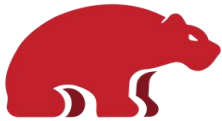


Resetting An Agile Team After A Failed Agile Transformation



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Executive Summary

An organization and team going through an agile transformation is an exciting and sometimes scary situation. When done right, teams can see the value right away. When done wrong, everyone experiences frustration and disillusion about the benefits of agile.

Unfortunately, they experienced the wrong way of going through a transformation for one department and their two teams. For months after the official transformation start date, the teams could not produce any value experienced delays even in their deliveries. In the end, they were following the old waterfall format within a short time. Do what was occurring as they were extending work committed between sprints without changing the following Sprint. Therefore they were dramatically increasing the amount of work Sprint after Sprint.

Coming into the teams four months into their agile journey with very tight timelines on mission-critical deployments scheduled, it was a matter of reintroducing how to be agile while ensuring that there was no impact on the organization's deliveries and their clients.

There were very noticeable results with the team's productivity and value within a short period.

Results

- All mission-critical deliveries deployed as planned.
- Productivity improved 100% within three months
- Team focused roadmap decisions

Challenges

The main challenge viewed throughout the coaching sessions was that the initial implementation of an agile environment was just a team setup and training what Scrum is. Some additional workshops dealt with how to write user stories and planning; unfortunately, they did not go in the direction based on the team's capabilities. There was no proper change management for behavioural changes needed for such a drastic change in getting the work done.

One of the other challenges was that the senior leadership drove the teams to deliver. The timelines significantly constrained them and still had a command and control environment. It was so cumbersome that it put deliveries at risk because of waiting for approvals by senior leadership. The organization did have agile coaches to create an agile environment. Unfortunately, it was focused on speed and not looking at individual capabilities and ensuring that the team would succeed. There was an introduction of a risk model the agile teams needed to follow before deployment. In the end, it was the traditional risk model with terms: agile, Scrum, SAFe©.

As part of the initial transformation and the team creation, there were many turnovers with individuals in the team and constant shifting of team members. Although there was steady attrition within the group, the foundation of agile behaviours was not consistent. The team lacked direction in being agile and the discipline to look within themselves to become better at their work.

In the end, each Sprint was a mini waterfall project where the silos between each discipline of development business analyst and testing had full handoffs between each group. The agile coaches were not coaching teams to be agile. More program managers were dictating delivery dates and not coaching individuals and teams to be agile and more effective.

They did not understand what Jocko Willink says – "Discipline is the pathway to freedom."

Reintroducing agile behaviours on the fly

One of the first things was to ensure that the teams felt they had a safe space to work with each other. Most of the team members functioned in a waterfall environment with full command and control, due dates and budget-specific backdrop. With that and the little experience they had with being agile and running a scrum framework, they instilled behaviours that everyone exhibited that were very anti agile.

The teams needed to understand that mikes are like a hockey team on the ice, the different positions are there, yet they still work together in unison to play the sport. They needed to get out of saying this group caused the issue and move towards the problem is caused by a process break. What do we need to do to fix it?

Working with them and showing how development testing this is analyst and product owners can work together to create a high-quality system and change was paramount. Getting them to not focus on the events used in Scrum and focus more on the abilities to communicate within each of the remote teams due to COVID pandemic issues and with offshore teams in India.

Often, when found issues and individuals waited to speak to the coach or the scrum master to resolve it, a phone call, email, or text message between them and another team member would settle it. So with the reintroduction, using the current toolset that they have for communicating was vital in ensuring that there is no longer a day wait between an issue that comes up during a daily scrum call, which allowed for the achievement of proper value in those events.

In the first two months of reintroducing agile behaviours workshops, daily calls one-on-one meetings with individuals on the team to better understand what was needed, their role in the team, and the expectations.

Results, Return on Investment and Future Plans

It was challenging to achieve completed value and work within their sprints for the first three months of coaching the team. The main reason was that they were going through a transformation when they needed to complete work by a specific date. The pressure and stress to each team member were high where a lot was working extra hours trying to get everything to work within the team's flow and ensuring that the work was complete as expected.

The team was successful in meeting all their deadlines and deployment dates. Although using agile metrics and a shared understanding of completion of work, it was not in a scrum framework for the team to deliver. It was not until the second month in the coaching assignment that they had a complete understanding of what needed to be delivered when it needed to be delivered and the decisions that were required to ensure that everyone was in agreeance on expectations. It was because goals and roadmaps were in constant flux within that time frame.

They took that reintroducing agile behaviours in the transformation created a very chaotic environment during that time frame. After the first delivery, the team rebounded and became an agile team. By the end of the fourth month, their productivity increased by 25%. At the end of the fifth month, it was up by another 40%. The team's accomplishment at the end of the sixth month the team not only had another increase in productivity they also completed all work that they committed to within the Sprint with no carryover.