The failure rates of Waterfall based development are well documented, but Agile is no silver bullet. According to the 2012 Standish Group CHAOS report, 58% of Agile based projects aren’t successful. The reality is that Agile’s short sprints can be challenging. For all the fundamental differences between Agile and Waterfall, a big problem remains: teams still need an effective way to define user stories and validate that the solution they intend to build will satisfy the user. Poorly defined user stories and the resulting lack of clarity often result in the dropping of backlog items or poor deliverables. At some point in the SDLC, all members of the team need clarity to do their job effectively. Providing clarity to the entire team is a critical part of what the iRise Platform provides (see sidebar).

"We need a new approach that asks, ‘What software development process prepares us to be experience creators?’ We need model-based and more-visual tools to make development faster and easy for more people to participate in the creative process of software development.”

Mike Gualtieri, Forrester Research

Agile Philosophy = iRise Foundation

Although every organization adapts the Agile process to fit their specific needs, there are certain fundamental Agile principles that are constant. These principles have been the foundation of the iRise Enterprise Platform from the start.

**Embrace Change**

iRise facilitates accurate customer feedback, allowing Agile teams to course correct and quickly make the right changes.

**Rapid Iteration**

iRise is built to facilitate rapid iteration, allowing you to quickly design, test, and validate.

**Team Collaboration**

iRise fosters the "whole-team" approach and acts as a central communication platform.

**Frequent Delivery**

iRise removes obstacles and barriers to allow teams to deliver better software more frequently.
Agile Challenges and How iRise Helps

Although Agile offers benefits over traditional Waterfall development, there are still challenges. Some of these challenges are unique to Agile, and many are the same familiar challenges that have caused the majority of software development projects to fail for the last 40 years.

Clarity – A Big Challenge in Agile Development
A lack of clarity is a common weakness of Agile projects. This partially stems from Agile’s modular nature and short cycle times. Product owners sometimes lack the ability or time to appreciate the big picture. This can lead to inaccurate backlog planning, a team without proper focus, and an end product that doesn’t deliver the intended business value. Correcting this disconnect means providing your entire team with a way to validate and iterate on the requirements for each project so they can craft a clear vision up front.

Vision – A Common Weakness of Agile
Lack of holistic vision is a common weakness of Agile projects. Having a vision of the end state allows all the steps along the way to make sense. iRise allows you to quickly visualize the entire backlog – from epics to user stories – to ensure everyone is aligned on the big picture up front and throughout.

Distributed and Global Teams – Keeping Everyone on the Same Page
It’s important to have all team members involved in the process, aware of team progress, and on the same page. Large companies often have dispersed teams, which makes paper requirements and Post-it notes on a whiteboard (common Agile tools) even more impractical and ineffective. iRise serves as the online and team-based central communication platform, removing ambiguity and keeping the entire team on the same page, regardless of location.

For IT development, having programmers in one location and testers in another impedes communication and results in wasted time. Why not give developers an “interactive blueprint” and remove ambiguity?

Prototyping In Code Doesn’t Work
The nature of Agile is to produce code quickly so that functionality can be validated with the customer. Unfortunately, development environments aren’t well suited for rapid idea generation and validation. “Prototyping ideas within code” is inefficient and often leads to poor quality code. iRise provides a more effective, faster and cheaper way to prototype and validate ideas. After validation, these simulations can accelerate development because IT no longer has to interpret – they can just build.

The short sprints and cycles can be challenging; if the team gets off track because of poorly defined stories, spikes, or other quality related issues, it usually results in dropping backlog items or poor deliverables. Teams can’t afford to sacrifice quality and usability for the sake of speed. iRise allows teams to define, iterate and test “at the speed of conversation.” Introducing iRise doesn’t add time to the process; instead, the clarity it brings removes roadblocks that slow the team down, while increasing the quality of the final product.
Incorporating iRise Visualization into your Agile Process

iRise provides benefits at each stage of the Agile process. There is no one size fits all implementation and iRise can be tailored to fit the needs of your organization. We’ve provided examples showing how you can use iRise at each stage:

**Backlog Planning/Preparation: Build the Vision with Validated Assumptions**

**Problem:** How can you plan accurately for something you don’t have a clear vision of? It’s very difficult to make decisions based on assumptions that may or may not be correct.

**iRise:** Gives you the ability to interact with the proposed stories in the backlog, confirm that they make sense (or change them if they don’t), allowing you to prioritize and plan more effectively.

**Sprint Planning Meeting: Determining Goals and Tasks**

**Problem:** Determining sprint backlog items and the tasks and time needed to accomplish them are difficult without a good frame of reference.

**iRise:** Can be used to drive the sprint planning meeting, allowing you to isolate specific User Stories in the simulation and then break down the tasks needed to accomplish it.

**Daily Scrums: Staying on Track by Removing Impediments**

**Problem:** The daily scrum meeting determines what was accomplished yesterday, what’s going to get done today, and if there are any blockers. These issues might involve the need to revisit the user story to clarify the end goal or call for a spike.

**iRise:** Serves as the primary reference throughout the remainder of the sprint – to clarify questions and convey changes needed. Major changes or spikes can be visualized for clarity.

**Product Increment / Release: Giving Developers Clarity**

**Problem:** Would sketches and Post-it notes or a dynamic interactive simulation be more open to developers interpretation? Within Agile, the developers are involved through all stages of the process and their input is important in scope and estimation.

**iRise:** Developers use iRise as an interactive blueprint for what to build, and throughout the process to collaborate and give more accurate input about the design’s feasibility and timelines.

**Sprint Review: Assessing Overall Project Success**

**Problem:** It can sometimes be hard to effectively evaluate if all the sprint goals were achieved.

**iRise:** The iRise simulation can be compared to the backlog items delivered in the sprint, allowing the product owner and team to accurately evaluate if they achieved their overall goal.

**Getting Started**

We’re prepared to work together with you to define the right approach, regardless of your development process, to allow your team to experience the value of iRise. Please contact us to discuss the next steps or to get your questions answered. Call 800-556-0399 or email info@irise.com.