

The importance of agility across the value chain

Following on the last two years successful State of Agile SA Reports, independent management consulting firm IQbusiness released its 2019 State of Agile SA Report.

The 2019 report doubled as a call to action for companies to adopt a more agile approach across the value chain, to challenge leadership to enable better ways of working in all areas, and, most importantly, to solidify the customer as the 'golden thread' in all activities in order to achieve business agility.



The need for organisations to become agile is even more compelling. More than just a buzzword, business agility means optimised value delivery to the customer, which inherently has a strong link to culture and mindset; an ecosystem of people, process, and technology.

The report is based on six in-depth interviews with expert industry practitioners as well as a quantitative survey of 263 individuals working in South African companies of various sizes.

“ The conclusion: there is much room for improvement towards peak customer value delivery enabled through a shift in the end-to-end system and its underlying culture. ”

The quantitative data clearly indicated the most significant reasons for adopting Agile:

- to accelerate product delivery, improve the ability to adapt to change, improve business and IT alignment, and enhance product quality.

In stark contrast to these reasons, the survey results indicated that actual benefits realised were improved

collaboration and visibility, whereas faster time to market and enhanced product quality were the benefits least experienced by survey respondents.

Adopting an agile business approach

Biase De Gregorio, Agile Lead at IQbusiness, weighed in on this, “More organisations are starting to adopt an agile business approach, embracing the principles and practices. What decision-makers need to realise, though, is that agile as a philosophy is not a silver bullet to solve the problem of slow product delivery. Rather, it’s the ability to respond more effectively and efficiently to customer needs through prioritising the products and features that provide the best customer value which in turn will lead to improved business value.”

As the report states, only 25% of management and senior management report a notable improvement in the ability to adapt to change. This is primarily because organisations are still project and matrix organisations, with traditional budgeting processes that will slow them down.

Over and above this, Agile ways of working have been a focus predominantly within IT and not necessarily upstream (Customer and Business requirements) and downstream (Operations). IT is no longer the bottleneck; Agile ways of working need to be adopted across the value chain. Without shifting the entire value chain, leadership can’t expect to experience the full benefits of Business Agility.

It’s important to note that Agile Software Development was intended to make the world safe for software developers. When the 17 authors created the Agile Manifesto in 2001, they didn’t intend for these values and principles to scale into large corporates.

However, organisations should realise that there is a burning platform to become ‘business agile’ in order to remain relevant in today’s highly competitive and ever-changing market. Based on both the qualitative and quantitative research, there is massive benefit further along the path towards business agility.

Download the [2019 State of Agile SA Report](#) (PDF: 1.16MB)