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In This Issue

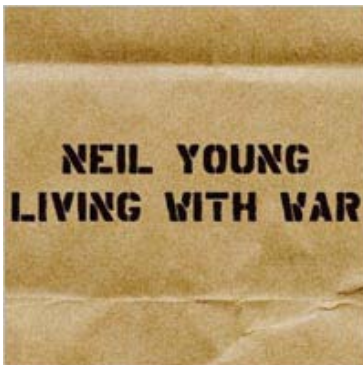
In **This Month's Topic** I offer a somewhat belated response to the Agile Manifesto...

- Monthly Morsels
Hints, tips, techniques and references related to this month's topic

This Month's Topic

The Quality Manifesto

The music of Neil Young played an important role during the turbulent 1970's. With the release of his latest album – **Living With War** – I learned of the angst he experienced as an irreverent rock and roll icon. In a recent interview, he expressed regret that the younger generation of rock and roll groups hasn't taken up "the cause" of the anti-war movement, a cause he and other musicians championed during the Vietnam War...



Does this have anything to do with software engineering? Of course not, but after listening to the Neil Young interview, it occurred to me that it's been almost 6 years since the **Agile Manifesto** was published. During this time, there have been few voices questioning the hype emanating from the Agile Zealots. Like Neil, I hoped that other like-minded people would see through the smoke and mirrors and expose these methods for what they are – just another set of development methodologies, nothing more – nothing less.

Thankfully, people are finally starting to speak up and speak out. There's anecdotal evidence that indicates adherence to Agile Methods such as Extreme Programming has led to **project disasters** and while there have been some successes, this only illustrates my point – Agile Methods are not a Silver Bullet.

And like Obama, I can proudly say that **I didn't vote for Agile Methods** back in 2001...

In case you've been living under a rock for the past few years, Agile Methods are a collection of several development methodologies that include:

- Extreme Programming (known as XP)
- Crystal
- Scrum
- Dynamic Systems Development

- Adaptive Software Development
- Lean Software Development

While these methodologies have some significant differences, they all share common values as expressed by the **Four Values**:

“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 and interactions	over processes and 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.” [1]

Penned by an impressive group of really smart people, the publication of the manifesto touched off a firestorm of controversy and ignited a “you’re either with us or against us” discourse that hasn’t been seen in our industry since the methodology wars of the late 1980’s.

As you may recall from my earlier **e-newsletter** on this topic, I was not a happy camper when the manifesto was first published. What angered me was the suggestion that Agile Methods were well-suited for all types of projects with all types of project teams. The Agile Zealots wanted us to believe that these methods were the holy grail of software development – and would render all other methods obsolete.

Cynic Alert!

Soon after the manifesto was published, it seemed that books with the word “agile” in their title started appearing almost on a daily basis. The cynic in me believes that the **Agile Manifesto** was published to create **marketing buzz** about books the Agile Zealots planned to write. Today, amazon.com lists over 535 books with the words “agile development” in their title.

Extreme Solutions

Extreme solutions are almost always not the most effective solutions. From the perspective of software development, too much process is just as detrimental as too little process. Process needs to serve a purpose that provides value to your customers.



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The ideal software development methodology provides “just enough process” so that the development team can deliver a product that:

- Meets or exceeds customer expectations for functionality and quality

- Meets or exceeds time to market commitments made to customers
- Meets or exceeds internal business expectations

There are many software development methodologies that can provide “just enough process”. And more importantly, a fact that seems to have gotten lost in all of the hoopla over Agile Methods is:

Customers don’t care what method is used to develop software, so long as the software meets their needs.

Customers are focused on results, finding solutions to their problems, and getting on with their work. If you take the time to ask your customers what they care most about with respect to your software, you would likely get answers like this:

- Your software needs to solve my problems in my environment...
- Your software needs to include features we need in order to be successful...
- Your software needs to be delivered in a timely manner with as few bugs as possible...
- Your software should be able to support us as we grow...
- Your company needs to provide the level of support we need to be as productive as possible...

In dealing with customers, there are always going to be challenges...



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... but we need to learn how to manage this relationship as effectively and efficiently as possible. Those companies that are successful in the long run will be companies that have mastered techniques for managing customer relationships in a manner that values customer interactions.

The software industry needs to focus on meeting customer needs and expectations since **high profile software failures** will likely continue to increase.

- Instead of focusing on meeting customer needs, the Agile Manifesto addresses the needs of software development teams.

Do you think customers care if your company uses Agile Methods or any other methodology to develop software? I don't think so.

- Instead of focusing on meeting customer needs, many software development companies suffer from short-term thinking.

Strategic decisions are often made based on achieving short-term objectives without consideration for long-term impact. The goals and objectives of many software development companies are often very different from the goals and objectives of their customers. The effect of these differences results in software products that fail to meet customer expectations. You can ignore your customer's expectations for only so long before they say to you – so long!

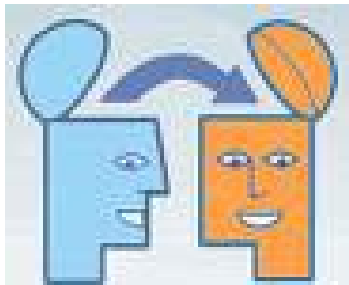
We need to identify how the software industry can do a better job of meeting and exceeding customer expectations...

The Quality Manifesto

A **Quality Manifesto** addresses how we can meet and exceed customer expectations, rather than focusing on the needs of development teams. Here then is my belated response to the Agile Manifesto:

The Quality Manifesto

We are committed to developing and delivering software products that meet or exceed our customers' expectations. To do this, we have come to value:



- | | |
|---|---|
| Getting it right the first time... | since we all know this is the most efficient way to work |
| Using measurable definitions of software quality based on our customers' needs... | because we know that to improve something we must be able to measure it |
| Meeting commitments made to our customers and to each other... | because our reputation depends on our ability to meet commitments |
| Providing products that can meet customer needs as their needs evolve... | since our business depends on establishing long-term relationships with our customers |

We believe that achieving these values is essential to the long-term viability of our company.

By focusing on the values described above, software development companies will be focusing their energies on meeting customer needs. Addressing the needs of software development teams should be determined once customer needs are understood. Using the paradigm of "just enough process" can help organizations determine the most efficient approach for developing and supporting software products over the long-term.

Summary

Dr. Roger Pressman said,

"I contend that software engineering principles *always* work. It's never inappropriate to stress solid problem solving, good design, and thorough testing (not to mention the control of change, an emphasis on quality,...). A specific software process might fail because it is overkill, or the work products it requires are unnecessary or

burdensome, or a person or team becomes overly dogmatic in the application of the process. But history is on the side of a solid engineering approach." [2]

Until next time...

Monthly Morsels

Every month in this space you'll find additional information related to this month's topic.

- **References:**

- [1] Highsmith, J. and Cockburn, A., "Agile Software Development: The Business of Innovation", *IEEE Computer*, Vol. 34, No. 9, Sept 2001, pp. 120-122.
- [2] Pressman, R., "What A Tangled Web We Weave", *IEEE Software*, Jan/Feb 2000, pp. 18-21.

About SQC

Software Quality Consulting provides consulting, training, and auditing services tailored to meet the specific needs of clients. We help clients fine-tune their software development processes and improve the quality of their software products. The overall goal is to help clients achieve Predictable Software Development™ – so that organizations can consistently deliver quality software with promised features in the promised timeframe.

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