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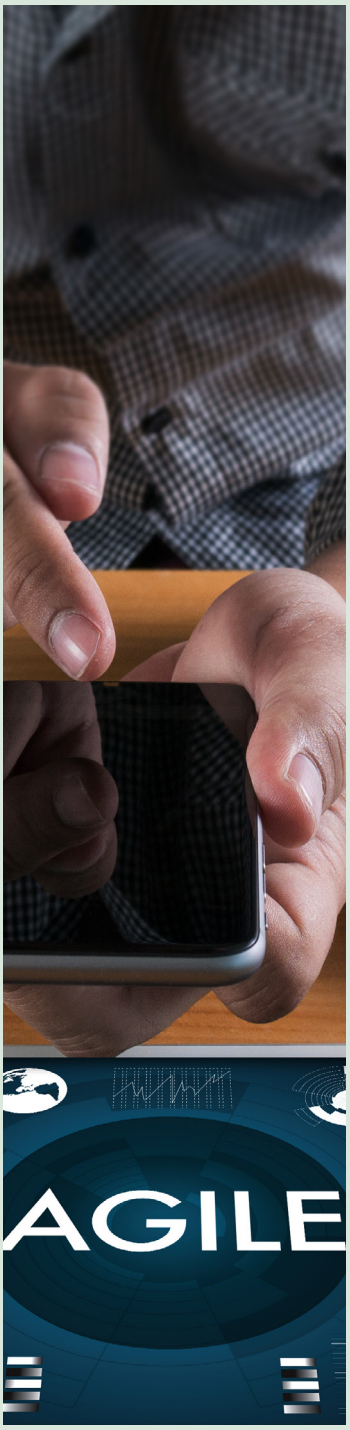


# DRIVING END-USER TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION WITH AN AGILE MINDSET

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## Introduction

User adoption of a product or service is the litmus test for any business. Yet, the end-user technology experience is not in focus even in mature agile organizations. Teams struggle with the user adoption journey as software is developed iteratively and features are rolled out often.

Most organizations approach the end-user adoption journey with an all-or-nothing mindset where they have a specific release plan with time and effort invested in creating training and user documentation. This model does not work in an agile environment where new functionality, features, and products are constantly being developed, piloted, and adopted. In such a scenario, it is imperative for organizations to evaluate other innovative models to ensure smooth end-user adoption.

## The User Journey

The success of any technology implementation hinges on user adoption of the product. The value realization of the implementation happens only when business users leverage the product to perform better on the job. Users go through stages based on how they utilize the product. The three major stages of user adoption are listed below:

### Willing

***I want to use the product/service***

In this stage, the intent is established. The user knows the benefits of using the product and realizes the value provided by the product.

### Able

***I know how to use the product/service***

This is the next stage of user adoption where the user is ready to explore the product. Users begin to learn how to use various features and discover how the product can help them in their activities.

### Ready

***I am a champion of this product/service***

At this stage, the user is a product expert and knows what to do even when things go wrong. This expertise encourages the user to become an advocate or evangelist for the product.

To maximize user adoption, implementation teams must collaborate with business users at each stage of the development lifecycle. A clear user adoption strategy must be able to navigate users from unwilling to willing to able to ready. The more users who make it to the ready stage, the better it is to scale adoption.

## Our Methodology – A Case Study

For the labelling management product of a large pharmaceutical company, we defined better user adoption as a goal in the early stages of the project. We ensured that the following key stakeholders were well-aligned at each stage of the project – development team, user adoption team, end-user pilot team, and the champions.

We identified four key steps to aid end-user adoption during the enterprise-wide rollout of the regulatory labelling management system. The process was established from the beginning with stakeholder buy-in and ran parallel with the development cycle to maximize the benefits.

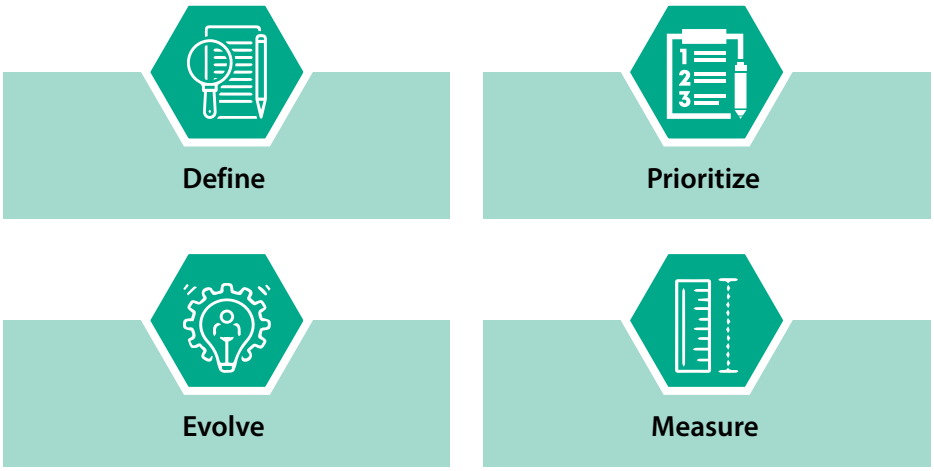


Figure 1 – 4 key steps to drive end-user adoption

### Define

The user adoption team worked with cross-functional teams and business leaders to understand and define the 'why' at the beginning. This shaped a compelling vision that served as the stake in the ground not only throughout development but also while creating the user adoption strategy.

The development teams defined user personas to identify initial pain points, needs, expectations, and concerns of various stakeholder groups to help shape the outline of the user adoption plan.

The adoption team worked with stakeholders to identify a pilot team of business users. It was critical to identify the right set of business users consisting of a mix of early adopters and dissenters across the organization. These business users were actively involved in product increment reviews and user acceptance testing. Working with a pilot team ensured that their comments were noted, and enhancements addressed their feedback.

## Prioritize

The user adoption team considered the following questions:

- What is an acceptable rollout plan? Some of the parameters identified included -
    - a) The minimum features that would impact the day-to-day activities of the business users
    - b) A structured yet simple communication plan that is consistent with the deployment schedules
    - c) Time required to document the basic policies and processes on how the system works before the minimum viable product
- What critical business objectives have been met in this release and must be conveyed to users to maximize usage and adoption?

For the labelling management system, we identified that global labels had to be distributed within 5 days of approval. Therefore, pieces of training specific to global workflows were prioritized. Pilot teams were provided the required training. These pilot teams were not positioned as experts but had enough information to proceed with normal day-to-day activities.

The pilot users eventually became the champions or evangelists for product rollouts in other markets.

## Evolve

Pilot teams in turn conducted workshops for various internal teams and business units. Following the rollout of the minimum viable product (MVP), end-user adoption activities kept pace with the expanding and evolving functionality. Inputs gathered from users were incorporated into training and communications materials on an ongoing basis. Pilot team members became change champions who evangelized the product across expanding networks. With each iteration, the content and the format of communication tools evolved to become more sophisticated and robust.

## Measure

The champions from the pilot team worked with systems administrators to monitor usage over a period. This ensured that users were adopting the product at a sustainable pace without falling back on older ways of working. If usage decreased, the user adoption team met with the champions to identify issues and take corrective measures.

The frequency of monitoring depends on how often a release is planned. However, monitoring usage statistics regularly provides insights to help drive further adoption.

# Benefits of Our Approach

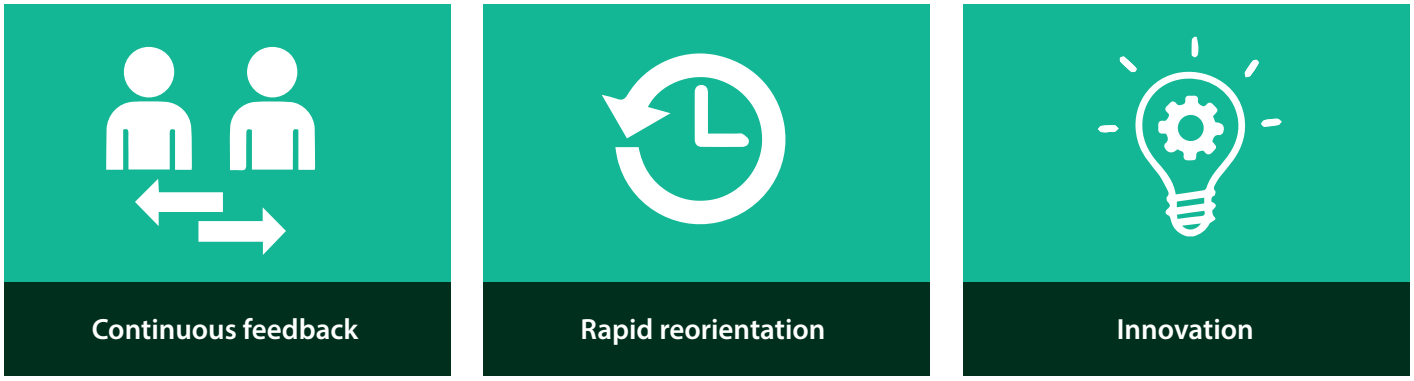


Figure 2 – Benefits of implementing a new approach to end-user technology adoption

Businesses must rethink their approach to drive end-user adoption of technology. Using our approach, enterprises will quickly see benefits that will help drive smooth adoption.

## Continuous feedback

Adoption is higher if users feel that the product is designed for them. It is critical to engage with business users regularly to understand their needs and replan if required. User engagement throughout the development process will eliminate waste and ensure the prioritization of features that are most useful from a business perspective.

## Rapid reorientation

Today's users are more demanding and business needs continue to evolve constantly. After establishing a process to engage with customers in early stages, it is important to build the ability to respond quickly and change direction to meet requirements. This enables implementation teams to deliver promptly to align with user needs.

## Innovation

Engaging with users, creating a channel to gather feedback, and reorienting the development cycle will encourage greater participation from business users leading to more innovative suggestions. Gaining a deeper understanding of the user context and implementing their suggestions will provide a significant advantage over competitors.

## Conclusion

Agile end-user adoption means introducing users to the product, involving them in the development of new features and products, and influencing them to think differently about the journey of change.

Training and user adoption activities need to be as iterative as discovery and development phases. A good end-user adoption plan has some basic elements:

1. User adoption strategy aligned with all teams with requisite buy-in from executive leadership.
2. Communication plan designed to promote product/service awareness includes audience identification, chosen communication channels, promotion programs, and communication cadence for each channel.
3. Training plan using a 'test and learn' approach instead of building extensive training material upfront.
4. Processes defined to help users adapt to the new ways of working. For example, increased business user involvement in the early stages.

For any major IT transformation, teams must take users along on the journey. This can be achieved in several ways:

- Learning: Learning can happen through formal training and education. It can also be reinforced by informal training opportunities such as buddy-ups and retrospectives.
- Communication and trust-building: One of the largest bottlenecks of adoption is fear of making mistakes. The best way to build user confidence is by making experiments 'safe to fail.' Communicating hypotheses, outcomes, and lessons learned all help build trust.
- Continuous delivery: If you deliver value regularly instead of a big bang release approach, you will consistently learn about what delights users. This creates a feedback loop that helps enhance features regularly.
- Involving users: Regardless of the methodology (agile or waterfall), it is important to blend the technical plan with the people aspect of user adoption. Due to the iterative nature of agile, it is even more critical to do this in order not to miss the implications of the business user's resistance to change for technical implementations.

## About the Authors


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Principal Consultant and (Chandra) has over 20 years of IT consulting experience in both services and product organizations.

He has rich and diverse domain expertise spanning banking, financial services, manufacturing, and life sciences domains. Chandra has been involved in agile transformations combining the best of scrum, Kanban, and lean practices for clients across APAC, Europe, and USA.

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Senior Consultant and has 14 years of IT management experience (agile and waterfall) in consulting and software development projects.

She is adept at implementing scrum methodology and agile principles to facilitate IT solutions delivery.


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