



**THE**  
**AGILE**  
**PROJECT MANAGER**  
**THRIVE IN CHANGE WITH AGILE**

**EMMA SHARROCK**

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ...

"This is a fantastic read with lots of very valuable insights. I truly wish I had read something like this at the start of my project management journey, as it would have helped a huge amount! A great job, Emma Sharrock, and I could not more highly recommend this to aspiring project managers or even existing ones, who may learn something new!"

Stephen Dowling, ETM Management Training (CEO & Founder)

"Emma is one of the most capable project managers I have worked with. She's organised, unflappable and sets the standard for Agile delivery. Outside of work, Emma's dedication to achieving personal goals, from completing triathlons to writing this book, is inspiring. I learned an extraordinary amount from working alongside her, and would encourage anyone who is interested in change or project management to read this book and learn from one of the best."

Ellen Cresswell, Digital Professional

"Emma's beautiful writing will have you engaged in the world of managing projects the Agile way from the first page of this book. Throughout the entire book, Emma will have you thinking about your current personal and professional projects, making it a worthwhile read for anyone. Her personal stories, knowledge and wisdom will definitely help you become a better project manager, but will also give you great tools to help you navigate and succeed in today's constantly changing world."

Eduardo Nofuentes, The Agile Contact Centre

"If you picked this book up thinking it may be a technical project management guide, you'd be wrong! It's so much more than that. Incorporating ideas from the Agile methodology, it demystifies change and simplifies what we often overcomplicate when managing change projects. Breaking down the key areas where projects typically go wrong, *The Agile Project Manager* provides effective ways to manage the often tricky people aspects of projects. Not sure how to get people on board? Facing resistance from key stakeholders? Grappling with scope creep, big risks and issues? Stop worrying and pick up this book!

Widely referenced and drawing on examples from her own life, the author shares how to apply the ideas, techniques and tools to successfully achieve goals at work and in life.

Emma's conversational style makes this book easy to read and digest. It's as if she's sitting alongside you, guiding you every step of the way. Using

analogies, metaphors and real-life stories from her vast project management and coaching experience, she becomes your own personal coach. Asking you questions you may not have thought to ask yourself, *The Agile Project Manager* is an inspiring and practical guide for anyone who aspires to deliver successful projects and make change happen. It could be the project manager's new best friend."

Caroline Cameron, Executive Coach, Possibility to Reality

"Emma Sharrock has written the book that all IT professionals need to read. We all work in IT, but first we are all human beings. Change is a constant for us in work and in life, and Emma's approach helps us all learn how to help ourselves. A must-read."

Catherine Lockstone, Consulting Executive

"When so much has already been said about a subject, it takes something very different to make you think, something that I was fortunate enough to do with *The Lazy Project Manager*. In this book *The Agile Project Manager*, Emma has approached the world of project management from a very personal perspective, and by projects this encompasses business change as well as personal change. The result is a book that I found very readable and therefore enjoyable, and a book that offers up a raft of practical means to address the very typical challenges any would-be Agile project manager will face."

Peter Taylor, *The Lazy Project Manager*

"Many have attempted to formulate and articulate what Agile is. What Emma shares is her astute experience on what the key Agile principles are and how they apply to achieve success in ANY change – she has pulled it off! Everyone interested in Agile – in being an excellent project manager – needs to read this book."

Lisa Poulton, Coach @ Maximise Talent

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

An experienced project manager, Agile enthusiast and coach, Emma is passionate about all things that involve change and people. She has been delivering projects for over fifteen years, and founded a coaching business in 2011. Since then she has been seeking ways to 'converge' her passions for projects and change, and human behaviour.



Emma feels strongly that in this increasingly complex world, we are losing the human aspect of project and change management. We are prioritising tools and templates over relationships and human interaction. It is getting harder to take the time to meet with someone face to face to understand their concerns when there are a million spreadsheets waiting to be completed and new processes that need to be followed.

Her goal with *The Agile Project Manager* is to provide simple tools and techniques that assist project professionals to achieve project success. These tools and techniques are all about you, the reader, because that is where the greatest difference can be made.

## **DEDICATION**

To my wonderful husband, Damo, my biggest fan, strongest supporter and love of my life.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When writing a book about the mindset and principles of honesty, transparency and collaboration, it is impossible to do without the help of a team of people. A team of people who are happy to give honest feedback on progress, as well as encouragement along the way.

Rob Thomsett, my mentor, whom I had the privilege of working with for three years at NAB. He has been my inspiration, my Yoda and the reason this book first came into being. His patient feedback on my ideas, as well as the opportunity to see him in action and learn from him firsthand, are things I am so grateful for.

Alice Haemmerle, my coach and mentor, whom I have learned so much from. Her insights into life and her support and encouragement, not to mention the incredible community she has built by attracting only the best people, have been central to my successes.

My editor, Mary-Jo, who has provided direct feedback on my writing style, including quote corrections I would have missed and great ideas for illustrations. I love our catch-ups over wine to talk all things from editing the book to solving the problems of the world. I'm looking forward to collaborating with you on more books.

My illustrator, Kathryn, who has brought to life the little character you see throughout the book. She easily translated my sketchy design briefs into real-life art. It's a talent I wish I had.

*My Agile Project Manager team early adopters:*

Priya – my long-time friend who gave me tons of encouragement at a well-needed time.

Darrell – who signed up immediately and was always up for some sage advice at the right time.

Maddy – a fabulous sounding board and cheer squad, her enthusiasm was infectious and her feedback was incredibly helpful.

Greg – my fellow coach at NAB: I am so grateful for your advice and help along the way, as I'm sure you are grateful for my help with your Twitter presence.

Adrian and his wife Denise – they signed up immediately and avidly retweeted my blog posts, which I so appreciated.

Blair – a fantastic first fast follower, always retweeting and prompting me for updates.

Ellen – my amazing boss for a short time at Coles, with her impeccable writing style and great feedback on my writing and content, including helping me get over my love of exclamation marks.

*My Agile Project Manager* team reviewers:

Lani Beer

Parth Bommakanti

Caroline Cameron

Clare Cope

Stephen Dowling

Emma Gangemi

Chris Griggs

John Jeston

Venkatesh Krishnamurthy

Catherine Lockstone

Eduardo Nofuentes

Lisa Poulton

Peter Taylor

You will never know how helpful you have been. On the days when the words refused to come out onto the page, to receive a tweet, a text, an email or a phone call asking how the book was going or providing feedback on something I'd sent out was such a boost and always welcome, no matter where I was in the writing journey. There were great days, there were average days, and you were always there.

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## Foreword

I remember very clearly when I first met Emma.

I was building an Agile project management framework for a major Australian bank and, as part of my contract, I had agreed to create, coach and mentor a small team of Agile project management coaches to embed and sustain the tools, techniques and cultural change that supported a very different approach to traditional project governance and project management.

Having developed and implemented components of my approach to Agile project management in US, UK and Australian organisations, I knew the person I was looking for and how hard it would be to find such a person. In particular, I was looking for a person who had learned what I have always believed is a fundamental truth about projects and change:

Project management is all about people and relationships.

All the great project managers I had met had learned this truth and were experts at communication, and building and maintaining great relationships with their teams, their stakeholders and, most importantly their sponsors. They were both empathetic and focused and, more importantly, open to change and learning. They knew their strengths and weaknesses.

So, I was waiting in the foyer of the bank. I didn't know what Emma looked like and assumed that somehow we'd find each other. There were many people milling around, talking in small groups and, like me, waiting to meet someone.

Suddenly this person walked up to me, put her hand out and said, “You must be Rob. I’m Emma and I’m really pleased to meet you.”

At that very moment, I knew Emma was the person we needed. She joined the bank and for nearly two years I watched as she coached, supported, taught and listened to project managers as they went through the difficult transition from traditional to Agile project management. Emma learned too throughout those years, both from her work in the bank and from her private consulting work. Those learnings are throughout this book.

You see, the courage, self-awareness and openness that Emma had shown in coming up to me and engaging me in a conversation are the keys to becoming a great Agile project manager. In addition, a passion for exploring different sources of knowledge and learning from them is the secret to remaining a truly Agile project manager.

To me, a great day is a day when we learn something.

I have learned from Emma and when you read this book, you will have many great days.

Rob Thomsett  
Canberra 2015

## Introduction

The world around us is constantly changing. And changing faster than ever. Are you ready?

If your answer is no, don't worry, as not many of us are ready. Our mindsets are still effectively geared for the Industrial Revolution and yet here we find ourselves in the Information Age. We need to adapt quickly, not just to survive, but also to thrive. Whether we like it or not, we are all in the business of change.

This book is about this business of change. You may well be the subject of the title – a project manager or a change manager. You may just as well be a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, a parent, a party planner or someone organising to move house. This book is written for all of you.

My goal for you is that reading this book will help you not only to thrive in this everchanging world, but also to achieve your purpose and aspirations, so that change happens on YOUR terms.

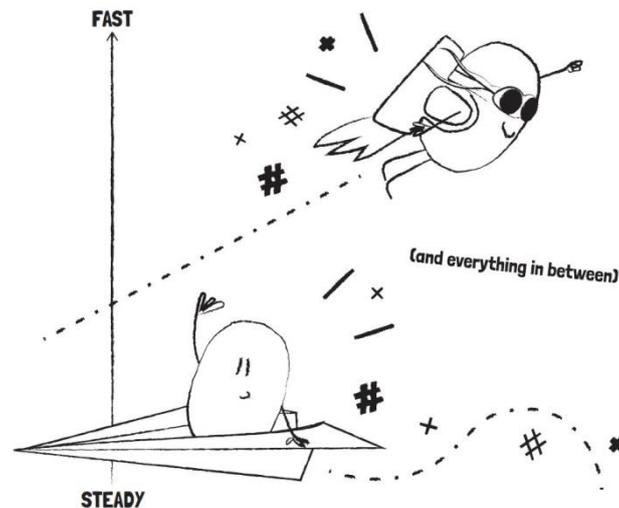
I am passionate about helping people to achieve amazing results by highlighting that these results are simpler to achieve than you may think. I've worked in project and change management for over fifteen years and now, as a coach, there are certain themes that I adhere to throughout my work which help to make change easy and effortless. When applied, these insights can help turn a potential disaster into an unqualified success.

One theme that informs my day-to-day coaching above all is the importance of being 'Agile'. The Agile concept has formally been around since 2001 when the *Manifesto for Agile Software Development* was published; however, Agile concepts have been practised informally since the 1980s. The Agile approach first endeavoured to make the complex process surrounding software development simple. But why apply this approach only to software delivery when the underlying concepts could be applied to anything?

Everyone deserves to achieve amazing results, and through my coaching I've learned to understand that with the right mindset and the right supporting tools, achieving those amazing results can be a lot easier than you think.

American author and motivational speaker Zig Ziglar once said that we are all in the business of sales. Whether it is our formal profession or not, we must all sell ourselves and sell what we do. I take that further and say we are all in the business of change. And with our lives changing so rapidly, we need to be excellent agents of change, large and small. Big change requires planning, scheduling and a steady approach. Smaller changes require fast decisions and quick action. I call this the project continuum. It doesn't matter where

you are located on the continuum: the more Agile your approach, the greater success you will have.



We all manage change all of the time, so whether it is our job title or not, we are ALL project managers. The TV series *The Apprentice* (a reality TV show originally aired in the USA where contestants compete against each other to win the prize of becoming the 'apprentice' to a successful celebrity business personality – in the USA it was Donald Trump, in the UK Sir Alan Sugar and in Australia Mark Bouris) did wonders in advertising the project manager role to the mass market and showing that anyone (with varying degrees of success) can do it. So, if we are all doing it all of the time, why not do it really, really well?

### **What is a Project?**

Since we are all project managers, we need to agree on what a project is. According to *The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Fifth Edition)*:

“A project is a temporary endeavor  
to create a unique product service or result.”

The key word here is 'unique'. Anything that you do over and over again, from cleaning your teeth or mowing the lawn to paying bills, is NOT a project. Even moving house, if done often enough (heaven forbid), could be considered a process; however, for most of us this doesn't happen too often and even if it does, it is most likely unique every time.

Here is a handy tool that Stephen Dowling from ETM Management Training uses to show the extreme differences between projects and 'business as usual' activities.

## What's the difference?

Area	Project Activity	Operations Activity
Life Cycle of the activity?	Start and a finish	No definitive beginning and end
Products, service or result produced?	Unique, once off	Repeated
People or resources used?	Specific for project	Normal operations
Costs to complete?	Specific for project	On-going costs
Risks in doing the activity?	New risks	Existing risks
Organisational change as a result of doing?	Will bring change	No significant change

How different are these?      What happens if you stuff them up?

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The great thing about defining a project this way is that we can all identify with the concept. In this constantly changing world, we must undertake unique actions all the time to simply keep up with what is going on. And projects can be done extremely well or extremely badly. Let's make the decision right now to do them well using some simple techniques and practices.

### So What Does Agile Mean?

This means many things to many people and so it's important to define the Agile concept here to make sure we're all on the same page. One dictionary definition states that it is "the ability to move quickly and easily". The *Manifesto for Agile Software Development* states:

"We are uncovering better ways of developing software  
by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

**Individuals and interactions over processes and tools**

**Working software over comprehensive documentation**

**Customer collaboration over contract negotiation**

**Responding to change over following a plan**

That is, while there is value in the items on the right,

we value the items on the left more."

This statement was signed by the 22 founders of Agile software development and since then Agile development has grown into a variety of methodologies and given birth to an industry of its own. It has had great success in some organisations and limited success in others.

With this in mind, the Agile project manager is a person just like you who can take control in an everchanging world in order to make change effortless. The Agile PM does this through a mindset that embraces some basic principles that result in successful change every time.

### **The Agile Project Manager – a definition**

You may have a burning question at this point: Are project managers even needed in projects using Agile techniques? If everyone is happily collaborating with each other and the customer, and delivering value in a flexible way, do they need someone to 'manage' it? This question gets asked a lot. Some people adamantly state that there is no need and others believe they are absolutely needed. The fact is: both views are right. There may well be projects (especially small ones with few dependencies) that need minimal project management oversight (as a formal role), whereas other projects will benefit from a project manager working with the team to support them. The principles detailed in this book are designed to assist with any change regardless of who embraces them and in what context.

With that in mind, the Agile PM is a smart, savvy individual who is equipped to manage change in the most effortless way possible and so as to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Does that sound like you?

### **What This Book is About**

This book is about why these basic Agile principles are so important and how they can be applied to achieve success in ANY change – from large-scale organisational change to something new in your personal life right now. This book is for YOU and how you can easily apply some simple principles to dramatically change the quality of your results and ultimately your life.

If you already know a bit about Agile, that's great – you can let me know if I get something wrong. If you don't know much about it, that doesn't matter, as you bring your own unique perspective.

### **What This Book is *not* About**

This book does not go into the details of Agile software development. It does not discuss Scrum, Lean, Kanban or any other software-specific tool or technique. There are already some great books out there that talk about this.

## **Why You should Read This**

Are you going through a change in your life, whether it is at work or at home? Are you prepared to make some small changes in your approach in order to achieve great results? I trust that by this point, you have decided it's worth investing in this book. I won't let you down!

## **My Story**

My childhood was spent as a 'RAAF brat' because my parents were both in the Royal Australian Air Force. We moved around the country a number of times and change became a way of life. When my father retired at the start of my high school years, I approached the prospect of spending the rest of my school life at the same school with a mixture of relief and sadness. There was a part of me that loved the challenge of finding new friends and getting used to a new routine. There was another part that longed for permanence.

I left school and joined the Royal Australian Navy as an Officer of the Watch. A life of travel and adventure awaited! I completed a science degree at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) and first stumbled on the concept of organisational change while completing my honours year. I discovered, through my thesis research, that (wait for it) the more involved people feel in a change, the more likely they are to accept it (I know, it's big). My passion for people and for change was ignited and everything I chose to do from that moment fed the fire.

Since then, I have become an avid reader of anything to do with change and human behaviour, and this hasn't stopped. While in the Navy, I was given some projects to run. I never considered myself a project manager, but after doing it for a year I was offered the role in a consultancy. For the next few years, I found myself running project after project in the capacity of a project or change manager and LOVING it. I found myself continually fascinated by how people respond to change. For example, a large change involving job cuts and system changes could go very smoothly, while a small change preventing people from changing the colour of their background screen on their computer could result in hostility bordering on outright rebellion.

And this got me thinking ... The difference, the 'secret sauce', was not how big the change was, but rather the level of involvement of the people affected by the change – whether great or small.

From then on, I have been determined to help people to execute change in the simplest way, with the least effort and the best results. Enter the Agile approach.

Admittedly, when I first used Agile I was running a software project, but I quickly saw how these concepts could be applied to the parts of my project

that were not Agile, and then further afield to other non-Agile projects. To areas of my personal life. To anything.

Eager to learn more, I became a Scrum Master for both the certification and the opportunity to learn Agile tools in more detail, as well as achieving a Diploma in Life Coaching. This opened the door to helping people on a deeper level, and the tools and techniques I learned and applied with my clients complemented the Agile tools perfectly. Everything started to come together and I realised that utilising simple Agile techniques and coupling them with an understanding of human behaviour are key to creating change that works.

### **Key Agile Concepts**

Projects that follow Agile principles have these characteristics in common. They:

- are iterative
- show value along the way (not just at the end) – often using regular 'showcases'
- involve smart people who add value
- are open and transparent about progress
- have a team that is trustworthy and self-organising
- have a clear outcome or vision
- demonstrate flexibility in order to change what isn't working
- have regular catch-ups to evaluate progress – these are often called 'stand ups' and 'retrospectives'

### **Other Definitions**

I use the terms 'resourceful' and 'unresourceful' throughout this book – especially in regards to behaviour – and they are worth understanding up front. *Resourceful* behaviours or actions are things people do that are good for them and for others. They help to move something forward. *Unresourceful* behaviour is the opposite. While it might be well intentioned, it does not contribute to anything helpful and could even result in things becoming worse.

You will also see the word 'ecological' – this is not just a reference to our natural world, but to everything in our environment. When you think about an action you plan to take, what are some of the impacts beyond yourself and your immediate environment? Setting a goal that moves you in a great direction but may potentially harm others is not an ecological goal.

You may also notice a few words specific to Agile such as 'Scrum' and 'backlog'. I make a number of references to the Agile values and principles. They are explained throughout and I have included a glossary at the back.

### **How This Book Works**

One of the key principles of the Agile approach is doing things in small chunks, getting feedback and then adjusting where required. So that's how this book has been written. Every two to three weeks, a chapter was released via download to my subscribers as a 'showcase'. These amazing volunteers took the opportunity to read and digest the content, then provide feedback – the 'retrospective'.

The format of a retrospective is:

- What's worked well
- What hasn't worked well
- What still confuses me
- What we can do differently next time

Some of this was delivered face to face; other feedback was via phone and email. When giving feedback, there is no right or wrong. The purpose of the book retrospectives was to identify challenges early so the project (i.e. the book) could remain on track and on message. Everyone was encouraged to be open and honest and I remained open to all feedback. Everyone who participated receives acknowledgment, a gift and my eternal gratitude.

### **Reading This Book**

As you read this book, as well as reading with your own purpose in mind, I encourage you to read through three different lenses (we're project managers after all, we can multi-task!):

1. Learning as a project or change manager and how this can help your project or change initiative
2. Learning as an individual and how this can help you personally
3. Learning with the objective of teaching these concepts to others

The chapters touch on lenses 1 and 2 interchangeably and you will take different things from each chapter depending on where you are right now in your personal and professional change journeys. Lens number 3 may not be something you were thinking about, but it is critical to achieving your outcome for this book. This is because when you learn something, the best way to remember it (and to use it effectively in your life) is to use the newly learned concept or tool AND to teach it to someone else.

Think about when you have learned something new, whether through reading an article or a book or even hearing it from someone. A couple of weeks later, you might struggle to recall the content or even WHEN you learned this nugget of gold – it may be forgotten altogether. However, if you tell someone else about it, you now have two reference points for your memory: the time you actually learned it AND the time you relayed this information to someone else. Your brain is very grateful for this additional boost. Plus you have helped someone else by teaching THEM something new. Do you see how this is win/win?

So, whenever anything resonates and you want to remember it, sure, write it down if you like (which will help too, by giving you another reference point), but also teach it to someone. Share the knowledge. Share the love.

Your brain will thank you for it, as will the person you share the information with. In fact, this very action may form part of your purpose for reading this book – to learn and share knowledge.

### **Key Concepts Covered**

Chapter 1 – Know Your Why: this chapter focuses on the importance of having a purpose, so that when things get difficult, you keep moving forward. This is important for any type of change – personal or work-related. Without knowing the intention behind what you are doing, it is easy to lose focus and grind to a halt.

Chapter 2 – Know Your Risks: once you have defined your purpose and know where you are going, it's a good idea to brainstorm what could go wrong – not just things that could destroy your initiative, but things that could make the project more difficult than it should be. Spending a bit of time in this space is important so that you know what to do when things don't run to plan.

Chapter 3 – Know Your Team: no one is an island and rarely do great things happen without support from others. Who is on your team? From your stakeholders in a large project to your family and friends, take time to enlist some help.

Chapter 4 – Know Your Scope (or What's the What?): what do you need to do in order to achieve your purpose? What are the logical steps that must be taken? And what are things that, while they might be good to do, are not critical to achieving your purpose? Spending more time on high-value activities will fast-track your progress to achieving great results in anything.

Chapter 5 – Your Systems and Tools (the How): build the dream and understand success before understanding which tools or systems will help you

to achieve it. There's no point in booking a removal truck if you don't know where you are moving to or what you are taking.

Chapter 6 – Opportunities for Excellence: be open to new possibilities that will help you to do things even better. This helps you to become ready to benefit fully from the work you are putting into achieving your desired purpose.

Chapter 7 – Stay True to your Vision: check your desired purpose regularly and ensure you stay true to what you have set out to do. This also helps you to reassess your vision – is this still what you want to do or have things changed?

Conclusion: a summary of key learnings and a personal action plan for you.

Remember, this is not only a book about project management and not only a book about personal change management techniques. It's about BOTH and how projects in the business world are related to change in our own lives. I absolutely believe that writing a book about Agile change management could not have been successful without open, transparent collaboration with people I trust. So the first chapters involved lots of feedback from people I know personally and trust professionally. Once the dream was built, I opened it up to the world ...

I encourage you, as you read this book, to think about your dream. What do you want to achieve? What is your purpose? How can you use the principles we discuss here to build that dream and make it real? My hope for you in this book is that it doesn't just give you simple strategies to thrive in this everchanging world, but helps you to build your dream so that change happens on YOUR terms.

To your dream.

## **Next steps**

To order a copy of this book, please go to

[www.theagileprojectmanager.com.au/products](http://www.theagileprojectmanager.com.au/products)

## **Would you like to work with me?**

I run workshops and trainings on all these concepts as well as one-on-one and group coaching.

I am also available (and would love) to speak at your next event.

## **Connect with me**

Twitter: @emmawhitecat

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/theagileprojectmanager](http://www.facebook.com/theagileprojectmanager)

LinkedIn: <http://au.linkedin.com/in/emmabrycesharrock>

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