

Oleh LUKUTIN

Senior Lecturer, Department of Computer Science
University of Economics and Law «KROK», Kyiv, Ukraine
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6142-2264>
oleglv@krok.edu.ua

Sergiy MICHKIVSKYY

PhD of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor,
Head of the Department of Computer Science,
Director of the Educational and
Research Institute of Information and Communication Technologies,
University of Economics and Law «KROK», Kyiv, Ukraine,
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9343-2317>
michkivskyysm@krok.edu.ua

AI AS A CATALYST OF ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY: STRUCTURAL, CULTURAL AND LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Introduction. Agile approaches have become the mainstream response to volatility and uncertainty in digital environments. Agile framework such as Scrum and scaling approaches like SAFe, LeSS, Nexus, Scrum@Scale or custom Agile frameworks are now adopted in both IT and non-IT sectors. Despite this diffusion, organizations often fail to achieve deep transformation, instead practicing what Larman & Vodde (2016) call «cosmetic Agile.» According to Larman's Laws, the dominant culture of an organization always resists real change and strives to preserve the status quo. Artificial Intelligence (AI) intensifies this paradox. On the one hand, AI provides organizations with tools to improve prediction, automate decisions, and process vast amounts of data in real time. On the other, AI challenges traditional structures, decision rights, and cultural norms. This paper explores how AI can act not only as a technological upgrade but also as a catalyst of agility, capable of helping organizations overcome structural and cultural resistance (Lukutin, 2025).

Structural implications.

From a structural perspective, AI changes the distribution of roles and tasks. Tools such as GitHub Copilot or AI-enhanced Jira plugins already automate backlog refinement, estimation, and even initial code generation (Amershi et al., 2019). Predictive analytics can support release planning by offering probabilistic forecasts of delivery based on historical velocity and defect patterns. Such practices reduce reliance on hierarchical approvals, as teams themselves gain access to system-level insights (McKinsey & Company, 2023). This leads to flatter structures and a shift of middle managers into roles of enablers or coaches rather than controllers.

Another structural implication lies in cross-functional literacy. Agile already encourages T-shaped skills; AI adoption extends this by requiring «AI-shaped» literacy—every role must understand how to interpret, validate, and responsibly use AI recommendations. Without this, organizations risk silos between «AI experts» and «Agile teams,» undermining adaptability.

Cultural implications.

Culturally, AI introduces dilemmas of trust and transparency. Studies demonstrate algorithm aversion (Dietvorst et al., 2015) and algorithm appreciation (Logg et al., 2019), suggesting that team

members may either resist or overtrust AI recommendations. Agile values such as openness, respect and courage must be reinterpreted to include collaboration with AI systems. Transparency, long celebrated in Agile through visible boards and metrics, is amplified by AI dashboards that reveal hidden inefficiencies and cross-team dependencies (Zhang & Sheng, 2022).

However, transparency without psychological safety can backfire. Teams may fear being judged by AI-exposed data rather than using it as a learning opportunity. Leaders therefore need to create an environment where AI outputs are discussed openly, questioned critically, and used for continuous improvement rather than punishment (Edmondson, 1999). AI also pushes organizations to embed experimentation: instead of fixed processes, teams must treat AI tools as evolving teammates whose capabilities change over time (Vakili & McGahan, 2023).

Leadership implications.

Leadership must evolve in at least three dimensions:

1. **Data-driven leadership.** Leaders increasingly base decisions on AI-derived insights rather than intuition. However, they must remain capable of interpreting limitations, biases, and assumptions behind the data.
2. **Ethical leadership.** AI raises dilemmas regarding fairness, bias, privacy, and explainability. Leaders need frameworks for ethical governance and the ability to communicate values clearly across teams.
3. **Augmented servant leadership.** Traditional servant leadership in Agile and true leadership in Scrum emphasizes empowerment and facilitation. Augmented leadership adds the responsibility of facilitating human–AI collaboration: ensuring that AI is not a black box but a transparent partner in decision-making.

These new forms of leadership challenge organizations to rethink training, incentives, and governance systems.

Tensions between Agile practices and AI workflows.

Despite synergies, AI and Agile may also conflict. Agile thrives on short feedback loops, rapid iterations, and empirical inspection. AI thrives on large datasets, long training cycles, and statistical inference. For example, sprint planning assumes stable metrics to improve predictability and help to plan future iterations, but AI prediction models may require years of historical data. Reconciling these temporal rhythms requires hybrid practices: using AI for strategic forecasting while keeping tactical decisions within short iterations (Sainio, 2023).

Another tension concerns autonomy. Agile teams value empowerment, but AI may prescribe directions that seem optimal statistically but conflict with team insights. Deciding when to follow AI and when to override requires explicit norms and a culture of reflective practice. A final tension concerns value vs. velocity. While AI may accelerate delivery, speed alone does not guarantee adaptability. Teams must learn to balance automation with judgment, ensuring that AI supports sustainable organizational learning (Teece, 2007).

Governance and emerging norms.

Organizations are beginning to experiment with governance mechanisms for AI in Agile contexts. Some establish AI governance boards within Agile Release Trains, ensuring responsible experimentation with data, ethics, and compliance. Others introduce explicit team norms: documenting when AI recommendations were followed, when they were rejected, and why. This not only supports accountability but also accelerates organizational learning.

Cross-functional AI literacy is becoming a minimal requirement. Similar to how Agile transformations once introduced «Agile 101» training, enterprises now develop «AI fluency» programs to help all roles—from developers to business owners—understand how AI works, what its limitations are, and how it can augment daily practices. Microsoft & GitHub (2023) show that teams with even moderate AI literacy experience higher productivity and satisfaction when using AI assistants.

Conclusion. AI adoption is not simply a technical project but an organizational transformation that reshapes structures, cultures, and leadership norms. Properly integrated, AI can reduce routine work, improve decision flows, and enhance transparency. Yet, without trust, ethics, and psychological safety, AI risks reinforcing resistance instead of overcoming it. The central insight of this paper is that AI, aligned with Agile values, can become a catalyst of organizational agility, helping enterprises move beyond cosmetic change toward true adaptability.

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