

# Agile in the sports context: driving change iteratively and collaboratively

## Introduction: agile for the sports industry – a custom fit

### Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, **agility is no longer optional**, it has become a strategic necessity across industries, from banking and e-commerce to government and entertainment. Increasingly, **sports organizations are recognizing the value of agile principles and practices** to respond to changing fan behaviors, emerging technologies, and high stakeholder expectations (McKinsey and Company, 2020).

Unlike traditional industries, sports operate in a **highly seasonal, emotionally charged, and public-facing environment**, which presents unique challenges to digital delivery. Whether it is launching a new fan engagement platform before the start of the season or upgrading an app mid-championship, sports organizations must deliver with speed **without sacrificing stability or coordination**. Agile methodologies help meet this need by fostering **iterative development, feedback loops, and cross-functional collaboration** (Beck et al., 2001).

This reading builds on the core agile concepts introduced in reading 2 (including sprint cycles, product ownership, and agile ceremonies) and shows **how they are being translated and tailored within the sports sector**. Agile in this context is not applied by-the-book, but adapted to the **pacing and rhythm of sporting seasons, media cycles, and event-based marketing**.

For example, rather than following rigid timelines, clubs and leagues align their delivery cycles to fan milestones, like transfer windows, playoff finals, or jersey launches. Agile teams in sports may not look like tech startups, but they share the same **obsession with user feedback**, continuous delivery, and quick adaptation, only their users are **passionate fans, not enterprise clients** (Salesforce, 2023).

Agile is not about doing everything faster — it's about doing the right things, in the right order, with the right team — and doing it with the flexibility to adjust as you go. In sports, where competition, passion, and loyalty rule, agile delivery methods must be tailored to **serve fans and operations simultaneously** (McKinsey and Company, 2020).

This reading will explore how sports organizations are:

- structuring agile teams and workflows within traditional institutions,
- delivering fan-facing products like OTT services, CRM platforms, and mobile apps using sprint-based models,
- driving cultural change to foster adaptability and collaboration,
- overcoming barriers such as hierarchy, legacy systems, and siloed departments.

With real-world examples and insights, this reading provides a **practical lens** through which to view agile not as a framework to be copied, but as a **strategic capability to be cultivated** in the unique ecosystem of sports.

## Why agile matters in the sports ecosystem

### Introduction

The sports industry has historically operated on fixed rhythms, structured around match calendars, rights cycles, and sponsorship seasons. But with digital disruption, **fans now expect real-time engagement, seamless digital access, and continuous innovation**. This shift requires a more flexible approach than traditional project methods can provide.

**Agile development practices** enable sports organizations to:

- launch digital features in sync with seasonal moments or matchday events,
- continuously optimize based on fan behavior and platform analytics,
- pivot quickly in response to user feedback or underperforming digital campaigns.

This evolution marks a shift from **fixed roadmaps to dynamic delivery**, aligned with fan expectations and business needs.

### Managing seasonality, fan emotion and rapid change

Agile methods are particularly well suited to the emotional and unpredictable world of sport.

- **Seasonal milestones** like kickoff, playoffs, or transfer windows offer natural planning sprints
- **Fan sentiment** can fluctuate hourly, demanding content, offers or engagement tools that can be quickly adapted

- **Competitive pressure** from other clubs, leagues, or entertainment options increases the need for speed and innovation.

By working in short cycles and continuously iterating, teams can **respond to new developments in real-time** while staying focused on long-term objectives. Agility refers to the ability to adjust and respond effectively to change, treating it as a chance for improvement rather than a risk to avoid.

## Agile supports the four pillars of digital transformation

As discussed in earlier readings, successful digital transformation in sports rests on four pillars: **technology, data, content, and customer-centricity**. Agile directly reinforces each.

- **Technology:** modular releases, DevOps collaboration, and cloud-native systems enable flexible scaling (AWS, 2023).
- **Data:** agile cycles use real-time insights and experimentation to guide improvements.
- **Content:** agile content workflows support dynamic storytelling, match-day activation, and personalized engagement.
- **Customer-centricity:** agile keeps fan feedback at the center of product development, marketing, and service design.

In this way, agile is **not just a delivery method, it's a mindset that aligns with the pillars of digital transformation**.

## Fit across all phases of digital maturity

Agile is effective at **all stages of digital maturity**. Sports organizations at different points in their transformation journeys can adopt agile in ways that suit their capacity and goals.

- **Start-up phase:** agile offers a low-barrier, results-driven approach to begin digital change, even with limited resources.
- **Acceleration phase:** agile fosters cross-functional collaboration and helps scale new digital initiatives with increased speed and stakeholder alignment.
- **Capitalize phase:** agile becomes embedded across the organization, driving innovation at scale with full DevOps, continuous deployment, and customer-centric iteration (McKinsey and Company, 2022).



# From waterfall to iterative: shifting development in clubs and leagues

## Introduction

For many years, sports organizations have relied on traditional project management models that mimic corporate IT practices, often waterfall-based and heavily linear. In a waterfall approach, requirements are gathered at the start, timelines are fixed, and development follows a pre-planned path. While these models offer predictability, they often lack flexibility and struggle to accommodate change, especially in dynamic, fan-facing environments.

In a sports context, this can result in months-long delays for digital products (such as a ticketing system overhaul or a mobile app launch), missed marketing opportunities tied to matchdays or transfer windows, or a disconnect between fan feedback and digital delivery.

## The rise of iterative models in digital sport

The shift toward iterative methodologies, led by frameworks like Scrum, Kanban, and SAFe, has brought sports organizations closer to fan needs and enabled them to respond in real time. In these models, work is broken down into shorter sprints or cycles, where features are built, tested, and launched incrementally.

For example, a league might roll out a new OTT (over-the-top) streaming feature for match replays in a 3-week sprint, gather fan feedback, then optimize the UI and backend streaming performance in the next sprint. The work is visible, collaborative, and customer-centric.

The benefit of iteration is not only technical agility, but also **strategic responsiveness**: adapting marketing campaigns based on performance data, integrating live feedback into fan engagement tools, or iterating loyalty programs based on user behavior.

## Why iteration fits sports better

Sports organizations operate in **cyclical** and **event-driven** environments, seasons, transfers, live games, off-seasons, and these naturally align with agile loops. Unlike waterfall, which assumes stability, agile thrives in environments where **customer expectations evolve quickly** and priorities shift often.

For instance, a football club launching a fan token or fantasy league feature cannot afford to wait six months for a final build. Iteration enables them to test concepts in preseason, gather fan feedback, and refine before mid-season activations.

Moreover, cross-department needs, from ticketing and operations to marketing and content, can be met with agile teams that plan, build, and measure iteratively. This helps break silos and

ensures that development aligns with fan-facing goals across all touchpoints.

## Challenges in moving away from waterfall

Despite its limitations, waterfall thinking still persists, especially in organizations with strong hierarchy or limited digital experience. Agile adoption can clash with:

- budgeting processes tied to fixed annual cycles,
- legacy vendor contracts scoped for waterfall delivery,
- leadership expectations for linear timelines and fixed deliverables.

Overcoming this shift requires internal education, pilot teams that demonstrate agile value, and leadership that embraces **adaptive planning** over rigid forecasting (McKinsey and Company, 2020).

## Realigning for iterative value creation

The transition to agile is not just a change in method, but a **recalibration of mindset**. Clubs and leagues that embrace iteration often report improved delivery speed, higher fan satisfaction, and better alignment across departments.

An illustrative example is LaLiga's digital team, which shifted from multi-year digital transformation plans to incremental delivery, focusing on fan feature rollouts via LaLigaSportsTV in sprint cycles. This created continuous value and enabled faster reaction to emerging fan behaviors (LaLiga, 2022).

# Agile roles and structures adapted to sports organizations

## Introduction

While the principles of agile are universal, their real impact depends on how roles and team structures are adapted to the organization's unique context. In traditional tech environments, agile roles such as product owner, scrum master and cross-functional team members are well-established. But in sports organizations (which are often a hybrid of media companies, entertainment brands, and legacy institutions), these roles require thoughtful adaptation.

This section outlines how agile roles and team configurations can be molded to fit the realities of clubs, leagues, and federations, especially as they progress from the **start-up** phase of digital maturity toward **acceleration** and eventually **capitalization**.

## The product owner: voice of the fan

In the sports setting, the product owner must combine business acumen with fan-centric thinking. This role ensures that what gets built serves not just internal KPIs, but external fan needs. In practice, this could be:

- a digital product manager responsible for the club's app, prioritizing features that enhance live matchday experience,
- a CRM strategist working with marketing and ticketing to deliver personalized campaign journeys.

In more mature organizations like FC Bayern Munich or Real Madrid, the product owner often bridges commercial, marketing and IT departments, ensuring alignment between business objectives and fan engagement strategies (Real Madrid, 2023; FC Bayern Munich, 2021).

## Scrum master: facilitator of flow in cross-functional teams

The scrum master acts as a team coach, removing roadblocks, facilitating sprint rituals, and fostering continuous improvement. In sports, this role may be held by someone within digital operations or tech who understands both agile and the nuances of sports seasons, content cycles, and stakeholder sensitivities.

The scrum master helps teams maintain pace during key periods, such as seasonal launches or transfer windows, and ensures that iterative processes don't break under pressure.

## Agile team members: beyond developers

Agile in sports often includes a wider mix of professionals beyond traditional software developers. Depending on the project, agile teams may include:

- content producers and editors,
- marketing campaign managers,
- data analysts and CDP/CRM specialists,
- UX designers focused on fan journey mapping.

This interdisciplinary model reflects the **customer-centric pillar** emphasized in previous readings and supports the delivery of **data-driven content, automated processes, and digital services**, the three building blocks of digital transformation covered in program 1.

### Cross-department collaboration: the role of tribes and squads

Organizations that reach higher levels of digital maturity often adopt hybrid structures inspired by the “tribes and squads” model popularized by Spotify. In this model:

- **squads** are cross-functional teams focused on specific fan-facing outcomes (e.g. loyalty program, matchday app, or merchandise platform).
- **tribes** are collections of squads aligned around larger themes (e.g. fan engagement, digital media).

For example, City Football Group (2023) has developed a multi-market digital delivery structure, where tech teams in Manchester collaborate closely with commercial and content teams across global markets, iterating new fan engagement tools for different clubs simultaneously.

### Evolution of roles along the maturity curve

Table 1. Evolution of roles along the maturity curve

Digital maturity phase	Agile role adaptation
Start-up	Roles are informal; project managers double as product owners; teams rely on external vendors.
Acceleration	Dedicated product owners emerge; internal scrum rituals begin; collaboration between marketing and tech expands.
Capitalization	Mature agile structures with defined squads; embedded data specialists; agile metrics and dashboards guide work.

Source: own elaboration.

The key is not to copy agile roles from tech firms blindly, but to **adapt and evolve** them based on digital goals, organizational structure, and resource availability.



# Sprint cycles in practice—timing, testing, and fan-focused delivery

## Introduction

Sprint cycles, the short, time-boxed periods of work in agile frameworks, are the engine rooms of agile delivery. In the sports industry, sprint planning and execution must account for seasonality, fan engagement peaks (e.g., derby matches or playoffs), and rapid content turnover. Unlike traditional software environments, timelines in sports cannot always be shifted, making sprint reliability and adaptability essential.

This section explores how sprint cycles are adapted to the rhythm of the sports calendar and how agile teams in clubs and leagues use sprints to deliver consistent value for fans, commercial partners, and internal users.

## Sprint length: striking the balance between speed and stability

While many organizations use 2-week sprints by default, some sports organizations adopt slightly longer or shorter cadences based on their operational cycles. For example:

- Content and social media squads may prefer **1-week sprints** to respond quickly to trending moments.
- Data or CRM development teams often work in **2–3 week sprints** to allow time for integration testing and quality assurance.
- During low-season periods, sprint planning might stretch further to accommodate platform upgrades or back-end rearchitecture.

The goal is to match **sprint velocity** to team capacity and project complexity, without compromising responsiveness.

## Sprint rituals: structuring for predictable delivery

Agile teams in the sports sector adopt several key rituals that support visibility and coordination.

- **Sprint planning:** aligning with business stakeholders before the sprint begins (e.g., digital campaign leads, ticketing managers).
- **Daily standups:** keeping communication short and focused,

especially important for globally distributed teams like those in LaLiga or the NHL.

- **Sprint reviews:** demonstrating real features or updates to sponsors, marketing leads, or customer service stakeholders.
- **Retrospectives:** identifying sprint inefficiencies and areas for process improvement, such as better coordination with external agencies.

These rituals become especially vital during high-stakes periods (e.g., UEFA Champions League campaigns or league finals), when delays or miscommunication can have real-time revenue and reputation impact.

## Sprint planning with fan journeys in mind

One of the most effective applications of sprints in sports is planning them around **fan lifecycle milestones**. For example:

- Before a new season, sprints might focus on **ticketing system UX improvements** and pre-season campaign automation.
- Mid-season sprints can target **in-app personalization** or **video content delivery** tied to current team performance.
- Off-season sprints often prioritize **platform upgrades, new features, or post-season review dashboards** for internal use.

This planning aligns with the **customer-centricity** pillar introduced in previous readings and ensures sprint outputs map directly to fan needs.

## Example sprint output timelines in practice

Table 2. Sprint output timelines in practice

Sprint focus	Typical output	When used in season
Ticketing personalization	Trigger-based campaign flows	Pre-season
App feature refinement	UI/UX tweaks, new engagement widgets	Mid-season
Content automation	Metadata tagging, dynamic publishing rules	In-season campaign Planning
CDP dashboard	Real-time segment insights	All season, with extra focus



Development		pre-kickoff
Platform rearchitecture	Backend refactor, improved APIs	Off-season

Source: own elaboration.

# Cross-department collaboration in an agile environment

## Introduction

In sports organizations, digital transformation isn't owned by a single department. It's a team sport requiring marketing, IT, content, data, ticketing, and even operations to row in the same direction. This interconnectedness makes **cross-department collaboration** a foundational requirement for effective agile delivery.

Agile thrives on **shared ownership**, **frequent communication** and **feedback loops**, but sports institutions have traditionally worked in silos. As organizations modernize, bridging these silos becomes crucial not only for efficient execution but also for aligning every sprint with broader business goals.

## Collaboration models for agile sports teams

Agile collaboration in sports organizations often takes one of the following forms.

### Embedded cross-functional teams

Small teams that bring together marketers, developers, designers, and data specialists. They own a specific outcome (e.g., fan onboarding or ticket conversion).

- Example: Juventus' digital team includes tech, design, and marketing personnel working together to improve the website and app experience, sprint by sprint (Juventus, 2021).

### Virtual squads aligned to workstreams

Members remain in their home departments but join squads for time-bound sprint objectives.

- Example: LaLiga's platform development includes ticketing and data roles during release sprints for LaLigaSportsTV



(LaLiga, 2022).

### Centers of excellence (CoEs)

Expert groups (e.g., CDP specialists or data scientists) that support agile teams across departments with specialized knowledge.

- Example: Real Madrid's centralized data team supports multiple sprint initiatives with insights from fan behavior analytics (Real Madrid, 2023).

### Breaking down collaboration barriers

**Table 3. Several organizational barriers can limit agile collaboration**

Barrier	Agile enabler
Departmental silos	Cross-functional squads
Competing KPIs	Shared success metrics
Hierarchical decision-making	Empowered product owners
Slow approvals	Decentralized sprint governance
Legacy tools and workflows	Agile-friendly tech stack (e.g., Jira, Trello)

Source: own elaboration.

These enablers have been especially critical in transitioning from **“handoff culture”** to **“co-creation culture”**.

### Communication rituals for synchronization

Agile teams in sports foster collaboration with recurring rituals that maintain alignment.

- **Sprint reviews** with marketing, operations, and commercial teams to showcase new features or test results.
- **Daily standups** involving roles from multiple departments, especially useful during ticketing campaign sprints or in-season content rollouts.
- **Shared roadmaps** and Kanban boards that give visibility to all stakeholders.

These practices build psychological safety and transparency, which are essential in traditionally siloed environments.



## Role of leadership in facilitating collaboration

Leadership plays a pivotal role in reinforcing collaboration by:

- sponsoring shared objectives (e.g., “Improve fan conversion across digital channels”),
- ensuring accountability without micromanagement,
- prioritizing team success over departmental wins,
- modeling agile behaviors; being present in sprint reviews or retrospectives. In short, leadership must **shift from “controllers” to “connectors”**.

# Cultural fit: fostering the agile mindset in traditional sports institutions

## Introduction

Agile transformation is not just a procedural shift; it is a cultural revolution. In traditional sports organizations, often hierarchical, cautious, and siloed, adopting agile methods without embracing the **agile mindset** is like installing modern engines on a ship with wooden sails. True transformation demands rethinking how people collaborate, make decisions, handle uncertainty, and learn from failure.

While many sports organizations now run sprints, hold standups, and use agile boards, the **real differentiator** is whether they internalize agile values like openness, experimentation, and iterative improvement.

## What is the agile mindset?

Coined in connection with the Agile Manifesto (Becket al., 2001), the agile mindset emphasizes the following.

- **Customer obsession:** in this context, the fan.
- **Empowered teams:** decentralized decision-making and accountability.
- **Continuous learning:** embracing failure and feedback.
- **Flexibility and adaptability:** planning in shorter cycles and pivoting quickly.

It is about **thinking in hypotheses, testing with real-world feedback, and responding to change faster than competitors**, all of which are critical in the fast-moving digital sports environment.

## Cultural challenges in the sports industry

Despite growing digital ambitions, cultural frictions remain in many sports institutions.

**Table 4. Cultural frictions**

Cultural trait	Agile conflict
Command-and-control hierarchy	Slows decisions and undermines team autonomy
Risk aversion	Discourages experimentation and iterative releases
Success = Matchday revenue	Neglects long-term fan engagement or digital innovation efforts
Hero culture (star individuals)	Undermines team-based collaboration

Source: own elaboration.

For agile to flourish, these deep-seated values must evolve.

## Building blocks of agile culture in sports

To shift mindset, organizations must act deliberately. Key enablers include the following.

### Psychological safety

Team members must feel safe to speak up, challenge decisions, and admit uncertainty, a norm famously promoted at Google through Project Aristotle (Google, 2015).

### Agile champions

Intrapreneurs and mid-level managers who model agile behaviors, mentor teams, and serve as catalysts for change.

### Agile learning loops



Regular retrospectives that focus not only on “what went wrong”, but on “what was learned” and how to test new ideas.

### Fan-centric storytelling

Using agile success stories, like improved fan onboarding flows or digital feature launches, to showcase progress internally.

### Cross-level alignment

Leaders, middle managers, and team members all need to understand agile’s purpose. If leaders speak agile, but micromanage delivery, trust erodes.

### Case insight: target corporation’s agile transformation

While not a sports entity, Target’s shift to agile (Target, 2020) offers a compelling cultural case. The company:

- flattened hierarchies to empower product teams,
- re-trained managers to become coaches, not commanders,
- created shared language and rituals across tech and business.

This transformation helped Target become a digital retail leader, suggesting that **cultural fit is as much a lever as it is a barrier.**

## Real-world sports examples of agile in action

### Introduction

Theory only goes so far, it’s the application that reveals whether agile practices truly deliver value in the complex, fast-paced world of sports. Across clubs, leagues, and federations, sports organizations have begun to embrace agile as a means to align product development with fan expectations, iterate digital offerings more quickly, and avoid costly delays.

Below are four diverse examples of how agile principles are being successfully implemented



in the sports industry, spanning both club-level and league-level operations.

### **Manchester United: agile teams behind a new CDP rollout**

**Initiative:** Manchester United implemented a new customer data platform (CDP) to unify fan data and personalize engagement.

#### **Agile practice:**

- Built cross-functional agile squads including IT, marketing, and operations.
- Used two-week sprints to iteratively test data ingestion, segmentation logic, and automation triggers.
- Conducted early A/B testing with fan segments to optimize engagement workflows.

**Result:** the phased delivery allowed the club to progressively enhance fan communications and reduce reliance on generic email marketing (HCL Technologies, 2022).

### **LaLiga: iterative development of LaLigaSportsTV**

**Initiative:** LaLiga's OTT platform, LaLigaSportsTV, was developed and improved through agile product management practices.

#### **Agile practice**

- Feature backlogs prioritized based on user behavior data and fan feedback.
- Product owners worked closely with tech partners to run biweekly sprint cycles.
- Prototypes were launched early and refined continuously, from UX to ad integrations.

**Result:** the platform matured into a scalable direct-to-consumer channel, improving viewership and engagement beyond core football matches (LaLiga, 2022).

### **Juventus FC: platform relaunch in phases**



**Initiative:** Juventus relaunched its digital platforms (website, app and CRM) as part of a larger digital transformation.

**Agile practice:**

- Defined clear MVPs (minimum viable products) for each phase of the relaunch.
- Adopted agile ceremonies (sprint planning, standups, retrospectives) across product and content teams.
- Iterated on fan journey flows, pushing weekly releases and UX adjustments.

**Result:** Juventus accelerated time-to-market while gathering fan feedback in real time, improving personalization and loyalty-building capabilities (Juventus, 2021).

### NHL and SAP: sprinting with real-time data products

**Initiative:** The National Hockey League (NHL) partnered with SAP to enhance fan engagement through real-time statistics and data storytelling.

**Agile practice:**

- Developed real-time data dashboards and fan-facing products using sprint methodologies.
- Prioritized delivery of key data sets like puck tracking and player speed analytics in MVP fashion.
- Integrated agile feedback loops with internal analytics teams and broadcast partners.

**Result:** enabled new digital products during live games and elevated the league’s data-driven storytelling for fans (SAP, 2021).

### Key takeaways across cases

Table 5. Key takeaways across cases

Organization	Agile element	Outcome
Manchester United	Cross-functional agile squads	Improved segmentation and engagement



LaLiga	Iterative product development	OTT platform adoption and user growth
Juventus	Phased agile relaunch of platforms	Faster delivery, improved UX
NHL and SAP	Real-time agile product delivery	Live data engagement for fans

Source: own elaboration.

These examples show that agile can thrive not just in digital-native startups, but in legacy-rich, fan-focused sports institutions, provided the mindset, structures, and sponsorship are in place.

## Barriers and enablers to agile maturity in sports

### Introduction

Embracing agile in sports organizations is not simply about adopting new practices; it requires a shift in mindset, culture, and leadership. While the benefits are clear (faster delivery, better fan alignment, and improved cross-functional collaboration), the path to agile maturity can be filled with roadblocks. Understanding the common barriers and critical enablers helps sports organizations navigate this journey more effectively.

### Common barriers to agile maturity

#### Siloed departments and legacy structures

Sports clubs and leagues often operate in compartmentalized silos, ticketing, content, sponsorship, IT, operations; each with its own goals and processes. These silos create friction when trying to implement cross-functional agile squads. Coordination becomes slow, and ownership unclear.

#### Resistance to cultural change

Agile requires openness to change, regular feedback, and learning through failure. In sports institutions, where hierarchy and legacy



practices run deep, teams can be hesitant to adopt iterative, experimental approaches.

As noted by McKinsey and Company (2020), cultural inertia is one of the most significant obstacles to achieving agile transformation, especially in organizations not born digital.

### **Misunderstanding of agile practices**

Agile is sometimes misunderstood as “moving quickly without planning” rather than being a structured, customer-focused approach. This misconception can lead to superficial adoption, where rituals like standups or sprints are implemented without delivering real change.

### **Lack of agile talent or leadership buy-in**

In sports organizations, digital transformation is often led by a few passionate individuals without systemic support. Without leadership buy-in and internal talent who understand agile principles deeply, the transformation can stall.

## **Enablers of agile success in sports context**

### **Leadership sponsorship and vision**

Leadership that champions agile and clearly links it to strategic goals (e.g., improving fan experience or accelerating digital revenue streams) creates the foundation for sustained transformation. Senior stakeholders must go beyond endorsement and actively model agile behaviors.

### **Dedicated agile coaches or partners**

Organizations like Manchester United and Juventus have successfully leveraged external agile consultants or hired dedicated internal coaches to support change management and ensure teams are not just performing rituals, but embodying agile values (HCL Technologies, 2022).

### **Starting small, scaling smart**

Agile success in sports often begins with pilot squads, for example, a CRM development sprint or content personalization initiative. Once credibility is built and results are shown, other teams are more willing to adopt agile.

Spotify’s model of “start small, scale what works” is often cited as a best-practice framework (Kniberg and Ivarsson, 2012).

### Cross-functional team formation and co-location

Co-locating marketers, developers, designers, and analysts enables real-time collaboration and removes delay-inducing dependencies. Even in hybrid or remote environments, daily interaction and aligned goals are essential.

### Agile metrics and transparency

Visibility into velocity, sprint goals, and backlog priorities helps foster trust and alignment. Tools like Jira or Trello, used not just by tech teams but marketing and business teams, support broader agile adoption.

## Summary table: barriers vs. enablers

Table 6. Challenges and solutions

Challenges	Solutions
Siloed departments and communication Gaps	Cross-functional squads and shared OKRs
Resistance to change	Leadership modeling and cultural investment
Superficial agile adoption	Agile coaching and structured onboarding
Lack of agile talent or knowledge	Upskilling programs and external partnerships
Misalignment between strategic goals and Sprints	Agile roadmapping and milestone-based planning

Source: own elaboration.



# Conclusion

## Agile as an ongoing game plan

Agile is not a destination, it's a way of operating. For sports organizations striving to thrive in a rapidly evolving digital era, embracing Agile is about more than just updating workflows or using new software. It represents a mindset shift: prioritizing adaptability, fan feedback,

cross-functional collaboration, and continuous delivery of value. This mindset is essential for delivering digital experiences that resonate with modern fans and for staying competitive in a global entertainment market that increasingly rewards speed, relevance, and personalization.

Throughout this reading, we've explored how Agile can be customized to suit the unique pace, structure, and strategic needs of the sports industry. From aligning sprint planning with seasonal rhythms to fostering collaboration across departments like marketing, technology, operations, and content, Agile methods provide a blueprint for managing change dynamically. Real-world examples (from Manchester United's CRM rollout to LaLiga's iterative OTT platform development) demonstrate the effectiveness of Agile when thoughtfully applied.

However, adopting Agile is not without challenges. Legacy cultures, unclear roles, and misaligned incentives can hinder progress. That's why success requires strong leadership, clear communication, and a willingness to iterate and learn. Agile should be seen as a team sport, requiring participation and support across the organization, from board members to data scientists, from digital strategists to content producers.

Ultimately, Agile enables sports organizations to zoom in and out—balancing big-picture strategy with focused execution. It empowers clubs and leagues to respond quickly to change, co-create with fans, and pursue innovation in meaningful, manageable ways. In the game of digital transformation, Agile is not just a play, it's the ongoing game plan.

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