# goAgile
Follow the value

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By specifying "just enough" up front, Agile enables projects to "follow the value."

Waterfall

The logic/rational thing to do when starting a new development (or change) project, is to decide and specify everything up front. This is represented by the triangle where both the overall (top of triangle) vision, goals and needs are specified – and also all the low level, specific requirements and solution descriptions have been decided upon, analyzed and specified (bottom of triangle). You have – in other words – decided exactly where you want to go with the project, before you get started. You want to go to X!
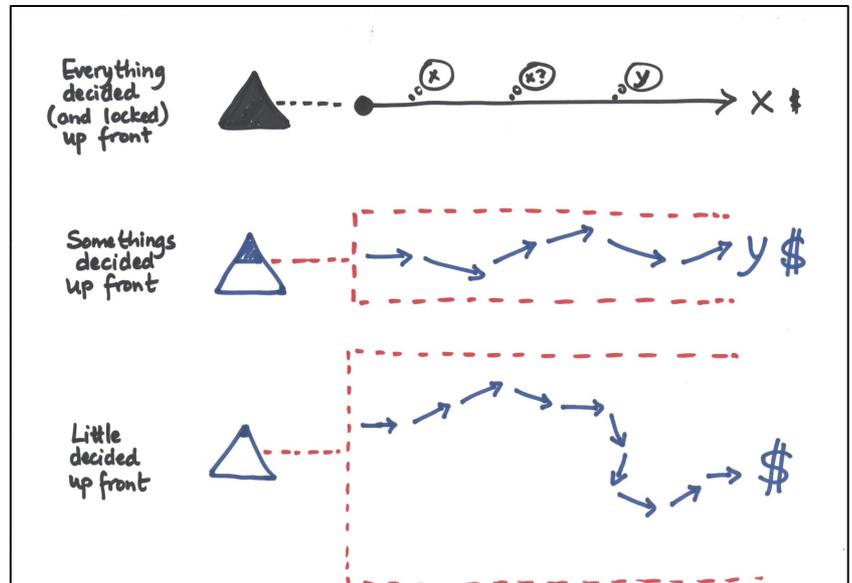
However, experience from decades of development projects have shown that, in most cases, you learn along the way. In the beginning of the actual development, you probably think "X – yes! That's where we're going". But then after some weeks or months, you start learning things along the way. This can be about the technology or about the business area. You might start to find out what the users really wanted – and then you start to question, whether X is the place to go. It might fulfill the original comprehensive requirement specification, but it starts to seem unlikely, that this is the best solution for the users. So you think "X – hmmm – I'm not so sure anymore". After some more weeks or months, you probably start to get a better picture about where the real value is: "Let's go to Y! That's where the value is!!"

But this is not so easy, when you have decided and specified everything up front. Because if you change the course of the project, then you go against what was agreed up front, and that both irritates most minds (especially those who believe that everything should be controlled) – AND it take a lot of work to redo the requirements and/or to describe and agree on all the changes. Because of this hassle, people on projects with big requirements up front often end up optimizing to meet the requirements rather than optimizing according to how the project can provide the highest possible business value.

Agile with room for adaptation & learning

The good news is, that there's another way of thinking about projects and leading projects. In Agile projects, we acknowledge the fact that we initially cannot get our heads 100% around where the highest business value is. We accept, that there will be learning along the way and that it makes sense to react to this learning and adapt the project direction and plans accordingly. So instead of trying to

understand and specify everything up front, we create an overall (top of triangle) understanding to begin with – and trust that we will learn and figure the rest out along the way. Then we execute the project a little at the time – in "sprints." And after each sprint we demonstrate what we have, get feedback, learn and adjust the course, steering the project in the direction of the highest possible business value.

In Agile projects, it's more likely that more learning will happen along the way because there's a mechanism for it: demos at the end of each sprint, sprint review and re-planning after each sprint. Learning and adapting is also less painful, because the mindsets (and development contracts) are not locked in all detail from the beginning. Visually you can see that the lower part of the triangle is open – representing openness to decide and learn along the way.

Agile for explorative projects

In some projects, the solution is even harder to predict. This is typically when brand new technology is in play, when the business area is new and unexplored, and/or when innovation is key.

In these projects, it makes sense to specify even less up front and leave even more space for exploration and learning along the way.