



Ever Heard of An Agility Hack?

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Nine PM Challenges

[Kissflow.com](https://www.kissflow.com) cites nine challenges facing project success:

1. Scope Creep
2. Poor Communication
3. Poor Goals and Success Criteria
4. Budget Shifts
5. Inadequate Project Team Skill
6. Poor Risk Analysis
7. No – Low Accountability (Action or Results)
8. Stakeholder Disengagement
9. Unrealistic Deadlines

Could a VUCA work environment be the real culprit behind our PM challenges?

+ HOW WELL CAN YOU PREDICT THE RESULTS OF YOUR ACTIONS?	<h3>complexity</h3> <p>Characteristics: The situation has many interconnected parts and variables. Some information is available or can be predicted, but the volume or nature of it can be overwhelming to process.</p> <p>Example: You are doing business in many countries, all with unique regulatory environments, tariffs, and cultural values.</p> <p>Approach: Restructure, bring on or develop specialists, and build up resources adequate to address the complexity.</p>	<h3>volatility</h3> <p>Characteristics: The challenge is unexpected or unstable and may be of unknown duration, but it's not necessarily hard to understand; knowledge about it is often available.</p> <p>Example: Prices fluctuate after a natural disaster takes a supplier off-line.</p> <p>Approach: Build in slack and devote resources to preparedness—for instance, stockpile inventory or overbuy talent. These steps are typically expensive; your investment should match the risk.</p>
	<h3>ambiguity</h3> <p>Characteristics: Causal relationships are completely unclear. No precedents exist; you face “unknown unknowns.”</p> <p>Example: You decide to move into immature or emerging markets or to launch products outside your core competencies.</p> <p>Approach: Experiment. Understanding cause and effect requires generating hypotheses and testing them. Design your experiments so that lessons learned can be broadly applied.</p>	<h3>uncertainty</h3> <p>Characteristics: Despite a lack of other information, the event's basic cause and effect are known. Change is possible but not a given.</p> <p>Example: A competitor's pending product launch muddies the future of the business and the market.</p> <p>Approach: Invest in information—collect, interpret, and share it. This works best in conjunction with structural changes, such as adding information analysis networks, that can reduce ongoing uncertainty.</p>
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	HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE SITUATION?	

Credit: HBR 2014 - Strategic Planning

VUCA is not the Villian

Today's work environment is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA). Nathan Bennett and G. James Lemoine wrote an article titled [Harvard Business Review under Strategic Planning \(2014\)](#)

Focusing on winning, not whining about VUCA.

VUCA has become a crutch for organizations NOT facing their future with continuous improvement of their strategic plans, processes, and results.

VUCA makes a great scapegoat for NOT figuring out a viable, effective, and efficient way forward against seen and unseen challenges.

Yes, the organizational pace of change is difficult and nearly untenable when constant.

And, VUCA is not going anywhere. Neither are we unless we get aligned (top to bottom) on what propels us forward on projects.

We Must Proactively Respond to VUCA

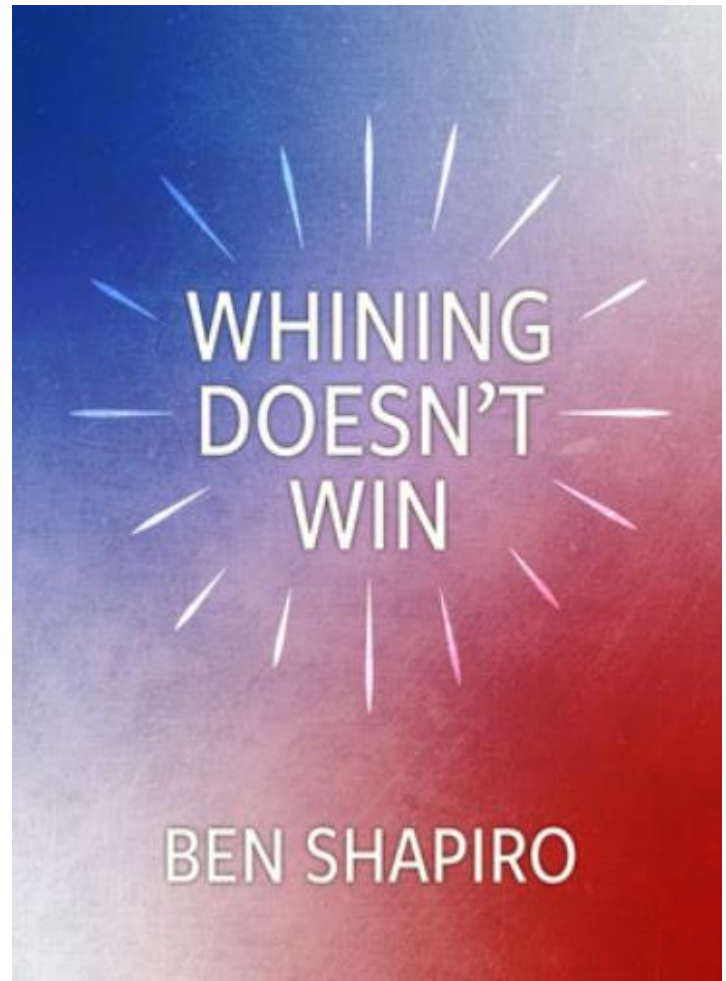
Our project managers, stakeholders, organizational leaders, and customers must rally around results, shut down the blame game, gain alignment on our strategic response to VUCA and embrace necessary change.

We must focus our energies on a proactive VUCA response that correctly identifies when a project or organizational challenge is ripe for Agile response (The Framework and Mindset).

Agile 101

Most readers should be familiar with the Agile Framework. As a Project/Product Manager, you will eventually need to learn and apply agile to your projects.

Please visit www.agilealliance.org and dive into the resource plethora available.



Credit: Google Images/Creators.com



Credit: Agile Alliance

Enter Agility Hacks

I read an interesting article by Amy c. Edmondson and Ranjay Gulati titled "[Agility Hacks](#)" (HBR November – December 2021) under Project Management.

An Agility Hack may help your organization deal with the short-term immobilization of a project or organizational challenge.

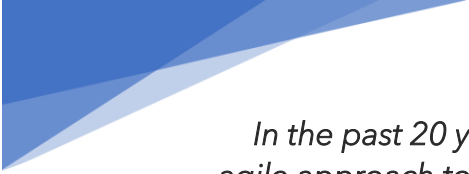
The goal is to size up whether the challenge is suitable for an Agility Hack.

Some organizational challenges shouldn't be hacked. And, deploying a hack on mature systems could result in costly, even deadly results.

Three Examples: When to Use an Agility Hack

The "Agility Hack" authors provide three clear examples of challenges ripe for an agility hack:

1. An immediate crisis requiring fast execution (e.g., saving a large corporate account)
2. A Minimum Viable Product innovation that would be missed due to bureaucratic processes and organizational silos (e.g., overriding incremental product development to pursue radical ideas)
3. When standard operating procedures preclude speed in addressing an issue of long-term strategic importance (e.g., new manufacturing technologies that threaten to reshape the market)



In the past 20 years, the agile approach to improving products, services, and processes has swept the business world. It calls for organizations to adopt small, empowered, cross-functional teams, break initiatives or challenges into small modules, and develop solutions using rapid prototyping, tight customer-feedback loops, and quick adaptation. Rooted in software development, agile has spread to many other functions, and some companies have turned much of their organization, including the C-suite, into agile teams.

["Agility Hacks" HBR.org \(2021\)](#)

Conclusion

VUCA will bring us challenges.

It is unacceptable for us to wallow in the derailing circumstance and get busy with a strategic plan and honest conversation about moving the project/product forward or not.

We must make it a point to involve all relevant stakeholders to see, scope, share, and shift our behaviors and process toward successful outcomes.

Finally, we must consider Agile Hacks or another solution because forward momentum is not optional.

Call to Action

The world needs us – get equipped for a world of projects producing exponential value! Finally, [Global demand for Agile/Scrum/Product Management expertise](#) is heating up for PMs with this experience and maybe the key to you prospering in the new remote economy.

It's only a matter of time before it intersects with your work or influences your opportunities.

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