

A Retrospective: Managing Agile Transition in Government Bureaucracy

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Judy Wankerl

- Agile Coach
- Practicing Agile since 2000
- Career Path: Mathematician->Software Engineer->Traditional Software Manager->Agile Coach
- CSM, CSP



Brandon Raines

- Practicing Agile since 2002
- Typical Software path, tester, developer, project manager, etc.
- Passionate about working with motivated teams to achieve their goals
- CSM, CSP



Setting the Stage

- Our Focus: Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense



Gather Data: The Problem

- Systems not getting fielded quickly enough to meet mission concerns
- Teams not meeting commitments
- Teams on the chopping block
- Front page headlines of 2+ year requirements endeavors

Gather Data: The Approach

- Agile!
- Two Agencies-Two Approaches
 - Ad hoc
 - Training + Coaching

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- **Government Culture**
 - Document Driven
 - Plan Driven
 - Change Aversion
 - Command and Control Mindset

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- **Contracts**
 - Fixed Price
 - Staged Gate Funding
 - Incremental funding with go/no-go decisions
 - Time and Materials with delivery bonuses
 - Pure Time and Materials
 - Stakeholders must be accountable
 - Stakeholders must govern

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Geography
 - Teams rarely co-located
 - Travel/parking difficult
 - Difficult to move teams around
 - Space is a problem in general
 - Cube culture

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Ever Changing Mission/Unrealistic Stakeholders
 - Mission changes day to day, minute to minute
 - Stakeholders mistakenly believe it's all important
 - Unrealistic expectations of what the team can accomplish

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Security/Certification & Accreditation
 - C&A process is waterfall
 - Requires clear “milestones” (e.g. Requirements reviews, IOC, FOC)
 - Security engineering viewed as “different” than other types of engineering (e.g. systems engineering)
 - C&A is slow (“board”-laden)
 - Document driven

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Specializations/Silos
 - Individuals are hired for a particular skill
 - Contracts are written for specific skill
 - Reluctance of team members to do work other than what they were hired to do

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Status Reports
 - Weekly/Monthly status reporting
 - Reporting vehicles don't align with agile processes

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- Testing
 - IV&V
 - Testers are not developers
 - Hand off
 - Testers and Delivery Teams are segregated
 - Testing environments not available or don't match Production
 - Test infection has not been reached

Generate Insights: The Impediments

- **Governance**
 - **Boards, Reviews and Inspections**
 - Bureaucracy at its best!
 - Engineering Review Boards
 - Configuration Management Boards
 - Contract deliverables/reviews
 - Security boards
 - **Enterprise Considerations**
 - Relying on other Non-Agile Teams
 - Cross organization dependencies

What We Did

- Why Ad Hoc?
 - Culture of the team
 - Government not willing to invest in training
- Ad Hoc Approach (OJT)
 - Roll out agile in little chunks
 - Training was focused on specific techniques

What We Did

- Train
 - Provide a full curriculum of courses
 - Team focused
 - Boot camps
 - User Stories
 - Estimating & Planning
 - Product Owner
 - Open Enrollment:
 - Agile Overviews (monthly)
 - Certified/Non-certified ScrumMaster Training



What We Did

- **Coach** the teams
 - Perform agile assessment
 - Developed customized coaching plan for each team
 - Targeted Areas:
 - Additional Training
 - Facilitated Sessions
 - Observation and Feedback
 - Time with team based on team needs
 - Sprint retros for the coaches!

What We Did

- Train the Stakeholders
 - Made a big investment in ensuring that product owners/stakeholders were engaged
 - Training Opportunities:
 - Boot Camps
 - Product Owner's Workshop
 - Targeted Agile Overviews
 - Facilitated stakeholder sessions (neutral 3rd party is very effective)

What We Did

- Organizational Coaching/Buy-In
 - Commitment was made across Applications Development organization
 - Executive Training
 - Offered 1 hour executive overviews
 - Visited executive offsite
 - On-demand briefings



What We Learned

- Ad hoc coaching not effective
- Need whole team to embrace transition: just jump in!
- Need a person on the team passionate about Scrum to pass the torch
- Retrospectives are incredibly important (we knew this already, right?)
- Organizational & stakeholder buy-in critical

Where We've Succeeded

- Proven that Training + Coaching Model works
- Agile & The Government can peacefully coexist (with some tweaks)
- Closing the chasm between business and delivery teams
- Closing the chasm between testing and development (raising awareness of testing)
- Agile can work on large projects
- Agile can work geographically distributed
- Using roadmaps as a fine substitute for up-front, detailed planning



Nuts We Still Have to Crack...

- Testing
- Truly embracing cross-functional teams
- Instilling the concept of “being” agile, vs. “doing” agile
 - Self-organization
 - Servant Leadership
- Certification & Accreditation & Security Engineering
- Contracts



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Find the slides at

- <http://www.bluecollarobjects.com/bin/view/Main/Agile2009>
- www.celeritytechnical.com

