Top 5 questions to find an excellent Agile Project Management Trainer

1. Does your trainer have current experience of implementing agile project management?

Too often the person standing at the front of the room is a dedicated trainer who hasn't had any practical experience of the subject they are teaching in years. This means that they probably know the text book and the syllabus really well, but they have not come up against the challenges of implementing it in practice. I know from my own experience that I learn more from doing than from someone showing me a hundred slides on a subject, so is there knowledge really that in depth? Just reading the book and presenting the slides is surely only a superficial understanding. Implementing agile project management is tough. There are lots of challenges from project managers and project teams with lots of experience in waterfall methods such as PRINCE2 or PMI who don't want to change how they do things. There is lots of push-back from the business who like the idea of incremental delivery but can't make the time available to work collaboratively with the project team.

- Make sure your trainer has experience of re-drafting project methodologies to build in agile working
- Ensure that they have coached a whole range of staff in what agile project management means i.e. project teams, project sponsors, those working in a PMO and those in the business
- Check that your trainer has examples of how they have tailored their implementation of agile project management to suit different situations and different organisational cultures

2. Does your trainer understand where agile project management fits into the project management profession?

It can be argued that project management has been established as a recognised profession since the early 1970s when the Project Management Institute and the Association for Project Management were first formed. During the last 40 years methodologies, principles and techniques have been developed to help us deliver project excellence. Agile project management is a continuation of this quest for excellence, but it is only one of numerous approaches to managing and controlling project delivery. Your trainer must be able to set agile project management in this wider context, so that you can fully understand the advantages and challenges offered by agile in contrast with other accepted practices such as PRINCE2, PMI, Managing Successful Programmes and Management of Portfolios.

Select a trainer who has a range of project management qualifications

Review their profile on LinkedIn to see that they have held a number of project management roles

3. Is your trainer active in the project management profession?

As stated in point two, the project management profession continues to change and grow and there are frequent additions to best practice and new ideas to tackling difficult project problems. Its important to keep up to date with the latest ideas and to understand how these ideas align to the structure and contents of Agile Project Management. If your trainer is not active in the project

management profession and its related disciplines then its hard to believe that they are going to be a wealth of current thinking.

Check that they are members of recognised project management professional bodies e.g. Association for Project Management, Project Management Institute or International Project Management Association

Look out for trainers who are also members of professional bodies from related industries. For example, a lot of excellent project management contributions are made by the BCS (Chartered Institute for IT) and the marketing profession, who are particularly active in agile project management, represented by the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

4. Does your trainer have a deep understanding of agile project management?

An excellent trainer will be passionate about their subject and will be active in developing greater insight about its application. This is evidenced by those trainers who write books, magazine articles and blogs about their subject. After all, it's pretty difficult to contribute new material to the vast amount of detail that already exists if you don't know much about your subject!

- Check that your trainer is a regular contributor to the development of knowledge about agile project management?

5. Do they have relevant trainer experience?

Guiding you successfully through an accredited course which includes two qualifications (Foundation and Practitioner) requires a lot of experience in training examination based courses. These types of courses are different to workshops or non-accredited courses, because the trainer has to deliver the whole of the syllabus of the course, otherwise they will not have prepared you fully for the examinations. In other courses, if the course is moving slowly, or there are lots of discussions about interesting but not wholly relevant points there is no impact on the results of the course. However, if your trainer does not have the experience to keep things on track, give enough time to discussion and answering questions whilst still ensuring all of the material is covered then you might not be getting the best preparation for your Agile Project Management qualifications.

- Ask your trainer how many qualifications based courses they have trained
- Check that your trainer has taken an exam in the last 12-18 months, as you want someone who knows what sitting an exam feels like
- Make sure your trainer has a track record of success in ensuring their candidates pass their examinations