

Software development a la mode

The style in which we develop software is as fashion influenced as the clothing style, maybe even more. We don't dress ourselves dramatic different more than every five to ten years, but when it comes to software we change our development style dramatically even more often. Just a few years ago the Unified Process was a la mode and every software organization was adopting UP one way or the other. Just 2-3 years ago the hottest style was Extreme Programming XP, but now I hear very little about XP. Now, everyone is running after the next "silver bullet" Scrum.

But what about Scrum, isn't it fantastic? When I for the first time met Ken Schwaber, a father of Scrum, I said: "What I like about Scrum is that it describes how really good project managers motivate people and run an iterative project." I continued: "...and its beauty comes from being agnostic to how you actually do things...you can pick your own way to do requirements, design, code and test." I summarized: "Can I label Scrum 'a common sense project management approach'?" "Yes", said Ken, "that label works". After this introduction we had a lot to talk about.

I can assure you that the founders of Scrum didn't view their baby as a silver bullet, but with all the pressure from people who love fashion and want to create buzz, they may very well have to accept that they have created a silver bullet.

I think Scrum is a great project management practice. It also includes some good social engineering work patterns which make it agile.

However, that is all it is.

- You still need all the other practices that a good master of software needs to excel in, such as requirements, tests, architecture, components, modeling, configurations, and tools, etc. This is all quite basic but important stuff.
- You also need to know how to build complex architectures such as SOA, PLA, EDA, and EA, architectures that are not just paper-ware but executable.
- Finally, Scrum is not enough if you want to know how to scale to large distributed organizations which may have outsourced projects.

What would make sense to do?

- If you already are a Scrum fan you can say that you need Scrum++ where the Scrum stands for the tip of the iceberg and the ++ stands for the bottom of the iceberg which constitute all the other good practices that you will need.
- If you are not a Scrum fan, you could consider replacing your current project management practice with a Scrum practice. You can still work as you did before so you don't need to throw out the baby with the bathwater. However, you would use Scrum for project management for smaller projects. For larger organizations you will need more.
- In both cases you need to use modern social engineering work patterns as you need to be agile.

The ability to mix and match practices from different camps is what I and my company have been working with over the last four years, and now we can do it. That will allow us to move forward and stay away from the silver bullets, the hype, the buzz and the fashion and treat software with the respect it deserves.

This would be smart. Smart by the industry.