KINETIC DATA

Agility is the Key to Request Management Software

Agile methods have gone from the periphery to the mainstream of the software development life cycle. Agile methods reduce development cycle times, lower costs and often mitigate the risks of traditional software development. Experience the same benefits by applying the Agile approach to service request management applications.

"Agile" is rapidly becoming the mantra of today's business enterprise. The term was originally applied to a software development methodology that focuses on incremental and iterative development phases, code simplification, frequent testing, and delivering functional bits of an application as soon as they're ready—as opposed to delivering one large application at the end of a project.

Today, the agile philosophy is rapidly permeating the entire software development life cycle (SDLC), regardless of the scope, complexity or importance of the applications themselves. Every business needs to rapidly respond to chance. Every organization wants shorter development cycles and greater business impact from IT initiatives. And (nearly) every enterprise has realized that obsolete applications, technology and SDLCs stile business agility.

The business environment has changed quickly. In a survey conducted last year of over 6,000 chief technology officers and other IT professionals, nearly 70 percent said that more than half of their IT projects used some form of agile development.[1] Accelerating time to market (or faster time to completion) was the top reason for Agile adoption, followed by managing changing priorities, increasing productivity, better aligning IT with the business and simplifying development processes. In another recent survey of

[1] "State of Agile Survey, 2011," VersionOne and Analysis.Net Research

corporate plans for modernizing applications, technology platforms and SDLCs, over 80 percent of responding companies used agile methods for new software development.[2] Nearly all Agile software-development adopters in the survey reported improved productivity, quality, time-to-market, business value and project success rates.

What is Agile?

Merriam-Webster defines agile as "marked by ready ability to move with quick, easy grace; having a quick, resourceful and adaptable character." In software terms, agile has come to mean software development life cycles with those same characteristics. Some practitioners say Agile is a return to the "lightweight" software development practices of earlier times, before IT organizations began using bloated "heavyweight" methods, which were characterized by critics as heavily regulated, regimented, micromanaged, and poorly aligned with user needs and business objectives.

While Agile has gone mainstream, in reality, there is no one single "agile" development methodology. Rather, up to 20 different methods are grouped into the Agile camp. While they differ in details, all adhere to the "Agile Manifesto" first articulated in 2001 by a group of lightweight-software development proponents.[3] All Agile methods anticipate the need for flexibility and are designed to accommodate change. Work is done in short iterations, often called sprints, of only a few days or weeks. The transition from one iteration to the next includes taking stock of how customer needs have changed since the project began and flexibly adapting to those changes. Other hallmarks of the Agile approach include standardizing on a common communication protocol and common data model. Because of these and other characteristics, a well-constructed Agile app can be easily modified to address changing business needs and is scalable by design.

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[2] "Clearing Your Path to Modern Applications and Business Agility," Forrester Research, Inc. April 6, 2010

[3] "**Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan" Kent Becker, et al. Agile Alliance, 2001.

While Agile may not be the ideal approach for all software development needs, in many applications it has proven effective at reducing costs, mitigating risk, improving quality and increasing customer satisfaction. The latter result is based on the fact that the whole purpose of agile development is to rapidly deliver specific functional business applications based on real end user needs.

An Agile Approach to Request Management

The power of Agile can be illustrated by the SDLC of service request management applications. Service request management enables a business service request to be submitted, routed, approved, monitored and delivered via automated processes. The use of standardized and automated request management software systems has long been considered an IT best practice.

In large organizations, request management is often an enterprise-wide need that involves multiple departments beyond IT. Onboarding and provisioning new employees; governance, risk management and regulatory compliance (GRC) activities; and security provisioning, identity and access management are just a few enterprise activities that span multiple areas within the enterprise and which require the orchestration and coordination of multiple departments in the design and implementation of service request management applications.

Designing and deploying complex service requests can be time-consuming. Building a catalog of 100 service items, for example, often takes months, as administrators labor to map new workflows to existing processes without negatively impacting the overall business logic of the underlying IT service management platform—a risky business if the process involves a lot of coding. This slows both adoption rates and time to value, and as request management process needs change across the enterprise, it is often difficult for IT to respond with the speed and flexibility the business demands.

A more agile approach to request management would include the following SDLC components:

- Instead of coding, cloning and modifying existing processes or configuring reusable templates and easily create service requests and catalog portals. This means catalogs and service portals can be rapidly created, scaled and expanded across the enterprise.
- Instead of relying on IT, non-IT administrators have control over the request management workflows and processes relevant to their functional areas and specific needs. This makes it easier to keep pace with continually changing request management process requirements.
- Instead of being tied to one IT service management (ITSM) system and dependent upon specialized IT expertise in that system, request management processes can be integrated with any corporate ERP, HRM, CRM or ITSM system and are usable by anyone who has basic familiarity with those systems. This increases the scalability and utility of request management processes across the enterprise.

Kinetic Request bundled with Kinetic Task takes such an agile approach to request management.

Kinetic Request is a forms-based request management portal application that can easily be set up, configured, customized, and managed by both technical and non-technical business analysts**.** Kinetic Task is a workflow automation engine that allows users to easily configure a limitless number of simple or complex tasks and approvals within Kinetic Request. Together, they empower any department with service delivery needs to automate service delivery processes. They also standardize and automate request management across the enterprise.

In terms of bringing agility to the request management software development life cycle, Kinetic Request and Kinetic Task offer the following advantages:

- Service request items can be created in a development environment and easily migrated to test and production environments without manual rework. Functional, business-specific applications can be delivered to end users quickly, often in just days rather than the weeks or months required by non-agile development methods.
- Process versioning allows new request management items to quickly and safely be "cloned" from existing processes. Iteration and testing are accomplished rapidly without business disruption or code changes to an underlying service management platform.
- The same versioning design provides the ability to simultaneously run multiple versions of a process.
- Kinetic Request offers exceptional flexibility via smart workflows that enable organizations to tailor their business processes to fit the unique needs of clients, departments or individual users
- Configurability allows users to tailor solutions for every client, department or individual user.
- Kinetic Task provides the ability to integrate tasks with existing enterprise-wide applications.

Conclusion

As noted, there is no one single and definitive agile software development methodology, but rather a collection of methodologies that share the same "agile" characteristics. For that matter, there is no commonly accepted definition for the word "agile" itself when it comes to application development. Most agree, however, that "the agile movement asserts that software development works best under simple, iterative processes which emphasize creativity and collaboration."[4]

[4] John Rusk, http://www.agilekiwi.com/other/agile/definition-of-agile-development/

By that definition, Kinetic Request bundled with Kinetic Task is the ideal agile approach to service request management. With Kinetic Request, creating, testing, and deploying service items is a simple, iterative process that avoids the expense and delays of traditional software development processes and delivers functional applications to business users quickly, anywhere in the enterprise. Creativity is virtually built into Kinetic Request since one service item can be cloned, reconfigured and reused to serve almost any business purpose, whenever and wherever the need arises. Collaboration is enabled by the ability to translate the unique needs of user groups across the enterprise into fully functional software that puts *them*—not IT—in charge of their own tasks, workflows and processes.

About Kinetic Data, Inc.

Kinetic Data offers the most extensive portfolio of third-party, "built on BMC Remedy," packaged applications available. A BMC Remedy Technology Alliance Partner since 1999, Kinetic Data has helped hundreds of Fortune 500 and government customers—including General Mills, Avon, Intel, 3M, and the U.S. Department of Transportation—implement BSM and service delivery management (SDM) applications aligned with ITIL best practices. In 2009, Kinetic Data was named "Innovator of the Year" by an independent group of BMC Remedy users at the Worldwide Remedy User Group, and the company was honored with the "Best Customer Service and Support" award in 2010. For more information, visit www.kineticdata.com.

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