



US Strategic Command J6

1. Case Study in an Agile Pilot

2. Introduction

This case study provides a real life example of an Agile Pilot implementation in a government organization. The Agile Pilot Program provided a unique opportunity to compare the successes and failures of two teams with identical environments and answers the following questions: Why did one team achieve high success while the other team had challenges and barriers in every sprint? Why did one team rise above their impediments and work as a team, while the other struggled with priority, self-organization, and team work? The two project teams represent both a best case and a worst case scenario for Agile adoption. The benefit of having this comparison is the clear illustration of the impact of the preparedness of the organization, sponsorship and individuals to shift to an Agile mindset.

3. Background

In October of 2015, the US Strategic Command [USSTRATCOM] at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska initiated an Agile Pilot to explore the value of utilizing Agile values and principles in executing projects and programs. USSTRATCOM is building a new facility to house the US Strategic Command. The vision of the project focused on standing up a new upgraded Remedy software solution to support asset management for the new building. The assets for the new facility were \$500 million. USSTRATCOM previously initiated a highly regarded successful Agile Pilot in the J9 division which, in turn, generated interest in exploring the Agile Pilot. USSTRATCOM J6 reached out to a local firm, Agile Transformation Inc. to discuss best practices for implementation and execution of an Agile Pilot.

3.1. Strategy

Agile Transformation Inc. met with the CIO of the J6 division to define a strategy for execution of the Agile Pilot. The following key strategy points were identified for the engagement:

- 1) **Organization:** Implement a program comprised of one team to focus on the Service and Process implementation and a second team to focus on the implementation of the new Remedy environment. The Program would be overseen by a Program Agile Coach who would provide Agile team and program coaching and support both teams.
- 2) **Staffing:** Staff the team with motivated individuals who are equipped with the right skills to optimize the potential for success on the Agile Pilot. It was recommended that a



Program Agile Coach will be engaged to support the adoption of Agile values and principals as well as support the Program level engagement.

- 3) **Training:** Provide comprehensive Real World Agile Training for the teams, Product Owners, Leadership and Stakeholders prior to initiating the Agile program.
- 4) **Team Health Assessment:** Conduct a program assessment to provide visibility into the performance and health of the Agile Pilot, and develop actionable growth plans.

4. Program Execution

The Program was initiated as two teams, the Process Creation team and the Tool Implementation team.

- Under the program, the Process Creation team would be responsible for defining processes and delivering configuration and customization requirements to the Tool Implementation team. Data Content file preparation and cleansing would be completed by the Process Creation team during the timeline of the project and supported by the service team after implementation and project closure.
- The Tool Implementation team would be responsible for setting up the development, quality assurance and production environments, and supporting configuration, customization and go-live implementation of the user interface on the latest version of Remedy. The ingesting of the data during the project and post go-live would be supported by the Remedy tool support team.

4.1. Successes

The Tool Implementation team provides an example of optimum adoption of Agile values and principles. The team was staffed with a highly qualified ScrumMaster who was also an experienced Product Owner. The Technical Lead and the team members were skilled subject matter experts in their organizational roles and open to functioning as generalizing specialists. The ScrumMaster and Team Members were dedicated and empowered to manage their time where the resources were matrixed.

The Tool Implementation team quickly became high performing and embodied shared accountability by the end of the first sprint. The team was able to activate and take on additional scope early in the project by launching a pilot for Microsoft Team Foundation Server in a desire to use collaborative Agile tools. Throughout the first 4 Sprints, the team was able to define innovative solutions for resolving challenges, roadblocks and organizational red tape and over deliver on results and schedule. The team continually found ways to increase productivity and value delivered. The success of the team was recognized in the organization through requests from other teams to be provided an



overview presentation on the “magic” the team was performing and how they were exceeding their goals.

4.2. Challenges

The Process Creation Team experienced significant challenges adopting Agile practices. The ScrumMaster was very experienced and qualified at traditional project management, but new to Agile. The Process Creation Team was composed primarily of members of the Asset Management service team that had been struggling with individualized process responsibilities, low service and quality delivery, and dysfunctional organizational roles. During the early sprints, the team, ScrumMaster and Product Owner were matrixed and actively prioritizing non-project activities, delivering only 40-60 percent of the half-time work commitment. The team did not present a Sprint Zero demo and delivered no functionality in Sprint 2, failing to meet the testing and acceptance criteria. During Sprint 4 it was revealed by stakeholders that the work of the first three sprints did not have value as the data being prepared came from the wrong sources. Finally, the project team only began activating on Agile practices and adopting Agile values when senior leadership stepped in halfway through the project. One success found in this challenge is that Agile celebrates failing early, and it was apparent only four weeks into the project that the project team was in serious trouble when value was not delivered in the second sprint.

4.3. Key Drivers

Resourcing the teams: The Tool Implementation team had three advantages where the Process Creation Team had three deficiencies associated with resources assigned to the team that contributed to the different results achieved by team. One team succeeded where the other did not due to a) availability of dedicated resources, b) deployment of right skills to achieve success and perform roles and c) motivation to focus and deliver results.

The Tool Implementation was provided a dedicated, skilled and experienced ScrumMaster able to provide Servant Leadership, whereas the ScrumMaster for the Process Creation team, though highly skilled at traditional project management, was inexperienced with Servant Leadership and Agile and was matrixed, limiting time with the team.

Additionally, the team composition of the Tool Implementation team was composed of dedicated, highly motivated subject matter experts while the Process Creation team provided twice as many matrixed individual resources, and were not motivated or possessing the skills needed to deliver the project.

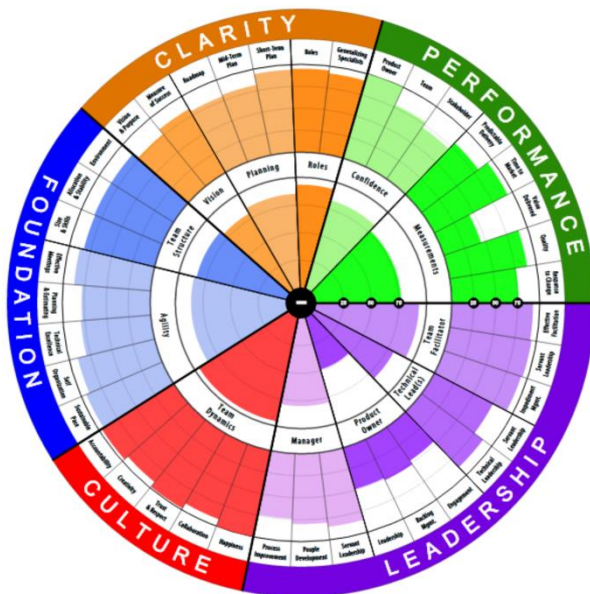
Change Resistance: The desire and interest to conduct an Agile Pilot was initiated by the CIO of the organization. The Sponsor and Product Owners have not recognized the value in the process and have not expressed buy-in to the success of the Agile Pilot, even given the supporting evidence of the successes of the Tool Implementation team.



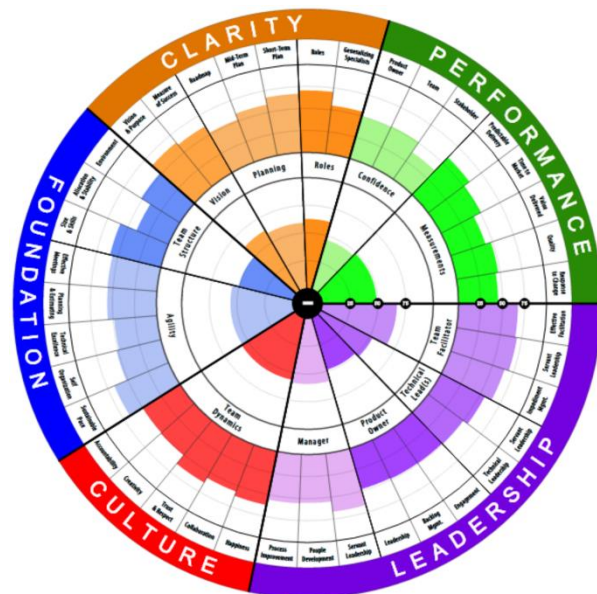
Leadership and Vision: The teams consistently identified lack of engagement by the Product Owner and lack of clarity on the vision as a major impediment for success. The vision for the project was not being translated into the functionality and features being defined and prioritized. The Product Owners for both teams have dedicated less than 50% of the allocated time commitment identified for Product Owner engagement. Stakeholders were not engaged as the Product Owner meet to gather or address expectations of the Stakeholders until the Agile Coach insisted halfway through the project timeline.

4.4. AgilityHealth Assessment

A clear understanding of the health of the two teams in the program is crucial to understanding the disparity in the levels of success in adopting and executing Agile between the two teams at USSTRATCOM J6. During the engagement, a Certified AgilityHealth Facilitator performed an AgilityHealth Assessment for the teams across five dimensions: **Clarity, Performance, Leadership, Culture** and **Foundation**. These results were rolled up into a Program Radar creating visibility and transparency into the team’s and organization’s health by seeing both qualitative and quantitative metrics. Below are the radars for the Tool Implementation and Process Creation teams:



Tool Implementation Team Radar



Process Creation Team Radar

The high assessments across almost all competencies seen in the Tool Implementation Radar reflects the maturity and adoption by the team of the Agile Values and Principles. Conducting the assessment provided organizational leadership with the quantifiable and qualitative information needed in order make decisions and take corrective action. The growth plan developed as part of the assessment provided the opportunity to gather a base



line and set future benchmarks for improvements on the competencies. For more information on the AgilityHealth Radar, follow this link: <http://AgilityHealthRadar.com>.

5. Summary

The different levels of success experienced by the two teams of the Agile Pilot highlighted that when the readiness and preparedness of the organization, leadership and teams is in place, Agile can be highly successful for delivering projects and business value early. When the organization, leadership and teams are not prepared, it is difficult to adopt Agile, achieve results and deliver value.

The following factors should be assessed when deploying an Agile Pilot, or reviewed when a team is failing.

- Readiness of Leadership for Agile as indicated by Sponsorship Support.
- Preparedness of the Product Owner as indicated by the ability to identify and prioritize business value.
- Readiness of the team to engage in the Agile values and principles as indicated by motivation and buy-in.
- Readiness of the Product Owner and team to deliver the project as indicated by skill set, expertise and experience.

Agile is highly successful at delivering value early, responding to change, engaging the business, and developing high performing teams, however the organization, leadership and the team must be prepared to implement the Project and adopt Agile for a Pilot to be successful.