

: *What is solution-focused agile?*

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Managers, project teams, and consultants should focus primarily on the present and future. We examine the past to learn from our mistakes, but we need to also examine “what will work” to deliver results in a given situation. We need to find an opportunity to succeed and a solution to a problem. Solution-focused Agile is a mashup of techniques from multiple disciplines that promote using reflection to encourage innovation and a “what works” solution attitude. Traditional Agile Retrospective meetings are a good addition to any work environment, but adding a more prospective, future-oriented component helps teams improve processes, handle issues and focus attention on solutions to barriers and problems.

Hagar (2019) explains that “Ninety-two percent of executives say agility is critical for the future of their business, yet only 4% of their transformation efforts are delivering agility. The leading causes for this gap are an entrenched legacy culture and general resistance to change. Responding to these challenges and delivering business agility may require more than Agile practices. Many organizations are discovering “solution focus” to be the missing piece of their transformation puzzle when it comes to transforming culture.”

Finding solutions, delivering results, is important. Leaders, managers, and teams encounter problems and must find a means of solving a specific problem or dealing with a difficult situation. Problems don't usually “disappear”, rather actions must be taken to remedy and resolve a problem. In some situations, doing nothing may resolve a problem, but evidence should suggest that is the best path.

Some intractable problems do exist that are hard, difficult, and seemingly impossible to solve. These problems benefit from “reframing”. Framing refers to how one structures or presents a problem or an issue. Framing involves explaining and describing the context of the problem in an understandable manner. Stakeholders are the key to reframing or restating a problem. What is the problem? Who identified the problem? When and why? A well-stated is easier to solve than a poorly stated one and framing should reflect the attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders. A key to innovation and creativity is the framing of problems (Getzels (1975); Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976).

Problem finding is also often important. A problem can not be solved or resolved until it is adequately and appropriately identified. Problem finding is a thinking process in which a person articulates or states a barrier or issue that should be addressed, a question that needs to be answered, or a solution that is not working.

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Doing Agile narrowly focuses on following a specific framework, its practices, and techniques. **Being Agile** means one broadly emphasizes agile principles and values, attitudes, and agile behaviors, cf., Abtin, 2018. Solution-focused agile means the team uses an agile framework, but the focus is on solving problems in the context of agile values. The guiding principles of agility, include: 1) creating a shared understanding and vision, 2) being adaptive and incremental, 3) being open and transparent with stakeholders, 4) thinking of and considering consequences, and 5) being value-driven, finding solutions that create value for stakeholders.

In general, reason and facts rather than passion should guide agile processes. Passion and emotion may influence ethical judgments, but in business situations, decision and project goals are generally set more rationally to meet customer needs and create value for stakeholders. Emotions do negatively and positively impact rationality, cf., Kirman, Livet, and Teschl (2010). Emotions like fear of failure may positively impact choosing a solution that best meets relevant decision goals and leads to project success. Become agile, be agile, and think agile.

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