



## When your Agile is just Fragile

Eddie Obeng PhD.

Agile is 'The Big Thing' in change these days. It helps us deliver results fast, whilst they are still relevant. Agile is 'The Big Thing' in business, public sector and enterprises. It helps our sluggish organisations respond faster to disruption and uncertainty. It's Lean. We all know that.

The reason is simple. As the world gets more complex and changes faster, there are fewer and fewer challenges where objectives and outcomes are completely clear upfront. And where knowing the best route to success is predefined. Linear 'waterfall' style becomes ineffective in this fog of uncertainty. Walking through Fog is safest if you select an initial direction, take one step at a time and hold hands to communicate effectively and check after each step if you are moving to success. This is what Agile encourages. This is what we need. The author of Black Swan Nassim N Taleb explains how in a chaotic world we must seek solutions which become more robust as complexity increases and which can 'heal' themselves. He calls these 'Anti-fragile'.

Some of us have read the Agile manifesto. Some of us know how to persuade colleagues to change their behaviour towards an Agile approach. Some of us know that for Agile to work, environment matters – use 'one centralised room'. Some of us have even reconfigured our office spaces for more whiteboards and collaboration. Some of us understand when to use Agile and when not to, finding it useful for taking confident sprints through the fog which prevents the traditional waterfall methods working. Some of us know Agile means seeing your colleagues daily, using talking to substitute for documentation.



Most of us think that this is enough. And it is. If your business enterprise is small, your project team co-located and you have few external dependencies then it is. Your teams and key business leaders can meet for a stand-up as frequently as they wish. But what if team members have to commute for an hour to come to the office for a stand-up? What if you are a global business and that instead means a flight? What if you have team members in other organisations and widely dispersed? What if your work crosses time-zones? What if talking is actually a barrier instead as people have different first languages and for them writing is clearer?

***What all of us know and what only some of us know  
is not enough to fix what none of us know!***

If you recognise those challenges then you know that ‘what some of us know’ is not enough to succeed. And none of us have an obvious solution to scale, speed, dispersed teams and complex interdependencies. Instead, you may find that as the project grinds on you are forced to change from weekly sprints to monthly global sprints in which you fly people around the world. And when cost is prohibitive many are left out. Stand-ups are replaced by conference calls which in turn become one person talking and 23 people, on mute, doing their emails. The Product Owner becomes remote and is always out of touch. Slowly, originally distant on the time horizon, key event deadlines jump closer at each review, finally getting too close to feel comfortable about. ‘Panic’ ensues and teams are rushed to get together into one physical place for a couple of weeks to “get the job done”. In short, *your Agile approach has become Fragile.*

***‘Panic’ ensues and teams are rushed together to “get things done!”***

If your first instinct is to reach into the digital ‘lucky-dip’ box for a solution, beware. You are more likely than not to take the wrong path.

If you’ve used social media you’ll be aware of the level of miscommunication that happens. That’s because you only ever get to read and respond to other peoples’ posts. You never encounter the person themselves. Many digital solutions are designed so you only ever interact with data. You never interact with people. For Agile this goes counter to the manifesto.

### **#1 Interact as people directly: talk, whiteboard**

Remember when you were frustrated on that webinar because it was all download? All just a stream of stuff dumped on you? You wanted to feedback but more importantly you wanted ‘sidebar’ conversations with your colleagues to deal with your specific issues.

### **#2 Make must be multi-way to deal with complex interdependencies**

Have you forgotten the frustration you had from that fantastic conversation where you were unable to take notes because you were on the train and once you hung up and everyone dispersed all the logic and discovery was lost?

### **#3. Persistence is key. The knowledge outlasts the event. This allows people from different time zones to participate and also enables you to have a single version of the truth**

You know how when you really want to get something done and you are getting on well with colleagues and know they won’t let you down or waste your effort, it doesn’t really feel like work?

### **#4. Select a solution which allows the emotional energy of the project to be shared and the team members to build trusting relationships**





Imagine if you will, that you could simply step through a door, from anywhere you are into a dedicated Agile workroom. Imagine if you can walking round the room. It's a huge room with two skylights through which you can see the clouds scurrying across the blue sky. The brick walls give it a modern edgy feel. But you are here to work so you are now visiting whiteboards with last week's stickies from the last stand-up you had. You can simply read them to remind yourself of what was agreed without having to resort to your notes. As you cross the room to a team area you see individual kan-ban boards for each of your team members. One of your key supplier's team members is stood up at his kan-ban typing in a sticky note. You feel a jolt of surprise as you know that it must be late at night for him. After all he's on the other side of the world. Dedication? Or panic? You wander over to speak to him.

Imagine how you feel two minutes later as your short verbal conversation has resolved a tricky challenge you had which would have taken about twelve emails or at least 40 lines to understand and resolve on Slack. Then imagine. you wander across to the Product Owner's board and watch a short video of the last thoughts of the Product Owner. This is much better than discovering the requirements second or third hand. Their vision is your vision.

And now imagine you walk through the door to another room dedicated to a different project you're involved in. The layout is familiar. You glance upwards at the blue sky with scurrying clouds. This one is a bit more noisy. Fifty of your colleagues from the scrum teams are sitting at café stools just catching up and sharing stories for a few minutes before the Product Owner's stand-up. It's great for motivation and relationship building and you remember why these Agile projects seem to go twice as fast as ones in the past. You join in a conversation at a table with a joke. It feels great.

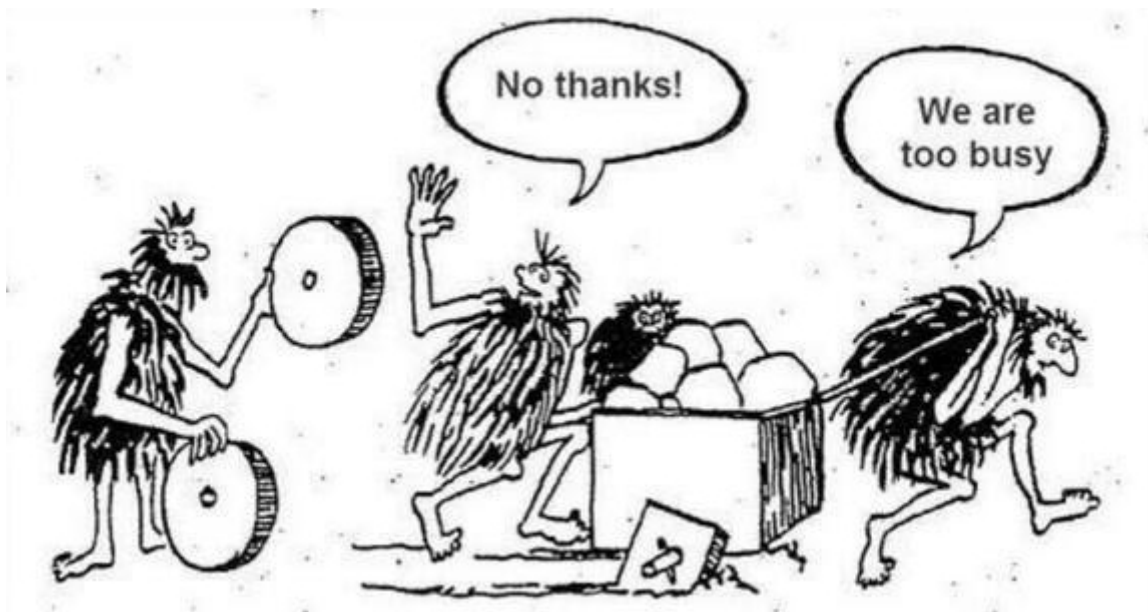
You've just imagined Agile-on-QUBE. Through eight years of development and research we've created for you the perfect agile working environment. The Agile Manifesto was written before most of us entered the digital age. On QUBE we take it to the next level.



You may even decide that it's better than life. We think so. The consensus is that it is ground breaking.

***“I found the experience extraordinary. It is a credible alternative to physical events of this kind, in fact more than that.” Jonathan Norman Gower Publishing***

QUBE\* is lining up to be The Next Big Thing. Everyone who experiences QUBE\* leaves it touched and inspired by the opportunities. With thousands of registered accounts featuring many of the world's top businesses and public sector organisations, and combined working/learning campuses equivalent to the square footage of six Empire State Buildings. And don't worry that somehow your other tools will be duplicated, replaced or made obsolete. And most important of all, don't worry that you are far too busy to adopt QUBE working. You aren't. The step change you will gain will mean the longer you leave it before getting on QUBE, the more you will have struggled needlessly. Think of that famous cartoon of the stone age men dragging a cart filled to the brim with heavy rocks but on square wheels. The cartoon shows them panting and sweating with the effort. Alongside them there is a stone age inventor, a prehistoric Steve Jobs, who is offering them round wheels to which they reply, “No thanks mate. We're too busy!”



Now you can scale, speed up, work with multiple complex interdependencies, emotionally engage people to proactively seek and destroy issues.

In short, in the words of Nassim N Taleb, now you'll find *your Agile has become Anti-fragile!*

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## *AGILE-on-QUBE Community*

*The Agile-on-QUBE \*(AoQ) community consists of five groups:*

*AoQ coaches – people who are skilled at agile and have participated in the QUBE eFacilitator programme and therefore can be reliable and valuable guides to the users.*

*AoQ promoters – people who help us spread the message and evangelise to attract more users and coaches.*

*AoQ users – people who want to move from Fragile to Agile for their businesses, organisations or projects. You win because on QUBE, on average, projects go at twice the speed and require half the resource. Plus, the boost in your relationships and team spirit are hard to put a price on.*

*AoQ learners - people who want to learn more about Agile, more generally about New Ways of working or understand some off the Effectiveness tools and behaviours available on QUBE\**

*AoQ Pentacle Leads – Our team who provide the learning, the spirit and concrete results are led by Simon Cooper, formerly Global Head of Agile Transformation at the global financial leader JPMorgan. It really doesn't get much better than Simon.*

*Well you can't be Simon so which one will you be?*

*Contact\_us@PentacleTheVBS.com*

*Discover QUBE is a 1.5 hour session costing £1000 with a full money back guarantee if you are unconvinced. When you proceed this QUBE Discovery fee will be taken off the cost of the project. We have to charge so we are not overwhelmed with less serious requests*