

## Semi-agile IT Project Management

IT projects are very unpredictable beasts. Unlike more conventional construction or electrical projects, IT projects are always very different from one another and our global experience at managing them is still limited.

At this point in history, I strongly believe that from a development point of view, using agile processes like SCRUM is the best approach. It will give rhythm and flexibility to your development and will reduce the risk of a project failure.

But this is well documented and is not the intent of this article. The question that I want to explore here is the following one: What happens if the higher management or customer doesn't want to embrace a fully agile project lifecycle and still wants to know where we're going with budget, scope and timeline in a classical way (with a good old Microsoft Project plan)?

In this case, I strongly recommend you not to opt out of using agile for your development team as it will deliver the most results. But here's a set of tools that as a project manager you should use to be a powerful interface between your agile development team and your "less agile" customer:

- Be incremental: Add milestones to your Microsoft Project plan. Those milestones should try to match your agile development sprints dates.
- Split your project in phases: A project should never go over a few months. Instead of a large one year project, plan for 3 phases of 4 months each. And make sure that you have software to demo at the end of each phase.
- Have a project plan: Every change in scope should be documented there and agreed with the customer. Undocumented scope change can lead to confrontation. Clear and documented scope leads to a successful project for everyone.
- Link the customer to the development team: For example, reuse your JIRA development task numbers in the project plan. This way, everyone will speak the same language.
- Request a customer's project owner: Someone must have responsibility and accountability for making the big decisions. And ask to replace him if he leaves.
- Measure all your efforts: On a fixed-bid project, you could go over budget. Even if the customer doesn't have to pay for extra work, make sure it's documented (in the project plan). This way, the customer will be more comprehensive and open for negotiation.
- Stick to what you believe: Don't let the customer control how you do your work. For example, don't let the customer force you to assign one of his resources to an important task for training purposes. Training is important, but you don't want to put your project at risk without any control over it. Find an alternative.



Topics: [agile](#), [SCRUM](#), [project management](#), [planification](#)