

## TMS for Agile Teams

# Performance through Collaboration

The term 'agile' was popularised by the short but game-changing *Manifesto for Agile Software Development*, created by a group of software engineers in the USA's Utah Mountains in 2001.

The manifesto was a response to the 'application development crisis' of the 1990s, when software development cycles were often multi-year in length and client needs changed significantly before applications were delivered. Rapid feedback and the ability to adapt to changing priorities were vital features of what became known as the agile software development method.

Almost 20 years since the *Manifesto for Agile Software Development* was written, the agile

approach has been adopted across other industries responding to disruption, uncertainty and rapidly changing operating environments.

### So, what do we mean when we talk about agile teams?

In a modern business context, an 'agile team' refers to a cross-functional group of people with specific skills and roles, who collaborate on a project to solve a problem or achieve an outcome.

Team agility requires several vital components, of which a key ingredient is size. Agile teams work best when members are nine or less; most people are assigned to the team on a full-time basis; and only a small number are working part-time or on multiple projects.

Stability is also essential, with any people movement or change in priorities kept to a minimum. Traditionally, it was considered best to co-locate a team, however our changing approach to work means this is not always simple and collaboration often occurs remotely or even on a global scale.

Teams should feel empowered to make decisions and organise their work – but also have access to timely support and relevant resources.

Lastly, motivation is crucial to the success of teams and projects. An agile team should have a vision and purpose with a focus on delivering a quality product or result.

### MANIFESTO FOR AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

**Individuals & Interactions** over **Processes & Tools**

**Working Software** over **Comprehensive documentation**

**Customer Collaboration** over **Contract negotiation**

**Responding to change** over **Following a plan**

That is, while there is value in the items on the **RIGHT**, we value the items on the **LEFT** more.





Essentially, agility in teams is about a shared purpose and the building of mutual accountability through open, honest communication. A truly agile team has a genuine understanding of the value each member contributes and is naturally positioned to adapt to changing contexts due to the inherent cohesion within the group.

### Building team agility with TMS

For more than 30 years, TMS has been researching and working with organisations worldwide to generate a deeper understanding of how people work individually and best in teams. Our suite of practical workplace profiles is considered the most reliable and extensively researched set of psychometrics on the market.

In the 1990s, well before the *Manifesto for Agile Software Development*, TMS founders Dr Charles Margerison and Dr Dick McCann conducted extensive research into the topic of leadership. They discovered that effective leaders emphasise and understand the importance of relationship-building in organisations, which led them to develop the term 'Linking' and the Linking Leader Model.

'Linking' sits at the core of the TMS Types of Work Wheel to represent the set of competencies that pull individuals together into highly effective and agile teams. Margerison and McCann identified there are six necessary People Linking Skills, which are essential for all team members. A further five Task Linking Skills are relevant to more senior members. Two more Leadership Linking Skills are considered necessary for team leaders.

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The Team Management Profile (TMP) incorporates the Linking Leader Model and is used by organisations globally to develop agility in teams. One of the fundamental People Linking Skills – communication – can be enhanced when teams use the TMP to generate specific feedback and insight on how people can better link with others. With a strong focus on team communication, the TMP provides both individuals and team leaders with practical development insights to generate high-performing and agile teams.

### Conclusion

Building agile teams takes vision, purpose, planning and strategy. It requires more than the simple alignment of people with complementary skill sets, it is about focusing on bringing empowered people together with a shared responsibility to solve complex problems.

Supporting team members in a position surrounded by others in which they can thrive will, in turn, optimise business outcomes. In an era of disruption, having agile teams which are dynamic, nimble and adaptable to changing operational ecosystems has become not only optimal but essential across organisations of all sizes.



Want to know more? Contact **Team Management Systems**

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