

## You're Waterfall? – No Problem

If you read much project management stuff today, it's hard to find anyone who has anything nice to say about Waterfall.

And I'm sure not going to try.

Just kidding. Sort of. But like it or not, it's a fact – most project management done today is done Waterfall, not Agile. So whether it's good or not, lots of people have to deal with it. Maybe you're one of them. Question is – are you doomed?

Let me ask a question – are all of these statements true for your situation?

Do you have very specific and separated stages for your project?

Does every i have to be dotted and every t crossed before you move on to the next phase of your project?

Does everybody freak if something changes once you get past a certain point in the project?

Do you keep secrets from some management people about the project and it's status?

If you answered yes to ALL of these, then you truly are on an inclined plane wrapped helically around an axis (screwed). It's not that your project won't succeed, it might, but you probably can't do projects quickly (unless you keep a lot of secrets) and easily.

If you answered no to at least one of those and are using Waterfall, you can be saved, but there are a couple of things you should try to do with your Waterfall methodology.

First, minimize the amount of time spent developing the 'specs'.

This might be one document or five, one format or various. Whatever it is, do it and get it over with.

I'm not saying to do a poor job, just to do it as expeditiously as possible.

It's easy to do two things at this point. One is to think you have all the time in the world to get this done. You don't. And two, to obsess about the perfection of the document you are creating. No matter how much time you spend on it, it will change at some point in the future, so save yourself some worry.

Treat the time spent on that as just what it is, time spent on a task other than building working software, almost as time that is being taken from the project.

Second, really hammer home with the customer that this is what they are going to get so you want some solid feedback.

As I said in some of the other articles, I don't think people pay attention to written documents. They respond best to something they can play with.

But you are not going to have something for them to play with, not until it's too late. So you have to use the only weapon you have – your voice.

You need to explain, verbally, with them watching your lips move, exactly what you are proposing and what they are going to have to do because of it. Do it multiple times, at different points in the day, under varying weather conditions to make sure they really do get it.

Then pay attention to their response.

Third, use iterations in your build process.

You don't have to use SCRUM.

But you should use iterations. Or phases. Anything to break the project up and have some sort of deliverable as soon as possible.

And start with the most important pieces of the project.

The end hope is to get some working software into customer hands early on and to slowly add complexity to the process.

The truth is, you can function very well in a Waterfall world. I prefer Agile, but have spent the bulk of my career wiping the mist from my glasses and there really are lots of times where Waterfall can work just as well as Agile, as long as you keep in view what is important.

Want more info on Agile? Or Waterfall? Or how **SCS** can help your company with it's project management issues? [Cool](#).