



PRINCE2 Agile®: It's All About Tailoring

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PRINCE2 Agile Overview

PRINCE2 Agile is a terrific solution that can help organisations already benefiting from PRINCE2. It may be traditional for white papers to maintain balance, but I want to share my enthusiasm about a valuable solution that will help us transition to new working practices without compromise.

In recent years, Project Management has been described as “*traditional*”, while agile working practices have been described as “*novel, changing the world of work.*”

Professionals have been forced to make a decision that appears binary: Are we a traditionalist or do we go boldly into the future? I imagine I’m not alone in answering, “*I want to be both!*”

PRINCE2 Agile resolves the dilemma of having to choose. With the right sort of preparation, an organisation can maintain good governance and direction of its initiatives while making use of every tool available to create forward-facing products and solutions. It can help ensure desired outcomes while employing ideas that also bring the future of work into the office today.

Project management is not a new concept, and best practices have been inspected and adapted many times over the years, constantly evolving to address new challenges. While fundamental principles have remained steady, other aspects have changed to capitalise on lessons learned. PRINCE2 has worked effectively with waterfall methodologies to guide and deliver successful projects throughout the world. As much a victim of its own success as anything else, it has become synonymous with traditional project delivery. However, that does not properly represent its role.

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PRINCE2 Facilitation

PRINCE2 is a facilitator. Its job is to create an environment where the team and the team delivery processes can succeed. It has done, and will continue to do this facilitation role well for the waterfall approach, as it will for agile delivery if we keep to our established principles. In this case, the key is *“tailor to suit the environment”*.

PRINCE2 Agile asks a simple question. *“What sort of environment do we need in order to empower agile working practises?”* It considers this question from multiple angles:

- How do we ensure that there is flexibility on what is to be delivered?
- How do we promote and empower collaboration?
- How do we make communication within the project rich and fast?
- How do we enable iterative working and incremental delivery?
- How do we get the contracts and commercials to support our chosen approach to working?
- How do we get buy-in to an agile way of working?

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It then sets about creating the correct environment. This is PRINCE2 at its best – creating effective project environments where work can be successful. The goal of tailoring is to adjust the “vanilla” vision of PRINCE2, as represented in the manual, to enable directing, managing and delivering to work together to create the products that we want, in the way that we want them created.

Directing and managing ensure that:

“The project board are accountable for the project’s success by making key decisions and exercising overall control while delegating day to day management of the project to the project manager.”

– Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2® AXELOS

Delivering is about getting the work done and getting it done right:

“When combining PRINCE2 with agile, the managing product delivery process and the use of work packages needs to be seen as a vital interface and linking process.”

“The interface should be collaborative and transparent where there is a collective agreement on what is to be produced and how this will be achieved.”

– PRINCE2 Agile®, AXELOS



PRINCE2 Customisation

PRINCE2 Agile is not prescriptive. As agile is such a wide body of knowledge, the PRINCE2 Agile manual explores concepts, gives guidance, and considers alternatives. It does not offer just one simple solution that will work best for every situation.

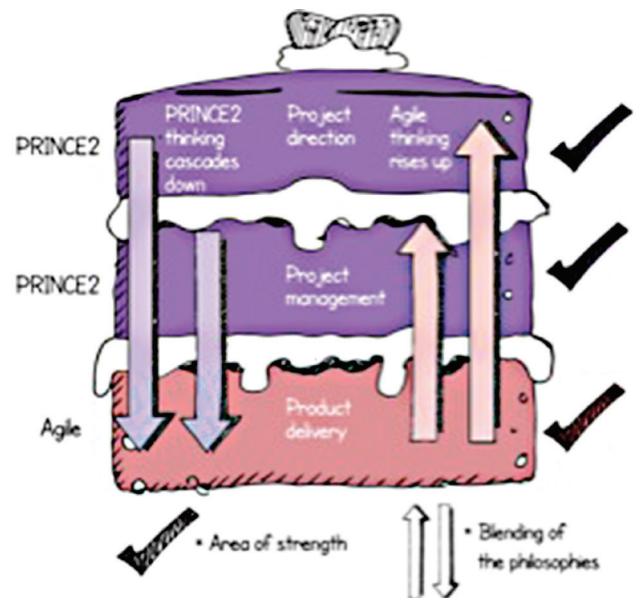
However, there are front-runners in the world of agile, such as Scrum and Kanban. Both of these approaches are reviewed in the manual, and basic knowledge covering how PRINCE2 might be tailored is offered.

We are not tailoring agile; we just want the delivery mechanism to do its job. PRINCE2 has been built in a flexible way in order to enable our chosen delivery mechanism. Tailored PRINCE2 establishes the environment; agile delivery focuses on creating products that are fit for purpose.

While we could simply put agile in the “execute the work package” box and leave PRINCE2 alone, PRINCE2 Agile aspires to much greater than that, as one process embodying the very best of both. It is an inspirational transformation and exercise in tailoring.

What are the drivers that we should consider when evaluating the benefits of PRINCE2 Agile?

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(Figure 3.1 – PRINCE2 AGILE® 2015 Edition.)

PRINCE2 Drivers

PRINCE2 Agile is an enabler. From the top down, it facilitates a way of implementing agile techniques, concepts and behaviours that don't weaken the governance, direction and information flows necessary for successful project completion. It's a way of tailoring management that empowers agile's implementation rather than limiting it to fit.

PRINCE2 is a career builder. PRINCE2's appeal to working professionals is that it is a proven method that works, and its implementation helps us to be successful in our chosen careers. It is also a differentiator in a busy job market. When you have real skill at delivering projects, the challenge is how to make that visible to prospective employers. Today the market is more fragmented, with questions pertaining to how you deliver, traditional or agile. My answer would be, *"I don't mind, how do you like to see it done? I have a flexible set of skills that understand the big picture and the value of governance, I can run a traditionally organised project and I can create an environment where agile working can flourish"*. A key piece of evidence that will support that position is the PRINCE2 Agile qualification.

For PRINCEers. Agile is simply too good a tool to be missing from your toolkit. In the right situation it will transform your delivery and build trust and collaboration that is exceptional.

For Agilisters. PRINCE2 is not the traditional behemoth you may think. It creates the space needed for work to be successful, and if applied well, is about empowering and facilitating not command and control.



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If we challenge PRINCE2 Agile from the perspective of “How does it help me be successful,” it creates an interesting picture:

“The first thing to note is that PRINCE2 allows us to clearly look at winning in different ways. In a PRINCE2 project there are 4 distinct ways to demonstrate a win:

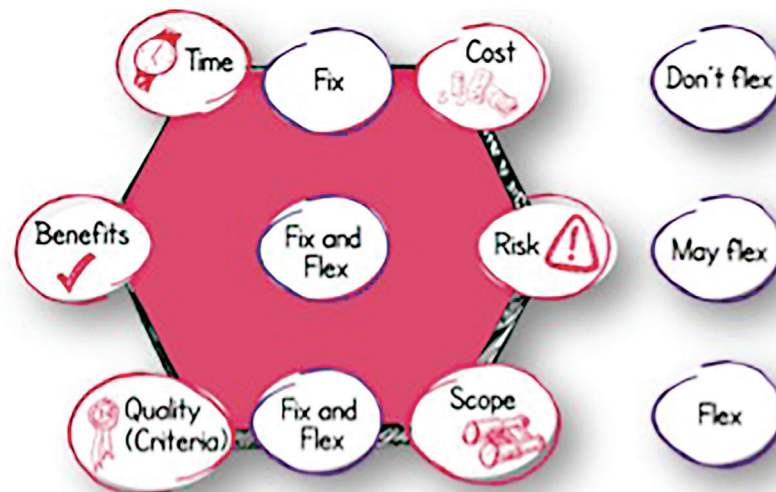
- 1. The defined acceptance criteria which include the projects performance targets are met*
- 2. The products that the project creates are accepted by our customers*
- 3. The benefits identified in the business case are delivered*
- 4. The promises that we make about how we will run the project, captured in the project initiation documentation, are kept”*

– AXELOS White Paper “It’s all about winning”, by Duncan Wade

PRINCE2 Guidance

PRINCE2 Agile guides us to:

1. Create acceptance criteria that are flexible yet measurable and definitive. Manage our targets to fix cost and time; and then flex scope and quality.
2. Work iteratively and deliver incrementally so that products are accepted by our customers early, and delivery becomes second nature to the project.
3. Create value by ensuring that work delivered has benefit
4. Keep our promises by adopting a set of behaviours, concepts and techniques that define a way of collaborative working.



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If your goal is to gain a great introduction to project management and at the same time learn the basics of agile delivery, then consider PRINCE2 Agile Foundation Certification Course 1177. This course does not require any prerequisite qualifications and is a fabulous place to start your development journey. The foundation certificate that you gain will allow you to progress in a number of different directions and follow what interests you most.

[Learn More about Learning Tree's PRINCE2 Agile Course 3634 ▶](#)

[Learn More about Learning Tree's PRINCE2 Agile Foundation Course 1177 ▶](#)

In order to create the right environment for an agile delivery framework to succeed, we need to consider every aspect of PRINCE2 and every step in the process of project delivery. PRINCE2 Agile does just that by reviewing the PRINCE2 principles in context and offering recommendations and considerations for the processes and themes. It is a comprehensive approach that considers every step of the dance.

About the Author

Duncan Wade (www.hic.co.uk) is a Director of Human Interface Consultancy Ltd. He is the Lead Trainer and Course Author of the Learning Tree International courses on PRINCE2 and PRINCE2 Agile, and a working professional in the field of project management and agile delivery.

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