Contested Development: Finding Pragmatism in Agile DevOps

The advent of Agile and DevOps methodologies has revolutionized software development, bringing about increased agility, collaboration, and efficiency. However, in certain contexts, these methodologies can encounter challenges and conflicts, leading to contested development—a situation where different stakeholders hold opposing views on the development process.

Contested development can arise from various factors, such as differing priorities, communication gaps, or technical constraints. To address these challenges and achieve project success, it is crucial to adopt a pragmatic approach that balances the principles of Agile and DevOps while considering the unique circumstances of the contested development environment.

Contested Development: Finding Pragmatism in Agile & DevOps by Roy Furr

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Understanding Contested Development

Contested development occurs when there is a lack of consensus among stakeholders on the development approach. This can manifest in several forms:

- **Conflicting Priorities:** Stakeholders may prioritize different outcomes, such as speed over quality or vice versa, leading to tension in the development process.

- **Communication Gaps:** Poor communication can result in misunderstandings and misalignment between teams, hindering effective collaboration.

- **Technical Constraints:** Existing infrastructure or legacy systems can impose limitations on the implementation of certain Agile or DevOps practices.

- **Cultural Differences:** Teams with different cultural backgrounds may have varying expectations and communication styles, which can create challenges in contested development.

Finding Pragmatism in Contested Development

Addressing contested development requires a pragmatic approach that combines the strengths of Agile and DevOps with consideration for the specific challenges. Here are some strategies to foster pragmatism:

- **Embrace Adaptability:** Agile principles emphasize flexibility and responsiveness. Embrace this mindset to adapt to changing priorities and constraints, adjusting the development approach as needed.

- **Foster Collaboration:** DevOps promotes collaboration between development and operations teams. Establish clear communication channels, regular meetings, and joint ownership of deliverables to bridge any gaps.

- **Prioritize Value Delivery:** Focus on delivering valuable software increments that meet customer needs. This helps align stakeholders' priorities and provides a common ground for decision-making.

- **Use Hybrid Methodologies:** Contested development may require a hybrid approach that combines elements of Agile and traditional methodologies. Customize the process to suit the project's context and address specific challenges.

- **Seek External Support:** If internal efforts to resolve contested development are unsuccessful, consider seeking guidance from external experts or consultants who can provide objective perspectives and facilitation.

Case Study: Implementing Agile DevOps in a Regulated Environment

Consider a financial services company that seeks to implement Agile DevOps in a highly regulated environment. The company faces challenges in balancing the need for speed and innovation with strict compliance requirements. To address this contested development:

- The company adopted a hybrid methodology that combined Agile principles with structured governance processes to ensure regulatory compliance.

- Cross-functional teams were formed to foster collaboration between development, testing, and compliance teams.
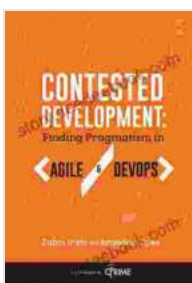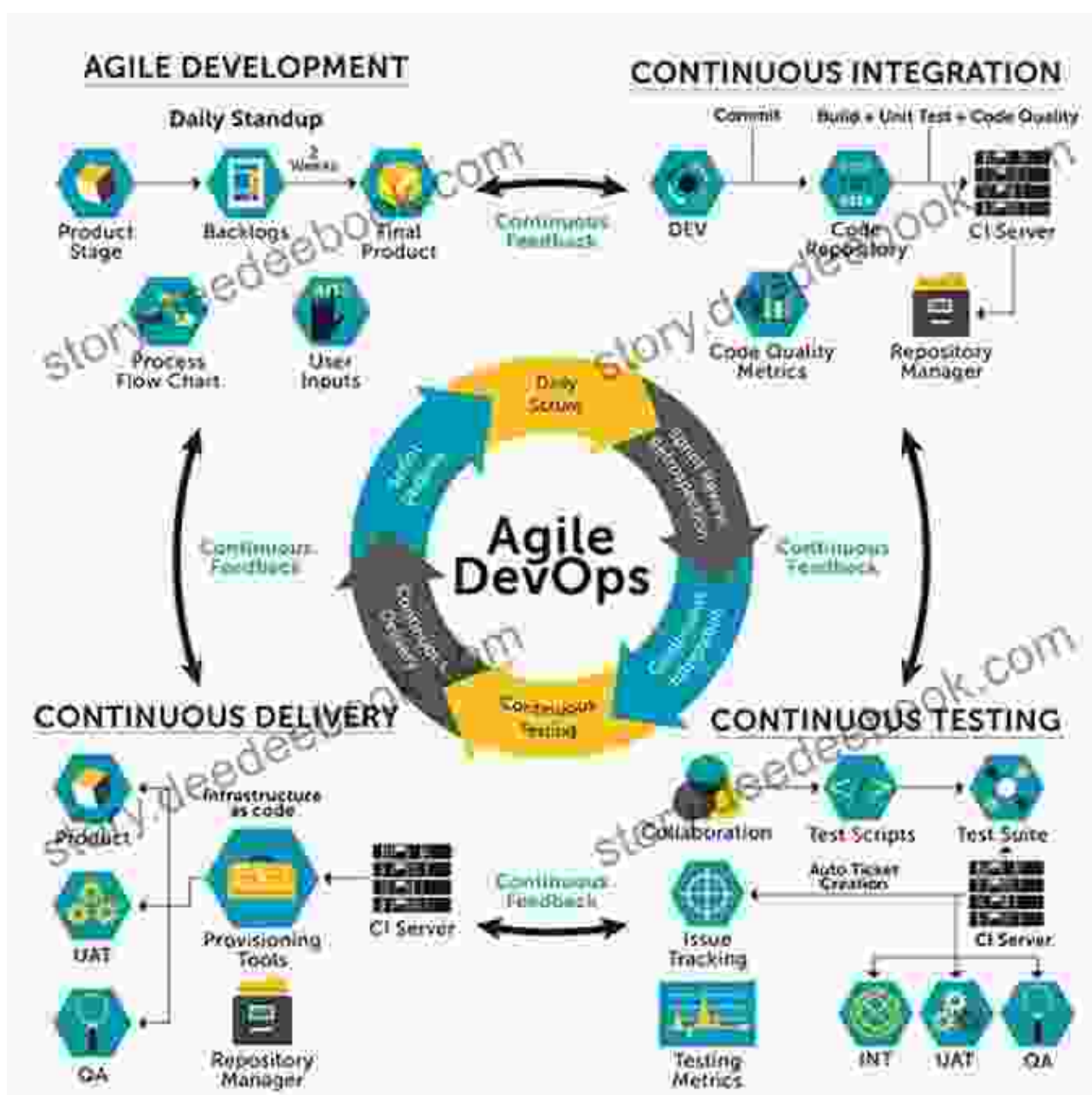
- Regular audits and reviews were conducted to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

- External auditors were engaged to provide independent validation and guidance.

Contested development is an inevitable challenge in certain software development environments. By embracing pragmatism, adopting a hybrid approach, and fostering collaboration, organizations can navigate these conflicts and achieve successful project outcomes. Balancing the principles of Agile and DevOps while considering the unique circumstances of each contested development environment is key to unlocking the full potential of these methodologies.

Remember, the goal of contested development is not to eliminate conflict but to manage it effectively and find solutions that prioritize value delivery and project success.

References

- Contested Agile Transformations

- Overcoming the Challenges of Implementing Agile DevOps in Regulated Environments

- How We Balanced Regulatory Requirements with Agile and DevOps in an Upgrade

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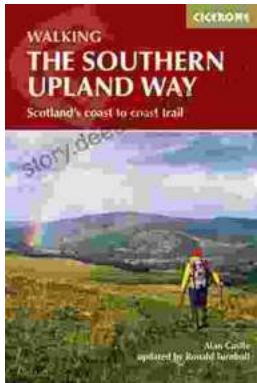
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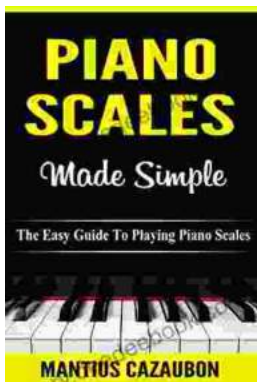|	
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