

From Technical Expertise to Faster, More Aligned Delivery

How a global biopharmaceutical organization helped a large data science organization improve speed, alignment, and adaptability



A data science organization within a global biopharmaceutical company had no shortage of technical expertise. Hundreds of data scientists working across dozens of teams supported an ambitious mission: helping turn promising molecules into medicines.

But expertise alone wasn't producing the speed and consistency the organization needed.

WHY THE WORK WAS SLOWING DOWN

People came from traditional project management, software development, data science, and other technical backgrounds, and teams did not always share a consistent approach to planning, prioritizing, and delivering work. Decisions took too long. Bottlenecks slowed progress. New ways of working were adopted unevenly.



WHY IT MATTERED

For an organization expected to help lead change in an increasingly software-, data-, and AI-enabled enterprise, the way it worked needed to catch up with the sophistication of the work itself.

The Challenge: Smart People, Different Ways of Working

A senior director within the organization recognized that the problem wasn't talent. It was alignment at scale.

Different assumptions about how work should be planned and executed created friction across teams and made the organization less responsive than it needed to be. That mattered because its responsibilities included advanced modeling, enterprise data capabilities, machine learning and AI, and portfolio management—all supporting the broader process-development organization.

The challenge wasn't simply teaching individual teams a new methodology. It was creating enough common language and shared practices across dozens of teams to improve how work flowed—without imposing another layer of process.

That's an important distinction. The goal wasn't to make hundreds of data scientists more Agile. The goal was to help a highly capable organization get more value from the capability it already had.



The Approach: Learn It, Apply It, Make It Your Own

The organization engaged agilityIRL initially for formal Scrum and Agile training. But it quickly became clear that training alone wasn't the answer.

The work began on a relatively small scale, allowing the organization to evaluate both the content and agilityIRL's approach before expanding the engagement. What distinguished agilityIRL was practical instruction tailored to the environment rather than a generic presentation of Agile theory. Facilitators used real-world examples, challenged participants to work through problems themselves, and adapted the experience to a fast-moving technical audience.

Strong feedback led to broader adoption across the organization.

The work centered on three things:

- 01** Create a common language across teams. Practical Scrum and Agile training established shared concepts and expectations around planning, prioritization, collaboration, and delivery. Teams could adapt the practices to their circumstances while operating from a more consistent foundation.
- 02** Turn concepts into working habits. Coaching and office hours gave teams access to experienced practitioners as they encountered real situations. Rather than leaving people to translate classroom concepts on their own, they could work through challenges while putting the learning into practice.
- 03** Build capability instead of consultant dependency. The emphasis was on helping teams understand why the practices worked, make better decisions themselves, and continuously improve rather than simply follow a prescribed process.

That combination proved important. Implementation support and office hours became a valuable complement to training, helping teams move from understanding Agile concepts to actually changing how work got done.

The Results: Faster—and Better Able to Adapt

The most compelling result was also the simplest.

50% Teams adopting the new ways of working were operating approximately 50% faster on average, with even stronger performance among those with higher levels of adoption.

But speed wasn't the only measure of success.

Teams developed greater mastery of the practices, became more consistent in how they worked, and were better able to meet performance expectations. Just as importantly, they became more capable of adjusting as needs changed rather than treating the original plan as the only acceptable outcome.

At the scale of hundreds of data scientists and dozens of teams, those improvements matter. Greater consistency doesn't mean making every team identical. It means reducing unnecessary friction between teams and creating enough shared understanding that people can make decisions and move work forward without repeatedly renegotiating how the work itself gets done.



That adaptability is particularly valuable in an environment where the work is evolving rapidly. The organization is advancing capabilities in modeling, enterprise data, machine learning and AI, and Lean Portfolio Management. Improving how teams collaborate and make decisions helps translate those technical capabilities into useful outcomes.

The engagement also created demand for continued improvement. What started with foundational training expanded into coaching and implementation support as teams saw value in having experienced practitioners help them apply what they had learned.

What Made the Difference

This wasn't a case of introducing Agile to an organization that needed convincing. The company already believed in Agile and Scrum and was adopting scaled Agile practices more broadly. The challenge was closing the gap between believing in the principles and consistently applying them across a large, complex technical organization.

That is where agilityIRL's approach mattered.

The training was tailored rather than canned. The examples came from real experience. Participants were expected to think rather than simply memorize a framework. And when the classroom portion ended, coaching helped turn new concepts into actual behavior.

For organizations with hundreds of highly skilled technical people, that distinction is easy to underestimate. Technical expertise doesn't automatically create an effective delivery system—and adding more process rarely solves the problem.

The opportunity is to create enough alignment that dozens of teams can move faster without sacrificing the autonomy and expertise that made them valuable in the first place.

When that happens, an organization tasked with helping turn molecules into medicines can spend a lot less time managing how work gets done—and a lot more time moving that work forward.

That is the kind of practical improvement agilityIRL helps organizations create.

✓ YOUR STORY COULD BE NEXT

Struggling with bottlenecks, slow decisions, or teams working from different playbooks? agilityIRL helps organizations create practical ways of working that fit their real environment - improving alignment, delivery, and business outcomes without forcing a rigid framework.

Let's talk about how we can help your teams deliver with confidence.

WHY AGILITYIRL?

- **Agile Experts with Practical Experience:**
We apply Agile principles in real-world environments, drawing on direct practitioner experience.
- **Customized Solutions:**
Training and coaching are tailored to the company's unique needs, culture, and level of Agile maturity.
- **Measurable Success:**
We focus on outcomes and practical indicators that help leaders understand whether the change is working.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

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