

I have often been asked to explain how I've implemented agile development on the teams I've managed or been a part of. [Mike Cohn](#), founder of [Mountain Goat Software](#) trains teams and entire organizations on a traditional approach to Agile and Scrum that is most aptly used in/on large organizations. In my experiences as a leader of much smaller (by comparison) teams or start-ups that approach can be difficult to adopt for upper level executives.

As a result, a compromise must be met to get the "buy in" of those executives who want nothing more than to be able to tell investors, advertisers, and stake-holders an exact date to expect the latest and greatest feature(s) or release. While running the technology for Vennli we found a middle-ground that proved successful for the three years I was lucky to be a part of the team.

While working in an agency/consulting environment however, agile methodologies require considerable more discipline and most importantly they demand the involvement of the customer which is not usually the case in a more traditional agile development process. Working on a single product the "customer" for the engineering team is an internal conglomerate of product managers and executives who have taken customer feedback which has resulted in a roadmap that usually follows that feedback relatively closely. In an consultancy your customer feedback is not filtered by anything but a project manager in most cases, and there is an expectation (rightfully so) to have full visibility to the development/design efforts being billed to the customer.

If your consultancy can hold any water, you're now in a predicament of managing each project in a silo and still maintaining a daily/weekly workflow that follows the principles of agile which is virtually impossible. Priorities shift on a single product, let alone when a developer/designer is assigned to a half dozen projects simultaneously.

So how can a consultancy or agency environment capitalize on the proven successes of agile but still maintain a culture of visibility and service to their customers?

We'll explore that in part two of this article.

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