

Agile IT Organization Design: For Digital Transformation and Continuous Delivery

By Sriram Narayan

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To gain the full benefits of agility in any software organization, you need to extend it beyond developers to the organization as a whole. Aspiring digital businesses need overall agility, not just development team agility. Now, Sriram Narayan, IT management consultant at ThoughtWorks, shows how to do just that. Drawing on 15+ years working with leaders in telecommunications, finance, energy, retail, and beyond, he introduces a comprehensive agile approach to "Business-IT Effectiveness" that is as practical as it is valuable.

Sriram demonstrates how to integrate agility throughout sales, marketing, product development, engineering, and operations, helping each function deliver more value individually and through its linkages with the rest of the business. Addressing people, process, and technology, he guides you in improving both the dynamic and static aspects of organization design, addressing team structure, accountability structures, organizational norms and culture, metrics, and more.

Using real examples, Sriram helps you evaluate and improve organization designs to enhance autonomy, mastery, and purpose. You'll learn how to eliminate the specific organizational silos that cause the most problems... improve communication in organizations that claim to be (but aren't really) non-hierarchical... optimize the way you build teams, design office space, and even choose tools.

Simply put, **Agile IT Organization Design** will help you improve the performance of any software organization.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Agile IT Organization Design*

“Continuous delivery is often described from the perspective of the technicians. This is understandable because that is where it started, but it does the process a disservice. Continuous delivery is a holistic approach. It requires change across the organization and it encourages such change, to the betterment of the groups that practice it. This book addresses that problem and looks at CD from an organizational perspective. It starts from Dan Pink’s ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and describes how to structure an organization for success—how to encourage a focus on autonomy, mastery, and purpose that will motivate your teams and produce high-quality results. This book takes a look at all aspects of organizational design that impact the ability to deliver regular, small, high quality changes. If you follow the advice in this book, your organization will be the better for it.”
—*Dave Farley, author of* Continuous Delivery

“A number of years ago, Silicon Valley marketing guru Geoffrey Moore quipped, ‘A bank is just a computer with a marketing department.’ Today, technologies—cloud, social, big data, the Internet of Things, and mobile—continue to drive this unprecedented digital transformation in organizations. As such, the need for agility has moved from software development to corporate boardrooms. Sriram’s book makes the case that to thrive in these fast and uncertain times, enterprise leaders need to rethink how IT, not just software development, is organized, structured, and measured. His book provides guidelines, not prescriptions, which enable innovation, adaptability, and responsiveness at scale.”
—*Jim Highsmith, Executive Consultant, ThoughtWorks, Author of* Adaptive Leadership

“Very hands-on and operational book for management of Agile-based development. Provides valuable insight for IT practitioners. A must read for IT professionals.”
—*A.V. Sridhar, Founder, President & CEO Digite, Inc.*

“*Agile IT Organization Design* is an engaging, enlightening, and immensely practical book. While many authors have addressed Agile software development, very few have tackled the wider topic of the more systemic changes necessary to move from Agile software to an agile organization, and onwards to ‘digital transformation.’ Even fewer have done so at more than a very theoretical level. Drawing heavily upon his substantial practical experience, Sriram Narayan’s book explores the pitfalls of many of our current ‘organizational wisdoms’ and gently, but convincingly, suggests appropriate and relevant alternatives to try in their place—all the time backed up by real-world examples. I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in, or struggling with, the challenges and opportunities of achieving organizational agility.”
—*Chris Murphy, President and Chief Strategy Officer, ThoughtWorks*

“Agile and continuous delivery transformations require changes in technology, process, and people. This book is the first to tackle the people aspect in depth, and it does this very well. A must read for those taking the journey!”
—*Anders Wallgren, CTO, Electric Cloud*

“*Agile IT Organization Design* tackles all the problems that we just want to ignore. Relying heavily on

hands-on experience rather than theoretical exercises, Sriram provides concrete actions to address the issues with Agile software development and continuous delivery at a structural and organizational level. He clearly addresses issues of finance, accountability, and metrics, not just team structure and team processes, and gives many examples and scenarios to help understand how these issues manifest and how the proposed steps work to resolve the issues. Organizational transformations to Agile often fail, not because the individual processes and practices break down, but because the organization itself—its power structure, its organizational norms, and its culture—fight against the gains that Agile has the potential to bring. Sriram focuses our attention on the systemic problems, but then provides action steps to allow us to address these problems in our context. This book presents no silver bullet, as those don't exist. However, Sriram provides for organizations a way to start facing reality and moving towards an organization that supports not only Agile software development but organizational and business agility."
—Rebecca Parsons, Director at Agile Alliance & CTO at ThoughtWorks

"Sriram's book addresses the rarely-approached topic of Agile organization design in a very pragmatic and thorough manner. It does a great job of explaining the value brought by Agile and DevOps approaches in enterprise-scale organizations, and gives strong details on the 'how' to get there. It also paints a very practical picture of how the different processes of the company (budgeting, staffing, metrics, etc.) will be affected by the Agile organizational choices. I see it as the perfect companion book for a large-scale Agile transformation effort."
—Regis Allegre, VP Software Engineering, Cloudwatt

"Businesses today are discovering that if they are to build 'digital first' experiences for their customers, they need to rethink how their product, marketing, and technology teams work together. Sriram's book pulls aside the curtain to reveal that the best-kept secrets of the world's top performing digital organizations are actually very accessible to all. It serves as a pattern language for management of the modern digital enterprise."
—Adam Monago, VP Digital Strategy, ThoughtWorks, @adammonago

"Agility is so much more than stand-ups and test driven development. Even the best practices won't yield results unless backed by the right leadership. Sriram's book is an important contribution to the all-too-bare bookshelf on leadership of IT organizations. He mixes theory and practical insights in the right measures and the result is as readable as it is full of usable insights."
— Nagarjun Kandukuru, VP Global South Strategy, ThoughtWorks

"Sriram covers everything the Scrum coach didn't tell you. Most books on Agile stop at a team and project level, and that's exactly where the organizations tend to get lost in the real world of pre-existing organization structures and procedures—which in turn become blockers to achieving ultimate business agility. If you ever wonder why your attempt at Agile is floundering, this is one book where you'll find some answers for sure."
— Puneet Kataria, Vice President Global Sales, Kayako

"The field of Agile is an evolving, moving target and there is little in terms of guidance for managers and staff that are trying to implement it within an enterprise context. This book provides a complete guide to all of the organizational aspects of implementing Agile within the enterprise context, as well as providing extremely useful examples and cogent advice. I would recommend this book to anyone with a general interest in Agile through to senior managers looking to reenergize their enterprise organizations using the principles and practices of Agile."
—Ken Robson, Global Head of Trading Technology, Danske Bank

"Sriram has pulled off an audacious attempt at a unified theory of IT. This work led me through the incredible range of issues that I recognize, slotting each one into context and building a vision of how things

can and should be. If you want to be elevated above the trenches of Agile and DevOps—to get a better view of where they fit in the digital world that includes sales, finance, governance, resourcing, delivery, and most importantly, people—then read this book. A compelling read that I'm already referring back to."
—Duncan Freke, Development Director, thetrainline.com

"Sriram makes a convincing case that digital transformation efforts need IT agility. He also does a great job of explaining how IT agility is more than just engineering and process. This book is a valuable read for those on the digital transformation journey."
—Shashank Saxena, Director, Digital and eCommerce Technology, The Kroger Co.

"Adopting Agile software development practices is not just an IT change, it is an organization-wide change. Sriram goes through every aspect of what this means to an organization and gives options for how to bring changes in, including hard-to-change areas like project funding. This book is thought provoking, an easy read, and includes great examples."
— Jeff Nicholas, Director, PB & WM IT Digital Banking APAC, Credit Suisse

"This book is for anyone who is looking for clear and focused guidance in the pursuit of modern product delivery. Any transformational leader will find this book a great tool that provides answers to many of the problems of Agile transformation at scale. A great jump start for those looking to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness to business, Sriram's book recognises that people leadership is the DNA of any Agile transformation."
—Marcus Campbell, Delivery Director, Semantico

"Entrepreneurial organizations thrive on continuously adding value, rapidly innovating, and staying close to their customers. Similarly, Agile software development emphasizes continuous, incremental improvements, quick response to change, and close collaboration. Sriram makes a compelling case for Agile design of IT organizations in large enterprises. He goes well beyond describing how an IT organization can adopt Agile development methodologies to explain how any successful digital transformation within a large enterprise must encompass strategy alignment, project portfolios, IT staffing, budgeting, and more. This book is a great read for those who want a digital transformation to have impact both within and beyond their enterprise IT organization."
—Ron Pankiewicz, Technology Director, VillageReach

"Organizational structure is a key enabler for a company to achieve its raison d'être. This book lays out the rationale for organizing IT organizations around Agile software development concepts. It provides practical guidance on wide-ranging success factors including tangible org elements such as structure, team design, and accountability, and intangible cultural elements such as alignments and norms. These concepts will certainly help IT companies turn the tide on huge cost and time overruns that are typical on large IT projects."
—Paul Kagoo, Engagement Manager at McKinsey & Co.

"Outcomes matter in an increasingly 'winner takes all' digital arena. A true digital transformation undertaking, driven by the need to build competitive advantage, is marked by an increase in responsiveness, insights, and engagement, not just cost effectiveness. IT organization is a key partner in this transformation but is seldom structured to succeed in most enterprises. This book makes a case for how IT organization needs to be weaved within outcome-based teams, not activity-based teams, to drive agility and competitive advantage. In general, organizational design is very expensive to engineer in real world situations but this book takes on this tough problem by providing some frameworks and considerations for the reader to evaluate the validity of outcome-based structure in their organization."
—Vijay Iyer, Sr. Product Manager, NetApp

“I found *Agile IT Organization Design* to be well organized with an in-depth knowledge of challenges that IT organizations face, while providing possible ways to address those challenges. Moreover, it was eminently readable and I found myself readily recognizing the problems described within. It may seem odd to describe a business-oriented book as such, but I found this to be an enjoyable read!”
—Randy R. Gore, Program Manager, IBM

“As enterprises try to ramp up their digital transformation initiatives, there will be an ever-increasing need for better collaboration between IT and business. New org structures will fuel this collaboration. Sriram’s book is a timely elaboration of the importance of org structures for the success of digital initiatives large and small.”
— Dinesh Tantri, Digital Strategist, @dineshtantri

About the Author
Sriram Narayan, an IT management consultant with ThoughtWorks, has provided IT agility guidance to clients in telecom, financial services, energy, retail, and internet businesses. He has also served as a leadership coach and a director of innovation. He was a founding member of the ThoughtWorks technology advisory board--the group that now authors the tech radar. During a two-year stint at the products division of ThoughtWorks, he helped with product innovation and advocacy on Go, a tool that helps with continuous delivery.

Along the way, he has worn the hats of developer, open source contributor, manager, product owner, tester, SOA architect, trainer, and Agile coach. An occasional blogger and speaker at conferences, his writings, talks, and contact information are available at sriramnarayan.com .

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