



1st State of Learning in Agile report

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The State of Learning in Agile Report 2023

By Agile Practice, QA Ltd



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About us

QA is a leading technology talent and training organisation. QA helps learners to excel and businesses to grow. We are experts in emerging technologies, leadership and management, business methods and people skills. We believe that everything starts with our learners. Transforming their careers and their lives is what motivates and inspires us. We power the success of tomorrow by training the next generation of technologists, leaders and innovators. Our model is primarily business to business, with long-term revenue visibility resulting from repeating clients with high customer satisfaction, subscriptions and contracted future programme lengths.

Foreword

The case for Agile learning

Benjamin Franklin is famously quoted as saying 'nothing is certain except for death and taxes', but in today's world, he might have also included 'change'. Since the creation of the Agile Manifesto in 2001, the demand for agile ways of working has grown exponentially due to our need to keep up with the pace of change.

As I reflect back over the years, I see three distinct ages of Agile which have shaped the demands for Agile education and we are embarking upon the fourth. Throughout this report we have referred to this model, which is also a useful reference for measuring the Agile maturity of an organisation:



First Age of Agile: Small Technology Teams

- Emerged with the creation of the Agile Manifesto in 2001.
- Early adoption by technology teams.
- Learning was primarily aimed at technologists focusing on a small but core set of Agile frameworks.



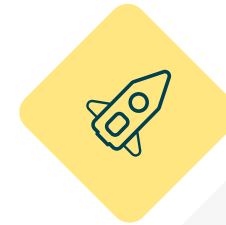
Second Age of Agile: Scaled Agile Teams

- Evolved in the mid 2000s and early 2010s.
- Identified the need for scaling Agile methodologies across multiple teams.
- Learning expanded to teach scaling frameworks like LeSS, SAFe, and others.



Third Age of Agile: Beyond Technology Teams

- Accelerated by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in late 2019.
- Critical need for Business / Enterprise Agility taking Agile adoption beyond technology teams where collaboration has become critical for success.
- The volume of Agile methods has grown, and so too have the number of certifications. This has made choosing the right learning extremely challenging for leaders.



Fourth Age of Agile: Project to Product & AI

- Emerging in the 2020s and continuing into the future.
- Characterised by a significant shift away from traditional project-based approaches and towards product-centric thinking.
- Learning will have to balance human skills with new AI tools to enhance product development and delivery.

Foreword

The evolution of Agile has seen a rise in not only the number of Agile tools and techniques, but also a flood of Agile certifications. Continuous learning is critical to enable agilists to keep up with the latest trends. But with so much choice, leaders face the challenge of navigating the complex Agile learning landscape and select the right training to maximise value from their investment.

In Jim Kwik's words, 'If knowledge is power, then learning is a superpower'.

Purpose of this report

There are numerous Agile reports published annually that provide valuable insights into current Agile trends. However, there are very few that provide insights through the lens of learning and education.

We have developed this report to help organisations make more informed decisions about their Agile learning and support your transformational strategy.

We have included insights into Agile training trends across industries, jobs, skills, training modalities, and many more. Additionally, we have included perspectives from respected accreditation partners to offer a comprehensive view of the holistic approach to Agile education.

This report is primarily aimed at Agile education sponsors, transformation leaders, learning and development professionals.

QA Group

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Paddy Dhanda
Agile Practice Director

Focus of this report

Based on our in-depth data analysis and experiences of working with thousands of learners, we've identified three key themes in this report that we believe organisations investing in Agile learning should plan to respond to:



01 Agile Adoption Trends

Agile has stood the test of time and is no longer considered a fad

Scaling Agile globally requires flexible, innovative, and localised learning experiences to cater to diverse teams

Adoption has diversified beyond technology teams. Agile education needs to span across departments, domains and hierarchical levels within the organisation



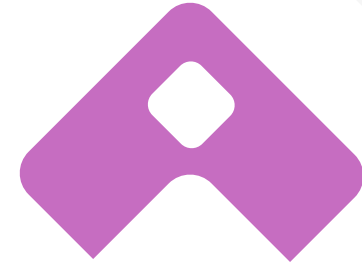
02 Demand for learning in Agile

Making Agile work is difficult and requires a combination of education and on the job experience

Whilst there is a vast range of Agile specialisms, there are a core set of skills that are commonly required by organisations

Managers are demanding the most Agile education

Agile certifications continue to be popular



03 Agile Learning is personal

COVID-19 completely reshaped the way that organisations engage with Agile training for good

A combination of digital and virtual modalities are the key to success

Customisation of learning leads to higher impact



Agile Adoption Trends

How organisations are adopting Agile

Agile is a business-wide methodology

The Agile Manifesto, introduced in 2001, transformed how IT professionals work. It placed a strong emphasis on cultivating transferable human-centred skills such as empathy, collaboration, and adaptability. Agile has now become the standard approach for product delivery in complex environments where uncertainty is high.

- 71% of Fortune 500 companies have embraced Agile practices (5)
- 80% of IT projects use Agile approaches (5)
- 698% increase in number of Agile UK job postings in the past two years (9)

Although Agile started primarily to improve software practices, it is now being adopted across more diverse industries and departments within organisations, such as, Marketing, Sales, HR, Finance and others. In 2021⁽¹⁾ and 2022 approximately 46% of QA's Agile learners worked outside of the software domain.

As the popularity of Agile grows, professional training is critical to support the workforce. An effective Agile learning strategy will enable teams to make informed decisions in selecting the right Agile tools and techniques, increase team collaboration and create a culture for agility to thrive.

46%

Agile learners are from non-technical roles ⁽¹⁾

\$30bn

Global market for Agile expect to reach by 2026 ⁽²⁾

80%

Companies use Agile as predominant approach ⁽³⁾

88%

International professionals believe Agile improves quality of life ⁽⁵⁾

Agile is a global phenomenon

During the present 'Connection Economy' era, the global demand for Agile is actively driving organisations to enhance **collaboration** among their global teams. Consequently, we are witnessing a global upsurge in the adoption of Agile ways of working.

ICAgile⁽⁶⁾ highlights the countries that experienced the most significant increase in certified learners in 2022:



Agile has become a global phenomenon. It's important that Agile training is designed to meet the needs of globally diverse teams. Consideration must be given to:

- **Flexibility:** Support different time zones
- **Innovation:** Create better remote learning experiences
- **Localisation:** Design materials in line with local cultural needs

Agile education must serve the needs of everyone and ensure they receive a consistent learning experience regardless of where they are based.

71%

US companies use Agile⁽⁵⁾

86%

Software developers using Agile worldwide⁽⁵⁾

Agile is scaling and diversifying

Traditionally, Agile learning focused on enhancing the agility of technology teams. But today, Agile education needs to span across departments, domains and hierarchical levels within the organisation to maximise collaboration to enable enterprise wide agility.

Diversity of Agile: The Technology industry has been the early adopters of Agile. But due to the versatility in enhancing teamwork and addressing complexity, we are now seeing the largest demand for Agile education coming from organisations that traditionally are from the non-technology domain e.g. Logistics & Transport, Manufacturing & Construction – Agile is becoming accessible to everyone.

Scaling towards Business Agility: We are seeing an increasing trend for scaling Agile beyond 1-2 teams. The highest enrollment in Agile scaling courses at QA is within the Banking & Financial Services industry which grew to 833% between FY21 – FY23(9). Whilst we've seen higher demand for scaling Agile across 'early adopter' regulated industries, we predict other industries will follow as they embark upon the third age of Agile to embrace business agility across the organisation.

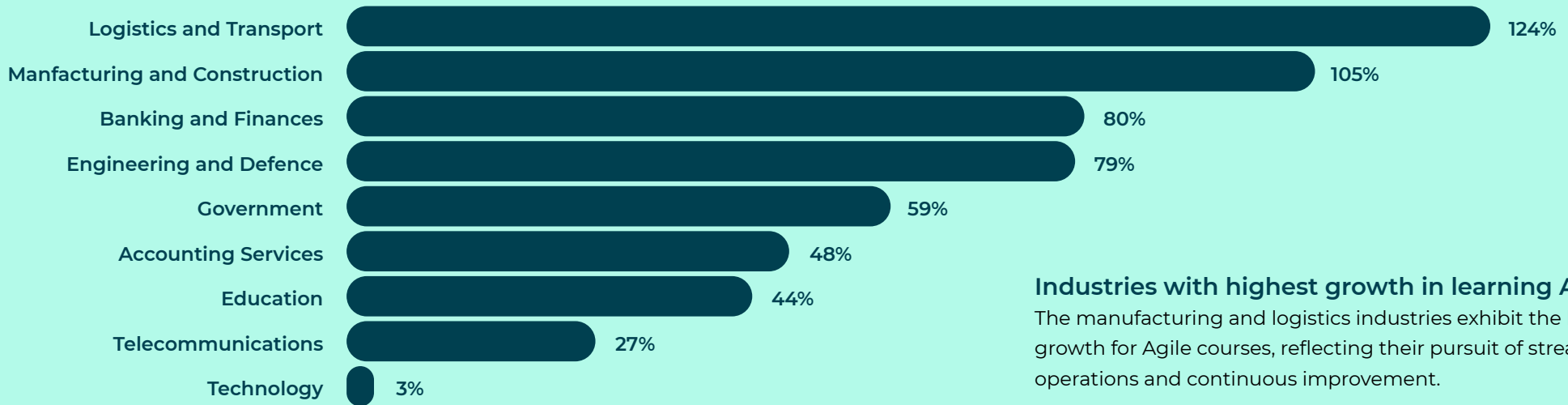


Chart 1 - Source: QA data. Agile trainings delivered in 2021 and 2022. Sampling approx. 4k events.

Industries with highest growth in learning Agile

The manufacturing and logistics industries exhibit the highest growth for Agile courses, reflecting their pursuit of streamlined operations and continuous improvement.



Over the past 5 years, we've seen a substantial increase in demand for agile learning outside of IT as more and more organisations around the world adopt agile ways of working. Team agility is necessary, but not sufficient. Roles in every area of organisations are embracing an agile mindset and learning how to adopt new principles and practices to encourage stronger collaboration, increase flexibility and fuel continuous improvement.



Shannon Ewan, Managing Director of ICAgile



Demand for learning in Agile

Skills trends

Demand for Agile skills has changed over time

In the early stages, Agile transformation often began as a grassroots movement led by software teams or start-up initiatives. However, to unlock the full potential of Agile, it has become increasingly clear that leadership involvement is essential.



1st Age: Small technology teams

The “first age” was characterised by a bottom-up rebellion, initiated by software teams and start-ups. It was a grassroots movement.

- Technological skills
- Project-based mindset



2nd Age: Scaled Agile teams

As Agile continues to evolve, the need for coaching and mentoring skills becomes crucial for team success.

- Hard skills continue to be a focus
- Soft skills to coach and evolve teams
- Holistic thinking and approach



3rd Age: Beyond Technology Teams

Demand is growing for executive coaching and leadership alignment to ensure a common language and understanding.

- Communication & cross-organisational collaboration



4th Age: Project to Product & AI

Whole-organisation Agile literacy is now a strategic imperative to drive alignment and maximise Agile’s benefits.

- Product mindset rather than silos
- Enterprise-level skills

Some Agile skills are in higher demand than others

As the field of Agile has evolved, many new tools and techniques have been born. These have given rise to a **demand for specific skills** in Agile practices. Below we can see the most sought-after skills in Agile job postings that organisations are demanding from new hires.

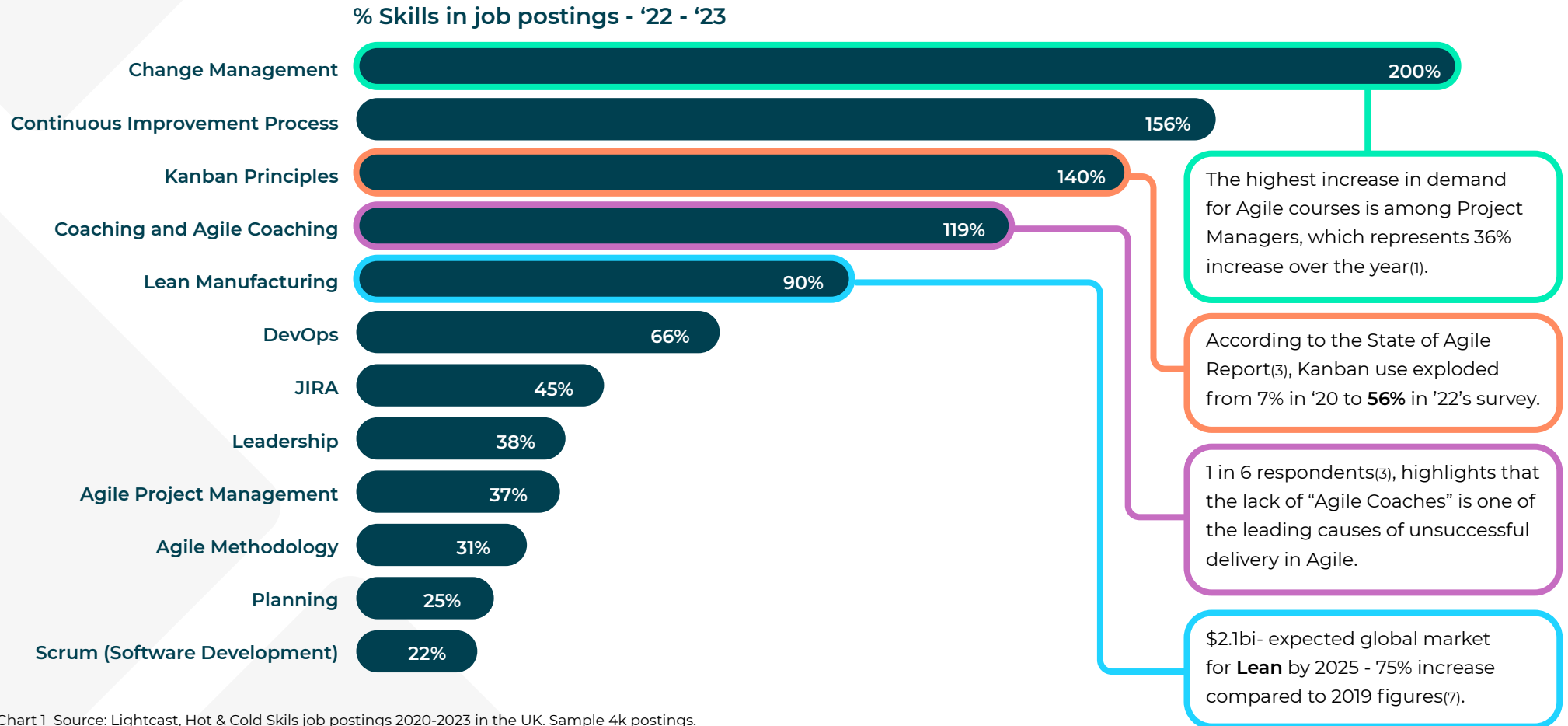


Chart 1 Source: Lightcast, Hot & Cold Skills job postings 2020-2023 in the UK. Sample 4k postings.



The rapid growth in demand for learning in Agile demonstrates that developing competence in Business Agility is strategically critical to a rapidly growing proportion of organisations.



Richard Campbell, Product Engagement Lead at Agile Business Consortium

Certified courses are the most popular



By embracing continuous improvement and adaptability, teams can develop better solutions, learn from mistakes, and enhance their effectiveness. In collaboration, agile teams and organisations elevate the success of their projects and better meet the customers' needs. Continuous learning must be the centrepiece of any successful agile approach.



Eveline Oehrlich, Director of Research at PeopleCert

Our most popular courses cover a diverse set of Agile skillsets and roles. Foundations of Lean and Agile continue to be popular. Whilst role specific courses include Project Management, Scrum Mastery and Product Ownership.

Learners continue to value certifications; 9 out of our top 10 most popular courses are certified.

Given all Agile courses delivered in 2021 and 2022,

- 81% are certified courses
- 19% are non-certified courses

Certifications ensure a consistent set of learning outcomes are covered across different cohorts and learners value the opportunity to share achievements via social media.



Source - Based on QA data, the population consists of 5.5k learners who participated in Agile courses during 2021 and 2022. From this population, a sample of 3.2k learners was selected to represent the top 10 courses, and the chart illustrates the distribution of learners among these courses.

Managers are demanding the most Agile training

Agile ways of working are a vital part of future success for organisations. The biggest challenges from a people perspective, include: (3)

- 39% - Leadership not understanding or putting up roadblocks
- 31% - Lack of clear priorities and/or clear directions
- 31% - Business teams not understanding what Agile does

The “first age” of Agile was characterised by a bottom-up rebellion, initiated by software teams. It was a grassroots movement. As Agile continues to evolve, the active participation of leadership becomes crucial for success.

Managers face growing demands from executives to execute the Agile vision, whilst at the same time trying to balance the needs of the delivery teams.

This has led to a rising demand for knowledge from specialist management roles such as, Delivery Management, Project Management, Product Management and Programme Management.

Education and continuous on the job support is critical to enhance expertise so that these pivotal roles can be successful.

Increase demand of Agile courses by Top 8 roles - 2021 to 2022

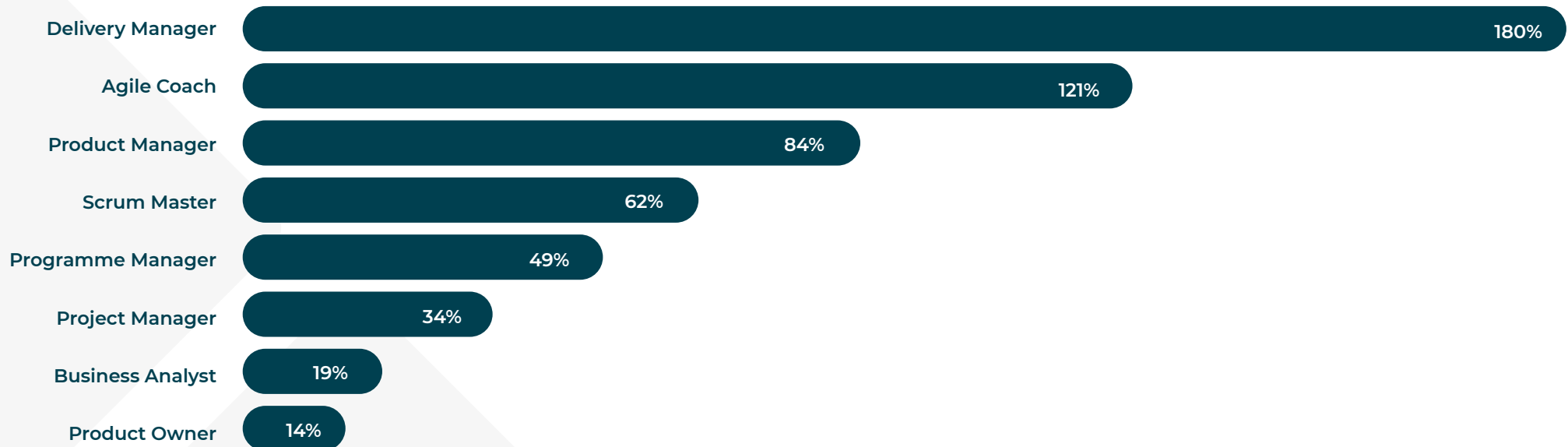


Chart 1: % Increase in delegates by role. Source: QA Dataset, people taking courses by role 2021 – 2022. Sample is around 3.5k learners

Agile adoption is hard work

According to the State of Agile report(3), the biggest challenges hindering successful adoption include:

- 41% Company culture
- 34% Inconsistent Agile practices and/or processes
- 23% Lack of experience with Agile methodologies

Many of these challenges are difficult to overcome with traditional training approaches and have resulted in the recruitment of experienced specialists into the organisation.

Supporting roles are in high demand

Organisations are grappling with the need to bridge the gap between theoretical Agile knowledge and practical experience. For example, passing a driving theory test is the first step, but to become a competent driver requires getting into the car and driving.

The obvious solution has been to seek the help of supporting roles such as, Agile Consultants and Agile Coaches. As a result, these roles have seen the highest demands in the UK job market across the Agile specialisms.

Product roles are becoming crucial

As we embark upon the 4th age of Agile, organisations are increasing their recruitment of important product focussed roles, such as Scrum Masters, Product Owners and Business Analysts. These roles are vital for shifting from a project-oriented mindset to a product-oriented one.

Evolution of delivery roles:

Since the first age of Agile, delivery roles have consistently been sought after and played a pivotal role in the success of Agile transformations. Over time, these roles have transitioned from their traditional forms into specialist Agile positions that have embraced new methodologies and thinking to fully embrace agility.

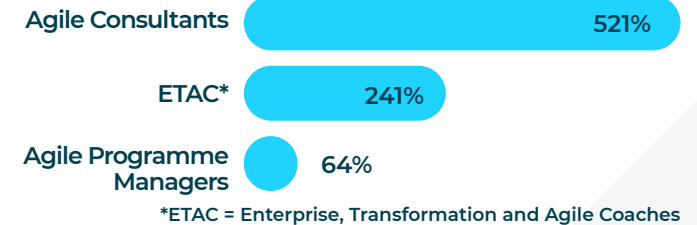
Making education more Agile:

Whilst organisations strike the balance to buy-in or build talent, effective education will have an important role to play in the decision-making process. Empowering teams with knowledge will reduce the reliance on supporting roles. As Agile continues to evolve, training methods must also adapt to prepare learners for real world challenges. If we want to go beyond traditional training we should consider:

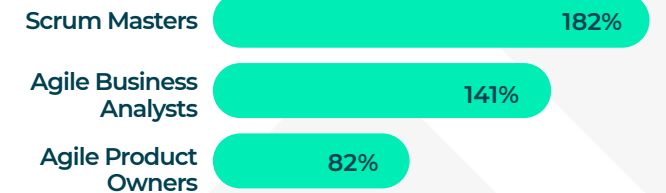
- Cohort-based programmes of learning vs ad hoc courses
- Work based assignments / projects
- On the job coaching and mentoring support to embed learning
- Immersion into communities of practice to encourage peer supported learning

9 Most Popular Agile Job postings - % increased from 2020 to 2022

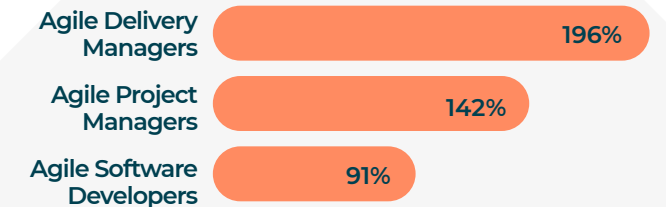
Supporting Roles



Product Roles



Delivery Team Roles



Charts- Source: Lightcast, unique job posts where "Agile" is on the title, 2020 – 2022
Total unique postings: approx. 15k



Modalities of Learning

Modalities and their trends

Virtual instructor-led learning is here to stay

The pandemic had an immediate and lasting effect on how people are learning in Agile. Before Covid, 90% of learners attended Agile courses in-person at training centres or their own company offices. Driven initially by the necessity of lockdown, the wholesale shift to virtual learning in 2020 and 2021 has not been reversed, with virtual still preferred option for the vast majority of learners and employers.

There has been a gradual increase in the number of learners choosing to attend in-person classes in 2022 and 2023, but at 20% this has now become the exception and shows no sign of recovering to pre-Covid levels. This UK trend is in line with global data from ICAgile showing 84%(8) of their certifications were delivered virtually.

Virtual learning continues to be popular with learners as it aligns better with new hybrid working patterns, particularly those working from home regularly, and for employers offers ease of booking and reduced travel expenses compared to face-to-face. Where in-person learning has been selected, it is often for single company events and enables a team building element alongside the core learning objectives.



Compared to the pre-Covid norm involving international flights, hotels and juggling availability, it was easier, faster and much less wasteful organising a virtual session. Committing to uninterrupted training time over consecutive days helped to focus everyone's minds on the same matter.



Jo Royce, Global Marketing Capabilities Director at Unilever

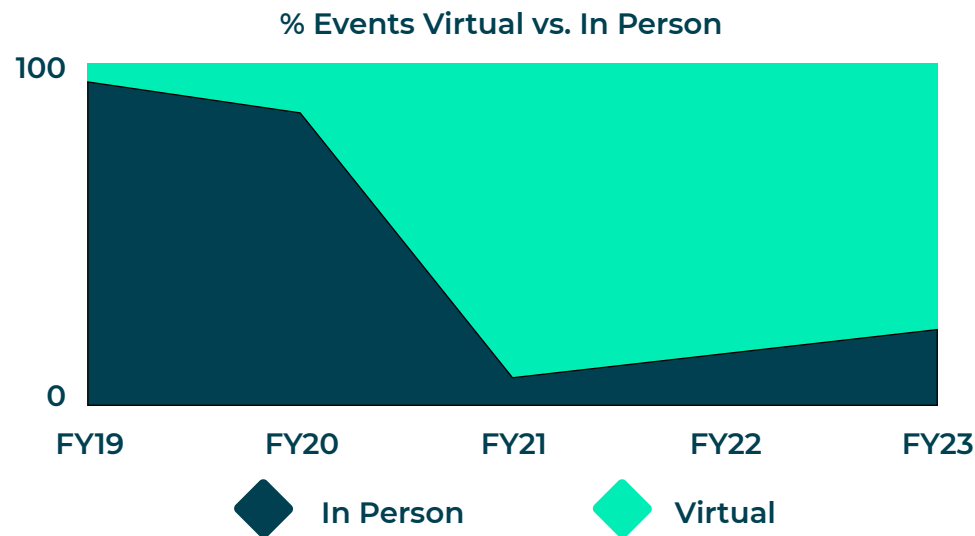


Chart 1: In Person vs Virtual. Source: QA data. Based on number of delegates taking courses from FY19 and FY23, in the UK. Sample around 6.5k

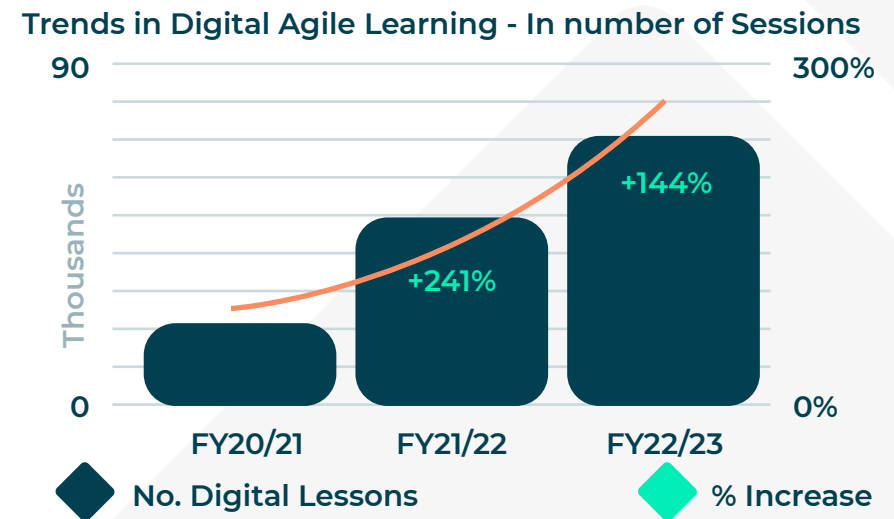


Chart 2: QA digital training data from FY21 (Jun/20 – May/21) to FY23 (Jun/22 – May/23)

Combining digital and virtual modalities is crucial

The most effective Agile learning requires a combination of modalities, no one approach will suit all learners.

“The modalities complement each other”

Based on our experience and the data analysed in this report, our findings challenge the common assumption the instructor-led training is in decline. The opposite of this notion, the data shows a significant increase in classroom modalities, accounting for 75% of Agile learning from FY22 to FY23. This rise implies a transition towards a balanced coexistence with virtual training.

This coexistence is further supported by the growing significance of digital self-paced learning. It allows professionals to make the most efficient use of the trainer’s classroom time, whether in-person or virtual. This dynamic approach allows instructors to focus their efforts on practice and coaching, enhancing the learning experience beyond content delivery. As a result, our data highlights a shift towards a sustainable blend of learning modalities, demystifying the idea of diminishing the relevance of instructor-led training.



With today’s pace of technological innovation, organisations must cultivate a growth mindset and continuous learning culture in order to become adaptive engines of change.

Daniel Quick, Chief Customer Learning Officer (CCLO) at Scaled Agile



Trends in modalities of Agile Learning – FY ‘21 – FY ‘23



* Pos-pandemic only (FY '22 – FY'23)

Why we are passionate about Agile Learning



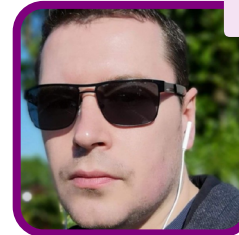
Agile is not your why, it's not your business why and definitely not your customer's why. It's how you make your why possible.

David "Tommo" Tomlinson, SR Learning Specialist



I am passionate about teaching Agile because it unveils the inherent truths I believe we already grasp. For me it's about the application of empathy, and common sense, reminding us of what should be instinctive.

Tony Cotgrave, SAFe PO/Learning Consultant



I believe learning is about embracing change, not resisting it. By moving with intent on our journey forward, we harness the power of agility. Without this adaptability, we risk being left behind and becoming stagnant.

Michael Easson, Agile Learning Consultant



Agile is enjoyable continuous learning... so you are not always aware you are learning. It embraces failures as explorations take place ultimately to serve others and a consciousness for why you need to grow and learn.

Bimpe Odukoya, SR Learning Specialist

Methodology

The data presented in this report is sourced from various data sources within QA Ltd, including classroom and live training. Additionally, insights are drawn from two digital companies within the QA group, Cloud Academy and Circus Street, for digital online learning. The report integrates data from Lightcast, a specialised platform providing information on skills, jobs, and labor market supply and demand. Throughout the report, calculations methods are shown on the legend of each chart.

Furthermore, data from certification bodies and industry reports enrich the analysis. Chart sample sizes are indicated in their respective legends.

Temporal references vary; some datasets adhere to the calendar year (e.g., 2022, 2023), while others align with QA's Financial Year, represented by the prefix 'FY' and spanning from June to May of the following year. For instance:

- FY21: Jun/2020 to May/2021
- FY22: Jun/2021 to May/2022
- FY23: Jun/2022 to May/2023

The data used in this report was collected, analysed, and computed between May and August 2023.

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6. Source: ICAgile: Certification trend data, 2022 year in Review.
7. Source: Lean Enterprise Institute.
8. Source: ICAgile, Certifications Earned by Delivery Method, Year 2019 to 2023. Global.
9. Source: Lightcast, unique job posts where "Agile" is on the title, 2020 – 2022. Total unique postings – Sampling is approx. 15k

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1st State of Learning in Agile Report

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