

# Turning agility into growth

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**Agility isn't just about working faster; it's about building structures that help you act first and grow fast. Liam Brennan, MediaCom Global Director of Innovation Programmes, explains**

We love buzzwords in our industry. Right now one of the biggest is 'agility'. The art of moving fast, shaking things up and, often, breaking things in pursuit of something better.

However, implementing an agile culture means different things to different people. Many believe agility is about working at 'pace' or giving autonomy to individuals at the expense of their teammates but both approaches are misleading.

Firstly, agility doesn't just mean speed of delivery. If you start shortening deadlines without

making fundamental workflow changes, you'll only end up cutting corners and getting below par work from a burnt-out team.

Agility isn't just about individual autonomy, either. While a good 'agile' team should be given semi-autonomy from the wider business, no one individual should be given higher decision-making power than the wider team. Instead, the best ideas come from a collective with clear roles and responsibilities.

Another misnomer is that being 'agile' means having a lack of structure, hybrid roles, and an unclear end goal. This anarchic view, which typically stems from a lack of preparation and process, may create the illusion of flexibility – both within the team and outside – but, ultimately, it produces nothing more than poor work completed in stressful circumstances.

Planning, process, and procedure may sound counter to 'agile' ways of working, but from my experience of running such projects over the past two years, creating order in the chaos helps projects run faster, maximises the skillsets of team members and produces strong, differentiated work.

## Building structured agility

So, how do you make agility happen? There are many ways you can apply agile working – Harvard Business Review's [Agile at Scale](#) adapts some of the core concepts for larger organisations – but you certainly need to focus on three key areas:

- Team design: First, you must design your team to be lean (note that doesn't mean small) to minimise communication lines and reduce consensus congestion (and know when to pull in skillsets as required). You might also want to think about changing your team's behaviours and ways of working. The [Scrum processes](#), which involves concurrent workstreams with regular check-ins, for example, emphasises creative and adaptive teamwork in solving complex problems. It can maximise

your team's skillsets while increasing efficiencies.

- **Compression:** Teams can spend a lot of time waiting for the next deliverable. This can lead to overload when a project drops and impact other projects, too. Workflow processes made famous by Japanese firms such as Kanban, used in the Toyota Production System, are useful for understanding how to reduce lead times to maximise workflow.
- **Streamlining:** A large portion of time spent working on projects isn't all that useful. That's not to say that it leads to poor work, just that there are certain elements in the processes that weren't required. Reflective, internal feedback loops that focus on the continual elimination of waste (AKA lean development) helps bring project timelines down, increase output, and decrease the amount of superfluous

Our MediaCom Blink teams follow structured processes within a lean 'squad' teams (consisting of specialists with little to no reporting hierarchy) to produce work at high volumes and speed without sacrificing quality.

This is not an outcome created by doing things on the fly. It requires preparation in terms of team makeup, roles and structure, custom workflow processes, a continuous focus on KPIs and the experience to know when to deliver or close.

Famously, brands such as [Specsavers](#), [Mondelez](#) and [Paddy Power](#) have set live 'reactionary' ATL campaigns in under 24 hours using thorough pre-planned go-to-market processes. MediaCom has recently run a simultaneous technology test for a large multinational using our 'agile' processes in one market, with business as usual processes in another market – time to go live was shortened by three months and work required by 60% for similar outcomes.

Google, Amazon and Facebook – three companies we often think of as agile – were all start-ups once but by following orderly processes and procedures have maintained that attitude and approach even as they have grown into three of the largest corporations in the

world.

By approaching 'agility' in a considered, structured way, businesses of all sizes can uncover new opportunities and find real growth.

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**OPINION**