The Growth of an Agile Coach Community at a Fortune 200 Company

Agile 2007 Conference
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Capital One is a diversified financial services company offering a broad array of credit, banking and lending products to customers in the United States, UK, and Canada.

• Ranked #115 on the S&P 500 and #4 in Diversified Financials
• Ranked #154 on the Fortune 200 list
• Ranked #37 on Business Week/BCG's 100 World's Most Innovative Companies List

And like many companies today, Capital One faces the challenge of decreasing operating costs while maintaining the competitive edge to be first in delivering innovative product offerings to customers.
Agile adoption at Capital One started in early 2004 and was brought about by a desire to decrease IT project delivery time to market.

Senior leadership across operations and IT began exploring options and ultimately decided to pilot Scrum as the project management framework paired with Lean software development in hopes of improving time to market.

**Early Efforts**

- Lean and Agile pilots were initiated in organizations across the company in mid-2004
- Lean pilots driven by Operational groups, Agile pilots by IT delivery groups
- Pilot efforts indicated a decrease in time-to-market of 30% to 50%
Agile Adoption Timeline

2004 - 2005

Exploring Agile

2006

Resistance and Adoption

2007

Expansion and Maintenance of Agile
2004 – 2005: Exploring Agile – Beginning the Journey

What Happened

- Leveraged outside expertise
- Clear support by senior management
- Projects with unassailable results
- Focus on developing a cadre of strong change agents
- Requested and received business support
- Incorporated Agile delivery model into standards

Results

- Incorporated Agile delivery model into standards
- First multi-platform project delivered with Agile
- Two key areas become Agile Organizations
- Agile projects account for approximately 20% of portfolio

Prove that Agile works!

What Happened

• Exploring “What is a Coach?” and “Why do we need them?”
• Made investment with external consultants for Agile implementation and for coaching skills
• First coaches volunteered, showed great passion and interest

Results

• Established Apprenticeship program - Mentor coaching practice (Pairing associates with external consultants)
• Many coaches allowed to focus on learning coaching skills and working with teams
• Developed Coach certification program
• Project governance required that all Agile projects must have a certified Coach
Why was a Coach Certification process implemented?

- **Competencies and Skills**
  - The Certified Scrum Master (CSM) training only provided a baseline of understanding for Scrum
  - Provided a detailed and comprehensive curriculum for associates desiring to become a Coach
  - Made experience and feedback a priority
  - Formalized the apprentice and mentor relationship

- **Sustainability**
  - Enabled Coaching to be an internally developed skill for associates
  - Provided a minimum standard for a certified Agile coach
  - Provided common expectations for associates performing the Coach role
Agile Adoption Timeline

- **2004 - 2005**: Exploring Agile
- **2006**: Resistance and Adoption
- **2007**: Expansion and Maintenance of Agile
2006: Resistance and Adoption - Implementation

What Happened

• Dedicated Agile program management team
• Corporate imperative
• Worked on Effectively supporting the growth of Agile
• Business Buy-In
• No Agile portfolio management structure
• Substantial IT re-organization
• Substantial resistance to change
• Focused more on Agile than Lean

Results

• Agile projects account for 50% of portfolio
• 50+ associates complete Agile coach development program
• 85+ people completed CSM
• 70% reduction in TTM

Make Agile the default delivery method!
2006: Resistance and Adoption – Beginning of Coach Community

What Happened

• Coaches realizing the need for support, knowledge sharing
• Not enough coaches to support the rapid growth of Agile
• Coaches meeting with CIO to discuss organizational impediments

Results

• Emergence of passionate community
• Monthly community meetings
• Open Spaces
• Agile 101
• Agile Health Checks
• Improvement and support of the coach certification process
• Influencing in large program
Agile Adoption Timeline

- 2004 - 2005: Exploring Agile
- 2006: Resistance and Adoption
- 2007: Expansion and Maintenance of Agile
Organizational Goals for 2007

- Support the explosion of Agile in non-IT teams
- Value stream mindset and continuous flow
- Continue to reduce Time-to-Market
- Re-center Agile methods
- Radical process re-design around Speed

Customer value delivery: making it possible everywhere every 30 days
2007: Expansion and Maintenance of Agile – Continued
Community Growth and Development

Community Goals for 2007

• Keeping community effective and engaged
• Continue influencing – programs and corporate departments
• Expand Agile beyond IT and software delivery
• Serve as subject matter experts for project delivery improvements
• Continue to grow Agile when it is not the “hot” new thing
• Helping new adopters to understand where they need to start and
  investment needed

Results Thus Far

• Another Open Space with new initiatives
• Agile projects running outside of IT
• Revamp project controls
• Applying Lean principles to business and IT processes, while leveraging Agile
  as the delivery model
What has a Coach Community meant for Capital One?

• **Self-sustainable Implementation**
  – **Internal Coaching competence**
  – **Support group for Coaches, developers, testers, managers, etc.**
  – **Better quality of Agile – Process Owners for Scrum**

• **Extended Knowledge Base**
  – **Ability to share best practices across a wide range of experiences**
  – **Using knowledge base to influence processes and decision-making**
  – **Coaching knowledge and experience is carried into other positions**
  – **Growing beyond Agile to understand and apply Lean principles**

• **Servant Leadership for Teams**
  – **Caretakers of team dynamics**
  – **Advocates for the team**
  – **Front-line change leaders for teams, as well as organizations**
  – **Community of influential leaders**
What could a coach community mean to your company?
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead