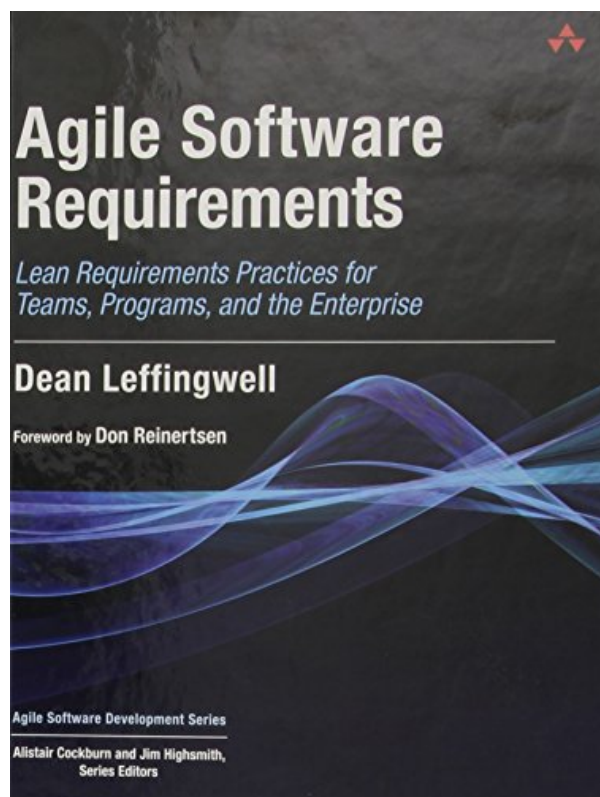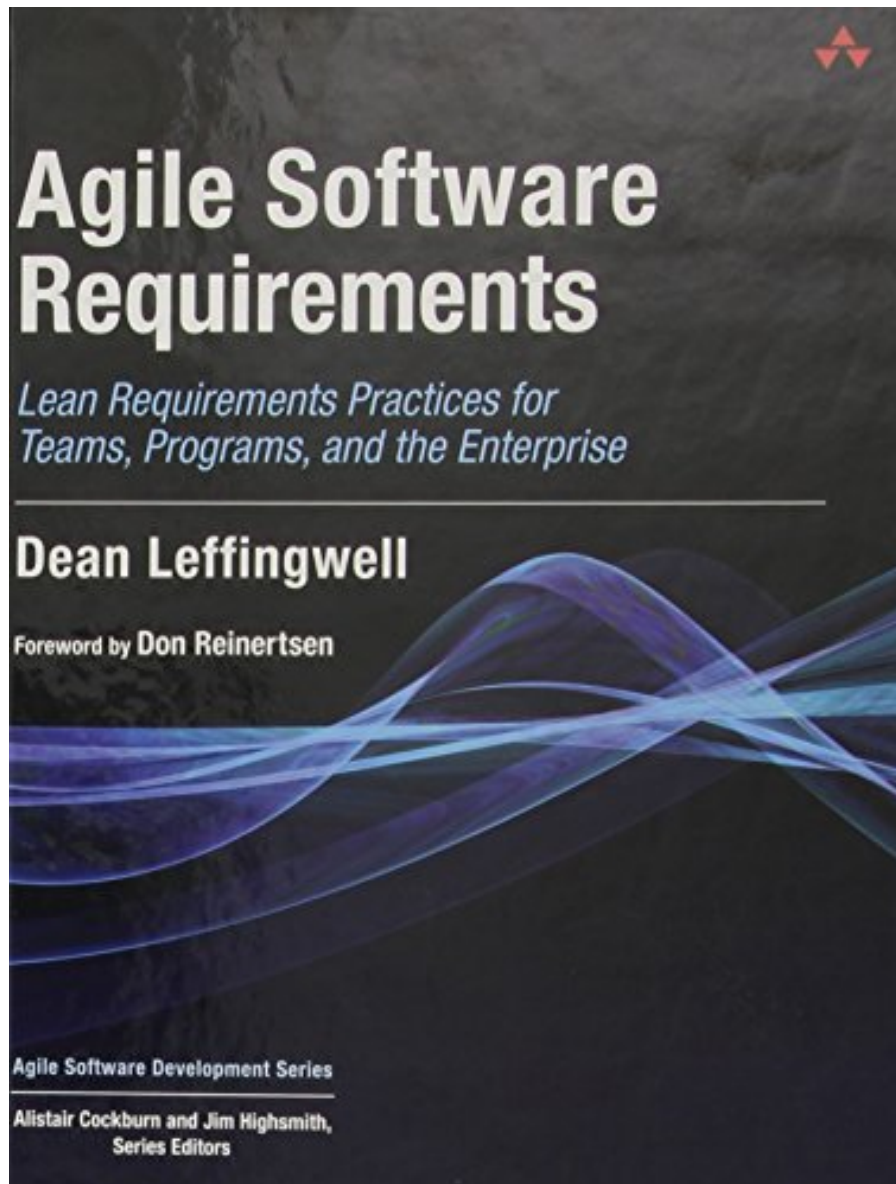# AGILE SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS: LEAN REQUIREMENTS PRACTICES FOR TEAMS, PROGRAMS, AND THE ENTERPRISE (AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT SERIES) BY D

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Agile Software Requirements

Lean Requirements Practices for Teams, Programs, and the Enterprise

Dean Leffingwell

Foreword by **Don Reinertsen**

Agile Software Development Series

Alistair Cockburn and Jim Highsmith,
Series Editors

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Review

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About the Author

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–From the Foreword by Don Reinertsen, President of Reinertsen & Associates; author of Managing the Design Factory; and leading expert on rapid product development

Effective requirements discovery and analysis is a critical best practice for serious application development. Until now, however, requirements and Agile methods have rarely coexisted peacefully. For many enterprises considering Agile approaches, the absence of effective and scalable Agile requirements processes has been a showstopper for Agile adoption. In Agile Software Requirements, Dean Leffingwell shows exactly how to create effective requirements in Agile environments.

- Part I presents the "big picture" of Agile requirements in the enterprise, and describes an overall process model for Agile requirements at the project team, program, and portfolio levels
- Part II describes a simple and lightweight, yet comprehensive model that Agile project teams can use to manage requirements
- Part III shows how to develop Agile requirements for complex systems that require the cooperation of multiple teams
- Part IV guides enterprises in developing Agile requirements for ever-larger "systems of systems," application suites, and product portfolios

This book will help you leverage the benefits of Agile without sacrificing the value of effective requirements discovery and analysis. You'll find proven solutions you can apply right now–whether you're a software developer or tester, executive, project/program manager, architect, or team leader.

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Most helpful customer reviews

35 of 35 people found the following review helpful.
The first complete book on what an enterprise level agile process should look like
By T Anderson
I still remember the first few pages of Managing Software Requirements: A Unified Approach (The Addison-Wesley Object Technology Series). I was in BWI waiting on my daughter's flight to arrive. The book opened with such a great beginning I knew I was going to love it. In a nutshell what I heard the authors say was we have years of experience that you don't, let us show you what we have learned so you don't have to repeat our mistakes. That is my number one reason for reading books. The message at the beginning of this book is the same.

I feel this is the first complete book on what an enterprise level agile process should look like. What baffles me is the number of enterprises I have been in that have not come close to implementing 10% of the process this book outlines, yet they call themselves agile and lean. The one thing this book brings to light is just how complex and advanced agile processes are. Like the book says, "it is not easy, it is agile".

This book has the caveat that certain skills are required for the agile teams to be successful. I agree with that completely. The thing I have a hard time with is the fact that agile processes assume such skill sets are readily available. They aren't. That is why I see such a mess in 90% of the attempts I have seen when enterprises attempt to go agile. Almost all of them will claim to be successful at implementing their agile processes, but budgets and bugs don't lie. Agile does not equate to simple or easy, actually the opposite is true.

So then does that mean agile methods should be avoided and this book is not worth reading? Absolutely not. It is one of the few books that may just help you implement a successful agile enterprise environment. If nothing else, it does not pull punches, so it will enlighten you as to just how difficult it is to pull it off. It is a must read for anyone out there claiming to be running an agile enterprise.

This book is unique in that it provides a complete view of all the roles throughout the enterprise that are involved with the process and does a great job of defining the activities they are involved with. The book

calls the process Agile Enterprise Big Picture: Scaled Agile Delivery Model, or the Big Picture for short. The process has three levels, the Team level, the Program level, and the portfolio level.

The book starts out with a really cool overview of software development process models. The chapter goes from Waterfall to Spiral, RAD, RUP to Crystal, Scrum, XP, FDD, DSDM, Open UP, Kanban to Enterprise-Scale Adaptive Processes.

The rest of part one dedicates four more chapters to introducing the Agile Enterprise Big Picture: Scaled Agile Delivery Model (the Big Picture).

The book has three more parts, one for each process level. The Team level, the Program level, and the portfolio level. Each part has several chapters that drill deep into the details of each level.

One of the things I really like about the book is that it acknowledges the importance of software architecture. It does not go along with the common agile "emergent architecture" view. The book advocates intentional architecture. It also acknowledges project managers and doesn't just drop them from the picture.

Another thing I really like is that modernization is realized through the architectural epics. Modernization strategies are usually nonexistent in most enterprises until they find it is too late. Then they are implemented in a haphazard way creating so much more damage than necessary. This book makes modernization strategies first class citizens through architectural epics.

If you are in an enterprise environment and you are attempting to implement agile processes, this book is the book to have. Agile requires experience. This book is filled with experience from the trenches. The book is written well and the author's writing style makes it an easy read. As easy as you can make a topic that is so complex.

This books takes all the activities, artifacts, roles, responsibilities, and processes that have always made a successful software development project using classic software development processes such as the unified process and the RUP, and repositions them in their agile context.

All in all I highly recommend this book to anyone working in an enterprise level software development environment. The developer, project manager, tester, software architect, process engineer, business analyst, scrum master, product owner, project sponsor, CIO, CFO, and CEO could benefit from reading this book, even if you are not in an agile shop.

43 of 49 people found the following review helpful.
Close, But Wrong Features
By Earl Beede
I believe Dean Leffingwell has a solid grasp of the issues that face agile and, in particular, Scrum as it scales. He does well in basing his approach on the the thoughts of people like Donald Reinertsen. However, I can give the book only three stars as I disagree with Mr. Leffingwell in several important aspects.

First area is the people Mr. Leffingwell left out. If one is going to talk about scaling software development, one must at least engage Fred Brooks and his recent work, The Design of Design. Even if you disagree with Mr. Brooks' position that a single mind is required for conceptual integrity (at a given level of abstraction), you need to more than throw an agile principle at his well reasoned thought.

Then there is Tom Gilb. Mr. Gilb was agile for there was an agile. I feel that anybody who wants to talk

seriously about scaling and agile needs to engage Mr. Gilb's position on requirements and their being testable at any level of abstraction. Again, you may disagree but not to consider it seems a huge oversight. His design impact estimation would be a perfect add to an architecture workshop.

A second area is the lack of testability at the higher levels of abstraction. Given a features approach, it seemed to me that Mr. Leffingwell had a hard time describing how to test things at the highest level. If, instead, he had the higher levels focus more on the problem and the (non-function) characteristics that made the client/customer/user feel the products would solve their problem, then coming up with tests is not that difficult. You can let an architecture "emerge" to the degree you have well designed tests that state that whatever emerges, must pass the tests!

A third area is Mr. Leffingwell's approach to requirements. I disagree with his features driven approach. I have worked as long in the field as Mr. Leffingwell and I have found that his approach, while perhaps letting the team be as efficient as possible in creating a thing, often leads to building the wrong thing. This isn't so bad on the small scale but large scale development really doesn't have the chance to fail fast AND cheap. If it does fail, it is always expensive. Fast feedback at the large end of development isn't a good substitute for building the right thing in the first place. I seek fast feedback, I just don't use it as a crutch for poor understanding of the clients problems/opportunities.

The main point is that "agility" is far more necessary when you take a features first approach as, to paraphrase the Cheshire Cat, "Any solution will work when you don't know the problem." When the problem is still not well understood, features (solutions) will fight to have their way, failing more often than succeeding, forcing the development organization to spin and flex. While Mr. Leffingwell will argue that requirements are not fully knowable at the start of a project (or if ever), that doesn't mean that the are not a least partially knowable. Given a reasonable approach to truly understanding the problem, I think practitioners will find that their business don't need to be as "agile" when they understand the customer's actual needs (not just their feature wants).

Even with those concerns, I have several action items to improve my seminars, writing, and coaching . I needed to remember the Cost of Delay more than I have. The idea of using the Kano model to talk about investment levels is great. If the concerns I listed don't bother you, you will probably get more bit more.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.
A detailed and extensive study of the agile gathering and management of requirements in enterprises
By Methods & Tools Software Development Magazine
Although many might tend to limit the concept of agile requirements to "user stories", this book reminds us that there could be more than just a post-it on an information radiator when we talk about requirements. The title of one of the initial chapters is "The Big Picture of Agile Requirements" and this book provides it, together with the small details that can help you write better stories.

Dean Leffingwell describes the general context of managing requirements in organizations based on a three levels view: portfolio, program and team. The concept of requirements is different at each of these levels: from the investment themes and epics of the enterprise strategy to the user stories implemented by teams during Scrum sprints. An interesting concept developed in the book is the Agile Release Train (ART) that aggregates user stories in features set. The goal is to adjust the team's capacity to produce software with the ability of customers to absorb it.

The book is very well written, achieving balance between a structured approach and easiness to read. It contains many case studies, templates and sample agenda that help relate the ideas expressed with the daily

activities. Three appendixes at the end propose interviews and document templates, along with a release-planning checklist.

This book provides a detailed and extensive study of the agile gathering and management of requirements in enterprises and I will recommend it to everybody involved in some software requirement activity, from the business analyst to the project manager or developer.

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