Some of the key features of agile are increased transparency, the ability to shift directions, and measuring productivity.

The first stakeholder group ensured the work completed met the end-users’ requirements. We'd do a two-week sprint to deliver the enhancements and our organizational leadership.

The second idea was organizing a work queue. Every month we met with VPs across the organization. We'd ask them to advocate for prioritizing their work ahead of other projects and have a discussion on which were important and which could wait. Instead of just me making the decision on what's important, we had feedback, input, and transparency. Which could wait. Instead of just me making the decision on what's important, we had feedback, input, and transparency.

The entire organizational leadership made decisions about where to focus our time and effort.

A natural question is why doesn't every organization use agile all the time? One answer is that a lot of people don't really manage projects that tightly. They do their work and try to do their best, and work gets prioritized based on who's the squeaky wheel. It's not that different from what many of us do. The second surprise was how transparently executives ran the organization.

Some people are rightfully skeptical of buzzwords and fad trends. In business management, for every successful launch of a buzzword campaign, there's a worker somewhere growing anxious about another mandated management “torrent” or a corporate reorganization of office chairs with no fundamental change in the way things get done.

The principles of “agile” have moved far beyond their origins in efficient software development among teams, and deeper into questions of business workflow management, productivity, and customer responsiveness.

Some of the key features of agile are increased transparency, the ability to shift directions, and measuring productivity. Before undertaking work, we estimate how long it will take, and at the portfolio level. We can see whether much we can optimize. We can give the rest of our leadership an accurate picture of our true capacity.

By Wes Williams, VP & CIO, Mental Health Care of Denver

It is lightweight: instead of estimating individual's hours spent for each feature, we estimate at the team and project level. Stakeholders get feedback on their estimations by comparing historical estimates against the amount of work each project required to complete.

Agile works well in our environment, a multi-clinic mental health organization with various clinic components that face administration, providers, and clients. There are some kinds of business projects where work gets prioritized based on who's the squeaky wheel. It's not that different from what many of us do. The second surprise was how transparently executives ran the organization.

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