

LLAMA and Other Agile Methods

LLAMA (Lot Like Agile Methods Approach) is another Agile design methodology that many instructional designers have begun to embrace. Agile project management is an iterative, incremental process and approach for guiding the design and build of projects in a highly flexible and interactive manner. In addition, Agile focuses on maximizing customer value and fostering high team engagement. What's more, LLAMA presents a framework of values that enables teams of programmers to develop software in ways that accommodate changes to underlying needs and a continuous discovery of requirements throughout the project effort.

LLAMA makes some adjustments to the traditional Agile methodology by taking into consideration the syntax and structure of learning objectives, as well as the idea that instructional designers are likely to be working on multiple projects at one time.

APPLYING AGILE TO ID

With the success of the Agile project management in the software industry, it comes as no surprise that L&D practitioners have sought to adopt it. Indeed, many of its guidelines probably sound very familiar to instructional designers, such as:



- Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
- Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
- Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
- Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
- The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
- Working software is the primary measure of progress.
- Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
- Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
- Simplicity—the art of maximizing the amount of work not done—is essential.
- The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
- At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

As you can see, in many respects, the design-build aspect of software design and development is akin to that of instructional design and development, and this similarity holds even stronger when we're developing e-learning or other digital learning experiences.

LLAMA and Other Agile Methods (Continued)



There are several key differences between the two types of work, though. Some distinctions include:

- Instructional designers need to focus on learning objectives and performance outcomes in addition to functions and features.
- Most instructional designers work on several projects at once, while software developers usually are dedicated to a single team.
- Instructional designers often need to wait for content or input from subject matter experts, and have to account for that downtime in their project plans.

Instructional Design Project Management: A Checklist for Getting Started

1. Identify a business goal.

Define the business goal in as much detail as is useful for the project. Think along the lines of business strategies, such as increasing revenue or income, decreasing costs, improving quality, or expanding the capacity of the organization. Connecting the project and its goals with the bigger picture and vision of the organization helps everyone stay motivated when challenges arise.

2. Start with the learner in mind.

Identifying a primary learner persona (PLP) will help the ISD project management team make sometimes tough decisions about the direction of the project as it progresses, such as how regularly the PLP would use the training and in what context.

3. Define the scope of the project with learner stories.

"Using traditional Agile story mapping for training projects tends to result in very information-driven courses," notes Megan Torrance, an expert in Agile for ISD project management, and this can be frustrating for the project team. LLAMA, by contrast, incorporates Cathy Moore's action mapping, which uses proposed user actions to generate stories for project planning.

4. Chunk the work effort.

Break the project into workable chunks. You can do this by taking each of the user stories—dependent units of scope that can be prioritized, assigned, developed, and tested along the project's path to completion—and breaking it into the tasks required to complete the story, such as identifying a location for the photo shoot or selecting the SME for the shoot.

5. Plan the work and work the plan.

Include frequent reviews of the project, and avoid scheduling release dates for multiple projects all at once, suggests Torrance. "Remember that the project schedule is an estimate. The further out it goes, the less likely it is to be completely accurate, so plan accordingly."

Source: Torrance, M. 2014. "Agile and LLAMA for ISD Project Management." *TD at Work*, November. Alexandria, VA: ATD Press.

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