

2021  
**AGILE**  
**PROJECT MANAGEMENT** ◆  
**TRENDS**



**santopietro**  
project management

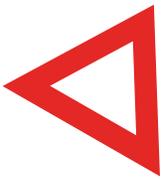


*Alcides Santopietro*

# 2021 Agile Project Management Trends

Last year was like no other, but among the chaos of the pandemic, we saw many new trends develop in the project management arena, particularly in the Agile project management field. In order to help you make the most of your career in 2021, I've put together some useful insights into the trends of 2020.

Enjoy the reading!



# We can work from anywhere now. But we need to know how to do it properly.

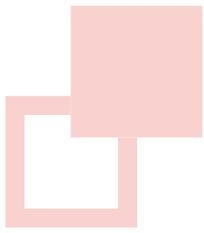
In today's world, people can work to deliver projects from anywhere, whether you are a project manager, a Scrum master, a programmer, an engineer or a product owner. Last year proved that you can work on projects that are based anywhere in the world from the comfort of your gamer chair bought with your company's money.

Before 2020, we sincerely thought that successfully managing projects remotely wasn't possible, but guess what? Companies found the formula of remote working and self-management so effective that the real estate industry is being seriously affected by the fact that organizations no longer want to occupy as much space as they have been.

A huge number of people are now working from home and need to be able to interact differently. This need brought about a huge increase in demand for online collaborative tools. Have you ever thought about doing a retrospective meeting with a team where each team member is in a different location? Well, it is not only possible, but there are great tools available to support this way of working.

As it is unlikely the demand for these tools will diminish greatly any time soon, I'm sure we'll see many interesting new solutions being released. It's very exciting!





# Agile approaches are not always better, but they're more versatile than you think

It seems that we have moved from a project management world dictated by predictive models, such as those based on the PMBOK® Guide or Prince2, to an Agile era, where we see new ideas being generated and implemented. Methodologies like Scrum and Kanban are not at all new but are now getting so much more attention than before, along with SAFe, Nexus, LeSS and others. Even the role of Scrum master and Product Owner have become hotter (yes, sexier!).

People started to believe that adopting an Agile methodology to manage a project is considerably better than adopting a predictive/waterfall methodology because of its wealth of benefits and its ability to deliver results much faster. And why hadn't we seen this before? **Right?**

Well, it turns out that not all the Agile methodologies out there are better than the predictive ones that we used to work with. They are just more suited to certain situations than their predictive cousins. You should keep in mind that people are getting savvier about when to use a predictive method versus when to use an Agile one to resolve their project management problems. I suggest you do the same!

Interestingly, we also started to see Agile techniques successfully implemented and delivering very interesting results in contexts in which we never thought they could be used. Industries not related to IT began embracing the Agile mindset and methods, and it is highly probable that we will see this happening more and more in the near future. Do you work in the services industry? Sooner or later, Agile will worm its way into your work life, so be ready!



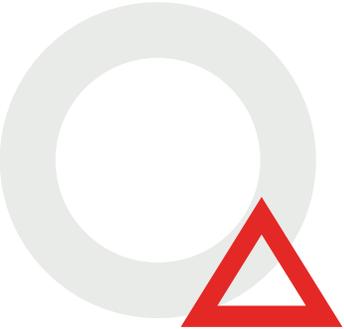
# Project management is becoming more than managing projects.

Forty years ago, when project management was considered a new discipline in the general management field, it borrowed some principles and tools that were well established in business: planning, follow-ups and budget control, just to name a few.

Things have evolved a lot since then, and the field of project management is becoming so comprehensive and broadly utilized that other business areas are now employing project management techniques. Consider things like Kanban charts, product backlogs, product roadmaps, sprints, project portfolio management and earned value.

These tools that were once considered 'fancy' are filtering into fields like marketing, sales, finance and customer support. Once people recognise the versatility and effectiveness of project management tools, they rarely return to their previously used tools and methods, and this continues to happen. Now more than ever, project management is about delivering business results.





# It's not all black or white: hybrid models are the way forward

Yes, maybe people rushed unnecessarily from using the predictive method to the Agile method. As a consequence, a number of intermediate concepts and models started to rise and shine during the transition: the idea is now that the individual is in control – they have choices and don't need to follow a strict set of rules.

Hybrid models have started to show up all over the place, and hybrid mindsets are gaining popularity. Why bother adopting every technique from the Scrum book if you can have a product backlog and a Gantt chart co-existing in your project if that makes sense to you and your company? Good question, eh? (That's my Canadian accent coming through!).

For example, **Disciplined Agile** gives you not a framework but a toolbox. It's up to you to pick and choose what you want to use. Its moto "Choose your way of working" (a.k.a. "Choose your WoW") is the way to go. Don't be afraid to build your own method by adopting the techniques that make sense to you. Purists that want to follow a methodology by the book have their days numbered. Go hybrid or go home!



# Certifications

All these new trends caused a myriad of certifications to be born and old ones to be reshaped. The PMP® certification, the most popular and highly valued certification from the Project Management Institute (PMI), has been redesigned to contain a fair share of agility. Additionally, the PMI-ACP® certification gained a new role when it merged with Disciplined Agile certifications as part of the “Journey to Business Agility”. The SAFe series is attempting to dominate the scaled use of Agile in corporations.

Micro-credentials are now starting to appear too (for instance, check out the **PMI Agile Hybrid Project Pro Micro-Credential**).

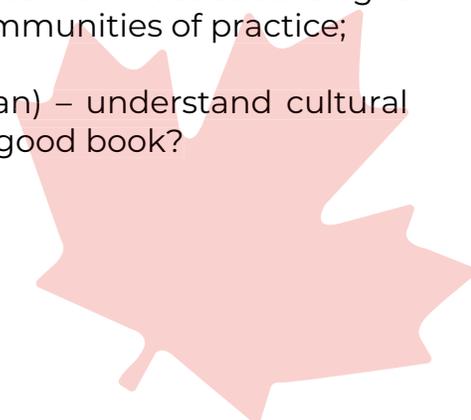
Expect to see a large number of certifications and micro-credentials popping up. Some are not really overly valuable (this is a diplomatic way of saying that they’re a complete waste of time and money), while others are quite interesting. Everything depends on where you are in your career and what you want to do with it. Be sharp and don’t get overwhelmed by all the choices (and believe me, there will be more to come!).

# The new skills you'll need

So, how do you cope with all these new challenges, this new world, this new set of tools and resources? It is normal to feel overwhelmed, but you can become the best version of yourself in 2021 by becoming more knowledgeable, getting good advice and investing in yourself (the only investment that always pays off, someone once said to me – makes sense, right?).

This coming year is full of opportunities, and if you want to stand out in this new era, this is what you should do:

- Learn how to work effectively remotely (I'm talking about more than remembering to unmute yourself in a Zoom conference when it's your turn to speak!);
- Trial new online collaborative tools. Try them and talk to people who use them – they could be an ally to support your projects;
- Learn about different project management methodologies and techniques – remember, your time is limited, so focus on the ones that are important and most relevant to you;
- Research real cases of implementing different methodologies in a variety of contexts to be able to pick and choose the best ones for your own requirements – you could start by examining **Panera's implementation of Disciplined Agile**, for example;
- Understand the certifications that the market offers so you can identify the most suitable option for you according to your career goals (oh, did I forget to mention that having a career goal is also something you need to develop?);
- Have the right “partners in crime” to take you to the next level – think about the right mentor, training programs, Agile coach, university and communities of practice;
- Be ready to work anywhere in the world (virtually, I mean) – understand cultural differences and how to work in different contexts. Want a good book? Try **The Cultural Map** by Erin Meyer.



# 2021 Agile Project Management Trends

I hope these insights can help you figure out how to make the most out of 2021 for your career.

If you want to discuss your thoughts about what you just read, just **drop me an email**.

I'll be happy to hear from you.

And if you want to stay up to speed in this ever-evolving world, stay tuned, and my team and I will make sure you won't miss anything.

Here's wishing you success for 2021!



*Alcides Santopietro*

