

Concept Engineering

Taking Scrum to their clients



“Scrum has handed back control to our clients. They love the flexibility and transparency that it brings”

THE ISSUE

Concept Engineering provides services ranging from consulting and advice through to the customised design, construction and implementation of software systems.

Concept Engineering had already been working through its own implementation of Scrum but there were issues in some aspects of the delivery and a realisation that getting the entire company engaged was going to take a lot longer than anticipated.

THE SOLUTION

So when Concept Engineering was asked by the Canterbury Development Corporation if it would like to participate in Scrum training through the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment's High Performance Working Initiative, it was as an ideal opportunity to address some of the issues they were having, as well as fast-track the engagement of both development teams and management staff.

Sixteen staff undertook the training with Clarus (Clarus was acquired by Assurity in December 2012), including developers, business analysts, product owners and

KEY RESULTS

- + Far greater client engagement with everyone tuned in to the two-week sprint cycle
- + More flexibility in meeting the clients' needs and transparency to work being done
- + Better estimation of time and resourcing required for projects
- + Ability for developers to work remotely (from Melbourne) within the team environment
- + Self-managing teams. Ability to identify problems and solve them
- + Instant visibility for management on work being done. It's all on the Scrum board
- + Marked increase in throughput. More work being done than ever before

“As a manager, I can go to the sprint board and see everything I need to know as it is all there in front of me”

testers from across the two teams. The training also included a developer who is now going to work with the teams remotely from Melbourne – something that the bi-weekly cycle of Scrum makes much more viable.

According to the Managing Director of Concept Engineering, Chris Graham, the training has stabilised the whole work process for the company. “Previously, we were not as structured in our approach” he says.

“Some tasks got missed and it wasn’t as easy to monitor or measure workflow. Now members of both teams are able to cover for each other if required and take ownership of the work to be completed. More structure has resulted in higher productivity, more profit, less rework and a much more stable environment.”

THE RESULTS

While many of us focus on the internal results of introducing Scrum, Concept Engineering has found it to be a really big hit with its clients. “Clients are tuning in on our sprint cycles” explains Chris Graham. “On one large project, we give the client their own demo every two weeks. This is timed outside of our own sprint cycle so we can do the reveal internally first. It means the client knows exactly where the project is at. They are able to reset priorities and make sure that what we are building is what they really need.”

Chris also believes the process has relieved a lot of the internal frustration in dealing with client expectations as well. “Previously, it was a case of estimating the time required and working to milestones. It could be months before the client actually saw anything developed. In that time, the world has usually shifted and requirements changed. It could be very frustrating to make numerous reworks – not to mention expensive.

“Scrum has also helped us to manage client projects more effectively. On bespoke projects, we can quote with a lot more certainty around the time it will take

and the resources needed. In effect, Scrum has handed control back to the clients, while giving us the opportunity to be truly visible and accountable to both internal and external stakeholders.”

He also says it is interesting how the different team styles have developed. “One team just loves process. They love discussing everything they have done in detail. The other team simply isn’t into that and is much more task-focused. Both are effective, but you do start to see a definite style emerge.” The bi-weekly celebrations of team success has also seen a sharp increase in the company’s budget for pizza, but Chris believes it is a small investment for the results Concept Engineering is now achieving.

“We have been able to measure a percentage increase in throughput and we are getting through far more points, with more work completed than we ever did before,” he says. “And, if there is a problem, the teams own it – they don’t try and dodge the issue. I don’t have to micro-manage what is going on. I just focus on my areas of concerns and let them get on with it.”

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