

# TOP PREDICTORS OF TEAM PERFORMANCE

### AgilityHealth Insights

What We Learned from over 4,600 Teams about Improving Team Performance

**Deloitte.** 





"Thriving in this new digital economy requires a ways of working operating model that enables teams to deliver customer value to the market in the time currency of months versus years.

This involves an enterprise domain led ways of working and a fundamental shift in mindset. We help clients shape resilient organisations through infinite delivery™ enterprise agility by aligning their capacity based digital technology investments outcomes through the emphasis of value, flow and quality."

THE ENTERPRISE AGILITY WHY

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### ENTERPRISE AGILITY NARRATIVE Deloitte.

Enterprise agility accelerates the speed and responsiveness with which the "resilient organization" will sense value, learn, and pivot to account for emerging priorities as based on actionable insights delivering desired business outcomes for customers, colleagues, society and climate

Delivering desired customer and consumer experience outcomes requires an enterprise to be able to dynamically sense and respond through hyper accelerated iterative delivery of value to market.

#### **Accelerate Value to Market Faster than Ever Before!**

We believe that Time to Market is enabled within delivery - by the enabling of speed (by prioritizing backlogs on high market value impact), strategy delivery assurance through aligned portfolio market mission outcomes (decomposed OKRs), and innovation centric capacity based execution through agile metered funding and fully integrated nextgen multidisciplinary delivery teams.



#### **Market Mission Outcomes Alignment:**

Invest in these three pillars to achieve this:

- Organise your Work, Talent and Technology around Customer Value
- Express your Digital portfolio investments through value outcome hypotheses (OKRs)
- Establish Value realization performance dashboards to bring visibility to Market Mission Outcomes Indices



### Digital Product and Platform Ways of Working Operating Model:

Evolve to organizing all multi-disciplinary teams around product domains leveraging the Product Owner (in the business) alongside the (Tech Delivery Lead) to take a founders approach in mobilizing a lean start up domain led ways of working. Adopt modern agile funding and agile talent placement models.



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#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### What are the top competencies driving teams to higher performance?

This simple question—which underlies this research report—is surprisingly difficult to answer.

A high-performing team is not measured by the amount of work delivered, but by the impact and outcomes they produce.

At AgilityHealth®, our team has always believed there is a correlation between qualitative maturity metrics (behaviors and practices) with quantitative performance metrics (Time to Market, Quality, Throughput, Predictability, etc.).

Here's our hypothesis: **Maturity** is a leading indicator for **Performance**, which leads to **Business Outcome** delivery. These are the three metrics that matter when measuring overall agility of your organization.

So we partnered with the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Center for Applied Psychological Services to crunch the data across 146 companies, including over 4,600 teams (over 46,000 individuals), using our AgilityHealth platform.

While some of our findings validate long-held beliefs about the relationship between performance and agility, others were a surprise. This report explores each of the five performance measures and the competencies that drive them.

The journey towards high performance starts with measuring where you are today and relentlessly improving. **AgilityHealth** is the world's leading measurement and growth platform, designed to accelerate Digital transformation and enable true Enterprise Business Agility®, by measuring and improving at every level.

I hope you glean real-world practical insights you can use to accelerate your maturity towards enterprise business agility!

Sally Elatta, CEO, AgilityHealth

#### THE TOP DRIVERS FOR TEAM PERFORMANCE

#### **Executive Summary**

Over 4,600 teams (over 46,000 individuals) from enterprise-level customers have completed the AgilityHealth TeamHealth® Radar assessment. Each of these teams was assessed against 39 competencies, including the key **five quantitative performance** measures below.











**Predictability** 

Value Delivered

Time to Market

Quality

Response to Change

#### TOP DRIVERS OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

We analyzed the data to identify which qualitative practices were driving these five quantitative performance metrics above. Here are the results:

**Short Iterations** 



Planning and delivering in short increments.

**Generalizing Specialists** 



Utilizing T-shaped team members so everyone can contribute towards the goal.

Planning & Estimating



Breaking work down, using relative sizing, and planning it into short iterations based on capacity.

**Creativity & Innovation** 



Empowering teams to solve problems, challenge existing solutions, and feel safe to experiment and learn.

**Self-Organization** 



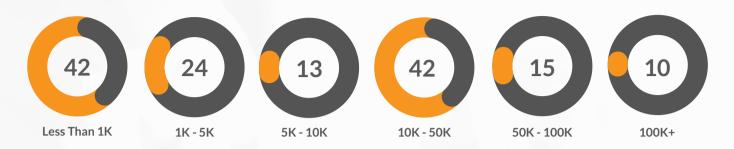
Delegating decisions to the team and empowering the team to design solutions and manage their work. (Autonomous Delivery)



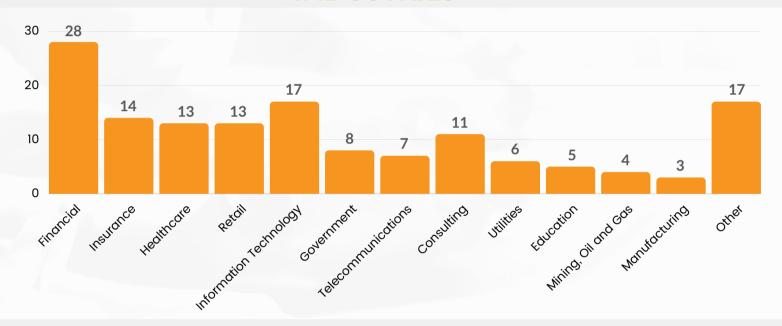
We found teams that scored in the highest maturity of these drivers achieved an average of 37% higher quantitative performance than teams in the lowest maturity.

#### REPORT DEMOGRAPHICS

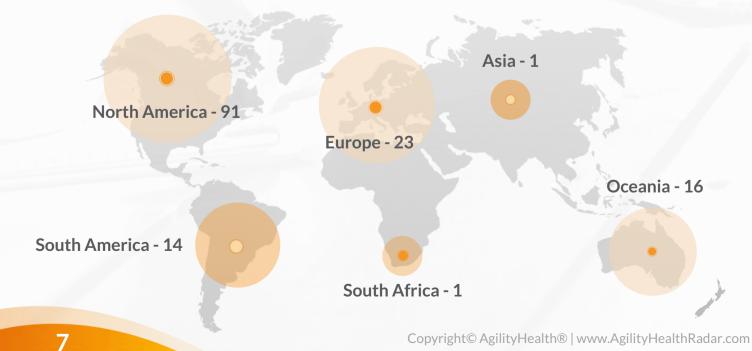
#### **COMPANY SIZE | 146 TOTAL**



#### **INDUSTRIES**



#### **REGIONS**



#### **HOW DO YOU MEASURE TEAM PERFORMANCE?**

There is no single measure for team performance. No KPI or OKR can contrast two teams against each other and definitively say "this team is high performing" and "this other team is not". However, using a combination of well established quantitative metrics can help us create a common/consistent approach to measuring performance.

In the context of knowledge work, specifically, agile delivery knowledge work, AgilityHealth defines the following five quantitative performance competencies as part of the TeamHealth radar:











**Predictability** 

Value Delivered

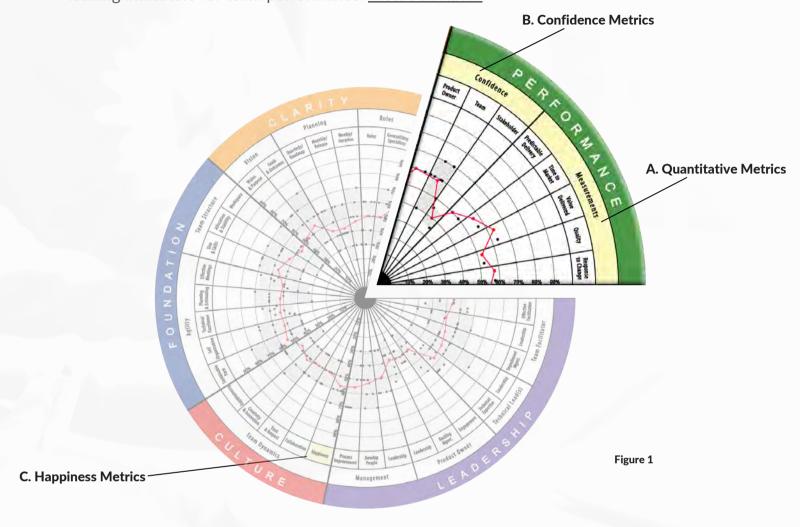
Time to Market

Quality

Response to Change

- 1. **Predictable Delivery** measured by % of target work items actually delivered within the time-box (say:do ratio).
- 2. **Time to Market -** measured by frequency of delivery and the elapsed time to put completed work into the hands of the customer (lead time to change).
- 3. **Value Delivered -** measured by % delivery of business outcomes, overall throughput and improvement over baseline throughput.
- 4. **Quality -** as measured by MTTR (Mean Time To Recover) from high severity incidents, % of releases resulting in high severity incidents, test automation, defect ratio
- 5. **Response to Change -** measured by story cycle time, feature cycle time, % of work blocked by external factors and # of teams to complete a feature/deliverable.

In addition to these five quantitative metrics (Figure 1: A), during a team assessment, the team and Product Owner are asked about their Happiness (Figure 1: B), as well as their Confidence (Figure 1: C) to meet the current goals. These competencies are considered leading indicators for team performance. View Full Radar



#### TeamHealth® Radar

The TeamHealth assessment also includes a comprehensive evaluation, where teams are measured against 30 Leadership, Culture, Foundational, and Clarity competencies. The goal of this research is to identify which of these competencies are leading indicators for performance.

All questions are written in the Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly maturity model to avoid team members overrating their current state.

This research analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data from teams surveyed between November 2018 and April 2021. Refer to the Research Method section to see the statistical analysis methodology.

#### **INCREASE YOUR TEAM'S PERFORMANCE BY...**

#### 1. DECREASING TIME TO MARKET

How often does your team release value to customers? How often could your team release value to customers? How long does it take from the final change to it being experienced by the customer/end-user?

Putting products into the hands of customers faster impacts far more than revenues. It builds customer trust, increases the pace and regularity of customer feedback, and builds confidence within teams who are able to build their iterative delivery and development practice on the backs of steady releases. Decreasing Time to Market also includes the delivery of value: for example, the delivery of cost reductions, iterative improvements, or the removal of constraints and bottlenecks.

By investing in the following five competencies<sup>1</sup>, teams should see the highest improvement on the Time to Market performance metric.

#### **Top Drivers for Time to Market**



# Self-organizing teams with a culture of creativity and innovation and T-shaped people have a faster time to market.

Our research indicates that Time to Market performance is driven by team dynamics and skills more than any other factor. Teams that are encouraged and empowered to design creative ideas to solve problems and challenge existing solutions significantly outperform those whose creativity is stifled or who work in environments where it is not "safe to fail" or try new things. Of note, Creativity & Innovation is also the only competency in the Culture dimension that has a significant impact on performance.

The make-up of skills and team structure are also critically important in Time to Market performance. The importance of the T-shaped people, or Generalizing Specialists, is well studied. This competency is of increasing importance in high-performing Agile teams, as overlapping skills enable team members to support each other as needed and increase overall resilience and flexibility.

This is where self-organization comes into play. One of the principles of the Agile Manifesto is that "The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams." In our research, the relationship between the principle of self-organization and team performance is clearly linked.

The importance of the work environment and ongoing process improvement cannot be understated, as both have a direct impact on the ability of a team to deliver quickly. Both these factors ensure the team can focus on the continuous delivery of value, especially when combined with a culture of continuous improvement and practices like the Sprint Retrospective.

Of note, the Workspace competency, which evaluates the team's physical or virtual working environment, also has the largest variance in impact pre-COVID-19 vs the onset of COVID-19<sup>3</sup>, with scores of an average of 0.79 points higher after the onset of COVID-19.

Each of these five competencies are important and ideally should be given equal focus in order to achieve the greatest improvement in Time to Market. However, if you need to start smaller, start by encouraging Creativity & Innovation in your teams, as that gives the greatest single improvement - 33 times when we look at the weighted impact of this competency.



**Recommendations:** Most of the predictive competencies for Time to Market relate to the empowerment of individuals and teams. As such, AgilityHealth recommends that one of the best things you can do is invest in developing Leadership Agility skills such as strategic agility, servant leadership, business outcomes, customer focus, and more. This will enable your Managers and Senior Leaders to naturally promote self-organization and create space for creativity and continuous improvement.

Refer to the AgilityHealth Leadership Agility radar to explore this topic further: <a href="https://agilityhealthradar.com/agile-leader-health-radar-assessment/">https://agilityhealthradar.com/agile-leader-health-radar-assessment/</a>

While this will improve Time to Market, it should also improve overall team performance. Creativity & Innovation, Generalizing Specialists, and Self-Organization are three of the top drivers for team performance.

#### 2. MAKING DELIVERY MORE PREDICTABLE

How predictable is your team? What % of target work items do you meet within your time-box (ex: iteration/week)?

In uncertain times and volatile markets, one of the most important things a team can do is deliver products or value on a predictable schedule. Predictability means trust, reliability, and stability. A team with Predictable Delivery can become a bedrock for customers and colleagues alike, and be one less variable to account for in an increasingly complex workplace.

By focusing on and increasing the following five competencies, teams should see the highest improvement on the Predictable Delivery performance metric.

#### **Top Drivers for Predictable Delivery**



Teams that deliver in shorter iterations at a stable, sustainable pace with a strong foundation in planning are more predictable.

The competencies that clearly link short delivery cycles, team responsibilities, and planning practices improve delivery predictability more than any other factor. Enshrined in the Agile Manifesto, the principle of planning and delivering working software (or anything of value) frequently is fundamental to all Agile approaches. By planning more regularly and with shorter horizons, Agile practices like sprint planning, release (or PI) planning, and the daily scrum improve the reliability of, and confidence in, delivery plans.

It is important to note that predictable work patterns do not necessarily correlate to Predictable Delivery. The extra "time" created in teams with a culture of overtime, "crunch time", or other work anti-patterns decreased overall performance. This is another key indicator of performance with a clear connection to the Agile Manifesto; "Agile processes promote sustainable development." Teams that are burnt out and working at an unstable pace will not deliver predictable results.

Lastly, multiple studies have shown the importance of small teams with clear roles and responsibilities in the functioning of high-performing teams. Google's Aristotle initiative showed the importance of clearly defined roles in creating dependability between team members. In addition, the primary constraint to high performance is the number of lines of communication. It appears that the optimal team size for high-performance teams is somewhere between 3 and 12<sup>10</sup> (with a preference towards smaller teams).



Recommendations: If you want to be in the top percentiles of high-performing teams, shortening your iteration cycle and improving overall planning skills is the best place to start. Doing one will automatically improve the other, as the shorter your iterations, the more regularly you are able to practice planning and estimating. 1-2 weeks is ideal for most knowledge work teams.

This should improve both Predictable Delivery and overall team performance.

#### 3. DELIVERING MORE VALUE

How well does this team deliver on the planned business outcomes or team goals? Of the targeted deliverables, how many does your team release every 12 weeks on average (throughput)? How much improvement have you had over your baseline?

There is no greater indicator of effective and purposeful work than the delivery of value to customers. It is immaterial whether that value is defined by the launch of new products, reductions in costs or complexity, improvements in Time to Market or time-to-response, or any other measure that improves customers' lives. Serving and satisfying the customer, in whatever way the customer requires, remains the highest priority of business agility. The recent strong focus on maturing Product Management practices (roles, processes, metrics, tools) all aim to deliver higher customer value sooner and better than before.

By investing in the following five competencies, teams should see the highest improvement on the Value Delivered performance metric.

#### **Top Drivers for Value Delivered**



# Cross-functional teams with a strong foundation in planning, using shorter iterations with a clear product vision and purpose, deliver more value.

Teams that invest in improving their Planning & Estimating skills through shorter iterations deliver more value to their customers. This links in no small part to Predictable Delivery, demonstrating that these two key competencies are not merely related, but intertwined. This finding also addresses the common misconception that shorter iterations mean that teams deliver faster. In fact, teams with shorter iterations actually deliver more value to customers in the same amount of time.

Improving Value Delivered is also closely linked to decreasing Time to Market through the competencies of Generalizing Specialists and Creativity & Innovation. This finding demonstrates that the behaviors and skills of a team are as important as how they work in the first place.

The final competency that drives Value Delivered is the alignment of the team around a Product Vision & Purpose. Teams that have clarity on customer needs, that are also aligned to business strategy, deliver significantly greater value to their customers.



Recommendations: To increase Value Delivered,
AgilityHealth recommends you consider the adoption of
Outcomes-Based Planning, as well as the adoption of
modern Product Discovery practices. These practices will
need engagement from Business Leaders and Product
Managers to define clear yearly and quarterly
Outcomes/OKRs and ensure all deliverables are aligned to
these outcomes. Learn more about our AgilityHealth
Outcomes Based Planning Jump Start here:
<a href="https://agilityhealthradar.com/outcomes-okr-planning-jumpstart/">https://agilityhealthradar.com/outcomes-okr-planning-jumpstart/</a>

## 4. IMPROVING QUALITY AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

How long does it take to recover from a high severity incident? What % of your releases over the last quarter have resulted in high severity incidents? How well have you matured towards your test automation goals? What is the average ratio of escaped defects to work items?

Investing in improving your Predictable Delivery and Time to Market are wasted if you are delivering something that is unfit for purpose or doesn't actually suit your customers' needs. In addition, your customer will always notice low-quality work. Every Quality failure will progressively erode the trust they have in you.

By investing in the following five competencies, teams should see the highest improvement in Quality and Operational Effectiveness.

#### **Top Drivers for Quality and Operational Effectiveness**



Technical Excellence



Generalizing Specialists



Planning & Estimating



Short Iterations



Technical Expertise



19x







## Teams with a strong technical grounding are more effective at delivering higher quality products.

Technical Excellence—the hallmark of high Quality—is the strongest single driver of team performance across any competency. Teams that have the right enterprise-level tools, that follow strong engineering, testing, automation, and release practices, and that invest in modern architectures produce outcomes of significantly higher Quality.

Technical Excellence is supported through strong Technical Expertise in key subject matter experts (SME). Proactive SMEs that act as trusted partners to stakeholders and customers ensure high-quality outcomes and improve overall delivery processes.

The competencies of Generalizing Specialists, Planning & Estimating, and Short Iterations are closely linked to Predictable Delivery and decreasing Time to Market. As such, it is unsurprising that they also measurably increase overall Quality.



**Recommendations**: Invest in acquiring appropriate, enterprise-level automation, measurement, and management tools for the work undertaken by the teams. Measure what matters with AgilityHealth by assessing maturity, performance, and outcome achievement across all levels of your organization.

When an organization knows the health and maturity of their teams, as well as the obstacles they are facing, they can make informed decisions on which investments will help teams have the highest impact. Support this investment by dedicating the necessary time for your teams to be able to use these tools effectively. Enable the teams to automate and optimize the majority of their core processes and workflows.

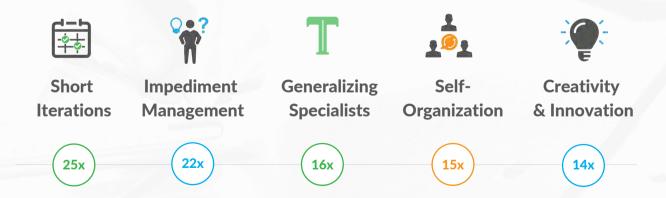
#### 5. RESPONDING TO CHANGE (CHANGE AGILITY)

What % of your work is blocked by unplanned factors outside of your control? How long does it take to deliver value to customers once the work is started? How long does it take to deliver a feature to production once the work is started? How many teams does it take to complete a feature?

Change Agility is defined in the Agile principle of "Responding to change over following a plan" and represents the cornerstone of agility. Those words are more important today than they were twenty years ago when the Agile Manifesto was first conceived. Change is the only constant—whether it is your customer's needs changing, the market changing, or opportunities changing. The better that teams are able to Respond to Change, the better for your customers and organization.

By investing in the following five competencies, teams should see the highest improvement on the Responding to Change metric.

#### **Top Drivers for Responding to Change**



# Teams with shorter iterations, a good mix of skills, and the support to remove external impediments are better able to respond to change.

The ability to effectively Respond to Change requires many of the same competencies as the other key performance measures: self-organizing teams with T-shaped and creative individuals who work in short iterations.

Teams who demonstrate a strong ability to Respond to Change are those who, beyond these common competencies, are best able to focus on their end goal by identifying and removing external impediments or obstacles. At a minimum, teams should have an effective Team Facilitator who can manage dependencies and remove external impediments. Mature Agile teams invest in continuously assessing themselves, identifying areas of improvement, and prioritizing the removal of impediments and obstacles in their way.



Recommendations: Within the AgilityHealth platform, there is a big focus on gathering the voice of the teams and enabling them to identify organizational-level obstacles they need managers to remove or address. We strongly recommend you form Continuous Improvement Leadership Teams which are committed to addressing these obstacles and applying Agile methods to this work. By systematically measuring and improving each quarter, you will accelerate the performance of teams by removing impediments and obstacles quickly.

Learn more about the Team and Organizational Baseline Jump Start: <a href="https://agilityhealthradar.com/org-baseline-jumpstart/">https://agilityhealthradar.com/org-baseline-jumpstart/</a>

## WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THOSE IN THE TOP 25%?

Across the more than 4,600 teams who have taken part in the TeamHealth® assessment, those that average 7.6 or higher (out of 10) are in the top 25% across all five performance measures. In this high-performing cohort, a new competency stands out: Effective Meetings

This competency is a unique driver for top performers. Taken together with planning & estimating, the ability for a team to run effective agile ceremonies is the hallmark of high-performance. From planning meetings (with clear priorities, goals, and visualization of outcomes), daily stand-ups (strictly timeboxed and self-managed), reviews & demos (incorporating users and customers to incorporate real feedback), and retrospectives (with findings immediately actioned).

In contrast to the top 25%, teams in the bottom 25% are those that average 6.0 or lower.

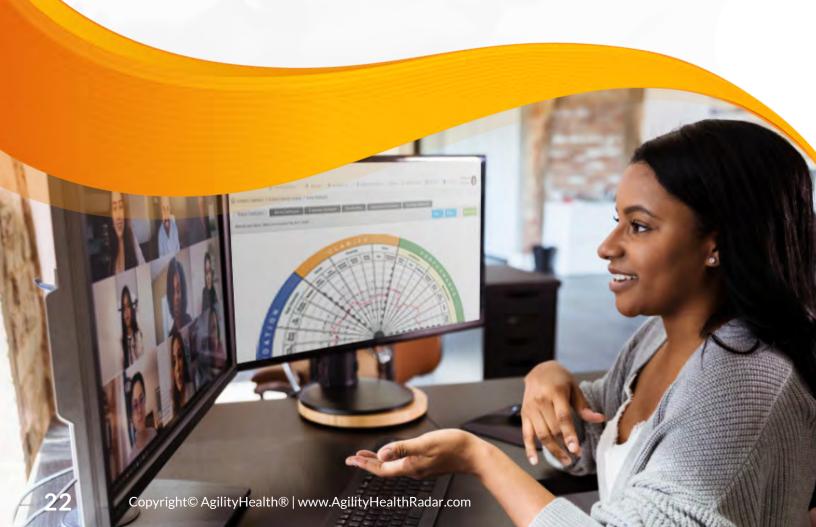
The key predictor for low-performing teams is poor weekly iteration planning (or poor adherence to the iteration plan) where work is done without a real plan or strategy or changes frequently.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

We know from experience that shorter iterations, better planning and estimating, and T-shaped skills all lead to better performance—and we now have data to prove it. It was a welcome surprise to see self-organization and creativity take center stage, as it did in our analysis. At AgilityHealth, we have always coached Managers to empower teams to solve problems, but for the first time, we have the data to back it up.



Remember, teams that invested in the five drivers saw a 37% performance improvement over teams that didn't. So when in doubt, start there!



#### **UP NEXT: CONFIDENCE, HAPPINESS & TEAM STABILITY**

What is important for a team goes beyond team performance. Higher performance means higher throughput and higher quality outcomes. But performance can be short-lived if the right culture and behaviors are missing. This is where other competencies like team Happiness and Confidence, key measures in the AgilityHealth assessments, come into play.

In an upcoming report, we will explore what contributes to a happy team and how to sustain that happiness by sharing our findings of the key drivers to team Happiness and Confidence. We'll also share analysis on how team stability impacts overall performance so stay tuned!

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<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/agile-transformation-inc/">https://www.linkedin.com/company/agile-transformation-inc/</a>

#### **RESEARCH METHOD AND STATISTICAL FINDINGS**

The analysis included both quantitative and qualitative data from teams assessed between November 2018 and April 2021.



There were 146 companies representing more than 4,600 teams (some who took the assessment more than once), equating to more than 46,000 individual survey responses.

Each assessment was completed by the full team to ensure credible results. These are teams embedded within the enterprise level and medium-sized customers of AgilityHealth and not surveyed through a publicly available survey.

AgilityHealth engaged the University of Nebraska at Omaha to undertake a statistical analysis of the data and ensure the impartiality and independence of the results.

All scores were aggregated to the team level, and the scores for each competency ranged from 1 to 10. There were five performance competencies we treated as outcome variables: Quality, Predictable Delivery, Response to Change, Time to Market, and Value Delivered. Additionally, there were three leading indicators: Happiness, Product Owner Confidence, and Team Confidence. All other competencies were treated as input variables.

The main interest of these analyses was to discover which inputs were the top statistical drivers of the outcome variables (quantitative performance). We used stepwise regression to explore and identify the top five drivers for each outcome. Stepwise regression is one approach in building a model that explains the most predictive set of input competencies for an outcome of interest.

This approach was used for two reasons. First, this method allowed us to isolate and observe which effects from which input were the most statistically influential while also controlling for influences from other input competencies. Second, many of the competencies within a dimension were highly interrelated and this caused multicollinearity concerns that can be allayed by this approach.

The following table lists the top five drivers for each of the performance metrics in the TeamHealth Assessment, along with the corresponding "weight" of each driver (each weight is an unstandardized regression coefficient).

The weights not only indicate which variable is more predictive but also the amount of movement we would expect in the outcome if that input competency increased. Each weight can be interpreted as the amount of change we would expect to see in the outcome competency if the input increased by one point. For example, if Technical Excellence increases by one point, we would expect to see Quality increase by roughly half a point (weight = 0.52) on average. As mentioned above, this increase assumes that we have accounted for the influence of all the inputs included in the model.

These drivers are the best predictors for the corresponding metrics. All drivers are statistically significant, and each metric has the driver's ranked order.

Outcome Competency	Top Five Drivers	Weights
Predictable Delivery	<ul> <li>Short Iterations</li> <li>Planning &amp; Estimating</li> <li>Role Clarity</li> <li>Sustainable Pace</li> <li>Team Size &amp; Skills</li> </ul>	0.42 0.34 0.14 0.12 0.12
Quality	<ul> <li>Technical Excellence</li> <li>Generalizing Specialists</li> <li>Planning &amp; Estimating</li> <li>Short Iterations</li> <li>Technical Expertise</li> </ul>	0.52 0.19 0.14 0.12 0.11
Response to Change	<ul> <li>Short Iterations</li> <li>Impediment Management</li> <li>Generalizing Specialists</li> <li>Creativity &amp; Innovation</li> <li>Self-Organization</li> </ul>	0.25 0.22 0.16 0.15 0.14
Time to Market	<ul> <li>Creativity &amp; Innovation</li> <li>Generalizing Specialists</li> <li>Self-Organization</li> <li>Workspace</li> <li>Process Improvement</li> </ul>	0.33 0.29 0.27 0.26 0.19
Value Delivered	<ul> <li>Planning &amp; Estimating</li> <li>Short Iterations</li> <li>Generalizing Specialists</li> <li>Vision &amp; Purpose</li> <li>Creativity &amp; Innovation</li> </ul>	0.27 0.24 0.15 0.14 0.13

Note. N = 4,616 teams (~46,000 individual responses). All weights based on stepwise regression analyses, and all weights are unstandardized regression coefficients.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The AgilityHealth Team | Amazing team who built the platform!



Sally Elatta



**Evan Leybourn** 



**Kevin Mitchell** 



**Lisa Smith** 



With special thanks to the AgilityHealth team that brings our Culture Wall to life in everything they do!

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- 3.N = 591 teams. Each measure was averaged for teams before 4.18.2020 and after 4.18.2020, and the differences in scores were analyzed using paired samples t-tests. All differences in the graph above are statistically significant (p < .001).
- 4.N = 4,616 teams (~46,000 individual responses). All weights based on stepwise regression analyses, and all weights are unstandardized regression coefficients.
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