AI and Agile

Working smarter without losing what makes teams agile

By Joe Little and Claude – (c) Joseph Little

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Why do you have to be agile?

You have to adapt to change that is coming at you even faster.
Both good change and “bad” change (eg, competition maybe eating your lunch).

Why do you need Agile Teams?

A lot of the differentiator, we think, will be how well everything “integrates”.

Which depends on humans “seeing” the whole elephant together. And challenging the assumptions. And integrating between your company and the customer. Not what they said they wanted “then”, but what they really need NOW and in the future (for some distance).

Claude’s Agenda



Where we are today

Adoption and the gaps



Principles meet AI

Values worth protecting



AI across the sprint

Each Scrum event



Roles on the team

PO, Scrum Master, developers



Risks and guardrails

Where AI efforts go wrong



Making it work

Roadmap and measures

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Where we are today

What the latest surveys say about AI use in Agile teams

AI is already in the room

83%

of Agile practitioners use AI tools

Yet most spend 10% or less of their time with it

The barrier is not resistance. Only 1% see AI as irrelevant to their role. People are unsure where it fits.

The opportunity is in finding the right use cases

Source: AI4Agile Practitioners Report 2026 (289 practitioners)

Well: The biggest problem is between the seat and the keyboard

1. The various Ai models are evolving quickly. It is hard to keep up.
2. Most people want to do what they expected to do. “People don’t resist change, they resist being changed by Ai. Because.”

How much is Ai really in the room?

I think it is hard to know.

How much are people playing with Ai?

How much are they using Ai and getting at least 50% of the value they could be getting, per hour?

How much resistance?

Certainly a LOT of coders still feel they are about to be fired.
A MYTH.

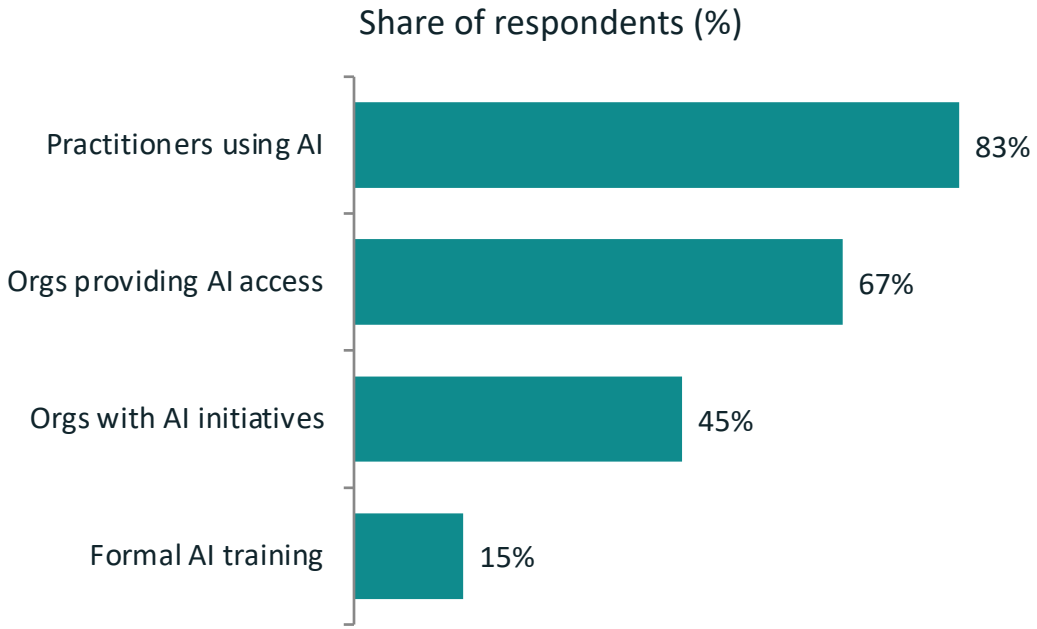
Anyone interested in Ai has heard the Doomers.

And have heard propaganda about how evil the Data Centers are.

And that Ai can destroy all human civilization.

Yes, unfair “narratives” but there must be some resistance.

Wide adoption, thin depth



The gap

Access is common. Strategy and training lag behind.

Source: AI4Agile Practitioners Report 2026

LLMs in Scrum work

70

Brazilian professionals surveyed

33

use LLM assistants in Scrum work

78%

report productivity gains

75%

report less manual effort



52% of respondents report daily LLM use, and 85% rate their proficiency as intermediate or advanced.

Source: XP 2026, Adoption of LLMs in Scrum Management. Small sample; directional only.

2

Principles meet AI

What to protect, and what AI can quietly erode

Key thing: Ai and Agile go together

1. Ai makes PEOPLE more productive
2. The wisdom of the Team is enhanced by Ai.
3. Now, we have to figure out the details. How do we start doing that, and what's the path for continuous improvement?

The Manifesto, revisited

Individuals and interactions

Boost: AI absorbs notes and admin.

Watch: A chatbot replaces a teammate.

Working software

Boost: Faster prototypes, tests, docs.

Watch: Generated code goes unreviewed.

Customer collaboration

Boost: Quick synthesis of feedback.

Watch: Summaries replace customer contact.

Responding to change

Boost: Shorter feedback loops.

Watch: Moving fast in the wrong direction.

Being Agile, not doing it

AI cannibalizes ineffective rituals, not agile principles.

At risk

- Status meetings AI can summarize
- Estimation theater
- Manual reporting
- Rituals run on autopilot

Durable

- Fast feedback from real users
- Small, empowered teams
- Continuous improvement
- Customer value over output

Source: Echometer, AI in Agile Software Development: State of the Evidence 2026

3

AI across the sprint

Practical uses for each Scrum event

AI across the sprint



Refine	Plan	Daily	Review	Retro
Critique stories, spot gaps	Forecast risk, break down work	Summarize board, flag blockers	Draft notes, group feedback	Cluster themes, track actions

AI prepares the conversation. The team still has it.

Everyone in the Team (and outside) is using AI in different ways

1. Some is experimentation that won't be immediately effective.
2. One big question: How fast to turn experimentation into MORE effectiveness.
3. But clearly, in a SW team, the Ai is writing the code, and PDQ. And the automated tests.

Using Ai how?

1. At least these: The leading models (Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, Muse, +?)
2. Open Models: At least Nemotron (Nvidia's Ai), probably some others, because the Tokens are so much less expensive
3. To conceptualize, to build, to structure, to test, to implement, to confirm in the field, to see opportunities.
4. To SHARE knowledge. They all need to know what they all know. All the time. (Exactly how much is a key question.)

The Retrospective

1. The key goal is improving the productivity of the Team. Ai should be able to help a LOT, but directly ("giving work to Ai"), by helping us learn faster, and by helping us "improve" faster (Ex: implement better automated testing)
2. So, the Retro should be clearly FAR more productive now, with Ai to help us. To identify the best opportunity, to propose (eg, to managers), and to implement change.

Backlog refinement



Critique stories

Check against INVEST, flag vague wording



Draft acceptance criteria

Propose edge cases the team may miss



Synthesize feedback

Cluster customer input into themes

Watch out: refinement is a conversation, not a document.

Try a prompt like this

"Review this user story against INVEST. List what is unclear, which acceptance criteria are missing, and how it could be split."

Then take the output to the team.

Key Rule

1. What you say in the first prompt (for Generative Ai) is minor.
2. What's KEY is in the follow-up prompts, and how you check that you not getting what you asked for, but what you really need.

Sprint planning



AI can help

- Forecast risk from past sprints
- Surface dependencies early
- Draft task breakdowns



Humans keep

- The sprint goal
- Capacity and commitments
- Trade-offs tied to product vision

Wait. What?

1. You have to estimate how long it will take you and Ai to do the whole story.
2. And ALL the stories you commit to.
3. And every sprint you're learning how to use Ai better.

Daily Scrum

Today

- Each person reports status
- Blockers surface late
- Board data read aloud



With AI prep

- Board activity pre-summarized
- Stale work and blockers flagged
- Time goes to helping each other

Goal: a shorter meeting with more problem solving.

Review and retrospective



Sprint Review

- Draft release notes and demo scripts
- Summarize stakeholder feedback
- Group requests by theme



Retrospective

- Cluster themes across sprints
- Track follow-through on actions
- Agree AI's role before honest talk

Sprint Review

1. Your’re still gonna get feedback (we hope better over time, if the BSHs use Ai) – that has to be fixed in the next Sprint.
2. And you have to decide quickly (now, with Ai???) whether fixes will cost 1 or 2 or ? SPs in the next Sprint.

4

Roles on the team

How AI changes the work of each role

The Product Owner

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Product Owners interviewed at Nokia Mobile Networks

Prepares decisions

Structures fragmented information

Cuts manual effort

Less time on routine artifacts

Keeps accountability

Transparency and human control

Source: Huis in 't Veld (2026), LUT University thesis on GenAI and the Product Owner role

What are the POs at Google doing?

1. I'd bet money the POs at Google are using Ai differently than those at Nokia.
2. And there are several reasons for that.
3. Particularly: you want to start using Ai to analyze data about customers and the product (current and "to be"). Ai can analyze a LOT more than a human can. Then: How do you know it's worth a damn?

The Scrum Master

7.6%

see AI as a significant threat

1%

see AI as irrelevant to their role

AI takes the admin

- Meeting summaries
- Sprint metrics
- Retrospective prep

People keep the craft

- Facilitation and coaching
- Culture and psychological safety

Source: AI4Agile Practitioners Report 2026

Geez: As an SM, you must boost the effectiveness of the Team

1. Use Ai to track important follow-ups.
2. Main: Track initiatives that will make significant change in the effectiveness of the Team.
3. Results: Higher Velocity, Higher Quality, More Fun, More Motivation, More Business Value.

4. Example: Develop small systems that can take data and prove that X% more BV was obtained, and how that maps back to $ (eg, profit). And you and the Ai and the Manager are in sync that it's meaningful. Or at least a good theory.

The developers

Where developers report the greatest benefit



Design



Implementation



Testing



Documentation

Output speeds up. The bottleneck moves to review, testing, and integration.

Plan for it in your Definition of Done.

Source: 2026 developer survey preprint, cited in Echometer State of the Evidence 2026

Automated Testing

1. Testing should not be a bottle-neck.
2. Ai should be able to automated the remaining manual tests.
3. BUT: Humans have to help find real-world data and real-world edge cases.

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Issues

Issues now.

Which Ai?

1. Very unclear. Lots of evolving to do.
2. Recommend: Track at least: Muse, Claude, ChatGTP, Gemini, Grok, Nemotron
3. Parts: Generative Ai, Bots, Harness, Training material, weights, infrastructure
4. Costs: Power, Infrastructure, Tokens, Training !!

Ai is a Fad
Ai is already providing real benefits

Which Ai nightmare?

1. Ai will kill all coder jobs
2. Ai will destroy humanity
3. Ai will lead to 20% unemployment
4. Data Centers will steal all the water, drive electric rates through the roof, etc.

BUT: These are negative narratives being spread by China and others who are against the US.
NOT wholly untrue, but greatly exaggerated.

Data Centers

1. Water (cooling) must be in a closed loop.
2. Data Center owners will pay HUGE property taxes. Loudoun County cut residential property taxes in HALF.
3. Data Centers must build their own power. Thus, local power rates go DOWN.
4. Data Centers bring good jobs. Building and then maintaining in steady state.

Data PRIVACY

1. Now do we keep our company data (which also includes customer data) inside our walls? How do we AVOID sharing it with a Generative Ai? Or in another way?
2. Therefore: Another reason to “own” the AI, and have the Ai and the Data (metaphorically) stay in the same Data Center!!!

Open Ai Models

1. We can “own” the Open Ai model.
2. We can put them, with OUR training, and our weights, and our Data, in the same closed Data Center
3. Whatever the token cost, it is MUCH cheaper!

Ai “Governance”

1. Good News! A LOT of the Ai maestros/CEOs came together and agreed on a Governance framework (Accord).
2. It has teeth.
3. With Corporate Governance and Consumer Protection laws, the Model corporations MUST provide a high quality product!

4. China was never going to agree to ANY governance; unless it conferred victory of the race to them.

Ai Governance - 2

See Gavin Baker's post on Oct 1, 2026. Full text, plus the document of the Accord.

https://x.com/GavinSBaker/status/2105666639521849644



Gavin Baker
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The White House Accord on Super Intelligence will have a positive impact on safety.

Committing to hire third party auditors who will report to an independent committee of board members has more practical near term significance than almost any conceivable regulatory action.

These board members will have a fiduciary duty. If they ignore a report from the third party auditors then a bad faith finding from a court is a real possibility. A D&O carrier could use this to deny coverage.

Really good outcome for ordinary Americans.

More effective and elegant than some ridiculous new regulatory body that would take months to do anything, then almost certainly done the wrong thing and along the way probably created a regulated oligopoly at the frontier which is the scariest potential outcome*

As I read the articles about the accord, it did occur to me that they were mostly written by political reporters who may have not understood the significance of the accord given their reporting beats are generally focused on public policy instead of corporate governance.

Cost of Full Infrastructure Build-out

1. This is a big issue. Very expensive.
2. May be key in causing one Model company to “win”.
3. Might get the USA economy in a “sling”, because a bunch of financing goes bust. How much “leverage” is there?

Infrastructure – What is it?

1. Land and Building. And basic permits.
2. Power system
3. Cooling system
4. Traffic director “module”
5. Nvidia chips
6. Lots of other chips, wiring, hardware

7. Training
8. Teaching the whole org about Ai
9. Learning to use Ai more and more effectively
10. Controlling our risks

11. Beating the competition!
12. Done faster and cheaper.

Infrastructure - 2

1. How long before building in space is the best bet?
2. Plenty of solar power…

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Risks and guardrails

Why AI efforts stall, and how to keep control

Why AI efforts stall

Wrong goals

Tools adopted for their own sake, not to improve an outcome.

Lack of trust

Low openness about mistakes lets problems linger.

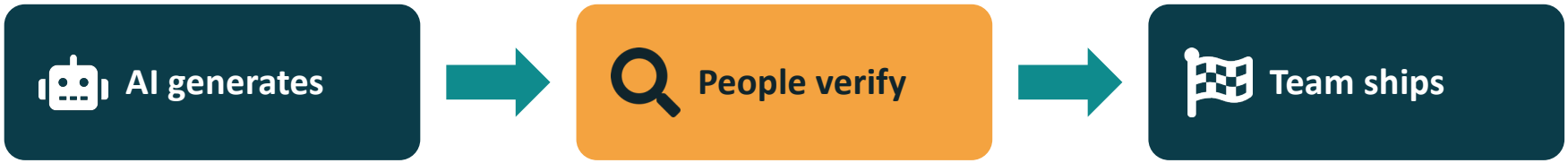
Weak feedback loops

No fast way to catch and correct AI-assisted errors.

Teams need clear goals, quality standards, delivery pipelines, and feedback.

Source: Echometer, Why AI in Agile Software Delivery Fails (June 2026)

The verification tax



The catch

Extra checking can eat into the speed gained, and generated code can carry security flaws.

The fix

- AI-assisted review in the Definition of Done
- Automated tests and security scans
- Track review time, not just output

Sources: Stack Overflow Developer Survey 2025; 2025 preprint on AI-generated code security

Technical Debt

1. We are suffering from a MOUNTAIN of Technical Debt
2. GOOD NEWS: Ai can help us dig out of the Tech Debt MESS.

The Quality Issue

1. Hmm. Lots of ways to look at the Quality issue.
2. We can now focus more on WHY the customer said they wanted X, Y, Z.
3. Better automated tests (but still need to be better yet).
4. Coders forget out to code. And “blinded” by the mountain of code Ai can generate.

The Quality Issue - 2

1. This “back-end” of the process will be the bottleneck.
2. The only question is how well each Team and each Company can manage it.

Adoption Bottleneck

1. I think the bigger problem is not shipping, but “changing the process” and actually implementing.
2. This includes UAT and related user area changes to feel confident they can go live.

3. We will especially need agile “change management” to get this to go faster.

Three zones of AI use



AI drafts, human decides

- Backlog items and plans
- Summaries and retro themes
- Forecasts and options



AI acts, human reviews

- Test and code suggestions
- Reminders and notices
- Routine reports



Humans only

- People and performance topics
- Sensitive conversations
- Final accountability

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Making it work

A path to adoption, and how to know it is helping

Two Key Recommendation

1. **Start**. Or start again.
2. Plan-Do-Check-Act. (PDCA Cycle) That is, always a feedback loop. Take a stab at where you want to get to. And see if you can do that.
3. “If you have to be very careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there.” Yogi Berra
4. **PLAY**!! Don’t think so much. Play with it. Play with it a different way.
5. Remember it is changing fast!

An adoption roadmap



Experiment

- Individuals try tools
- Share wins and failures

Standardize

- Shared prompts and guidelines
- Train the team

Embed

- Tools in backlog and pipeline
- Update Definition of Done

Evolve

- Review metrics quarterly
- Retire what does not help

Only 15% of practitioners report formal AI training (AI4Agile Practitioners Report 2026). Start there.

Measuring what matters

Cycle time

Idea to done, end to end

Throughput

Items finished per sprint

Quality

Defects and escaped bugs

Customer value

Satisfaction and outcomes

Team health

Trust, workload, openness

Velocity caution

Points can inflate without more value

Looking ahead



Leaner teams

Routine work gets absorbed, so teams may shrink a little.



Invisible infrastructure

AI becomes built into Agile tools, with better context over time.



Guardrails matter

Kent Beck compares AI agents to genies: powerful but unpredictable.

The question shifts from “Agile or AI?” to “Agile with AI.”

Agile with AI

1. Start where overhead hurts most
2. Keep humans accountable for decisions
3. Make verification part of Done
4. Train the team, not just the tool
5. Measure outcomes, not output

Questions for your team

1. Which event or ritual carries the most overhead for us today?
2. Where must a human always make the call?
3. What would we need to trust AI output enough to build on it?

Sources

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