

## Agile Software Development

At VanRath Search and Selection we pride ourselves in keeping up to speed with the latest technical issues that effect our customers. In this article we turn the spotlight on the topic of Agile Software Development, a new process designed to take the hassle and time out of creating new customised software products for businesses.



We have worked in conjunction with a number of local IT specialists to find out how Agile differs from the traditional Waterfall methodology typically employed by most local software houses.

### Which processes in the design and implementation of new software products are ineffective?

The main process which takes time and effort is testing new software products with potential customers. Nine times out of ten, developers will spend six months creating a new product, and when potential users finally see it, they demand drastic changes and complain that many of the existing features are not relevant to them.

In the traditional Waterfall development methodology, the software developers work independently writing code for weeks or months, and then spend weeks in "integration hell" combining the code to work as a fully operational product.

In this case, the customer is only involved at the beginning, which often leads to an inaccurate end

product that may be dated by the time the software is tested. In many cases the client no longer needs certain applications or they find that they need a new application after providing the initial design specifications. This can leave the developer and customer caught up in a long and drawn out process before creating an effective bespoke product.

### Waterfall Process v the Agile Approach

In a typical waterfall process the four stages of the waterfall are Analysis, Design, Implementation and Testing... meaning opportunities for client feedback throughout the design process are limited.

Extreme Programming and other Agile methods say that key to effective software design is not to improve on the four steps, but to ensure regular frequent customer feedback at each stage.

That way the full process, which is normally spread out over months, is compressed into a week or a day through creating smaller bite size chunks of the overall product.

### Applying customer feedback earlier in the software design process

An Agile process uses early and frequent feedback to avoid later (and more expensive) feedback.

Agile projects require that a customer representative is involved at the beginning of the project, with the ability to change the project's direction and fulfil the client company's changing software requirements.

This means that the code is written in small chunks and is integrated with the code written by other developers once a day as well. The code is then subjected to a series of automated unit tests to support that process.

Agile projects do broad strokes at the beginning, and details just before implementation.

The heart of the Agile method is feedback, and using that feedback to improve your product, and to improve your process for creating that product. A number of local IT companies are currently looking very closely at moving towards this more flexible method of development.

VanRath would like to thank our IT partners for contributing to this article and we will continue to highlight subject matter which affects the IT sector in Northern Ireland.

### Eye

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For a confidential discussion concerning current IT opportunities in Northern Ireland please contact Ryan Quinn on 0870 774 1000.

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P 0870 7741000  
e [belfast@vanrath.com](mailto:belfast@vanrath.com)  
w [www.vanrath.com](http://www.vanrath.com)

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