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Agile Methodology: how to use it in eLearning

The term Agile indicates a software development methodology that meets the criteria of flexibility and speed. What are its advantages in online courses?

The Agile method was officially born in 2001, when some software developers met to define a specific methodology for this sector. The objective was to guarantee **flexibility**, continuous interaction and at the same time **speed** in the development of innovative products. Due to its multimedia character, eLearning, and training in general, can benefit from the use of the Agile methodology. Let's look specifically at what the Agile method is and how to use it in the design of online courses.

How the Agile methodology works: the principles

The word agile in English has the same meaning as Italian and indicates a streamlined method for software development that responds to the principles outlined in the **Agile Manifesto**. These include:

- The **centrality of people and teams** collaborating at every stage of the design process
- Openness to **change** as a competitive advantage
- **Communication** and frequent interaction between all parties involved in a project

In concrete terms, the strength of the Agile methodology is the ability to divide the design into **different phases** that begin with the definition of objectives through interactions with the customer, the creation of a **prototype** and a new meeting with the customer from which to obtain feedback to be incorporated in the changes. Once the team and the client approve the result, we move on to the next phase, which involves the same cycle of prototyping and interaction, until final completion.

What are the advantages of the Agile method?

With the Agile method, the developer and the client can work together as part of the same team at each stage of the project. In this way you can have the contributions of all the people involved in the project and use them to **make changes** and achieve the desired result from the earliest stages of the design. Changes are made step by step and this ensures a quality path to the final result. For all these features, the Agile method has crossed the boundaries of software and has started to support the **ADDIE model** for the design of online courses.

Why use the Agile method in distance learning

In eLearning the analysis of the **beneficiaries' needs** is an essential step in defining the training objectives and the design of learning objects capable of achieving them. As you know, the process of **creating an online course** can take several months of work. If interactions with the client were limited to a monitoring meeting or even at the end of the course creation, there would be a risk that all the work done by the **instructional designer** and his team would not fully meet the client's needs. The Agile model serves precisely to avoid this waste of resources and the principle of dividing the project into **small phases** is perfectly suited to the creation of modules for an online course.

Agile Methodology applied to eLearning

To use the Agile method in distance learning, one must keep in mind its founding principles:

- The **team** concept is broader and includes the design team and customer stakeholders. With this in mind, you can include the beneficiaries of the course and the background knowledge they have. This also makes it easier to include **user-generated content** from in online training.

- Each phase of the project is characterised by frequent meetings with the client to identify problems and changes to be made.

Instead of creating a complete course to be submitted to the client upon completion, eLearning professionals can work on short modules that can be easily modified based on continuous feedback from the client, saving resources and ensuring that teamwork leads to agile change management.

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