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## Using Agile Software Development, part one

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**In the first in a series of three articles, we'll take you through the key practices of Agile – how to use them, what problems you might face and what you'll get from them**

Agile is not a specific process, but rather an umbrella term for a group of methodologies and approaches that have a similar basis. These approaches, which include Extreme Programming, Dynamic System Development Method, SCRUM, Crystal, and Lean among others, are based on delivering high quality, working software early and often, and creating customer satisfaction.

While each of the methods that form the family of Agile processes has a similar goal, they achieve this goal through different practices. We have taken the best practices that we have seen work from all the processes and put them together.

The figure below is a basic representation of these Agile best practices which we have distilled. The centre-most circle shows practices that a pair of programmers works with daily. The next circle outwards shows practices which are used by a team of developers. The outer-most circle gives us practices used by everyone involved in a project — customers, developers, testers, business analysts etc.

Each of the practices in the circles relates directly to the core Agile values shown at the four corners: Communication, Feedback, Courage and Simplicity. That is, each practice gives us a concrete way to follow Agile values and make them part of the process.



Ideally, if you decide to take on an Agile approach, you should try all the practices from the circle in an Agile pilot project that has management approval. This is one of the best ways of getting into Agile, as it ensures support, gives you more return for your efforts and can help capture learning so that you can adapt Agile processes to fit your unique environment.

However, this isn't always possible, so an incremental or step-by-step approach is sometimes appropriate. In this case we would recommend working from the inside of the circle of practices outwards. Start with developer practices, then team level practices finally incorporating the "one team" concept.

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