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Agility in practice – options and limitations in applying SCRUM

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Abstract

While the world is turning faster and faster, flexibility and speed are required to produce data for customers. Commercial competitors in statistics are providing data often more quickly than governmental institutions. Thus, statisticians are confronted with how to solve this unsatisfactory situation: High data quality in official statistics is defined by six indicators and timeliness is one of those, so to compete is a challenge. Consequently, there is ongoing discussion in numerous national agencies how to become more effective and efficient while producing high data quality at the same time.

Therefore, the new buzzword is agile project management. One popular applied strategy is SCRUM, which was originally developed by software-developers in 2001. However, this agile approach can be applied in any professional context. The ultimate aim is to become quicker, more efficient and flexible. Basically, in SCRUM individuals and interactions have priority over processes and documentation; smaller work packages (sprints) and retrospective discussions on the performance are key elements. Destatis has conducted several projects based on Scrum, which yielded different results and success.

In this context, the presentation will provide insights on a Scrum project to develop a new data collection tool. Advantages and disadvantages will be presented and the final review how to apply and adjust the basics of SCRUM into official statistical agencies. Thereby, details are not only details, but make the difference. Additionally, some typical setting that statistical agencies face, such as complexity of tasks and large organisations, clearly represent challenges.

Keywords: Agility, data collection, Scrum.