

Agile Break Free

I still remember the days when Development team built a functionality. QA did not know anything about the functionality, and tried to test it. Bugs were found late in the game. Development and Product Management did not collaborate on what functionality to build? Product Management provided Product requirements document, which was a contract to measure success of the Development and QA teams. Product Development sometimes drove the requirements, and sometimes was a recipient of the requirements. Over past several years, most of the software product development has moved away from this model, and now Development, QA and Product Management work hand-in-hand to deliver the product to the market. There is also focus on customer needs, than some arbitrary requirements. Development Operations, which essentially is again part of Product Development, is also adopting Agile practices. In many organizations, Leadership within Product Development has also cultivated Agile mindset. However, all this is has been confined to Software Product Development.

It is time for Agile to break the Product Development and Software cocoon, step out, and fly! There is a huge world out there. At one of the companies I worked at, we used Agile practices in the Support team. Services also lends itself easily to Kanban practices. Then there is IT and Data Centers. Marketing and Sales can be next. Yes, it is challenging, and yes it needs a lot of hard work, and yes, it needs a complete Agile transformation of the company, which can be very challenging. But these same challenges existed in Software Product Development just a few years ago. Agile evangelists have come a long way, but there still a lot to be done! It is now time to explore new lands.

I was at a conference a couple of weeks ago, where I ran an Open Space session on Agile Marketing. There were a few participants, and the encouraging part was that there are people who are thinking about this! One person in the session mentioned about using Agile in a world-wide resort chain. Another person mentioned about using it in Education. 3 weeks back, someone reached out to me for coaching a team that helps farmers run their farms more effectively and efficiently! In another conference this week, there was a presentation on how to recruit in an Agile environment - coaches and engineers. The participation in these sessions is gradually growing and that is the good news! Many are now thinking that Agile and Scrum can grow beyond Software Product Development - into other functions in a Software Product industry, as well as in other industries. It seems like it is not a question of "if" but a question of "when" will Agile become more widespread?

