



“Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way”



Although made famous by Chrysler’s Lee Iacocca, the phrase was originally a quote from Thomas Paine. The quote strikes a chord with this month’s theme of Agile Development. Businesses that just strive to keep up are at great risk of falling behind or, worse, becoming obsolete. On the other hand, businesses that are innovative and continually try to stay ahead tend to thrive. The businesses that are likely to succeed are those businesses who know what the customer wants before they even know they want it. Agile software and system development techniques are a perfect fit for such a business. Whereas traditional developers tend to be isolated from the customer, Agile methods require developers to be in tune with the needs of the customer. By understanding our customer’s world, we can be innovative in meeting their needs. In Department of Defense (DoD) terms, an intimate relationship with our ultimate customer, the warfighter, helps us understand the capability needed to accomplish their mission. Their lives and our national security interest depend on us being in tune with their needs.

As developers and maintainers of DoD software, it’s imperative that we are adequately agile to enable our warfighters to respond to continually changing threats and technologies. Getting new code to the field, however, involves much more than just developing the software; we must also address our policies and procedures for funding, testing, acquiring, training, and distributing software if we are going to be truly agile. Many emergency fixes are delivered at heroic speeds, but there is still progress to be made in order to intentionally deliver incremental capability real-time to need. It may be a far stretch from where we are today but imagine the possibilities of being able to tweak software in flight and receive instant feedback if it meets the user’s need. A lot would have to change to make that leap, but I believe it is a worthy goal.

To address this challenge, I appreciate the opportunity to share continuing ideas to enhance Agile development. We begin with Dr. Alistair Cockburn’s insights on the benefits of moving software incrementally and quickly through development in *What Engineering Has in Common With Manufacturing and Why It Matters*. Next, Esther Derby discusses some of the people skills that tend to be so critical in Agile development in *Collaboration Skills for Agile Teams*. We complete our theme articles with a contemplative look at Agile development from Dr. Richard Turner in *Toward Agile Systems Engineering Processes*.

In further discussions, my co-sponsors at the 309th Software Maintenance Group share one of their techniques for achieving Capability Maturity Model Integration Level 5 with *CMMI Level 5 and the Team Software Process* by David R. Webb, Dr. Gene Miluk, and Jim Van Buren. Consistent with Dr. Cockburn’s assertion regarding the importance of decisions is Dr. David G. Ullman’s discussion on making decisions in “OO-OO-OO!” *The Sound of a Broken OODA Loop*. We conclude with *Using Switched Fabrics and Data Distribution Service to Develop High Performance Distributed Data-Critical Systems* by Dr. Rajive Joshi.

We must find ways to lead – not follow. Our industry plays a critical role in providing warfighting capability that is unmatched anywhere in the world. As we consider Agile methods, we must realize that the DoD cannot afford to fall behind or become obsolete.

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