Sketch development
Better Teams // Better Software

Delivery Surges Through Mentorship and Training

A workers' compensation insurance provider was dealing with inconsistent deliveries, predictability and speed-to-market and engaged Sketch after attending a Sketch workshop with the Mid-Missouri PMI. Options for improvement included implementing basic agile practices, prioritization across stakeholders, reviewing current processes and working on roles and responsibilities for their product owners and scrum masters.

> Sketch really came in and helped us in so many ways, but mainly with our productivity. We improved so much in such a short amount of time. I wish we would have done this sooner."
>
> — IT Delivery Manager

CHALLENGE

Leadership identified three distinct challenges across three development teams:

- Every year, one team needed to update one of their core systems with new data, representing product configurations for the new year. The deadline for the update was early February, but the process always took until late March or April to complete.

- A second team was building a replacement to an existing system that had been analyzed by an external vendor who created a large specification document for the new system. A second vendor was hired to build the new system in conjunction with our client's staff and the effort was behind schedule, with no usable functionality. Leadership wanted to identify ways to release incrementally and begin capturing value from their investment.

- Our client had decided to make lean/agile processes a core skill within their technology group, but none of the teams had deep experience in the area. Scrum Masters and Product Owners were struggling to understand expectations of their roles, and how to help their teams improve. While they had attended agile classes in the past, they realized they needed more direct help in incorporating the concepts in their daily operations.

SOLUTION

Sketch applied a mixture of training and team/individual coaching to address the client's challenges. We began with a bootcamp for the development teams to establish a common understanding of the principles and practices we would apply. We also conducted a half-day session for leadership throughout the organization to understand the fundamentals, as some changes would impact the way the technology teams interacted with other departments.

Following the training, a coach worked directly with the teams to help them apply the concepts in their real-world operations through:

- Attending each team's Scrum events and providing guidance in the moment as questions came up, as well as feedback to the Scrum Master on ways to better facilitate them

- Facilitated workshops on estimation, story writing and story splitting to apply concepts from training to each team's backlog

- 1-on-1 coaching with key roles (Product Owner, Scrum Master, Management) to tackle specific questions they have, and guidance from Sketch based on direct observations of how they are interacting with the team and stakeholders

- Pairing with developers and testers to help with technical practices

RESULTS

Over three months, team productivity and predictability improved dramatically. The core system update was completed on time and carryover (work carried from one sprint to another) dropped for all three teams. **All teams became better at setting and delivering on stakeholder expectations, restoring trust and resulting in better collaboration between departments.**

Our client improved upon their successes in subsequent years. They further reduced the time needed to deliver the annual core system updates from ~6 weeks to ~3 weeks through continuous improvement efforts by the entire team, and are much better at delivering incremental value quickly across all their product. The prioritization discipline and stakeholder management skills we helped establish are key to their continued progress.

CONTINUED WORK

Our client has invited Sketch back several times for smaller goal-focused efforts like mentoring for junior Scrum Masters and Product Owners. We are proud to support them with external coaching, but prouder that they have continued to grow and evolve on their own. Our continues to be a great partnership and success story that we're very happy to be a part of.