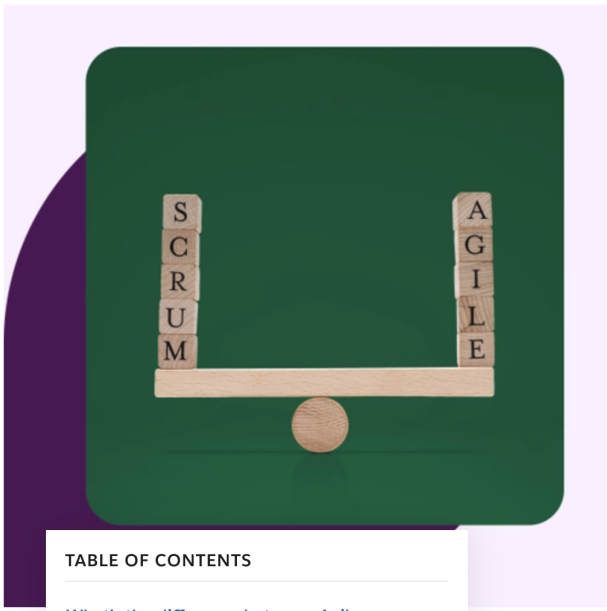

Collaboration

Agile vs. Scrum: Bridging Methodology and Framework for Collaborative Teams

Discover the key differences between Agile and Scrum, and find the best approach to streamline your team's communication and workflow.

By the team at Slack
October 8th, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- What's the difference between Agile methodology vs. Scrum?
- What is a Scrum framework?
- Which comes first, Scrum or Agile?
- How to successfully implement a Scrum framework using Agile methodology
- Collaboration is key for both Agile and Scrum

5 min read

If you work in tech, you might have heard people use the terms "Agile" and "Scrum" interchangeably. They aren't. When you understand the differences between Agile and Scrum, you can transform your team dynamics, boost efficiency, impact, and overall results.

Let's explore the key differences between Agile and Scrum methodologies, and how you can implement Scrum successfully within an Agile environment.

What's the difference between Agile methodology vs. Scrum?

Some Scrum projects may also be considered Agile, but not all Agile projects use Scrum. Confused? Let's first explore each as an individual concept.

What is the Agile methodology?

Agile is a project management philosophy that was conceptualized by a group of 17 software developers, which they documented in the Agile Manifesto. Agile methodologies are all about flexibility in product development. Instead of sticking to rigid, traditional project management practices, Agile focuses on adapting to changing needs as they come up. The goal is to stay responsive and open to adjustments, making it easier to keep projects aligned with what's actually needed over time.

Agile principles really emphasize the importance of delivering value consistently, working closely with customers, and creating workflows that benefit both individual contributors and the team as a whole. Since the Agile Manifesto was published, a variety of project management frameworks have emerged to help put these principles into action. One of the most well-known frameworks is Scrum.

What is a Scrum framework?

Scrum is an Agile framework that operates in short, iterative cycles called sprints, which typically last about four to six weeks. The process kicks off with sprint planning, where the product manager takes a look at the product backlog, customer feedback, and the organization's priorities. Based on this review, they select a short list of tasks to tackle during the sprint. Then, a team of five to nine development experts is brought on board to work together and complete these tasks.

During a sprint, the team holds a daily scrum, which is a quick 15-minute standup meeting where they discuss their progress and any relevant challenges. These daily check-ins are all about fostering transparency in the development process, allowing team members to collaborate and solve problems more efficiently. The emphasis on transparency is a key feature of the Scrum framework, helping to create shorter development cycles – and, ultimately, leading to better results over time.

At the end of a sprint, the development team conducts a sprint review with key stakeholders, where they present deliverables from the sprint. This is an opportunity for the team to share what they've accomplished, answer questions, and gather feedback.

After the sprint review, the team shares what they've created, called an increment, with stakeholders (and sometimes even users) to get more feedback. The idea is that each sprint should deliver a piece of the product that helps move everyone closer to the larger product goal.

After that, the development team meets with the product manager for a sprint retrospective. This is a chance to talk about what went well and what could be improved for next time. They might gather feedback on things like process improvements or consider using a workflow automation tool based on their experiences from the last sprint. They also review the product backlog to get ready for the next sprint. Then the whole cycle begins again.

Is Scrum actually Agile?

Now that you know what Agile is and how Scrum fits in, it's easy to see why things can get a bit confusing. Scrum is one type of Agile framework, but not all Agile frameworks are Scrum – kind of like how a chocolate bar is a type of candy, but not all candy is a chocolate bar. Both Agile and Scrum focus on iterative, rapid, and responsive product development in a collaborative environment, which is what makes them so effective.

Which comes first, Scrum or Agile?

Agile concepts are the driving force behind the Scrum framework, so to implement Scrum you must hold to Agile methodology.

Can you use Agile without Scrum?

Yes, you can use the Agile methodology without following a Scrum framework. There are numerous Agile frameworks that each emphasize a different element of the Agile methodology. Some, like the Kanban framework, emphasize the

“responding to change” aspect of Agile, while others, like the Extreme Programming (XP) framework, focus on the “working software” aspect of Agile.

What sets Scrum apart from other Agile frameworks is that its primary focus is moving the product forward as a whole through a collaborative process. In contrast, XP focuses on continuous feature releases and Kanban emphasizes workflow efficiency.

How to successfully implement a Scrum framework using Agile methodology

Agile methodology is like the philosophy of healthy living, while Scrum is a specific workout routine. Agile’s key principles revolve around flexibility, continual improvement, and responsiveness to change, just as general principles of healthy living are to eat well and exercise regularly. However, none of these principles prescribe exact steps for applying the concept. That’s where a framework – like Scrum for an Agile organization, or a specific workout plan for healthy living – comes in. It turns a concept into actionable steps.

In the case of Scrum as an Agile framework, it prescribes concrete practices and defined roles. However, the organization as a whole must willingly onboard the Agile methodology for the Scrum framework to work. Just as a person won’t put their best effort into a workout plan if they aren’t sold on the idea of a healthy lifestyle, teams won’t buy into a Scrum if they aren’t committed to an Agile method of work.

If your team doesn’t already use Agile methodology or the Scrum framework, you may need to provide some training. Share what it looks like in action, and the key benefits of approaching work within that framework. You’ll also want to give your team the collaborative tools they need to implement Agile methodology. You wouldn’t expect someone to complete a weight-training program without giving them weights, and you shouldn’t expect your team to implement a collaborative Agile framework without easy document sharing, for example.

Collaboration is key for both Agile and Scrum

Cross-functional team collaboration is foundational to both Agile and Scrum. Slack’s collaborative work platform empowers Agile teams to be responsive, efficient, and transparent in their work. In Slack, teams can securely share information, connect with shareholders, organize teams, track projects, automate workflows through powerful APIs, and more.

Ready to take your team’s collaboration to the next level? Learn how Slack can help you and your team members.

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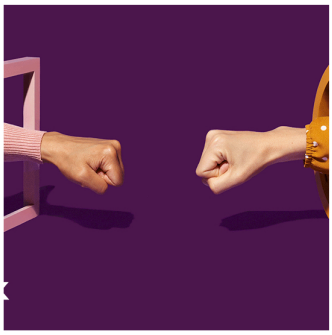

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