RESCUING PROJECTS WITH VISUALISATION AND DAILY HUDDLES

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Background

Our organisation partners with clients and helps them to address their IT related requirements. A large chunk of the projects fall into application maintenance, minor enhancement, bug fixing and L3 analysis space following standard lifecycle (traditional approach) and there is a strong belief in the senior leaders that a well- defined process would resolve their problems. Through this experience report, we would like to share how Visualisation and Daily Huddle Practices rescued the project from depleting customer confidence and quality of service delivery.

Project Demographics and Problem Statement

A project team of 9 members distributed across 2 locations was working on an application involving enhancements and maintenance for a large investment bank. The core functionality of the application was to calculate the various indices and involved complex logic which required knowledgeable team. Despite the fact that the platform has been in use for many years, new features were still being implemented by the same project team. Yet it was taking longer duration to complete the change requests.

Technology	CR Size & Type	# Applications Supported	Domain
Oracle, Java, Unix, Mat lab	5 to 7 Days, Development, Enhancements (Major & Minor)	2 Applications	Equities & Derivatives

The team was responsible for all the activities from analysis to deployment. There were many challenges faced by the team, of which the key ones are listed below

Delay in delivery and low productivity as perceived by the customer

Low quality of deliverables

Lack of senior management involvement in planning and forecasting capacity leading to constant pressure on the delivery team

Low morale of the team

This paper describes how we adopted a few agile practices by a small team by combining selected agile practices and

principles of Scrum, Kanban and Lean methodologies. Implementing these Practices had helped the team in surfacing the various issues in team, senior management & client and enabled defining practical and well-functioning collaboration between them

Approach

The Project Manager partnered with COE of Agile and assessed the project problems (common ones which afflict many IT projects), are listed below

- Disconnect / indirect means of communication between client IT and delivery teams.

- Frequent change of work priority

- Unrealistic expectations by client on delivery capacity (Demand Planning)

- Lack of visibility within the teams and to other stakeholders

Execution

It was decided to unearth the problems and to adopt a dynamic practice called "Retrospection" The idea was to give the team a platform to talk about the issues as they see and also to have an open discussion across the team members. The outcome of the retrospection brought out the pain points of the team which have been listed below

1) Too many customer escalations

2) Missing deadlines for their deliverables

3) Customer (IT) would prioritise without knowing when the work items would complete (Predictability)

4) Team slogged during the weekend and got burned out

5) Management and senior management was not aware of demand and capacity

6) No clarity on who is doing what (Visibility)

It was decided to implement Visualization Practices as it aids to address some of the issues listed above as the root causes of many of the ills. In addition, to bring more collaboration between team members we had daily stand-up's, tracked the work visually and had regular retrospectives to ensure that there was constant flow of information between the team, client and

Senior management

During the implementation, the 3 areas which groups and the challenges within those that were addressed were

Business

Prioritize features by highest business/end user value 'Drive' the development efforts to incrementally deliver

Teams

Eliminating waste and reducing context switching

Focused on enhancing knowledge sharing

Improving collaboration

Improving Quality

Deliver Right at First Time

Management:

Focus on the value stream (cycle time—idea to implementation)

'Drive' Continuous Improvement (Kaizen)

Manage impediments

Current Status

The adoption of these practices brought in visible changes in the issues listed above with the primary ones being
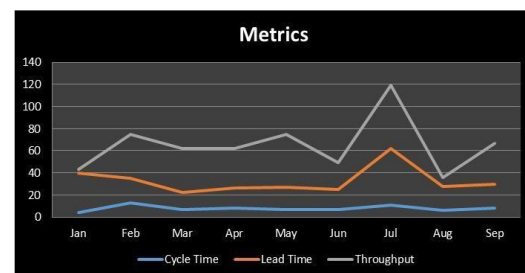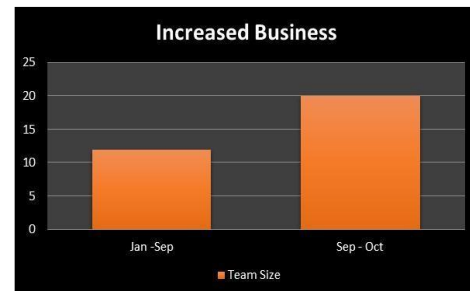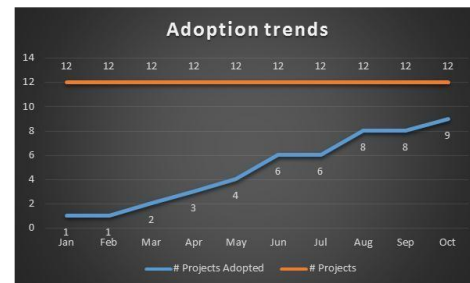
Better transparency on existing work

Ability to plan better due to increased visibility

Improved quality of deliverables due to better planning and reduction of ad hoc work

Better team morale

Overall improvement in work environment due to less escalations, improved on-time delivery etc

These benefits have resulted in more projects adopting the practices and it is now common to see visual boards, stand-up meetings when one walks in the ODC. There is a perceptible change in the culture and mind set

Feedback

Customer Observations

The client's monthly governance calls to understand the performance of the team and the pain points were conducted objectively based on the parameters shown in the adjacent diagram. After adopting the

Visualization and Daily Huddle Agile Practices, the scores started increasing and the change was seen by the customer as well.

Team Observations

1. Improved Quality because of the Acceptance Criteria and Definition of Done for each work items

2. Proactively act on Impediments, Issues gets communicated early; client has appreciated on improved communication of risk/issues.

3. Transparency on status , who is doing what

4. Resource utilization

5. Increased throughput

6. Improved Quality and Collaboration within the team.

7. Improved Team Collaboration and Application Knowledge

8. Team is less stressed due to proper planning and prioritization

9. Schedule is 100% adhered.

Management Observations

I have seen the following improvements in DBIQ due to visualization dashboard implementation and tracking mechanism

• Schedule is 100% adhered (we have perfect 7 score for last month)

• No. of indices delivered in last month has increased significantly due to effective utilization of resources (waste is reduced)

• Client is happy with the deliverable and PCSAT has increased from 4 levels last Nov/Dec to 6.16 today

• Proactive risk/issue identification and communication has been appreciated by client, please see BSC feedback

• Defects in deployment is one area which is still requiring an improvement

Conclusions

Based on the feedback from the above project and other projects, our group has added the above practices into a larger framework and the table below represents the adoption rates.

- F o c u s e d Accounts : 9

- Total no. of traditional projects : 85

- No of team members in these projects : 1400 (approximately)

Many times we look at a new approach and have an "all-or-nothing" attitude towards it. However with some more analysis we realized that some practices can be applied even in parts and can still give benefits as compared to adopting something in its entirety