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Bridging Governance and Agility: A Conceptual Framework for Steering Committee–Agile Team Interfaces in Hybrid Project Management

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Abstract

Hybrid project management, which blends structured, planning-focused approaches with agile implementation methods, has become a prevalent practice in organizations (over 50% of projects use this approach). Despite widespread adoption, the dynamics between traditional steering committees and self-organized agile teams remain poorly understood in theory. This disparity often leads to practical conflicts that undermine both strategic oversight and the autonomy of agile teams. These challenges will be addressed by this conceptual paper by integrating perspectives from key organizational theories –paradox theory, loose coupling, ambidextrous governance, and organizational control theory. Based on these we propose four governance mechanisms to enhance the interaction between steering committees and agile teams. First, teams can use "usable increment commitments" to show progress and be flexible at the same time. Secondly, fixed synchronization points facilitate loose coupling by coordinating different planning rhythms while respecting the independence of the teams in the meantime. The third mechanism is that the direct involvement of steering committees in sprint reviews promotes a common understanding and control by the group, as they do not rely on documentation alone but can observe the functioning solutions with their own eyes. Fourth, teams can use different types of control - "outcome control" for big-picture planning and "behavior control" for team self-organization. This means that planning teams focus on the overall goals, while agile teams focus on how to get there. Each proposed mechanism maintains core agile principles while effectively addressing essential governance needs. This framework responds to calls for governance strategies that complement agile methodologies

Keywords: Agile Methods; Control Theory; Loose Coupling; Paradox Theory; Project Governance