



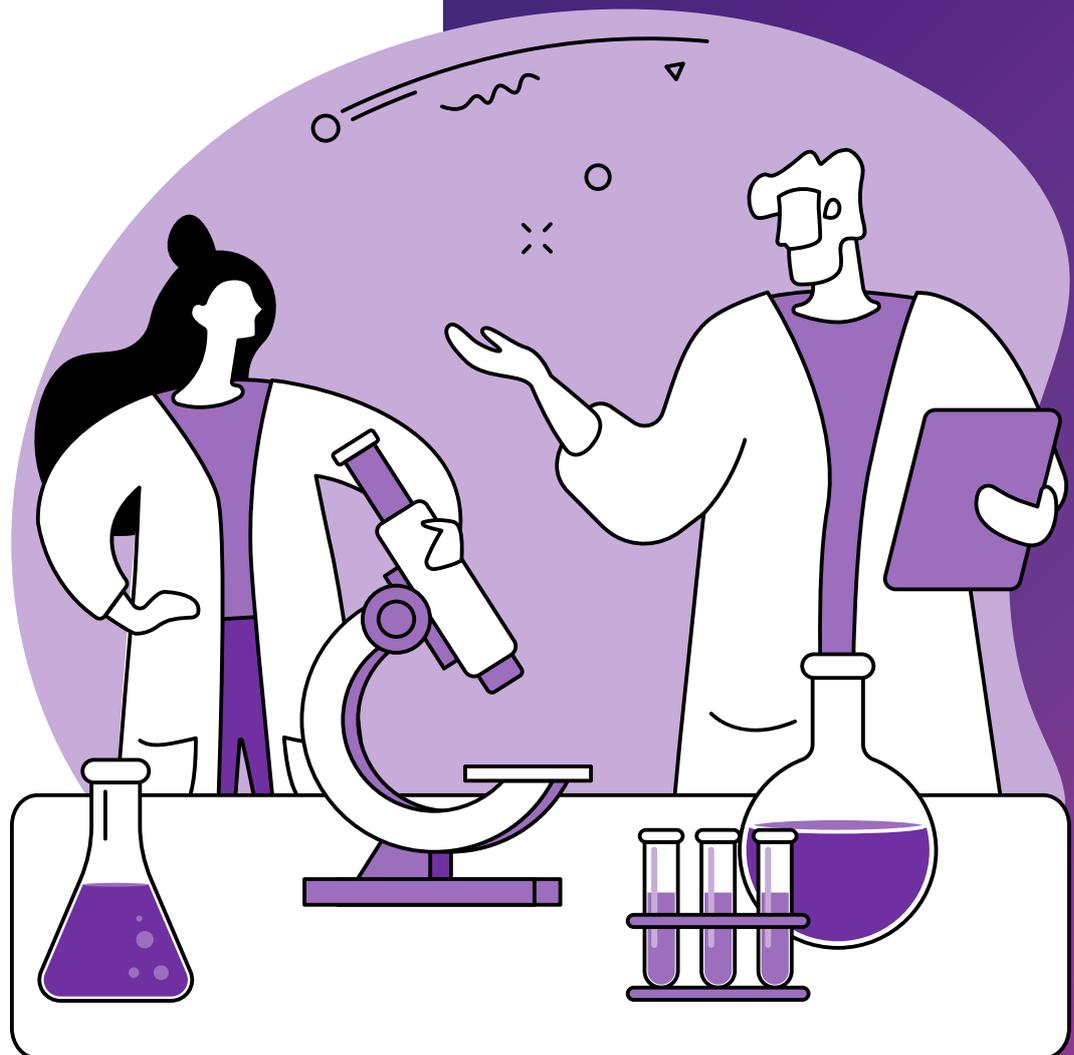
# Applying Agile Methodologies in the Pharmaceutical Industry

Authors: Freya Finnerty, Marina Borozna & Ben Saich

# Executive Summary

How can agile marketing and agile project management assist in addressing the challenges faced by the pharmaceutical industry?

In this article, we explore what makes these approaches effective, with case studies from both inside and outside of the pharmaceutical industry.



Marketing professionals in the pharmaceutical industry are under increasing pressure to innovate quickly, driven by both competition and customer expectations. This highlights the need to differentiate with better product positioning, a clear value proposition, and consistent messaging.

The expectations of digitally native healthcare professionals (HCPs) have evolved, with a demand for relevant and personalised content to be seamlessly delivered to them at the appropriate time and via their preferred channel. A recent Veeva roundtable poll of pharmaceutical companies suggested that 20% to 50% of HCP interactions are expected to be digital in the future<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, digitally native HCPs are seeking marketing materials that are delivered conveniently and easily accessible on a range of devices and platforms. These materials should also be searchable, navigable, and visually engaging, featuring multimedia elements such as videos, infographics and animations.

Agile marketing can assist in addressing these challenges by speeding up content production and enabling effective personalisation. Across all industries, marketers are now adopting agile project management to enhance execution. The findings of a recent survey by Gartner<sup>2</sup>, where agile approaches were compared to more traditional ones, illustrate why marketers are adopting this new approach, despite its origin in software development, a completely different field. Practitioners report that an agile approach in marketing is more effective in critical areas such as:

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Sensing and responding to changes in a business context as they occur

02

Managing, prioritising, and adjusting marketing projects, content and messaging to reflect changes in customer sentiment

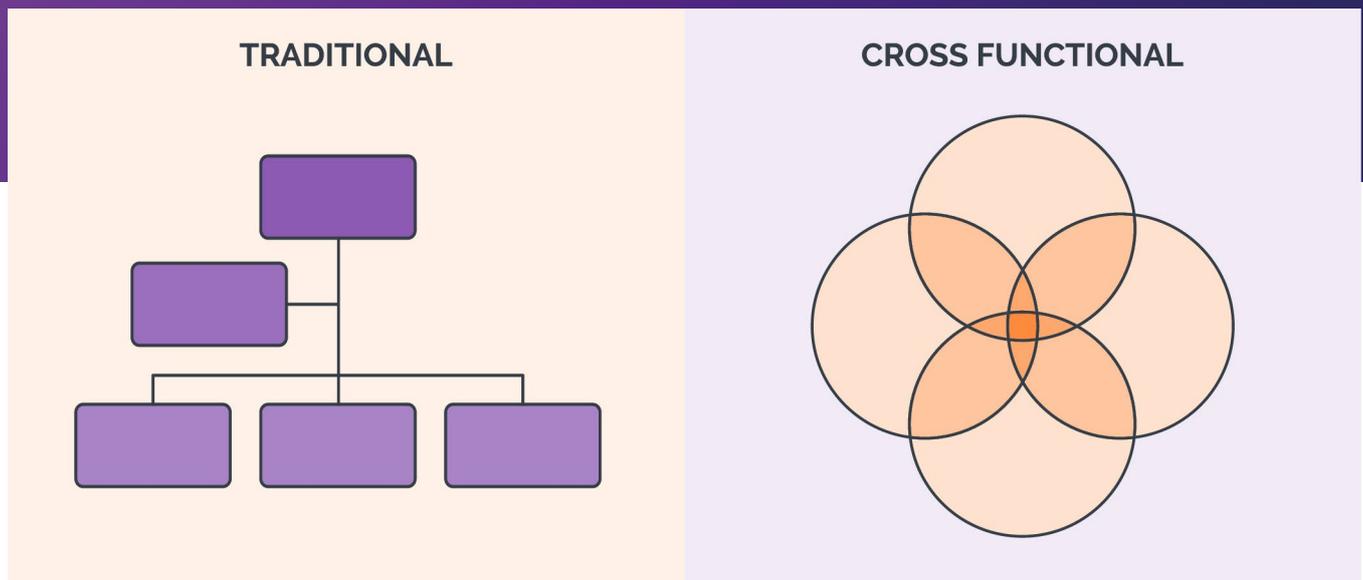
03

Reacting promptly to unpredictable events or tight deadlines, such as regulatory approvals.

<sup>1</sup>Noel S. 2022. 'The Future of Digital Engagement: An HCP Perspective'. Veeva. 29 June. Available at: <https://www.veeva.com/blog/the-future-of-digital-engagement-an-hcp-perspective/> (Accessed 6 March 2023)

<sup>2</sup>Marsh L, Baughns A. 2023. When and How to Apply Agile Principles in Marketing and Communications. [Webinar]. [Online]. Gartner. [Accessed on 06/3/23]. Available from: [https://www.gartner.com/en/webinar/451740/1064604?\\_ga=2.180710241.778997256.16781084831302142234.1678108483](https://www.gartner.com/en/webinar/451740/1064604?_ga=2.180710241.778997256.16781084831302142234.1678108483)

This is achieved by working in small, incremental stages towards an agreed-upon objective rather than adhering to predetermined requirements, a fixed scope, and a detailed plan. By concentrating on the ultimate goal, the team can adjust to unforeseen circumstances and new information while still driving the organisation's needs and strategy.



For agile teams to be successful, they must include all the necessary knowledge and expertise to complete the job. This frequently requires the inclusion of people from various areas of the organisation, with technical, marketing, sales, legal, and other professionals all working together in a cross-functional team. When presented with a clear, common goal, this diverse set of skills, knowledge, and perspectives enables them to make informed decisions rapidly. The team is expected to openly share their decisions to allow for constructive criticism – but the critical point is that they do not wait for authorisation before proceeding.

**This means the team can make the right decisions quickly, driving their work forward and realising value often and early. In fact, research suggests that organisations that respond rapidly to change in this way are more than twice as likely to create value<sup>3</sup>.**

<sup>3</sup> Mersino, A. 2021. Why Agile is Better than Waterfall (Based on Standish Group Chaos Report 2020). Vitality Chicago. 1 November. Available at: <https://www.vitalitychicago.com/blog/agile-projects-are-more-successful-traditional-projects> (Accessed 6 March 2023)

Although the pharmaceutical industry is behind in adopting agile working, our experience shows that those who pioneer it will reap the benefits of better engagement with HCPs.

The speed of content creation is often a bottleneck in pharma's ambition to provide personalised and relevant content to HCPs via email, edetail, webinars and events. In one success story, a pharma company was able to accelerate email content creation by reducing the time required for medical approval from weeks to days.

**They achieved this by creating collaborative cross-functional teams that included marketing, digital, sales and medical specialists. These teams were formed at both the brand and country level and worked together synchronously from the start of the content creation cycle. They had a clear, shared goal, powered by their collective broad set of skills, knowledge and perspectives.**

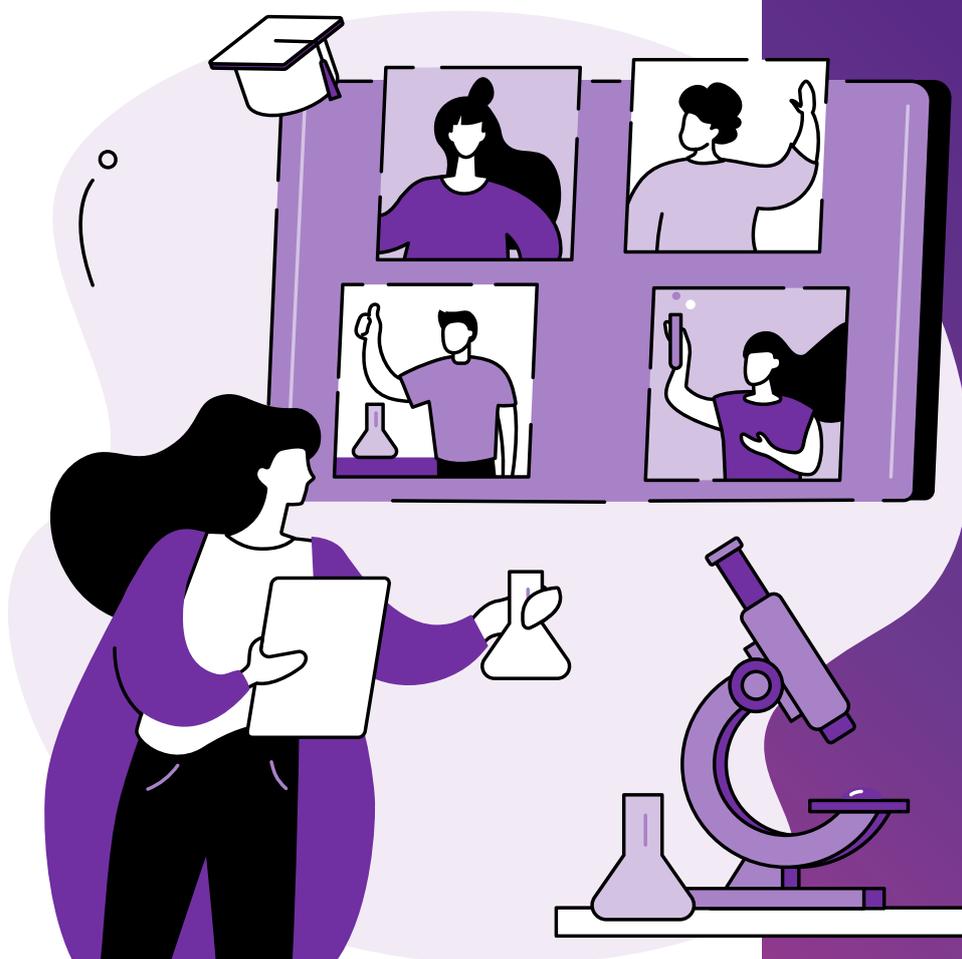
In another case study, a global medtech organisation that encountered regular setbacks in creating email copy resolved this issue by forming a hybrid team comprising in-house brand and digital experts and external agency creatives. As this mixed team worked concurrently, empowered by a shared collaboration platform and focused on delivering value through incremental progress rather than adhering to a fixed scope of work, the time required for reviews, revisions, and approvals reduced, eliminating delays.

Agility can also aid in identifying effective tactics and focusing on delivering value through better use of data analytics.



In another instance, a pharmaceutical company incorporated analytics specialists into their agile marketing teams to measure the impact of various types of 1:1 email personalisation. With content tagging established in advance with impact measurement in mind, they were able to assess whether personalising content to HCP persona, speciality, potential prescription volume, or brand adoption stage made a difference. They discovered that the labour-intensive and time-consuming personalisation to HCP persona was ineffective, prompting them to shift resources to other, more impactful personalisation options.

Pharmaceutical companies can benefit from learning from other industries with wider adoption of agile. Here are some success stories from Enfuse Group's and The Practical Agile Company's clients who have successfully transitioned from traditional to agile project management practices.



# Creation of a Cross-Functional Innovation Hub that leverages the principles of iterative development

Enfuse group partnered with a global restaurant chain to stand up a cross-functional innovation hub that would rapidly generate and deliver innovative ideas. The intent was to remove the unnecessary red tape by reducing handoffs and ensuring rapid decision-making while encouraging continuous feedback and validation from end users and customers (a key principle of Agile).



The results spoke for themselves, with a single initiative, generated by this innovation hub, doubling mobile app order sales within eight weeks due to the mindset of continuously testing new features and layout of the app while also reducing siloes between functions.

# Agile Model for Corporate Teams at a Major Airline



A major airline wanted to adopt agile 'product' working methods within its corporate IT and business teams. This was to be an excellent example of how to operate with Agile.

Enfuse Group worked with corporate teams, such as Finance and People, to establish cross-functional delivery teams. Each team had a backlog of business demand that was prioritised weekly at a Product Board attended by a cross-section of stakeholders.

This model enabled the teams' activities to become more transparent; early delivery of benefits to be prioritised; and senior stakeholders to be brought closer to the decision-making, giving the teams more autonomy with their activities. Before using agile, the teams had struggled to impress, working completely reactively, leading to notable tensions and frustrations. As a result of the new model, the backlog of demand could finally be understood, and the business stakeholders could engage in the right conversations on priorities and further investment needed.

# Agile for Data Analytics at a major UK Government Agency



Enfuse Group was asked to pilot an Agile model with the Data and Analytics (D&A) functions at a major UK governance agency that was highly regulated.

The D&A function was critical to enabling the agency to continue to meet its remit by working smarter with data whilst working within notable budget constraints. Improvements for the use of data and analytics had previously been planned with a waterfall model that would not see benefits for 18 months; this meant existing teams across the agency would undertake disjointed shadow data initiatives as they could not wait this long.

Enfuse Group worked with the D&A leadership to roll out an agile approach which saw the early release of a new data platform and governance processes within three months. This brought early benefits and ensured business engagement with D&A. The agile teams could then quickly scale up and start meeting demand whilst in the background maturing technical and business practices to support a longer-term vision. The approach also enabled early feedback, leading to a notable change in the business strategy and renewed investment in D&A. The agile model was subsequently adopted more wholesale at the agency, particularly across their business delivery and IT functions.

# Agile Team Fundamentals Training and Rapid Setup at a Multi-National Food Ordering Company

A multi-national food ordering company wanted to adopt agile ways of working within one of their workstreams to accelerate delivery. The Practical Agile Company delivered a rapid, four-day training program that equipped the team with background knowledge, key skills, and agile tools to begin working in an agile way.



This gave the additional benefit of allowing the team to quickly build and test in cross-functional teams and at a low cost, proving the Agile approach before scaling it.

If your organisation could benefit from adopting agile principles, reach out to Freya Finnerty ([Freya.Finnerty@enfusegroup.com](mailto:Freya.Finnerty@enfusegroup.com)) or Ben Saich ([ben@practical-agile.co.uk](mailto:ben@practical-agile.co.uk)) today to find out more about our extensive training packages to uplift your capability today.



**Freya Finnerty**  
*Agile Coach, Enfuse Group*  
[Connect with me](#)



**Marina Borozna**  
*Head of Data Strategy, Ipsen*  
[Connect with me](#)



**Ben Saich**  
*Practical Agile Coach and Founder of The Practical Agile Company*  
[Connect with me](#)