

# Debunking Agile Project Management Myths, Part 2

Agile methodologies can help drive more business value—but not if you believe these Agile myths.



**Agile methodologies promise to accelerate time to market, improve quality, enhance collaboration, drive business value, and more—but what if your organization has implemented Agile and isn't yet seeing those benefits?**

If you're not realizing the rewards from adopting Agile frameworks like Scrum, Kanban, or Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®), you could be *doing* Agile but not *being* Agile.

You might also want to upgrade your Agile practice to implement SAFe frameworks, which helps adjust Agile best practices for large or multiple teams and teams with a broader focus. Doing so helps deliver large and complex products. Like with any Agile framework, SAFe methodologies aren't just a series of processes and ceremonies but a comprehensive mindset. It doesn't only apply to development teams; it's an organization-wide effort.

Guidehouse has professionals with experience leading digital transformations and projects across many Agile frameworks, including SAFe Practice Consultants (SPCs), Agile Coaches, Scrum Masters, Product Managers, and more. We're interested in using that expertise to help organizations improve their Agile framework implementations. When organizations recognize [common agile myths](#), they can achieve the efficiency, quality, clarity, and collaboration benefits of a truly Agile organization.

## Myth #1: Story sizing equates to hours or days.

Estimating work in Agile project management is fundamentally different from traditional waterfall methods of estimation. In waterfall methods, all requirements and scope are defined in advance. That makes it relatively easy to estimate the hours or days needed for each task at the outset—though that can sometimes not line up with how long things actually take during development. Agile's focus on delivering value through iterative sprints produces progressive elaboration that allows teams to respond more quickly to change and produce results.

While the use of story points to estimate scope, level of effort, and potential risk allows teams to commit to a realistic amount of work and is required to help in planning releases and sprints, story points don't easily equate to hours or days of work and are relative to the individual teams setting them.

Points are assigned to stories to provide a single number that represents a combination of the following qualities:

- Volume—How much is there to do?
- Complexity—How hard is it to do?
- Knowledge—What's known about the work?
- Uncertainty—What's unknown about the work?

Guidehouse has experienced Scrum Masters and Agile professionals who can help your organization use story points to estimate appropriately by running relative-sizing workshops and educating your staff on how to estimate stories.

## Myth #2: PI Planning isn't needed.

Another common Agile methodology myth is that it's not important to do Planning Interval (PI) Planning. The PI Planning process helps teams align on a shared mission and vision. Organizational leaders who believe they're fully adopting Agile often have individual teams submit a high-level plan for client approval rather than having all teams involved collaborate on PI Planning. The problem is that doing so takes away a critical opportunity to identify dependencies across teams, understand what other teams are planning for their sprints, foster cross-team collaboration, obtain approval on work from clients, and align with business priorities, goals, vision, and context.

The PI Planning process also allows organizations to better identify and address risks using the ROAM (Resolved, Owned, Accepted, or Mitigated) methodology, so that teams across the organization know if another team's efforts could potentially affect their work. Understanding and owning these risks and identifying dependencies is crucial because it reduces the need for rework, ensures that work is better coordinated across the organization, and improves velocity. Managing and owning risks also enables teams to complete work on time and avoid or mitigate blockers. Given these considerations, organizations with a virtual or hybrid workforce shouldn't assume that PI Planning is out of reach. While it's important that everyone is present, attendance can be either virtual or in person.

We have extensive experience running PI Plannings both virtually and in person depending on client needs. Our experienced SPCs and Release Train Engineers (RTEs) and SPCs can help you implement PI Planning and other Agile Release Train (ART) events such as ART Syncs and Inspect & Adapt ceremonies. They can also coach and train you to embrace SAFe culture and facilitate these ceremonies on your own.

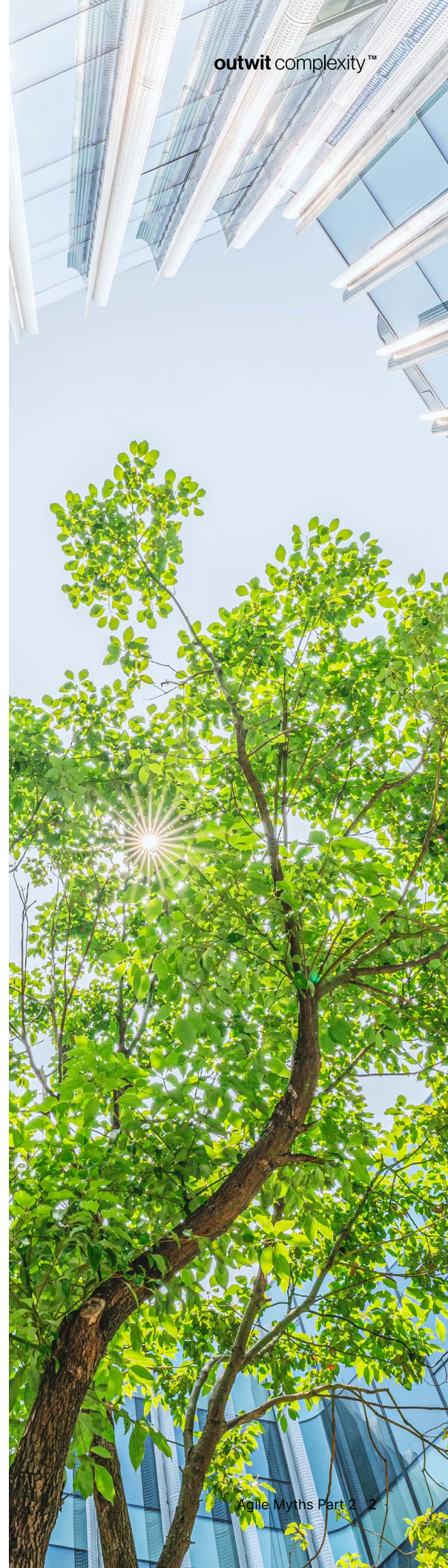
## Myth #3: HIP/IP and planning sprints should be scheduled only when needed.

Some organizations only schedule Innovation and Planning (IP) sprints (also known as "HIP sprints" or "Hardening Sprints"), when they notice that their teams are burning out or when technical debt becomes a significant enough challenge that it finally needs to be addressed.

Yet IP sprints or hardening sprints should be scheduled regularly in every PI rather than just "when needed." This allows organizations to:

- Address technical debt
- Keep teams from burning out
- Work on infrastructure
- Innovate and explore

In our work, we advocate for these regularly scheduled sprints because we've seen how they offer critical time to plan, innovate, reduce technical debt, give teams a break from weeks of ambitious sprints, and increase measures of success.





## Myth #4: ART Syncs aren't necessary if leadership meetings are already taking place.

Another common myth some people tend to believe when implementing Agile is that ART Syncs aren't necessary if teams are already providing updates at leadership meetings. However, these are very different kinds of meetings with very different goals.

Leadership meetings focus on high-level updates on a project's progress, looking at aspects such as program level risks and issues, circulating client feedback and priorities, and making decisions on incoming work. By contrast, an ART Sync focuses on more granular elements that are often critical to the project's success. Examples include process improvements, team conflicts, dependencies, roadmap statuses, blockers, planning and refining epics, and other details that don't make sense to talk about in leadership meetings. In an ART Sync meeting, organizations can work through these critical issues surrounding project implementation and set teams up for success.

Our seasoned experts can work with your leadership to ensure that both types of meetings are purposeful and productive, and that team members feel that progress and needed changes are being made.

Ultimately, these myths all demonstrate that there aren't any shortcuts to becoming a truly Agile organization. By following these in-depth recommendations with the help of experienced guides, organizations can attain greater velocity, quality improvements, and increased business value.

## Reap the full benefits of Agile with our guidance


We have a proven track record of helping organizations implement Agile framework transformations, including SAFe, of all sizes and scopes. Our experienced professionals can either facilitate Agile events or train your teams to fully implement them themselves. Our Agile Transformation practice includes SPCs who can guide you on SAFe implementation as well as certified Agile professionals with experience as Agile Coaches, Product Owners, RTEs, Scrum Masters, and more. You can depend on that expertise to help you fully integrate a holistic Agile mindset into your business practices.

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### About Guidehouse

Guidehouse is a global consultancy providing advisory, digital, and managed services to the commercial and public sectors. Guidehouse is purpose-built to serve the national security, financial services, healthcare, energy, and infrastructure industries. Disrupting legacy consulting delivery models with its agility, capabilities, and scale, the firm delivers technology-enabled and focused solutions that position clients for innovation, resilience, and growth. With high-quality standards and a relentless pursuit of client success, Guidehouse's more than 18,000 employees collaborate with leaders to outwit complexity and achieve transformational changes that meaningfully shape the future. [guidehouse.com](https://www.guidehouse.com)

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