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Critical Success Factors in Agile Software Development Projects An Empirical Investigation



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### About the Author

Dac-Buu Cao, Ph.D.: Studied Computer Science at University of California, Irvine, Information Science at Claremont Graduate University, and Information Technology Management at Capella University. Director of Product Development & Support Systems at Siemens PLM Software, based in California.

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Agile software engineering methods have recently emerged as a new and better way of developing software as compared to the traditional methodologies. This book explores and determines the critical success factors of Agile software development projects using quantitative approach. The book compiled success and failure factors of Agile projects identified in the existing literature into a preliminary list of potential critical success factors. A survey was conducted among Agile professionals, gathering empirical data from 109 Agile projects from 25 countries across the world. The results revealed that only 10 out of 48 hypotheses were supported, identifying three critical success factors for Agile software development projects. The book should provide researchers and practitioners with insight on the comparative values of success factors, and might be helpful to those managers and professionals considering joining the Agile bandwagon.

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Dissertation on Agile success factors

By Bas Vodde

I looked forward to reading "an empirical investigation" of the critical success factors of Agile development. Still, I was disappointed. It was (again) a survey-based study with a fairly small group of people who responded to the survey. Next to that, the author makes some statements about agile development that seemed odd.

This book is the dissertation of the author, Dac-buu Cao. It is written as most dissertations I've read... including the enormous space between lines (to make it seem bigger?). To purchase a dissertation in book form for nearly a 100\$ is strange and IMHO not worth it in this case.

The book is structured in five chapters and a couple of appendixes. The first chapter is a general introduction

to the dissertation. The second chapter is a literature review where the author introduces agile development and also the concept of critical success factors. The study looks for critical success factors for agile development. The third chapter discusses the methodology (of research) and takes success and failure factors from existing literature to discover which one to look for in the survey. The fourth chapter describes the survey that provided the data for the research. The survey was send to Agile Alliance user groups. The last chapter shows the results and conclusions of the study. Interestingly enough, the conclusion was that people's skill and development practices matter... The appendix is worth reading, it gives some of the comments people wrote down during the survey.

I wasn't very enthusiastic about the book. Especially the first parts were disappointing and contained some possible misunderstandings or awkwardly formed sentences. On p19, the author takes a process picture of XP from "an agile book" which is definitively not from the XP books, it reads awkward. The description of a ScrumMaster as a project lead (p23) is awkward and on the same page, the author includes "daily build" as a Scrum practices... which is just wrong. On p46 the author suggests that an Agile failure factor is when "no unit tests are design upfront" which is an awkward way of explaining TDD. Next to that, the author keeps insisting that agile only works for small projects.

I was very disappointed in the beginning of the book. As mentioned, I had expected more than a dissertation for this price (almost 100\$ when I bought it). The book was small, and much space between the letters. It could have been written in about 1/4th the current size. The literature overview etc wasn't interesting and I'd recommend to read a different book if you want an overview of agile development. The survey was not larger or much different than other publicly available survey results. I was pretty certain that I was going to give this book an 2 star review, but then the end of the book suddenly turned out to be more interesting. The results of the survey (people skills and development practices matter!) were interesting to me and the appendix provided some insights in agile project success/failure. Therefore, I decided to go with 3 stars, but still... I would not recommend this book unless you are looking for all research done in agile development. If you are just a practitioner then this book is probably not worth reading.

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