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From an Idea to implementation



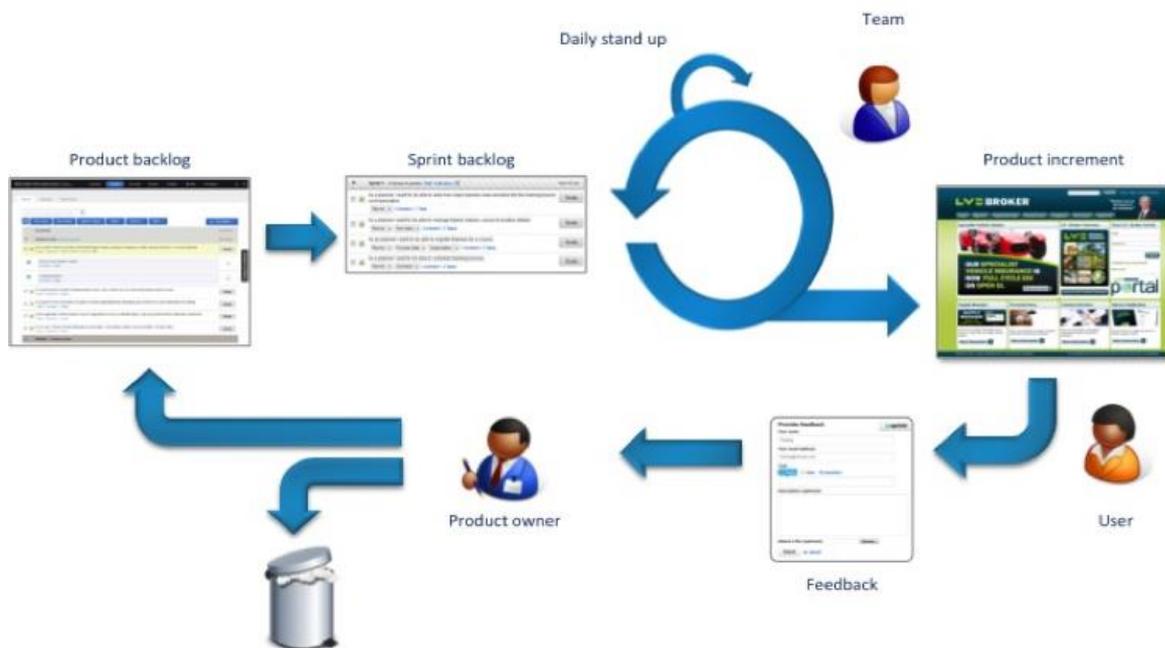
It's great having new ideas that you want to implement in the business, which can really make a positive impact in many ways, be it fixing "broken" parts of the business, improving processes or adding new products and services. A lot of the time changing something small can make a big difference for our customers, whether they are

internal (colleagues) or external customers (clients). It is not so great when existing legacy systems smother these great ideas by being slow, difficult and expensive to change. It is demotivating when a great idea cannot be implemented in time as a result of this.

The Mendix rapid development platform combined with the Agile development approach has proven itself to enable business ideas to become reality in a short amount of time. For example at Clarks International we developed a solution in six weeks that enabled Clarks to interact with their 10,000 plus employees via mobile devices for the first time.

With regular feedback and constant interaction between the development team and the business, business users can keep a finger on the pulse and keep motivated to bring these new ideas to life. In reality this means the end product meets the need of the business with the budget and expectations also managed by the business users – which engages the business users in a way not usually seen in traditional development strategies. Below is a rundown of the Agile Process and how it can be delivered. It also discusses where the Mendix rapid development platform fits in for delivering content and turning requirements around in short timeframes.

What is “Agile” and how does Mendix assist me in quickly turning ideas around



Sprints - The Agile development methodology allows for a project to be broken down into bite-sized chunks that can be delivered in short cycles. These short development cycles are called Sprints. These Sprints are usually two weeks long and will cover the delivery of set functionality at the end of each Sprint. The Mendix development portal acts as a collaboration platform (among other things) and allows for the planning and monitoring of development sprints.

User stories - At the beginning of the project, user requirements are written down in the form of user stories. These user stories will have detail about what the system should do for a specific user. These user stories are captured in the Mendix development portal and assigned to the development backlog in the first instance. During sprint planning the prioritised stories will be moved into the relevant sprint.

Sprint planning - There will always be more requirements users can think of than is possible to deliver, so setting priorities for each of these user requirements are important. During Sprint planning the priorities for user stories are set, the level of effort for each user story is determined and the stories are added to the relevant Sprint. Sprint planning usually takes around 60 minutes. The Sprints are created in the Mendix development portal and the prioritised user stories assigned to the sprint are moved to the relevant Sprint. Sprint planning does require strong leadership from the business as they have the benefit of deciding the direction of the development and budget, but they need to show good change management skills and the ability to make decisions.

Daily stand-up meeting – Every day the core development team and the product owner have a 15 minutes meeting where each member of the team will state:

- What they did yesterday.
- What they will do today.
- Any impediments

Sprint review and feedback – At the end of each development Sprint the developments delivered are demonstrated to the relevant stakeholders. The relevant stakeholders will then provide feedback on functionality delivered in an informal setting. Sprint demonstrations usually take around 60 minutes. With the rapid development of Mendix solutions and the sprint review process, business enablers and key users get constant feedback on their ideas and get to see these come to fruition.

This positive experience motivates colleagues when new and helpful ideas are implemented.

Testing and feedback – after each sprint is delivered, the functionality is given to the users to test and provide more formal feedback. Feedback items will also be captured, sized, prioritized and delivered in subsequent sprints. Mendix allows users to capture feedback directly in the application they are testing. This allows Mendix developers to quickly identify where the problems with the application are.

With Mendix there is constant collaboration between business users and the development team. Progress is rapid and with the sprint review sessions business owners and key users can see their ideas come to life in a way that they couldn't before using traditional development methods (or similar). I have received comments that the development may need to slow down in order for the business to keep up with the testing. Which in itself is an interesting situation!



What are the roles and responsibilities required by Agile and Mendix?

The Agile development process has the following roles and responsibilities. It is important to note that even though the Agile methodology is an informal development approach, the roles and rules should be strictly applied. Agile is not the silver bullet for delivering projects. Agile projects can also fail if the rules are not adhered to. Below are the key roles assigned in an Agile project with the typical responsibilities for each role.

Role	Responsibilities
Product owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder contact• Decision maker• Responds to queries from development team• Ensures project business value
Key users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver user stories• Test and accept implemented functionality• Provide feedback
SCRUM Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leads the project and development teams• Setup and leads workshop to gain input on user stories
Development team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Engineer – gathers and implements user stories• Expert services (UX/Integration) – supports the team with specialist skills



What types of applications are suitable for development in Mendix, and which ones are not

Technically there are not many business problems that Mendix will not be able to address. As Mendix is so powerful, it's probably easier to start by explaining when not to use. Below are a few recommendations for what Mendix should rather not be used for:

Not an ideal area for Mendix

- Replacing systems that have clearly defined requirements, that don't change often and have to be implemented in one go. A payroll is a good example, as it has clear rules, changes slowly and cannot be developed in phases
- Commercial off the shelf software such as ERP or CRM system

Below are a few recommendations for what Mendix should be used for

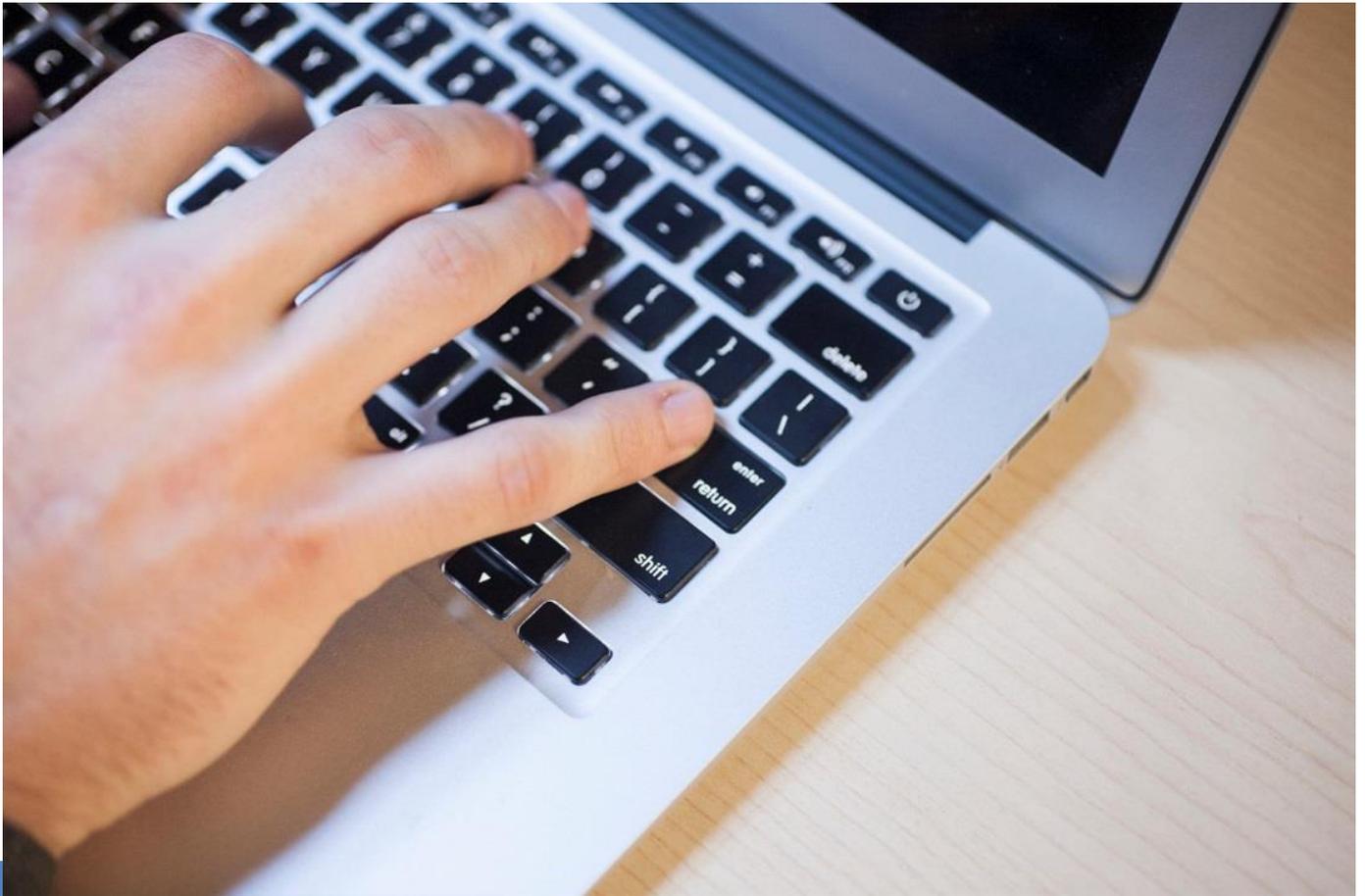
- Solutions where the requirements and design are fuzzy. They need to evolve as you develop
- Solutions that are client/customer facing (whether these clients/customers are internal and external).
- Solutions that require systems to change frequently and rapidly.
- Solutions that sit on top of existing systems of record and can provide functionality that the system of records cannot turn around quickly. e.g. gaps in ERP system functionality

Once the penny drops, business users and other users realise how quickly and easy it is to bring an idea into reality. As a result loads of new ideas for applications that solve current business problems arise. Business owners will easily think of other typical business problems that will be quick and easy to implement and will solve problems that organisations struggle with.

A few Quotes from our clients

- "Agile provided the freedom to shape the project and deliver results"
- "Our project for 10,000+ employees was successfully delivered in 6 weeks"
- "The proof of concept demonstrated the art of the possible"
- "Data protection issue were mitigated by a secure portal"
- "Fundamentally transformational"

Using Mendix and the Agile development process can assist business users in building solutions that improve the business for both internal and external clients. Delivering these solutions happens without the usual problems that changing legacy systems brings, such as being difficult, slow and expensive to change. This in turn improves the attitude and perception of colleagues and reduces the IT backlog of solutions for existing business problems.



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