



AGILE CHANGE

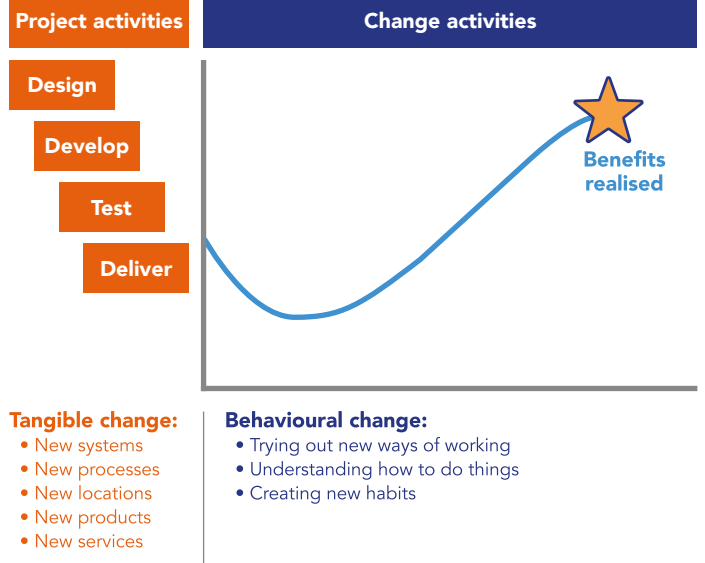
by Melanie Franklin

WHAT IS AGILE CHANGE?

Agile change brings together the best ideas from Agile principles and methods and techniques from change management. The purpose is to bring together project activities that create tangible change with change activities that provide the encouragement and support needed to use these new things.

Project and change activities are often delivered by two different parties and using different methods:

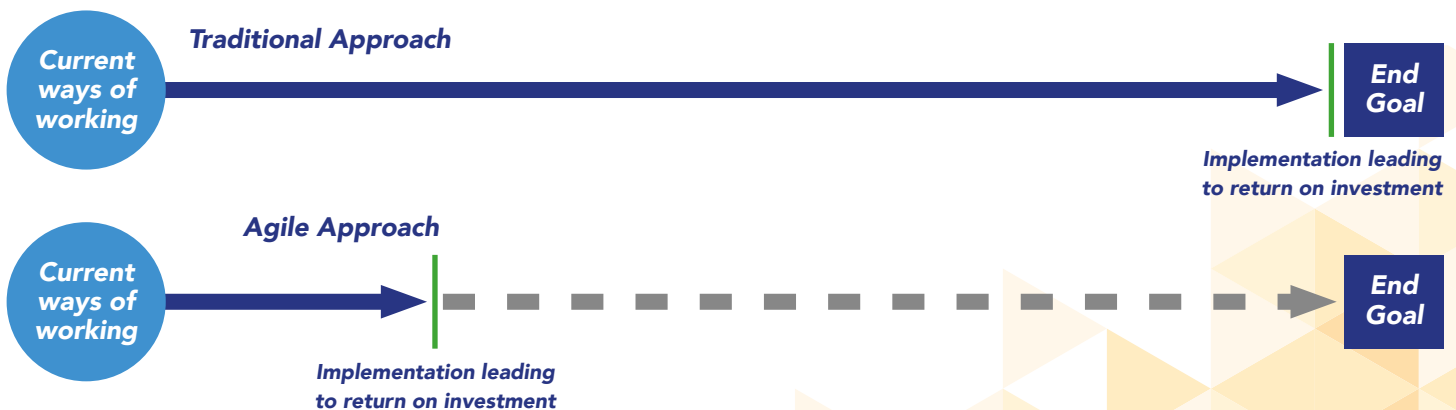
Tangible change is created by project teams, developers, engineers, facilities staff and professional services staff including regulators, HR and accountants. Whatever their role, their objective is to create the deliverable according to technical quality standards. They are often incentivised and/or performance managed on their ability to deliver on time and on budget with the minimum number of errors.



Behavioural change can only be achieved by individuals deciding that they will start doing things differently. This means those responsible for behavioural change are all those required to work in a new way, and incorporate the tangible changes into their ways of working. It is a conscious decision to “forget” old habits and to start practicing new ways of working. To start with, productivity is lower because we go slowly when we do things for the first time, and we make mistakes which take time to correct. Repetition of the new ways of working build familiarity and competence and productivity rises again, creating more benefits for the organisation than before.

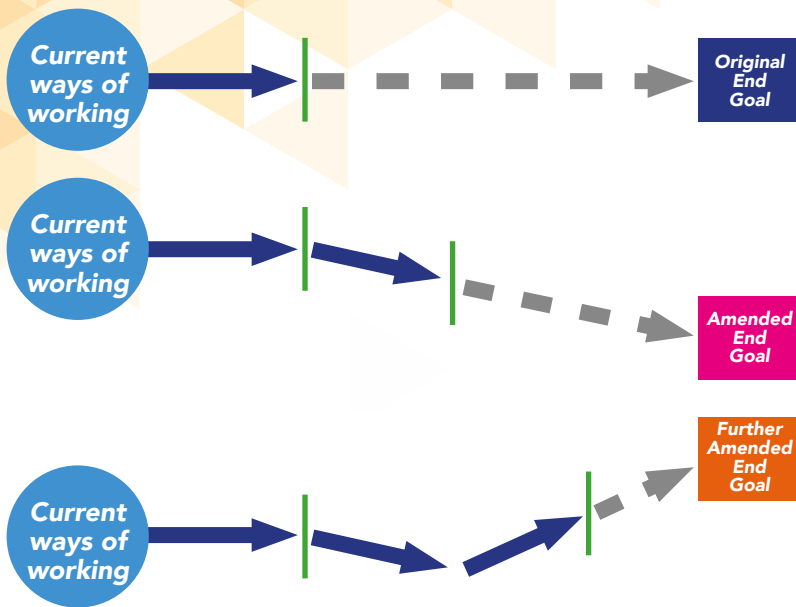
Agile Change applies the agile concepts common in systems development and widens it to include the development of new behaviours, new attitudes and new habits leading to new ways of working.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGILE CHANGE AND ORDINARY CHANGE?



Agile Change is incremental. New ways of working are adopted piece by piece, building new achievements as each new capability becomes the norm. The alternative is to create all aspects of the tangible change and then hand it over to those who have to work differently as a complete solution.

This means change is not experienced for a long time because everyone is waiting to receive all the tangible elements as a single delivery. The danger is that what was a good idea at the start of the change journey is no longer as relevant as it has been overtaken by events.



Another disadvantage is that during the weighting period everyone carries on working in the old way. If they could have been given parts of the solution early then they would have been able to benefit from the improvements earlier.

Agile Change offers the opportunity to change course in response to new information, making it ideally suited for ever changing end goals. For example, if an organisation has the end goal of “digital first” what is required will evolve over time as the understanding of digital becomes clearer.

Agile Change is a common sense response to our fast changing world. It gives us a way of benefitting early from good ideas, and helps us test if they are as good as we think they are. If we are right, our early experiences of the benefits motivate us to keep going. If we are wrong we have avoided the waste of a fully developed idea that just doesn't work.

IMPACT OF AN AGILE CHANGE APPROACH

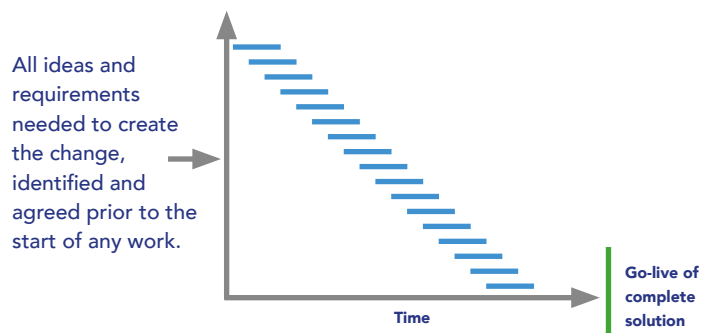
Whilst there are many advantages to an Agile approach to managing change, it also creates challenges. The incremental approach to implementing change means that there are more changes to manage.

The incremental nature of the change creates a plan that appears riskier than a more traditional approach. This is because only the immediate future is planned in detail, the rest of the change is defined as a result of the feedback from the early implementations. This creates the flexibility to respond to new developments but creates an illusion of chaos.

Agile change creates more frequent experiences of behavioural change, because for every launch of a new capability, there is a need to adopt a new way of working. Behavioural change is much harder to predict than the creation of tangible change because it is psychological and emotional. Everyone sees change differently, some greeting it with enthusiasm and some seeing it as a threat to their current ability and status.

We can argue that as each change on the Agile Change journey is smaller than launching one complete solution at the end of a long initiative, the behavioural changes will be easier to adopt. This might be true, but the frequency of the changes can be unsettling and those impacted by change need support.

Traditional approach creates the illusion of control

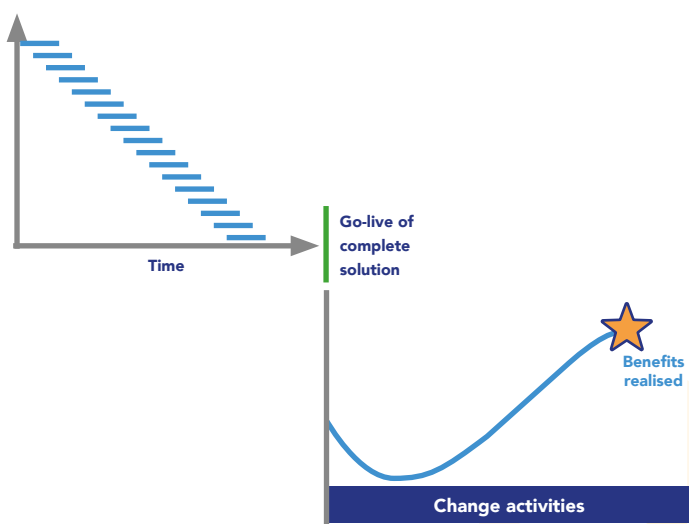


Agile approach creates the illusion of chaos

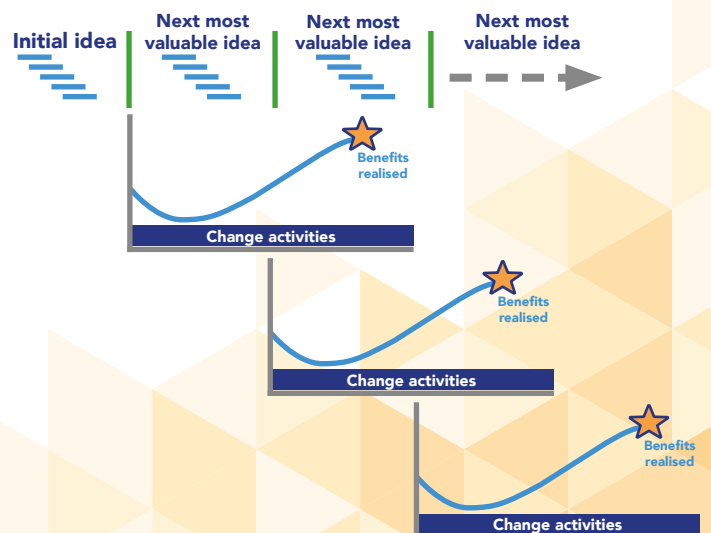


They must learn new ways of working, whilst forgetting how they used to work. Initially this leads to slower rates of work and greater levels of stress. Time must be given to trying out new ways of working and repeating each step until it becomes an automatic response.

Traditional approach creates one wave of behavioural change



Agile approach creates multiple waves of behavioural change



AGILE CHANGE IS A PRACTICAL SKILL-SET

Agile Change is more than an Agile methodology. A methodology explains what must be done, when it must be done and by whom. Agile Change recognises that knowing what to do and being able to

do it are different. It provides you with techniques, tips and practical guidance to support the implementation of tangible change with the behavioural change that realises benefits.

THESE ARE THE CORE ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE AGILE CHANGE:

CLEAR DESTINATION

Clarity about what is to be achieved, describing what the organisation will be capable of when all aspects of the change has been adopted. This destination describes what this new ability will look like and feel like but does not list its constituent parts. This maintains the agility of the change, because it does not define what has to change, providing freedom to choose as circumstances change.

End Goal

The end goal can be one or a combination of these answers:

What we do – products/services

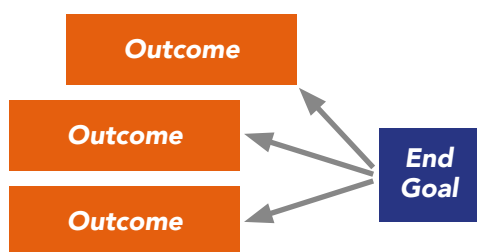
How we do it – manual/automation; known/innovative

Who we do it with – external suppliers/internal resources

Where we do it – onshore/off-shore; continents/countries; urban/rural

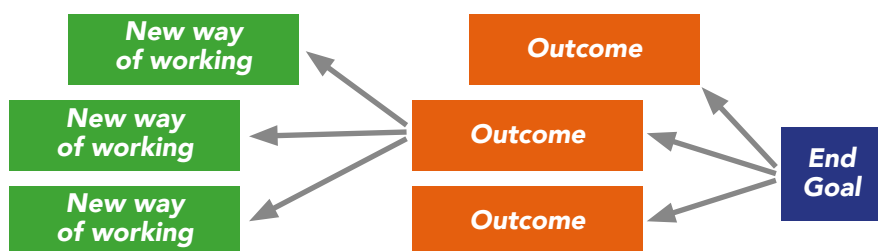
When do we do it – time of day/week/month; frequency; regularity

CHUNKING

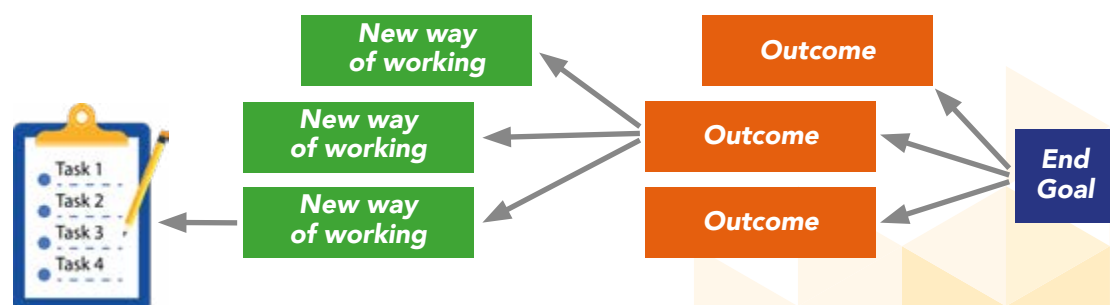


An ability to break the end goal into outcomes, each of which “shifts the status quo”. Each shift creates a new way of working, which delivers value by creating small improvements and fixing problems along the way. Outcomes that contain outputs without the supporting operational changes are not capable of realising benefits. Each outcome must contain all the tangible and behavioural change needed for the new way of working to be fully operational.

This breakdown is counter-intuitive because instead of building up an idea of what we are going to do, we must jump into the future, imagine the big leap we are making, and work out what are the key differences or outcomes that comprise this big leap.



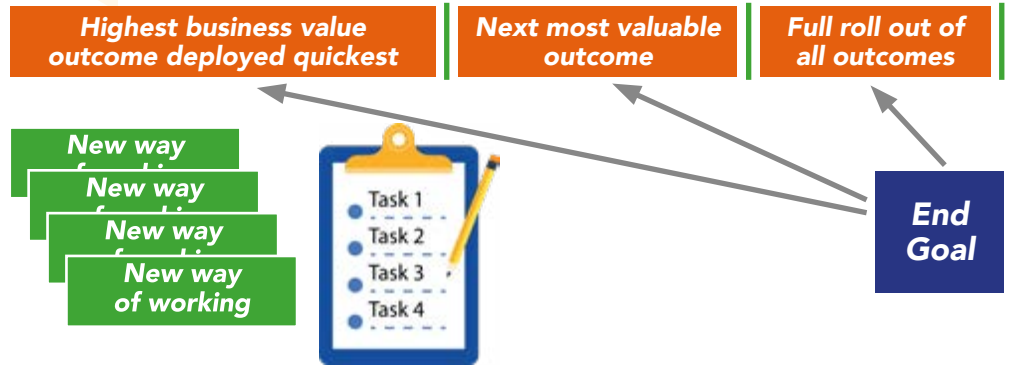
Once we have identified these outcomes, we can work out how we will need to work differently to achieve them. Each new way of working represents many changes to process, priorities, tools, skills, timing, and stakeholder engagement. These elements need to be defined by those expected to work in the new way.



For each new way of working, we can start to identify the tasks and activities that will create this change, the amount of time and effort required and how this can be resourced.

VALUE

Having a clear understanding of what makes a positive difference to internal efficiency metrics and external customer satisfaction measures is essential. Agile Change is a mechanism for delivering change that makes a positive difference. This can only be achieved if we know what benefits are needed and how they contribute to the overall success of the organisation.



PRIORITIES

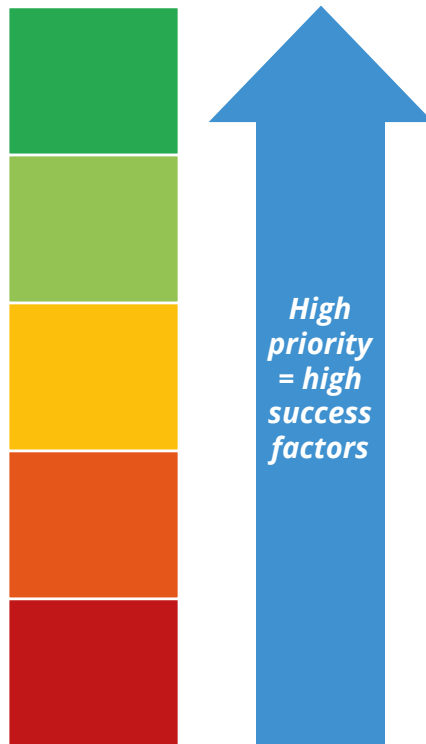
Knowing how to decide what to implement first and what to implement later using criteria that reflect business priorities. This requires an ability to understand the objectives of the business and to turn these into critical success factors that every idea for change can be evaluated against.

Agile Change supports small experiments to find out what works best. It minimises the risks of wasted effort on failed experiments by assessing the strength of the likely improvement and ranking each experiment against the others. Those that offer the best return on the effort required in the shortest time are implemented first.

Strong contribution to critical success factors
Idea 4
Idea 7

Medium contribution to critical success factors
Idea 1
Idea 3

Weak contribution to critical success factors
Idea 2
Idea 5
Idea 6



DECISION MAKING

A willingness to take decisions frequently and without delay so that there is a flow of activity, providing continuous delivery of new capabilities, bringing together tangible and behavioural change.

Decision makers must ensure they have a current understanding of the end goal and the business benefits required and use this knowledge to decide what is the next most valuable idea.

EMPATHY

Understanding the emotional impact of frequent, continuous change on our own well-being and that of our colleagues is important. Change is disruptive, so understanding the pressures we are under and the impact that change will have helps us prepare for it.

COLLABORATION

Working together with all those affected by the change, respecting the perspective and contribution of each person. This requires relationship building skills and an ability to facilitate the sharing of different views with the willingness to listen to others.

MOTIVATION

Creating an environment that recognises and celebrates resilience. Frequent and regular change is disruptive, so there is a need for a consistent level of motivation to change how things are done. We often talk about the importance of continuous improvement, but Agile Change means we have to put our energy into making it a reality.

WHO IS AGILE CHANGE FOR?

Agile change is not specific to a role or job title. It creates new ways of working so it is relevant to anyone who has to work differently. Sometimes doing things differently is part of our job. We don't have a choice; the decision has been made and we need to fall in line with it. Working differently might be a choice, because we want to fix problems, or we can see a better way of doing things. Whatever our motivation, Agile Change gives us a clear set of steps to understand what we need to do and organise our ideas, so we know what to do first and what to do next.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

There are lots of ways you can learn more about Agile Change. I have written a book called Agile Change Management that expands on lots of these themes.

This book is the recommended text for the Agile Change Agent qualification which is a globally recognised certification in your ability to implement change using Agile concepts. You can study this qualification with me by attending my Zoom classes or you can take the self-paced study option via my online course.

