ADOPTING AGILE HR PRACTICES IN DRIVING PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN NIGERIA

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CONTENT

PREAMBLE

❖ The title of this presentation is "Adopting Agile HR Practices in Driving Performance in the public service in Nigeria"

❖ Starting with an introduction, this paper define the terms "Agile" and "Agile HR" then answers the question "Why Agile HR?".

❖ It also shows how to activate Agile HR and discusses Agile HR enablers and how to embrace the mindset for Agile HR as a HR Operational Strategy.

❖ The paper further analyzes Agile's external benefits and challenges and shows the parts of HR that should be agile.

❖ It again discusses modern Agile HR and argues why adoption of Agile HR in the Nigerian public service is imperative as well as how the Nigerian public service Reforms will realize benefits from Agile HR

❖ Finally, the paper concludes with policy recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Human Resources (HR)managers manages complex projects and serves multiple stakeholders, often times with competing priorities that require consistent, effective strategies in their approach to communication, programs, administration, and talent management.

Agile ways of working in government has become a hot topic. But is Nigerian public Service going agile?

Since 2012, "Agile HR" has emerged as a popular discipline with the goal of empowering HR professionals to better "manage volatility, enhance adaptability, and strengthen organizations by applying Agile methodologies to their talent-management processes."

INTRODUCTION Continued

These questions continually crop up in our discussions with public service leaders. It is expected that the paper will reveal a remarkable uptake of agile in the public service.

Where and how extensively is agile taking hold?

And is it delivering value?

To help demystify the topic, I will discuss the Agile HR and how it applies to the federal, and state public service institutions in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION Continued

Many functions have begun to recognize the value of this cross-functional, test-and-learn approach. For example, agile is particularly well suited for policymaking and service delivery.

This paper advances our understanding of Agile HR by defining clearly what is meant by the term and offering examples of what it means in practice and how it can be adopted by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)

However, Agile HR is not yet widespread within Nigerias public service.

Like their counterparts in the private sector, we expect more MDAs to start wider scaling of agile approaches shortly, with the leading role by BPSR.

WHAT IS AGILE?

Agile, broadly defined, is a methodology that emphasises continuous process improvement to maximise customer value while minimizing waste .

The agile concept operates at multiple levels– from philosophy, culture and mindset, through to processes and methodologies, and affecting roles and behaviours of leaders, teams and individual employees.

At the conceptual level, "agility represents the capacity to sense opportunities and threats, solve problems, and change the firm's resource base" .

HR for AGILE   or   AGILE for HR?

- ➤ "HR for Agile" refers to the design and implementation of HR systems to support Agile implementation in organisation.

- ➤ HR researchers have studied this, highlighting the critical role of HR practices in implementing Agile in organisations

- ➤ "Agile for HR" refers to agile as a HR operational strategy, in which Agile principles are applied to the operations of the HR function.

- ➤ Recent empirical evidence demonstrates clear linkages between investments in the HR function and organisational performance in terms of labour productivity, highlighting the need for a greater Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM).

- ➤ This paper focuses very clearly on "Agile for HR" by offering a clear definition of agile HR as an HR operational strategy.

Agile HR: A Conceptual Framework

According to the HR Trend Institute,

"Agile HR" refers to:

A way of working and organization of HR functions that facilitates responsiveness and adaptiveness of activities and structures, facilitating the flexibility in matching workforce fluctuations to demand, and the way the HR function supports the organization in becoming more responsive and adaptive.

WHY AGILE HR?

1 Talking with Human Resource (HR) leaders around the globe it's clear that the need to develop business agility dictates strategic agendas.

2 If we then consider the HR function itself, most teams face the same problems and share the need to modernise, digitalise and deliver value at speed.

3 As a result, the HR profession is in catch-up mode when it comes to Agile.

4 Not only do we need to quickly understand what Agile means in order to guide wider organisational transformation, but also begin to apply the mindset ourselves to revolutionise our own ways of working.

How to Activate Agile HR
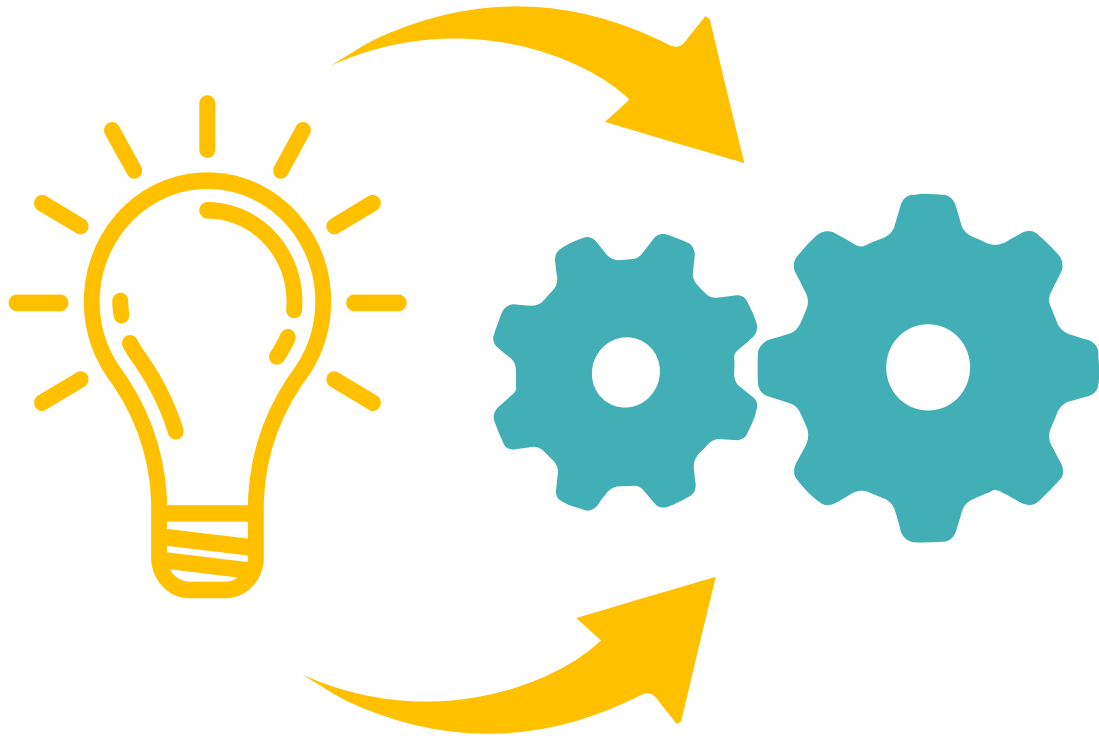
01 For agile to take root, and to scale up in the public service, MDAs need both **AGILE PRACTICES** and **AGILE ENABLERS.**

02 By agile practices, we mean the everyday rituals and routines of HR teams.

03 Multidisciplinary and cross-functional teams minimize handoffs across silos; clear objectives create alignment across teams; sprints and frequent feedback from end users improve final outcomes; and co-location and technology improve team collaboration.

Agile HR Enablers

Agile HR enablers are organizational levers that allow agile to scale.

These are:

➢ Senior leadership support,

➢ Technology enablers,

➢ Measures for productivity,

➢ Training for teams,

➢ Fail-fast culture, and

➢ Flexible funding models

public service agencies are less advanced than the private sector in implementing enablers such as the use of agile funding models, creating a culture that learns from and even celebrates failure, adequately investing in training for teams, and measuring team productivity.

Essentially, enablers allow teams to break free from existing processes and mindsets and realize the full benefits that agile offers.

Agile Enablers

Exhibit 1 | Public Agencies Are Strong on Agile Practices—but Less So on Agile Enablers
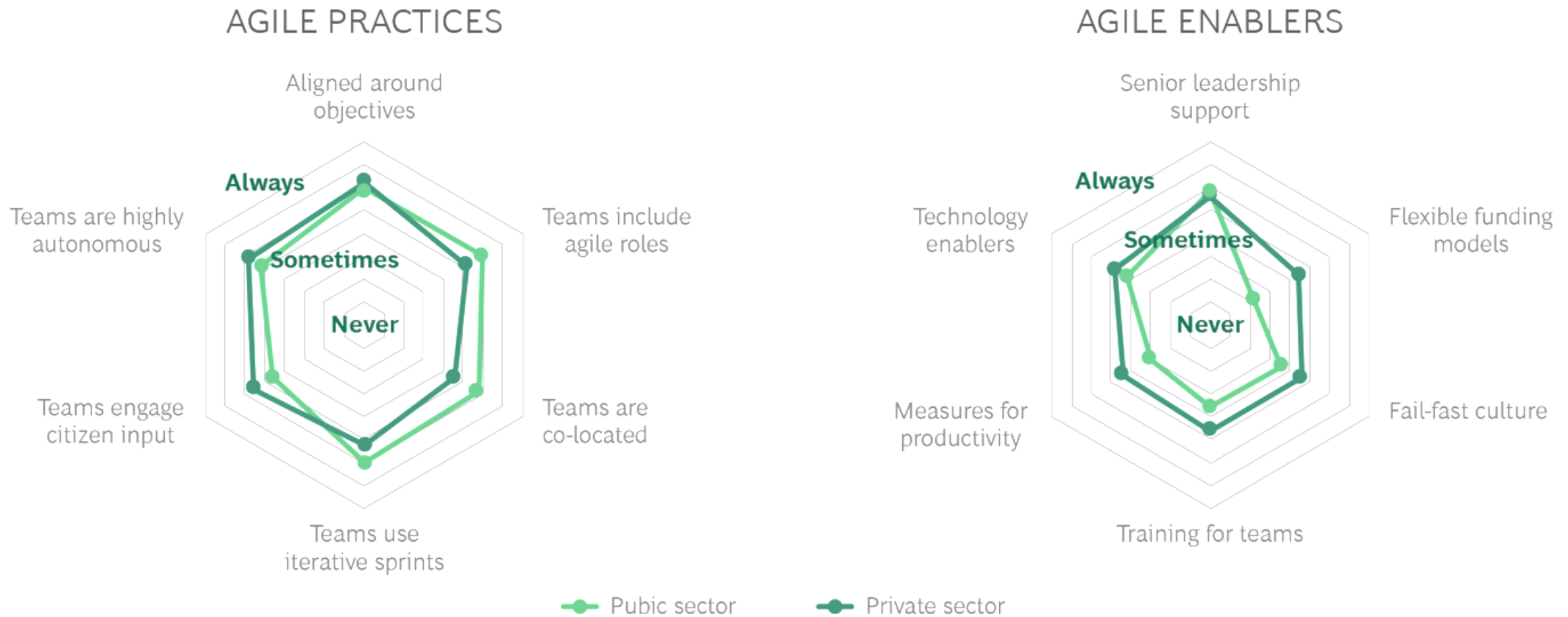
Sources: BCG Public Sector Agile Benchmark (2019) and BCG Agile Maturity Assessment database; BCG analysis.

How Agile HR is Different from Project Management

An example of how Agile HR differs from traditional project management techniques can help us understand this important point.

Traditional project management is often referred to as a "waterfall" technique.

"WATERFALL" project management begins by clarifying project objectives, then developing a structured plan, specifying timelines, resources, deliverables and milestones; for large scale projects.

By contrast, agile projects are generally broken into **"SPRINTS"** which emphasise the rapid delivery of elements of a solution that can be tested in collaboration with customer(s).

How Agile HR is Different from Project Management

Agile project management reflects a belief that if you are going to fail, then you should fail fast and at a relatively small scale (an element rather than the overall deliverable).

Each sprint has a defined duration (usually in weeks) with changing requirements and participants, planned at the start of the sprint by an empowered cross functional team.

In a corporate HR context, this might mean shifting from a centralised redesign and global relaunch of a performance management process, to collaborating with business on a number of local pilots of redesigned processes, then gathering feedback from stakeholders to identify the best solution(s)

Agile HR as a HR Operational Strategy

01 As an operational strategy, Agile HR seeks to Minimise waste and Optimise the flow of value to its customers by organising the HR function in multidisciplinary, empowered teams, that continuously align with changing business needs by sensing and adapting through open communication while operating in short cycles.

02 Agile principles are reflected in all aspects of the HR operation including structures, roles, processes, and tools as well as skills and behaviours of HR management and HR employees.

Agile HR's External Benefits

Agile HR's external benefits, such as flexibility, responsiveness, and speed, take time for agencies to achieve—and the benefits typically come from implementing agile at greater scale.

The Benefits are:

01 Staff engagement

02 Collaboration

03 Transparency and accountability

04 Citizen satisfaction

05 Delivery speed

06 Ability to manage changing priorities

Agile HR's External Challenges

These are:

It is a similar story for the challenges that private sector and public service face in adopting agile to begin with.

01 Legislation and compliance

02 Staffing key agile roles

03 Right culture

04 Flexible management structure

05 Tension with project portfolio management

06 Flexible funding models

Modern Agile HR

1) Essentially, the Modern Agile framework takes the history of the Agile manifesto and modernises it for our current times.

2) The good news is that the framework greatly resonates with HR and modern people practices. It's four guiding principles are:

Make People Awesome

Make Safety a Prerequisite – this is about the need to build psychological safety to develop an Agile culture of feedback and learning, as well as the responsibility in HR to keep our people safe as they work.

Experiment & Learn Rapidly – yes, you got it, the basis to the Agile feedback loop and how we co-create the employee experience.

Deliver Value Continuously – which is how HR reserves its seat at the table.

AGILE HR IN THE NIGERIAN public service

To Adopt Agile HR in the Nigerian public service, the following are Important

Basic Foundation:
Modernization of Manpower policy

01
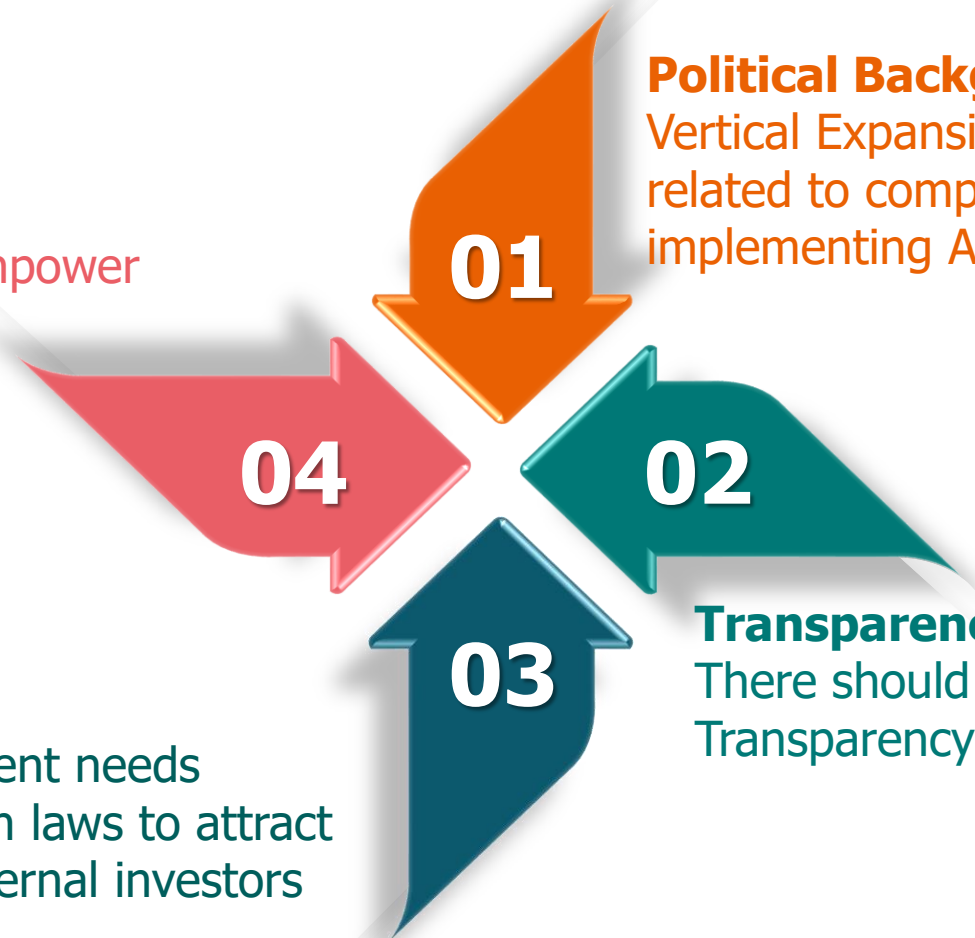
Political Background:
Vertical Expansion to provide a service related to compliance and law when implementing Agile HR

04

02

03

Collaboration:
The Federal Government needs change in the Nigerian laws to attract more internal and external investors

Transparency:
There should be improve Transparency in the public service

Why Adoption of Agile HR in the Nigerian public service is Imperative

Having understood the concept of Agile HR and it's a benefits, the time is now ripe for its adoption into the Nigerian public service.

In a well-managed agile transformation, results spur employee engagement across the organization and a faster response to emerging priorities.

An agile HR model enables the allocation of resources to top business needs, generating these outcomes:

01 Critical talent initiatives are completed faster with better outcomes and greater visibility of value delivered

02 HR staff can focus on generating clear impact while developing a broad base of skills.

03 A more flexible pool of resources typically drives a smaller overall resource level in HR, more fully utilizing those already in place and increasing productivity through agile project delivery techniques.

04 A centrally managed pool of HR professionals permits visibility and control over initiative development and deployment, eliminating the siloed approach typically found in traditional HR organizations in the Nigerian public service.

Agile Workforce: Why HR Must Take Strategic Lead in the Nigerian public service

Most organisations are under pressure to evolve their businesses at a faster pace as they try to get in step with rapid changes in the business landscape, technology and customer behaviour.

MDAs cannot afford to lag behind.

That means HR departments, too, need to become better equipped to lead the organisation's through constant and rapid change.

They need to build a more agile workforce that is ready to adjust to the evolving needs of the market.

This goes beyond offering people flexible working arrangements such as flexible hours or the ability to work from home.

Agile Workforce: Why HR Must Take Strategic Lead in the Nigerian public service

It is about helping to shift the organisational culture to one that embraces learning, change and innovation.

The HR department of the future must thus shift its focus from reducing risk and managing red-tape towards a highly strategic role of guiding change, improving agility, and ultimately driving higher performance.

It is also about recruiting, developing and retaining people who thrive in a changing world – chameleon workers who can adapt to change, learn new skills in a short space of time and seamlessly move from assignment to assignment.

Agile Workforce: Why HR Must Take Strategic Lead in the Nigerian public service

Here are a few ideas about how HR must evolve in the years to come in public service:

Accommodate A More Fluid Workforce: The way that businesses structure their workforces is changing as they begin to source more of their talent through freelancers, crowdsourcing, and other approaches that give employees and companies more flexibility.

Develop a learning organisation rather than a 'training strategy'
One of the major challenges HR face is helping the business and the workforce keep up with the rapid pace of change in today's digital world. With mobile technology, the cloud, analytics, blockchain and the Internet of Things changing the world so rapidly, companies and their workforces need to learn fast.

Facilitate a Culture of Innovation: HR departments play an important role in shaping organisational culture – from helping to source talent to supporting change management and designing rewards and incentive programmes. To support a more agile business, they need to look at how and where they source talent; how they reward and incentivise the right behaviour; how they support managers and employees through their tools and processes; and how they measure performance.

Create Flexible Career Options: In an agile workforce, HR will need to rethink how it develops career paths, salary bands and job descriptions.

Benefit of Adopting Agile HR in the Nigerian Public Service

Citizen satisfaction

Ability to manage changing priorities

Delivery speed

Collaboration

Staff engagement

The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) being statutorily empowered to supervise reforms in the Nigerian public service will soon commence the adoption of Agile HR in all the MDAs, after getting approval from the supervising authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Service should adopt HR integration system to be fully integrated with the IPPIS HR system and link the local systems in each MDA's in the Federal Public Servicer in general.

MDAs should automate red-tape so that HR in the Service can focus on where they can add value, and they provide data and analytics tools to support agile decision-making.

To keep making progress in adopting agile as its primary way of working, MDAs should move beyond practices such as the "daily stand-up" status check-ins, and put in place enablers such as senior leadership support, new funding models, and training.

In a time of seismic technological change, MDAs should focus on using the smartest technology to reinvent and simplify HR and other process.

RECOMMENDATIONS continued

Patience and flexibility are key. Agile HR is a change in mindset, and changing mindsets isn't easy.

In rolling out Agile HR, the public service need to be experimental and responsive to what is working and what isn't. The longer that an organization nurtures agile, the bigger the benefits.

This sparks some near-term disruption, but MDAs pioneering the model demonstrate that the benefits of transformation cement it as a core component of next-generation HR.

Numerous issues must be addressed, when establishing an Agile HR model, that require solid planning and change management within and outside HR in Public Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS continued

Early civil service retirement and performance-based promotions are priorities for the federal government. Early retirement policy should not be granted for all, it should be based on quality, the less qualitative staff are encouraged to leave more than the qualitative ones

To keep making progress in adopting Agile HR as its primary way of working, agencies should move beyond practices such as the "daily stand-up" status check-ins, and put in place enablers such as senior leadership support, new funding models, and training.

Federal Government should accelerate implementation of E-government Master-Plan, Shared Services, E-documents and Online Transactions.

While an individual organization can be reasonably successful by adopting Agile HR practices, they will need to more systematically implement agile enablers to take the next step forward.

CONCLUSION

01 **TO ELABORATE THE STRATEGIC VISION OF THE HR AGILITY**

02 This paper explores the need to adopt Agile HR practices in driving performance in the public service in Nigeria.

03 We've learnt that the starting point is mindset and HR's ability to define and articulate the value we deliver to our people. To change the mindset it should be associated 1st by changing the legislation that will send an alarming message of IF YOU DON"T change you'll be left out"

04 Agile HR has the potential to revolutionise the Nigerian public service and help it co-create the future of work and workforce.

05 It can also equip the Nigerian public service with the capability to help MDAs transform and meet the challenges of a volatile, uncertain and complex business world.

06 By embracing a test and learn approach, and incrementally develop solutions in partnership with our people, we can enrich their employee experience.

CONCLUSION

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07 When introducing agile practices and methods into the organization, agencies would do well to adopt an agile approach.

08 There is no cookie-cutter method to adapting to these new ways of working, so teams need to be flexible and experimental, finding what works and then learn, improve over time.

09 It's said that the cookie-cutter approach or style, means that the same approach or style is always used and not enough attention is paid to individual differences.

10 But this study's most encouraging finding may be that Agile HR adoption has substantial benefits to organizations, both private and public services.

11 Despite a significant level of practitioner interest, the topic of agile HR as a HR operational strategy remains underdeveloped and unexplored among the MDAs in Nigeria.

12 It is hoped that this article will spur interest in Agile HR as a HR operational strategy by stakeholders and encourage them to (re)visit the extant HR operating model and fit public service service delivery .

CONCLUSION Cont.

13 And remember to be Agile in your own approach when learning how to do Agile HR. Start Small

14 This becomes truly vital for getting the best out of people. Treat it as an experiment, in which you might fail at times but will definitely learn from and allow the energy Agile ignites to move you forward.

15 You need to pay attention to the individual differences.

16 The benefits from Agile HR are substantial but take time and effort to achieve. When agencies embark on agile, they need to commit for the long haul.

17 Changing behaviors is difficult, particularly at scale.

18 It is expected that BPSR will seek and get approval to enable it commence the adoption of Agile HR in all the MDAs in Nigeria.

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