

“We want to get better at Agile, but are not sure how best to do it.” CTO of a \$1B Corporation

Many companies have successfully implemented Agile, but are unsure how to improve. This case study shows how Group Atlantic was able to help take their successful Agile implementation to the next level.

Agile Level-Up Improving Agile Execution

With a focus on innovation, technology and teamwork, this company implemented the Agile framework in its Information Technology (IT) department. Over 2 years, this move to agile resulted in the company reaping the benefits of an improved focus on customer needs and faster speed to market with its product enhancements, resulting in rapid, controlled growth. Executive management recognized that further improvements in Agile execution were essential to continuous improvements and future growth. Group Atlantic was chosen to provide the expertise and guidance to ensure current and continuous improvements of their Agile program.

COMPANY PROFILE

For over 35 years this company, a division of a Fortune 1000 corporation, has been a leading global innovator in the highly competitive automotive services industry. Based in suburban Chicago, this company has over 150 locations in the U.S. and Canada and 2200 employees.

A past Digital Edge award winner, this company uses digital technology to redefine the competitive landscape in its industry and to create a distinct competitive advantage. Information Technology is centralized at division headquarters and provides technology support to all locations.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Executive management made it very clear they wanted to improve what was in place with their agile implementation because it was successful. They did not want a pre-defined training curriculum nor another new cookbook standard methodology. The executives were looking for a firm willing to invest the time needed to understand their company culture, business processes and strategic plans before crafting a solution.

The target for this engagement was 18 Agile teams comprised of people in Information Technology and Product Management.



“Group Atlantic’s guiding principle is to provide our customers exceptional quality and lasting value on every engagement.”

J. Scott Stribrny
President & Founder

It’s not just what you do, but also how you do it that is often the difference between success and failure.

Communications and change management are always key components of a Group Atlantic engagement. Experience shows that failures often result from inadequate attention to the impacts of new implementations on people, not from problems with technology. At Group Atlantic we focus on people first, processes second and then technology.

Though the Agile framework was successfully implemented across the teams, they were delivering inconsistent results – both the volume of work and the quality varied considerably from team to team.

Additionally, key performance metrics were in place, but their accuracy was questioned. As a result, it was extremely difficult to identify actionable insights from these metrics.

SOLUTION

Group Atlantic used their unique Perception Analysis Methodology (PAM) to quickly and accurately assess the current Agile environment. This web-based tool allows employees to provide anonymous responses to customized questions and provided a true picture of employee perceptions about their workplace. PAM helped identify and confirm misconceptions held by management about their environment.

Supplementing the PAM analysis with a brief on-site assessment phase with six representative pilot teams, Group Atlantic developed a custom Agile improvement plan based on the organization’s business, culture and organizational structure.

Even during the assessment phase, Group Atlantic was able to identify some “quick hits” and help the pilot teams implement immediate team specific improvements in their Agile execution.

Group Atlantic took 3 waves of 6 teams each through action learning based training and coaching sessions to build a solid foundation for success. One key was the introduction of specific techniques on identifying and assessing business value.

Group Atlantic identified 3 major themes to achieve the objectives: development of clear actionable improvements from retrospectives; creating and grooming of minimum viable product backlogs outside of full team meetings, and performing testing earlier and more often in the process.

The initial effort realized desired quality production outcomes, along with reduced time-to-completion and cost reduction objectives. It was lauded by happy and excited team members, who worked together and owned projects in ways they had not experienced in the past.

Leadership took notice and Group Atlantic was engaged to assist with more initiatives to: drive faster turnaround times, define a state of done-ness and enable a true collaboration culture of information and knowledge sharing.

ACTION LEARNING

Group Atlantic training employs action learning principles which combine education in principles, techniques and tools with on-site mentoring during live projects, guiding participants in the actual application of the lessons learned. This approach has proven extremely effective in the retention of new concepts and their operationalization.

