the team has an enormous impact on the business.
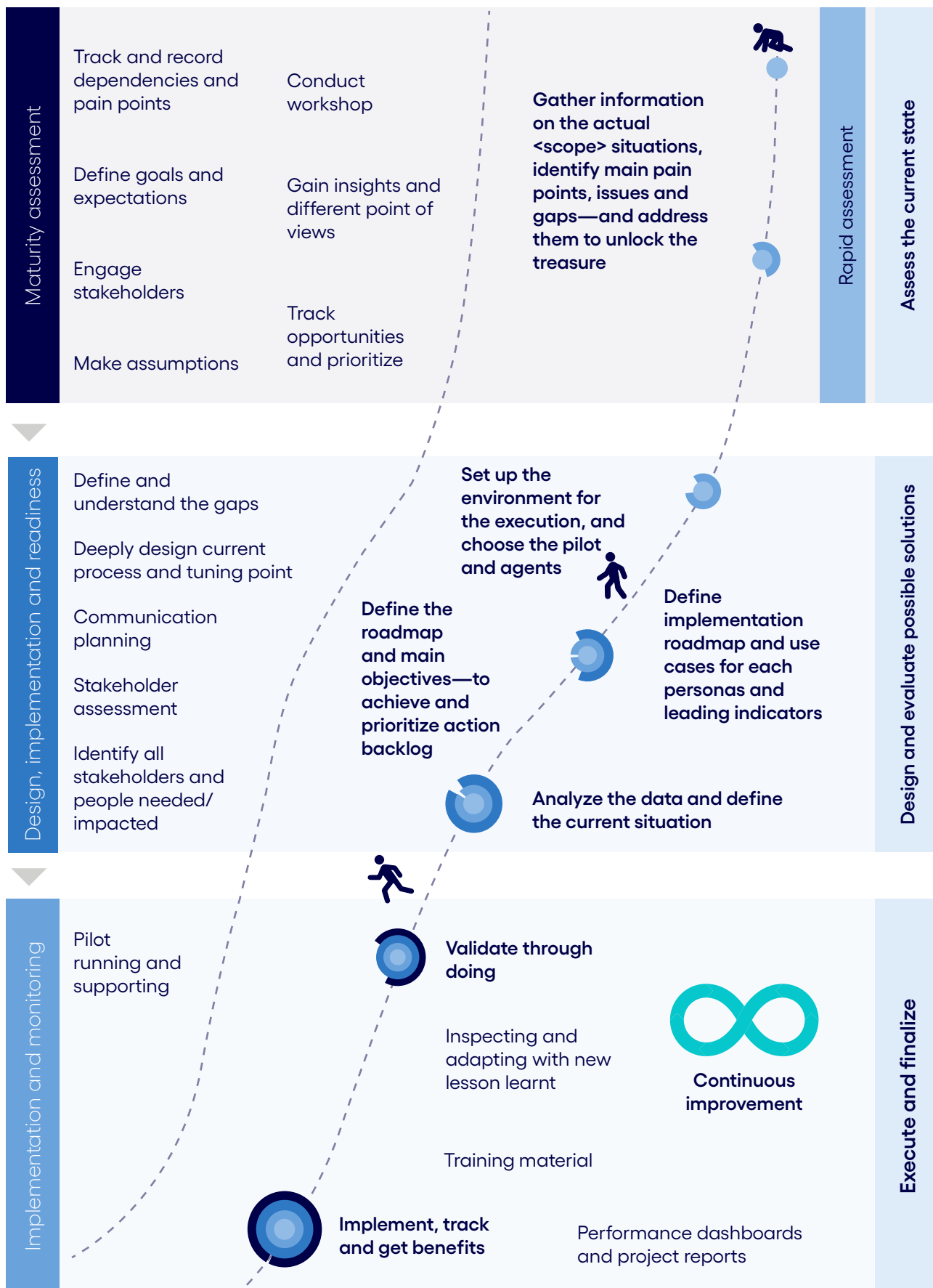
Our approach to unlock clients' potential

We help clients unlock value within their business processes by harnessing the power of data to discover insights that will guide their transformation journey. In that sense, the maturity assessment is the first step, gathering the building blocks that indicate the current state of their processes. At the same time, we gain insights about their goals and expectations. Using this information, we provide an agile, data-driven and high-level diagnostic approach—to identify the challenges and dependencies that can impact the actions required to bridge the gap between their current situation and their desired outcomes. This is the blueprint that guides the design of the transformation roadmap.

The second stage involves detailed design for enhanced results. This includes prioritizing initiatives and establishing measurable KPIs that define the expected improvements for each project. The roadmap also requires the identification of significant milestones to track progress and the impact of the prescribed measures.

The final step is the implementation of the transformation plan while closely monitoring the deployment of each project—tracking challenges, gains and lessons learned to facilitate agility and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

The image below represents our standard approach to consulting/implementation engagement.

Maturity assessment

Track and record dependencies and pain points

Conduct workshop

Define goals and expectations

Gain insights and different point of views

Engage stakeholders

Track opportunities and prioritize

Make assumptions

Gather information on the actual <scope> situations, identify main pain points, issues and gaps—and address them to unlock the treasure

Rapid assessment

Assess the current state

Design, implementation and readiness

Define and understand the gaps

Deeply design current process and tuning point

Communication planning

Stakeholder assessment

Identify all stakeholders and people needed/impacted

Set up the environment for the execution, and choose the pilot and agents

Define the roadmap and main objectives—to achieve and prioritize action backlog

Define implementation roadmap and use cases for each personas and leading indicators

Analyze the data and define the current situation

Design and evaluate possible solutions

Implementation and monitoring

Pilot running and supporting

Validate through doing

Inspecting and adapting with new lesson learnt

Continuous improvement

Training material

Implement, track and get benefits

Performance dashboards and project reports

Execute and finalize

Our approach to unlock all the potential value

In Agile improvement, the iterative approach is crucial. It involves measuring the starting point with a tailored assessment, setting goals and a vision, analyzing the assessment and data to identify gaps and recommendations, designing a roadmap and action backlog, actively supporting initiatives, measuring progress, inspecting and adapting based on lessons learned, reassessing and restarting the cycle.

Maturity assessment

Start with our maturity assessment to determine the current level of agility

Develop solution roadmap

Design solutions that address the gaps and improvement points

Iteratively increase your agile maturity

Follow our roadmap to grow to the defined future state and determine the next goal

Understand gaps and improvement points

Determine the focus areas and pain points

Support your transformation programs

Start your transformation journey with our support through training, advice and implementation

Agree on end state and vision

Determine what level of agility is envisioned as an organization

Make the next step in Agile maturity with Cognizant. Our Agile Excellence Maturity Model is your gateway to a more agile, innovative and adaptable organization. Partner with us today to embark on this transformative journey. Your success is our mission, and your future is our expertise.

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