

The challenge here was enabling a team comprised of both on & off-shore resources with the bulk of the developers/testers on the team being off-shore. Additionally that offshore team was geographically split between Bangalore(Devs) & Hyderabad(Test). I had the privilege of visiting both teams in location as ambassador for the Agile/Lean approach with some individual & group success.

For both TUI & the off-shore teams Agile was, culturally, a new & threatening experience – with the concept of delivering constructive but honest team feedback a huge blocker. When acknowledgement & approval were coupled to constructive frankness we accelerated.

In addition, the TUI-employed release mgmt & operational support teams were separate entities with the defensive relationships being a barrier rather than a gateway to going Live.

6 months in I was offered the opportunity to assume the SM role for the fully on-shore Management Information Dev Team. I jumped at the chance.

Pros: Fully integrated Dev expertise – complete Dev deliverable & seasoned team. Permanent employees with extensive technical & cultural experience.

Cons: Cross-functionally incomplete Scrum team. Complete Scrum team breakdown. Frustrated and skeptical 'Product Owner'/Director; Dis-functional release process; De-motivated & cynical dev team. Widespread organisational resentment/cynicism of Agile/Lean approach.

The core issues were rooted in a lack of trust both within the team & at all team interfaces. My core Scrum team were all developers. The PO, testers, release mgmt & ops were all external to that core team. Far from ideal.

The key lesson here was for me to focus on current behaviours rather than past events & resentments. By highlighting the impact of current, unconstructive behaviours I was able to create a space for the team to heal. Individuals were then able to change their behaviours without appearing to 'climb down'.

My immediate focus was on establishing trust in the team & in the Scrum cycle; restoring full participation of the PO and building strong partnerships between the team and the 'external' functions.

Through continuous marginal gains – with heavy a focus on quality and integrity of delivery - morale and trust improved across the board and we accelerated.

The result was that a year later we were the first to release our Phoenix delivery to Live and we had established ourselves as a Team that delivers.

Wordtracker Ltd: Mar '12 – Feb '14 : Scrum Master

Wordtracker provides keyword research tools allowing clients to manage the effectiveness of their marketing – the goal being to generate traffic to their sites.

I work in close partnership with the Product Managers, domain experts & the development team to enable the full agile life cycle. Agile Coaching and eliminating impediments was key to my success here.

I have also introduced an explicit focus on Quality with TDD finally becoming the default development approach. One particular challenge here was to coach the business to the realisation that the re-factor step of the Red;Green;Re-Factor cycle is not optional but absolutely essential.