Agile Velocity

Implementing Agile
Make Sense of Your Agile Rollout Options

There are many ways organizations are implementing Agile—almost too many. Which is the best? How do leaders make an informed decision based on the unique needs of their company?

To help, we've provided a quick overview of the 9—yes, 9!—Agile implementation strategies. For each option, we've offered pros, cons, Agile Velocity's point of view, and likelihood of success based on our combined years of Agile transformation experience.

In many of the 9 options, success depends on luck in some way… leaving a huge investment to luck is risky. We've collected our Agile implementation experiences in the table below to help you confidently choose the plan that will lead to a successful transformation outcome in the shortest possible time.

OPTIONS	PROS	CONS	AV POINT OF VIEW	LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS
1 Internal Knowledge "Book Club"	• No hard costs • Self organizing • Current employees own the transformation	• Takes full engagement and buy-in from everyone to be successful • Can take a long time to stick • Agile implementation becomes a cycle of "trial and error" • Tough to scale	• Doesn't scale well in larger organizations • Enthusiasm wanes • Hard to get everyone in the organization involved	★☆☆☆☆ **VERY LOW** Tends to be slow rolling and prone to error due to a lack of transformation experience
2 Internal Expert	• No hard costs • Quick action • "Designated Driver" to lead the change • Mechanics can get established easily	• May not be qualified to train/coach, or lead org change • One opinion/perspective • Limited influence	• Typically, mechanics get implemented without understanding of the deeper purpose • Critical senior leader buy-in is often missing • Individuals often implement what worked at a previous company which may not align culturally at current organization	★★☆☆☆ **LOW** Ability to transfer experience is limited
3 Send a Few Employees to Public Training	• Low cost • More informed change agents • Consistent knowledge	• Change is led by a novice • Learning as they go • Employees have never done this role before	• Improvement is owned by the ScrumMasters and not the team • Leaders are lost • Often creates tension within organization • Team frustration due to the ScrumMasters' lack of experience	★★☆☆☆ **LOW** Newly trained employees don't have the experience to properly execute and share their new skills—they don't know what they don't know.

	Pros	Cons	Considerations	Success Rating
4 Hire an In-House Expert	• Immediate expertise in-house • Long term solution • Investment in a longer term employee • Expertise gives employees more confidence	• Hard to justify the long term cost of a highly experienced coach • Hard to attract this caliber of talent • Interviews are led by employees that are inexperienced with Agile • Hire from perspective of current problems and knowledge	• Improvement is owned by the ScrumMasters and not the team • Leaders are lost • Often creates tension within organization • Team frustration due to the ScrumMasters' lack of experience	★★★☆☆ **MEDIUM** Depends on the growth of the hire
5 Hire an Independent Coach	• Immediate expertise • Variable cost • Ability to attract a higher end coach	• Short-term solution • Only receive expertise from one perspective • Interviews led by employees that are inexperienced with Agile • Organizations can hire from perspective of current problems and knowledge • Risk in quality of coach	• Lots of people are calling themselves an "Agile coach" these days—many are unqualified • Winging it with no disciplined approach to follow	★★★☆☆ **MEDIUM** Depends on quality of hire
6 Team Training Only	• Teams are armed with knowledge • Teams are invigorated • Terminology is consistent	• No post-training guidance—teams are left on their own to apply • Leaders not equipped to lead Agile teams • Business is not equipped to operate in an Agile delivery world	• Quality and expertise in action but the Agile adoption often stalls or hits a ceiling • Superficial agility is often present here • Agile at the team level, waterfall at the organization level	★★★☆☆ **MEDIUM** Tends to hit a ceiling—change at the team level can only go so far
7 Middle Management Leadership Training	• Armed to lead real Agile change • Consistency in leadership approach	• No post-training guidance • Not clear how to map Agile principles and practices to a unique culture • Critical senior leadership still sees Agile as only an execution team change • Team resistance	• Managers aren't professional trainers • Teams never fully take ownership and managers still tend to micromanage	★★☆☆☆ **LOW** Teams resist changes when they fully don't understand the context behind Agile principles or the goals behind implementing them
8 Coaching Staff Provider - Staff Augmentation for Coaches	• Various levels of expertise • Variable cost • Staffing managed by vendor instead of the organization	• Big investment • Outsource skillset • Inconsistency in approaches • Short-term presence	• Beware of "body shop" providers who will place sub-par coaches • Quality can vary • Consistency can vary	★★★☆☆ **MEDIUM** Dependent on the quality of individual coaches placed in the organization
9 Transformational Partner	• Disciplined approach • Paced right • Partners often provide an Agile transformation framework to help guide the organizations • Team and leadership involvement • Leaders should expect to see the breadth and depth of the transformation at the team and organization levels	• Big investment • Outsourcing of key expertise is at risk if you choose the wrong partner	• Long term partner/advisor • Partners work towards making the org self-sufficient—you won't be reliant on experts forever • Develops org's internal coaching capability • Not everyone is ready for real change	★★★★★ **HIGH** Long term partner invested in your organization's success