

4 tips to optimising Agile marketing

By  Sheila McGillivray

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The original business concept of "agility" stems from the 2001 [Manifesto for Agile Software Development](#) - put together by 17 software developers at a meeting at Utah in the USA.



Image credit: bonneval sebastien on Uhsplash.

The need for an Agile manifesto was aimed at the Silicon Valley startup world, envisaging a less micro-managed world in order to action changes faster. It resulted in different Agile software methodologies evolving, many of which have now been adapted and embraced by industries outside of the IT world.



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Fast forward nearly two decades, and being agile in the advertising industry is more of a buzzword rather than a common occurrence. We continue to see concepts fall flat as they come to life after the *zeitgeist* has passed, or, in the case of Pick n Pay's recent 'iNkukhu' ad for chicken, missing the mark altogether by not having the right team on the job, as well as not being quick enough to respond appropriately.



Nando's has hilarious response to Pick n Pay's new 'iNkukhu' advert

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Using the word “Agile” as a proper noun is still a hotly contested debate, as the director of products at Mobikon outlines in [RIP Agile, Long live Agility](#). But for the purposes of this article, I’m looking at the overall work process philosophy, which the Agile Manifesto put into motion.

Simply put, outside of software development, how can we propel campaigns from concept to screen more quickly, making them more relevant to customers and a better sales tool for our clients?

Following Agile’s modular approach, here are four tips to optimising your Agile marketing:

1. What’s at the edge of what seems possible today?

I love this point, made in the book *Simple Habits for Complex Times*. What's possible outside of the plan? How do we keep creativity flowing in order to lead an agile team?

Andrew Ng, founder of Coursera, believes you can be more creative in a systematic way, rather than wait for [flashes of genius](#). “I found that whenever I wasn't sure what to do next, I would go and learn a lot, read a lot, talk to experts. I don't know how the human brain works but it's almost magical: when you read enough or talk to enough experts, when you have enough inputs, new ideas start appearing,” he says.



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2. Different outcomes require different input.

When we think about what’s at the edge of possibility, we begin to expand our thinking and eliminate time-wasters – such as long meetings. Challenging the methodology of idea adoption, Agile teams use “sprints”.

These are meetings held for about 10 minutes – where people literally “stand up” and check-in to keep the team in sync. In fact, “too many meetings” is cited as the top time-waster in the US by 47% of employees.

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Strategy and Business [also reports](#) that approximately 55 million meetings are held in the US every day – costing an annual \$1.4trn, excluding indirect costs such as “employee frustration”.

3. Having a curious team makes Agile adoption easier.

Agile works best with an accomplished, driven and curious team. There's a high level of autonomy involved as one needs to roll with the production quickly and aside from the benefit of working fast – [87% of agile CMOs](#) found their teams to be more productive following the transition to Agile marketing.

Another thing to consider when putting a team together is: Who do you *really* need? Practice taking a team member out of the equation and asking how the job would work without them.

4. Agility is about doing as opposed to over-planning.

Be ambitious but don't plan too far in advance. The aim is to have a largely autonomous team who can run with the ball and be self-governing.

For this to happen, the team needs to work closely with internal and external people involved. If you always have time-saving as a goal, different ways to do things will crop up as you go – without needing to plan the minutiae of the project.

My team and I recently did a commercial for the Nelson Mandela Foundation in five days – from shoot to screen. One of the ways we managed this was by having the editor working on set as we filmed.



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Adopting agility into your business could result in better productivity, a happier team, as well as a quicker and better product to market than traditional approaches can achieve. It also frees up leadership to focus on the long-term company vision.

In the words of Albert Einstein, “The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

ABOUT SHEILA MCGILLIVRAY

Sheila McGillivray's knowledge of the advertising industry spans four decades. Sheila's energy, enthusiasm and passion for her work has grown with every new position and challenge. Her experience in the industry is exceeded only by her willingness to keep learning and innovating.

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