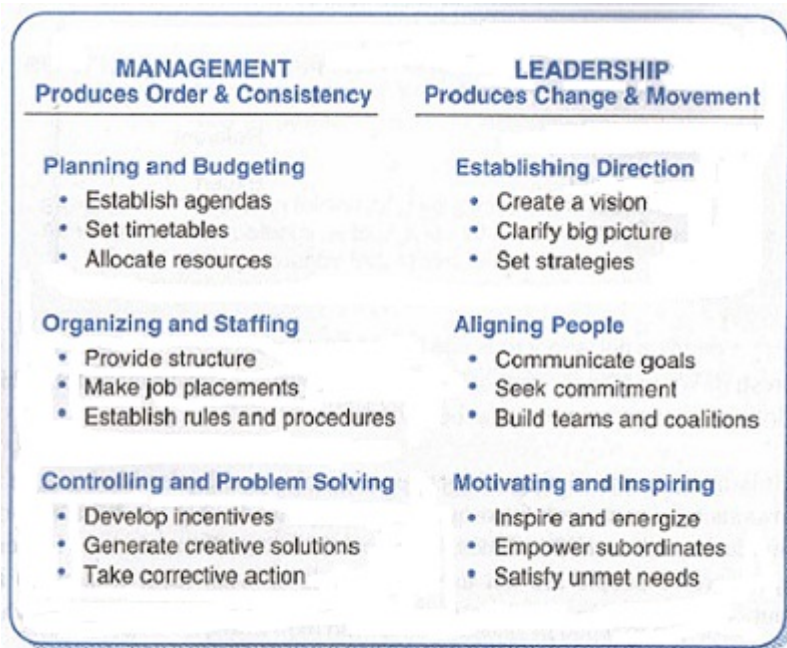


PM Role in Agile Teams in the Context of Project Communication Management

In general, there is a greater emphasis on soft skills in the role of agile project manager in comparison to the role of traditional project manager where hard skills such as structured planning or organization and task distribution are essential. The traditional project manager is somebody who is very good at following processes, using tools and who tends to organize and plan the project in the traditional staged way typical of the Waterfall development. Whereas the agile project manager is seen as somebody who is more of the leader than the manager. The agile project manager tends to engage, motivate and inspire people rather than manage them from the position of authority. Northouse (2007) describes the leader as somebody who establishes direction, and aligns, motivates and inspires people, which is how the role of agile project manager is seen across agile approaches such as XP, Scrum and DSDM. See Northouse's diagram for leadership attributes below:



The agile project manager is more of the emergent leader with informal leadership status rather than somebody who has been formally assigned the role of manager and keeps it from the position of power. The traditional management functions that produce order and consistency are transferred and propagated in agile project management as adaptive functions based on the concept of team self-organization and self-control, APM (2003).

The interaction among individual agents in complex systems is governed by simple and localized rules, which is also the case in agile teams where the agile project manager oversees the whole strategic picture, provides guidance but does not usually intervene on a local level as the individuals who are specialists at a particular knowledge area are better positioned for effective problem solving on that level. This is in contrast to the role of traditional project manager who used to be regarded as a problem solver as it was thought that he should possess the necessary knowledge to solve specific problems, which is not the case in knowledge type of economies of nowadays any more. It is simply no longer possible for a manager to be a subject-matter expert on today's information-rich projects that include a number of different knowledge areas.

Agile philosophy uses many principles from Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS). It is possible to identify for each CAS principle a corresponding agile project management practice as APM (2003) shows in the following table:

CAS Principles and Corresponding Agile Project Management Practices

CAS Principle	Corresponding Agile Project Management Practice
Non-material fields exert force on material objects.	Guiding Vision. Recognizing vision as a non-material field rather than an elusive destination results in vision continuously guiding and influencing behaviour in positive ways.
Autonomous, intelligent agents form the basis of CAS. Interactions between these agents result in self-organization and other emergent phenomena	Teamwork and Collaboration. Recognizing individual team members as intelligent, skilled professional agents and placing a value on their autonomy is fundamental to all other practices. Teamwork and collaboration form the basis for rich interactions and cooperation between team members.
Local, strategic rules support complex, overlaying behaviour in a team environment.	Simple rules such as XP practices support complex, overlaying team behaviour.
Information is energy that serves as an agent of change and adaptation.	Open Information is an organizing force that allows teams to adapt and react to changing conditions in the environment.
Emergent order is a bottom-up manifestation of order, while imposed order is a top-down manifestation.	Light touch. Intelligent control of teams requires a delicate mix of imposed and emergent order.
Non-linear dynamical systems are continuously adapting when they reach a state of dynamic equilibrium termed the edge of chaos.	Agile vigilance. Visionary leadership implies continuously monitoring, learning and adapting to the environment.

The project manager role in the agile team is more the role of facilitator rather than a controller for communication flows both inside and outside the team. According to Beck (2005) a project manager on an XP team fulfils the role of team historian in terms of how much progress the team has made while adjusting project plan accordingly. The DSDM Atern framework describes a project manager as somebody who enables constant change while he or she continuously corrects the course of the project so as its aim at the target is maintained. According to DSDM (2008), effective agile project management requires 'no blame' organizational culture. Therefore, the agile project manager serves as somebody who maintains a buffer zone between his team and the outer organizational environment especially if the two cultures differ.

Being an agile project manager means to trust your team with problem solving on a local level while ensuring that the project is delivered in time, on budget and to agreed quality. It is evident that the rise and importance of knowledge economy in today's world has contributed to the fact that the leadership requirement for the role of manager in organizations has widened covering now managerial roles not just in top management but also in middle management and project management. The role of agile project manager appears to be well equipped for the current adaptive paradigmatic shift we live in.

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