Agile, Governance and the PMO

Building a relationship that works

Barbara Roberts

What I will cover

➤ Some basic positioning within an Agile (or partly Agile) world

➤ Relationship building – sooner, rather than later!

➤ Reporting Agile-style
   ▪ PMO and the Agile teams
   ▪ PMO and the senior stakeholders

➤ Behaviours for an Agile PMO

➤ Questions

Why me?

➢ Helped create DSDM (the first Agile approach) in 1994

➢ Ran one of the DSDM Early Adopter projects in 1995

➢ Creation of AgilePM was my original idea
  ▪ (AgilePM is based on DSDM)

➢ Have been running complex Agile transformations in UK (and beyond) ever since
  ▪ In all sectors : insurance, finance, military, public sector, telecoms, transport
  ▪ Lots of experiences working with PMOs (good and bad)

➢ Have been Professional Development Director for Agile Business Consortium for many years   (previously called DSDM Consortium)

➢ Signatory of the Agnostic Agile Oath

➢ Still love all things agile ☺

Agile – What's the Point?

✓ Agile is about delivering change

✗ It's not (just) about cutting code

"Corporate Strength" Agile

➢ Complex corporates require "corporate strength" approach to Agile
  ▪ A different world to "selling DVDs online from my garage"
  ▪ There will necessarily be some constraints for Agile in a complex organisation

➢ Flexibility - that's the whole point of being agile – Agile itself needs to be...Agile!
  ▪ Beware dogmatic Agilists!!

➢ Formal governance - an integral part of
        complex corporate organisations

➢ Agile and Governance are complementary, not contradictory
        (despite what some people may tell you)

➢ Agile used effectively for many years to deliver successfully
        in regulated organisations
  ▪ Pharmaceutical
 ▪ Financial
  ▪ Military
  ▪ Manufacturing

Agile - Not the only option

➤ Over time, the balance between Agile and traditional projects will change
- To succeed in a volatile world organisations will need more agile projects
- But may never become 100% Agile – this is OK

➤ Different governance criteria needed, depending upon the approach

➤ For example - key project level questions to ensure Agile is being applied appropriately
- Is level of business engagement what is needed?
- Are daily stand-ups happening and the whole team attending?
- Are retrospectives happening and follow-up improvements beings actioned?
- Are show-and-tells happening?
- What % of User Requirements have been accepted to date?
  (i.e. developed, tested and accepted by the business)
- Is time being respected? i.e. Are Timebox / sprints finishing on the agreed date – always?
- What progress can you physically show me?

➤ "*Trust me, it's Agile*" is **not** an acceptable answer !!

Not a good starting point!
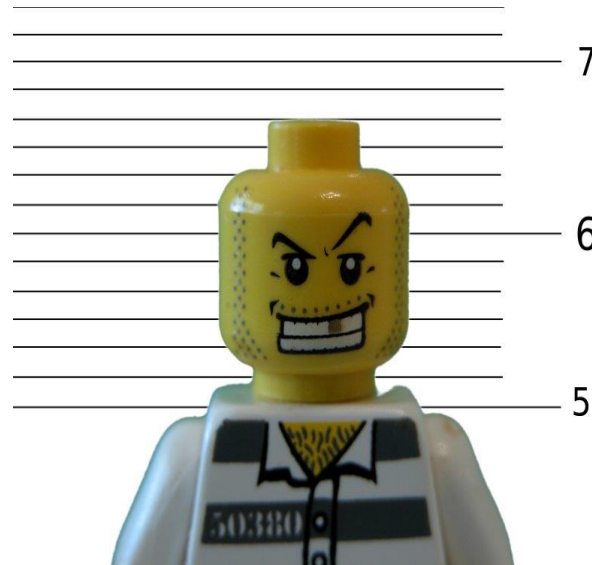
Governance - Building the right relationship

- Start from a positive assumption of success and commitment

- Initiatives need help to break down barriers

- Build a collaborative partnership
  - "What do you need?" "How / where can we help?"

- Governance objectives
  - To enable (rather than impede)
  - To provide appropriate controls to ensure effective delivery
    - Working within Agile's culture of empowered teams and delegated authority

- Create clarity from start
  - What is being governed
  - When intervention would be necessary
  - When intervention is **not** necessary

- This works best as a conversation
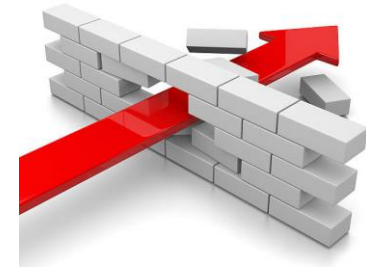
Governance - Building the right relationship

- Decide _with_ the initiatives, don't manage them
  - Set the direction, then let the professionals work the detail
  - Trust their knowledge and experience, and support their decisions
  - Create an environment that allows team to focus on delivering against their goals
  - Only get actively involved if help is needed to facilitate removal of blockers

- PMO agrees basic ground rules (expectations) with each initiative
  - Ground rules will differ for Portfolio, Programme and Project
    - E.g. Project stand-ups should be daily, Portfolio stand-ups more likely to be weekly

- Predominantly the same rules applied across each level ,
    but there may be some differences for individual initiatives
    - e.g. level of project risk, or % of Must Haves
    - e.g. level of programme tolerance

- Ground rules should be objective, not subjective

Governance - Building the right relationship

> A real project example….

1. Agreement – Project will apply "normal" MoSCoW rules
   - Must Haves will be no more than 60% effort (Project, Increment & Timebox)

2. Rule – If one Timebox does not achieve delivery of Must Haves = minimum Amber
   - Warning sign for Increment and Project
   - Investigate why as part of retrospective and address cause

3. Rule - If two consecutive Timeboxes fail to deliver Must Haves = Red
   - Status Red is non-negotiable
   - Something is wrong, this is not a "one-off" scenario
   - Need to understand impact on plans and commitments and deal with this
   - Avoids subjective interference
   - Avoids risk of Water-melon reporting

Agile Reporting – A Different Focus

- Traditional / linear projects have long periods where no proof is available
  - Subjective "% complete" style - the only option available
    - This is often presented from an optimistic perspective

- Agile projects have iterative development and incremental delivery
  - Enables regular show and tells
  - Allows for on-going business acceptance of requirements
  - Ensures progress is based on fact
    - "Show us what you have working at this point" "Yes, that element works"

- Agile projects are transparent
  - This ensures reporting is objective and accurate – no hiding place

Objective Reporting at Project Level

➢ The Agile concept of "Done"
  ▪ Done means a requirement has been tested and is accepted by the business
    o i.e. it can be "banked", ready for next release
➢ "Done" is binary – there is no such thing as "half done"!
  ▪ Only requirements that are potentially ready to go ("done") have any actual value

➢ Agile teams will be getting requirements "Done" incrementally

➢ Team level reporting should be based on how much is "Done"

Agile Reporting – Think About Timing

➤ At project level, if possible align reporting period
    to shortly after end of sprint / timebox

- ▪ i.e. Ensures reporting based on "Done"

➤ At programme level, align major reporting period
    to shortly after end of tranche (delivery of an incremental change)

➤ At this point, final show and tell or tranche release
    will have confirmed actual position

- ▪ Based on fact
- ▪ Avoiding speculation, optimism or pessimism

Agile Reporting to Senior Management

➢ Agile transparency = honest (untampered) reporting – this can be painful

➢ In Agile status Red is a call for help

  "Our project has problems. Resolution is outside our power.
   We will fail if we don't get help."

➢ "No hiding place" = Agile projects more likely to flag Red status
  ▪ Problems are highly visible and will be dealt with early
  ▪ The "*Fingers crossed things will sort themselves out*" approach
     is not an option in Agile

Agile Reporting to Senior Management

➢ The benefits of this brutally honest style of reporting
          may need explaining to senior stakeholders
- This may be different to what they have been used to

➢ Early (and honest) recognition of problem
      should be treated as a positive
- Early warning ensures more options for available actions
- Senior intervention at this point often makes all the difference

The cavalry has arrived, ... I've been telling everyone, 'Hold on. Hold on. Help is coming.'.

QUOTEHD.COM   George Payne

➢ <u>Please do not</u>
- "Shoot the messenger" – i.e. Treat this as a disciplinary for the Project Manager
- Delegate back to the PM to resolve
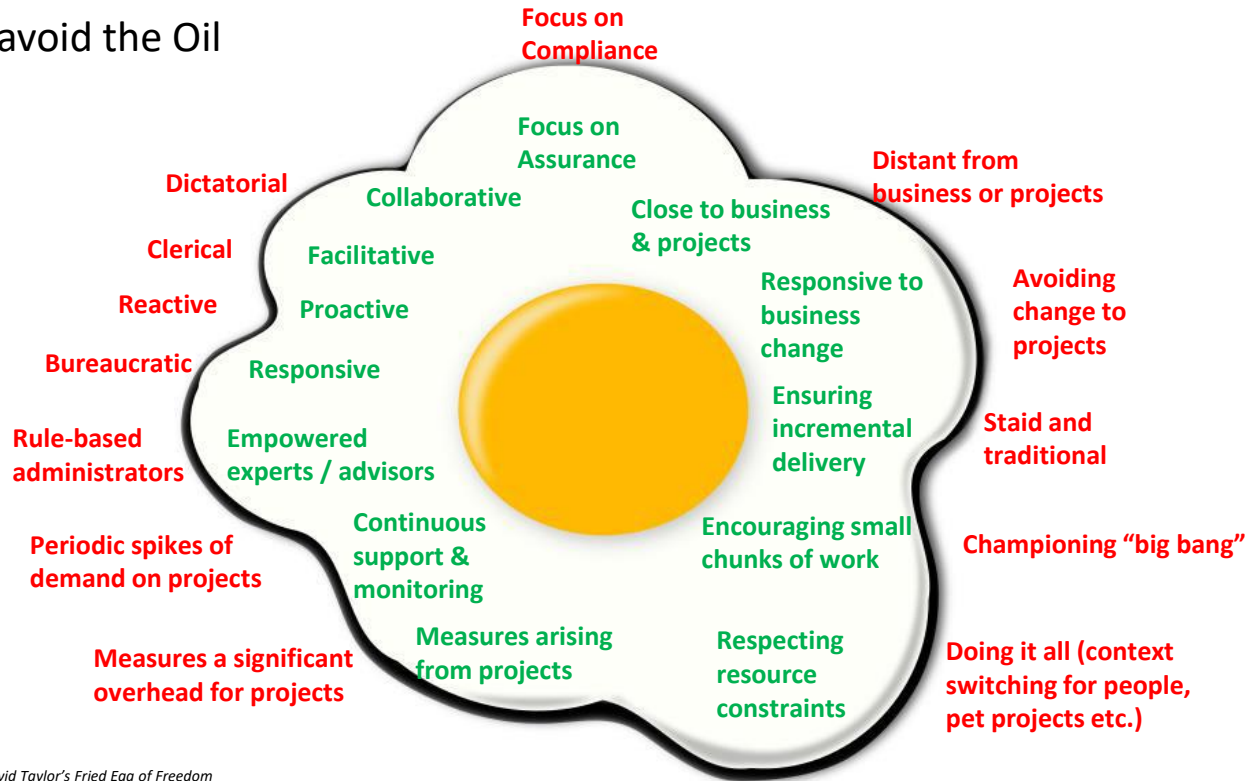- Suggest that Green (or Amber) is a preferable answer!

Agile PMO – Desired Behaviours

Be the Egg, avoid the Oil

Focus on Compliance

Focus on Assurance

Dictatorial

Collaborative

Close to business & projects

Distant from business or projects

Clerical

Facilitative

Responsive to business change

Avoiding change to projects

Reactive

Proactive

Bureaucratic

Responsive

Ensuring incremental delivery

Staid and traditional

Rule-based administrators

Empowered experts / advisors

Periodic spikes of demand on projects

Continuous support & monitoring

Encouraging small chunks of work

Championing "big bang"

Measures a significant overhead for projects

Measures arising from projects

Respecting resource constraints

Doing it all (context switching for people, pet projects etc.)

Adapted from David Taylor's Fried Egg of Freedom

Questions

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