**Agile Scrum Master**

**Case Study**

**Agile Transformation at John Deere**



**Objective**

The primary objective of John Deere’s Agile transformation was to enhance the speed and efficiency of delivering outcomes. This included achieving faster delivery times, increasing productivity, improving employee engagement, and reducing costs. Ultimately, the goal was to drive innovation and maintain a competitive edge in the industry.

**Background**

John Deere's Global IT group, like many large organizations, faced significant challenges with outdated business practices that limited their ability to innovate and respond quickly to market changes. While some Agile teams were in place, the absence of a cohesive strategy across the organization led to inefficiencies and inconsistent results. The IT teams were often constrained by rigid project timelines, extensive preplanning, and a heavy reliance on outsourcing. These factors created bottlenecks and slowed the delivery of customer value.

**Critical Information**

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive transformation, John Deere sought to unify the organization under a single Agile framework. This involved reducing dependencies on non-Agile teams, shifting from a project-oriented approach to a product-oriented focus, and embedding new practices and mindsets across the entire IT group.

**The Challenge**

John Deere faced several challenges during this transformation, including overcoming the fragmented use of different Agile frameworks, reducing reliance on traditional project management practices, and addressing the constraints of legacy systems. Additionally, the organization needed to build internal expertise and create a self-sustaining Agile environment capable of continuous improvement and adaptation.

**The Agile Shift**

To address these challenges, John Deere implemented a comprehensive Agile Operating Model based on the Scrum and Scrum@Scale frameworks, integrated with DevOps practices. This shift involved restructuring teams around Agile value streams, increasing in-house technical capabilities, and providing extensive training to align all team members with the new ways of working.

**Cultural Transformation**

The transformation required a significant cultural shift from traditional command-and-control management to Agile servant leadership. To facilitate this change, John Deere introduced the foundry, a training facility designed to deeply embed Agile principles within the organization. The foundry provided continuous learning opportunities, ensuring that Agile practices became a core part of the company’s culture.

**Key Factors in Agile Transformation**

**Leadership support and governance**

Leadership played a critical role in the success of the transformation. Senior leaders were actively involved in advocating for Agile practices, aligning business strategies with Agile methodologies, and ensuring that resources were allocated effectively. A governance model was established to support Agile teams, allowing them the autonomy to make decisions while aligning with the company’s broader strategic goals.

**Technology and tooling**

John Deere upgraded its technological infrastructure to support Agile practices, adopting tools that facilitated continuous integration and delivery, real-time collaboration, and project tracking. The integration of DevOps with Agile frameworks streamlined development and operations, reducing deployment time and improving software quality.

**Employee empowerment and training**

Extensive training programs were rolled out across the organization to equip all employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in an Agile environment. Teams were empowered to make decisions and take ownership of their work, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and job satisfaction.

**Customer-centric approach**

The Agile transformation helped the organization to refocus on delivering customer value. John Deere enhanced product quality and addressed consumer needs by reducing feedback loops and included customers in the development process. Collaboration with customers allowed for more frequent and meaningful interactions, which informed product development and enhancements.

**Sustainability and continuous improvement**

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the Agile transformation, John Deere implemented continuous training, established communities of practice, and regularly assessed Agile practices. The company fostered a culture of continuous improvement, encouraging teams to reflect on their practices and make incremental enhancements to boost efficiency and effectiveness.

**Scalability and flexibility**

John Deere successfully scaled Agile practices across various departments and locations, ensuring organization-wide adoption of the transformation. The Agile framework provided the flexibility to adapt quickly to changing market conditions and customer requirements, becoming a key competitive advantage.

**Goals-Focused Transformation**

The transformation at John Deere was highly goal-oriented, with a strong emphasis on aligning Agile practices with the company's strategic objectives. Each step of the Agile shift was driven by well-defined goals, such as improving time to market, enhancing productivity, and increasing customer satisfaction. By continuously measuring progress against these goals, John Deere ensured that the transformation remained focused on delivering tangible business value.

**Results and Benefits**

The transformation delivered significant results:

* **Output:** Increased by 165%, far exceeding initial expectations
* **Time to market:** Reduced by 63%, significantly surpassing targets
* **Cost efficiency:** Achieved a 20% reduction in labor costs
* **Employee engagement:** Improved Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) from 42 to 65, reflecting higher employee satisfaction and engagement
* **Overall:** Delivered a return on investment exceeding 100%, demonstrating the substantial impact of the initiative

**Conclusion**

John Deere’s comprehensive Agile transformation has positioned the company to respond more effectively to market demands, deliver value faster, and maintain its leadership in the industry. The successful adoption of Agile at scale has empowered teams, reduced time to market, and fostered a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that John Deere is a   
well-equipped for future challenges. This case study illustrates how a well-executed Agile transformation can drive substantial business outcomes and create a sustainable competitive advantage.