Culture eats agile for breakfast

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Published on: September 23, 2016

Implementing agile which works and delivers can be a very challenging task, especially in corporate and enterprise environment. According to 10th State of Agile Survey, two of the top five causes of failure were related to company culture – company philosophy or culture at odds with core agile values.
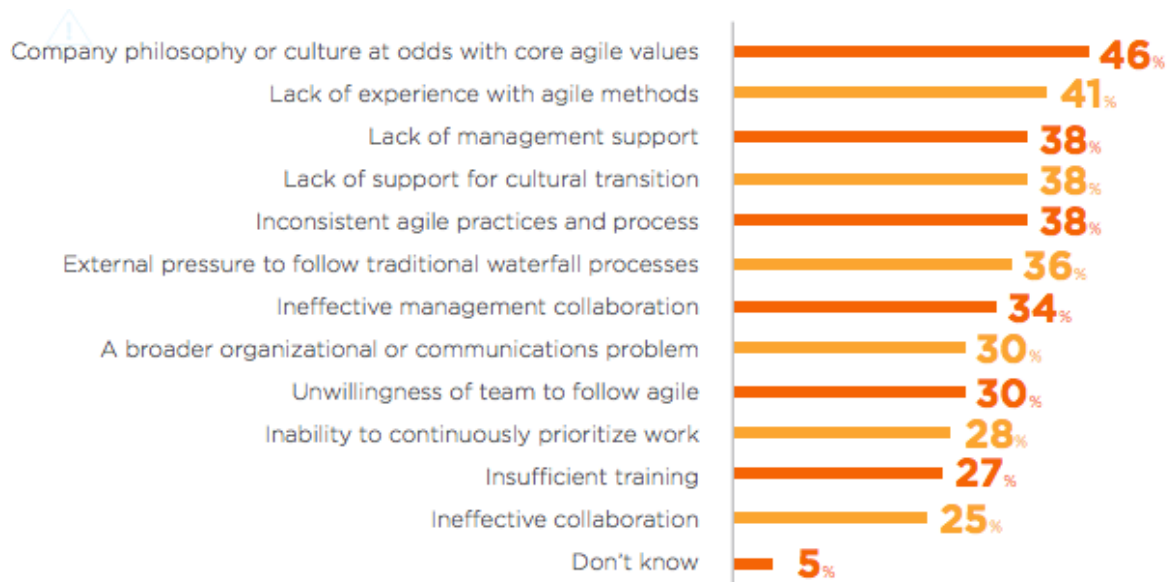
Figure 1: Company culture continues to dominate the top causes of failed agile projects with company philosophy or culture at odds with core agile values at 46%. Credits 10th Annual State of Agile™ Report

A good company culture means a resilient workforce and overall better business performance. A bad company culture is reflected in a low moral workforce, low productivity, fear, resistance to change and poor collaboration. In a bad culture environment, agile is often used as a controlling tool and an excuse to advance a particular agenda. Unfortunately, often leaders pushing the agile agenda either underestimate the value of good culture or ignore the side effects of bad culture just to gain short-term benefits.

> 80% of your company's culture will be defined by its core leaders.

Often a company's culture tend to reflect traits of its core leaders - their personality, strengths, weaknesses. A good company culture requires continuous discussion, transparency, and a clear vision on the type of culture core leaders want to create. In order to create a great company culture, one should start with developing a culture manifesto. A culture manifesto is internal values and mission for the internal organisation. Companies like Netflix, Spotify, Zalando, Etsy etc maintain a well-defined documented culture manifesto.

Hiring right people with cultural fit is one of the most important steps in the implementation of culture manifesto. In fact, cultural fit should be given more weightage in hiring than job performance. A good company culture flows from top-down, hence culture fit is should be key criteria in the hiring of core leaders, executives, and senior managers. Always remember, one bad fish can spoil the whole pond. Hence avoid hiring people with negative attributes.