Moving product company to Agile principles

Case study - Agile Prague 2014

Acision
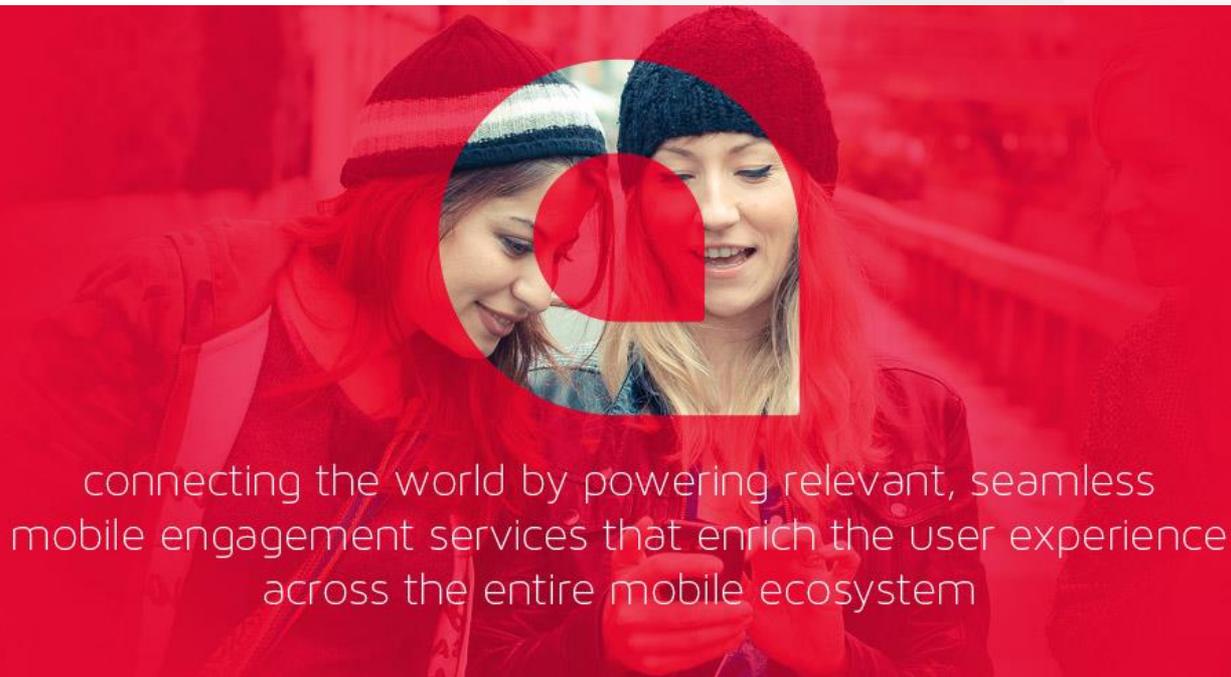
connecting the world by powering relevant, seamless
mobile engagement services that enrich the user experience
across the entire mobile ecosystem

Radomir Antos
VP Engineering

20 year history in messaging
8/10 of the world's largest mobile operators
Nearly 300 customers globally
40% messaging market share
Delivering over 2 trillion messages per year
Global footprint and support model
A proven portfolio that serve over 3 billion subscribers
Quality of service – "carrier-grade" DNA
Combining SMS, with IP messaging and voice
Leading innovators

Martijn Lammers
VP Product Management

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Middle sized Product Company
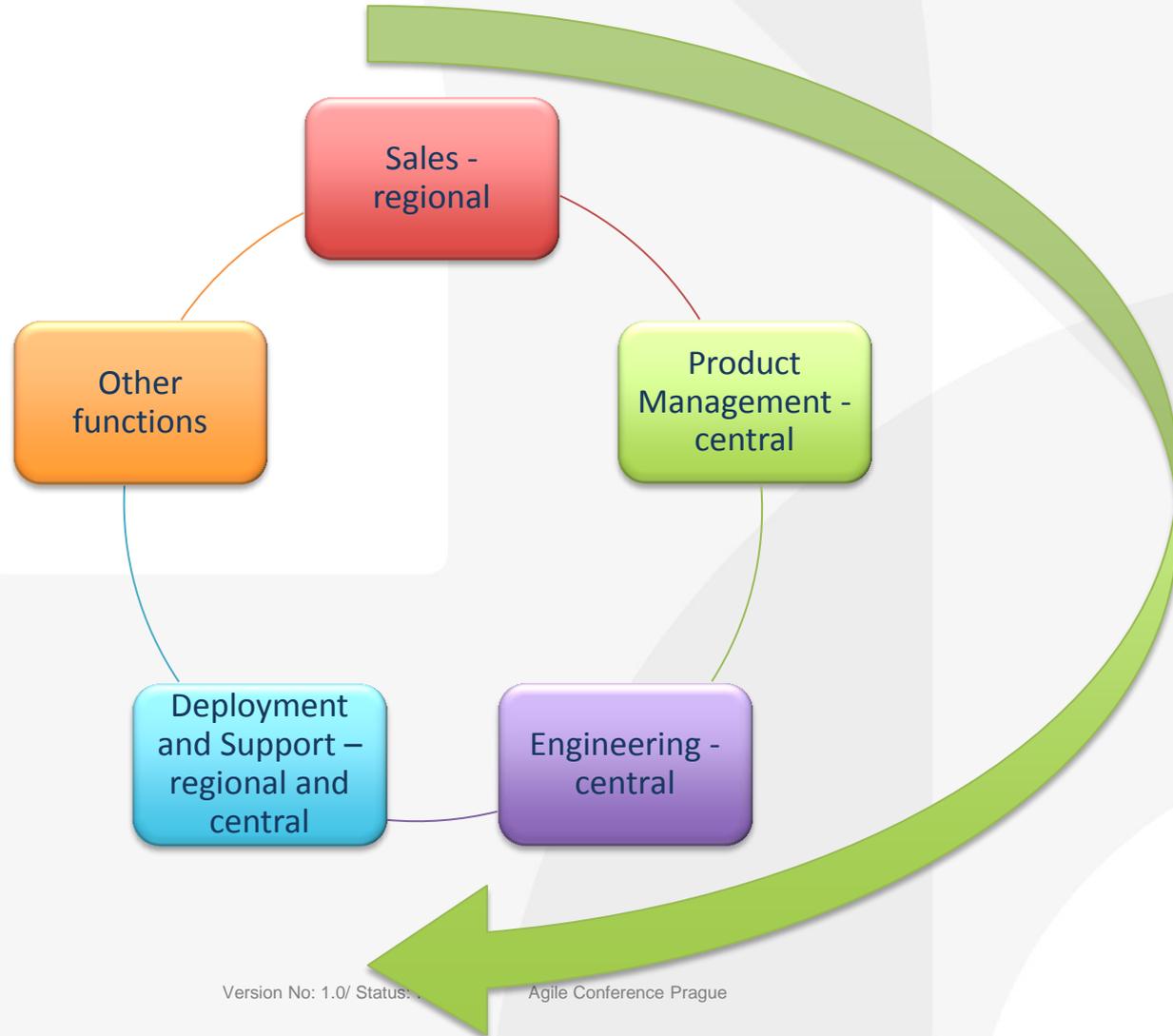
Moving Product company to Agile principles

The initiative

How to

Implementation

Evaluation

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The initiative…
Came from engineering team!

Product Management and Engineering

- Interface with Product Management
  - Almost a contractual agreements between Product Management and Engineering
  - Us and "them" on the other side of the wall

- Project management style
  - Waterfall with long project duration – 6 to 18 months

- Unwanted symptoms:
  - Engineering too far from any customer – internal or external
  - Landscape change during project but firm commitment still there
  - Difficult to create a brand new product – slow starts
  - People playing on their own playground only
  - People doing what they are told to do and how to do it

The initiative…
Was reluctantly received by PM…
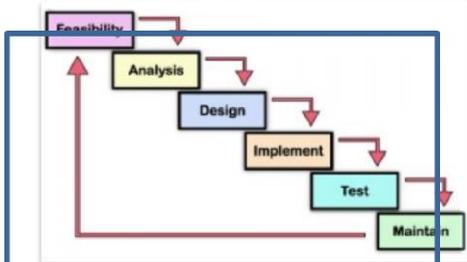
You know now what to do

Bad experience

Too late
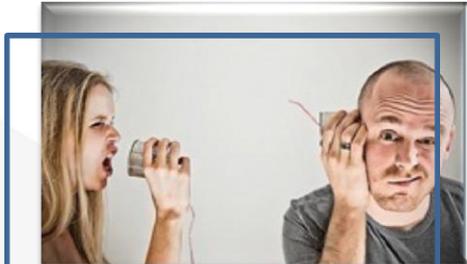
Bad communication

No good quality

Committed deliveries?

Let's give it a try!

Starting & common challenges

- New playground – who does what?
- Training needed – no expert in house
- Disbelievers on both sides even in the pilot team
- Roles – conflicts with existing organisation

Roles and responsibilities issue

Engineering

- Mind set of people?
  - Doing what they are told to do
- Do I have a good SCRUM master?
- Combined roles of Team Manager and SCRUM master
  - Team managers believed in this more than people in the team
  - Conflict of interest – responsible versus helping the team

Product Management

- How to use agile with existing R&R
- Agile roles were unknown
- Transformation was key
- Keep the motivation
- Theory versus practice
- Our own hybrid form

Preparations & communication

- Tooling and process– automated tests and continuous integration must be achieved to working level prior starting SCRUM

- Engineering preparations
  - Jira, Stash, Continues Integration, automated tests
  - Buzz around the change
  - Food for Thoughts about Agile
  - Talking about self organising teams – they have hated us ;-)
  - Did not block teams that wanted to start playing with Agile

- Close monitoring

- Regular meeting of key players from Engineering and PM
  - SCRUM master/Team Manager
  - Product Owner/Product Manager
  - VP Eng and VP PM
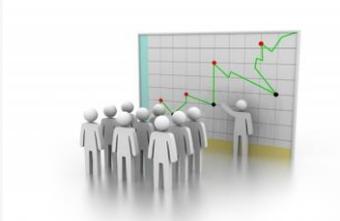
First sprints

Engineering

Hey, it is easy
Well, this sprint is tough
Damn, this scrum is awful …
nothing works
Better than last time, still sucks
Better again ☺
We know it is gonna work !

Product Management

We're doing great

Hmm, let see how this goes

Oh no, here we go again

Descoping again!!!

Hm, this is going the right way

Yes, this was actually good!

Legend:
- completed
- real velocity
- projected velocity
- projected burndown
- R1.0 backlog
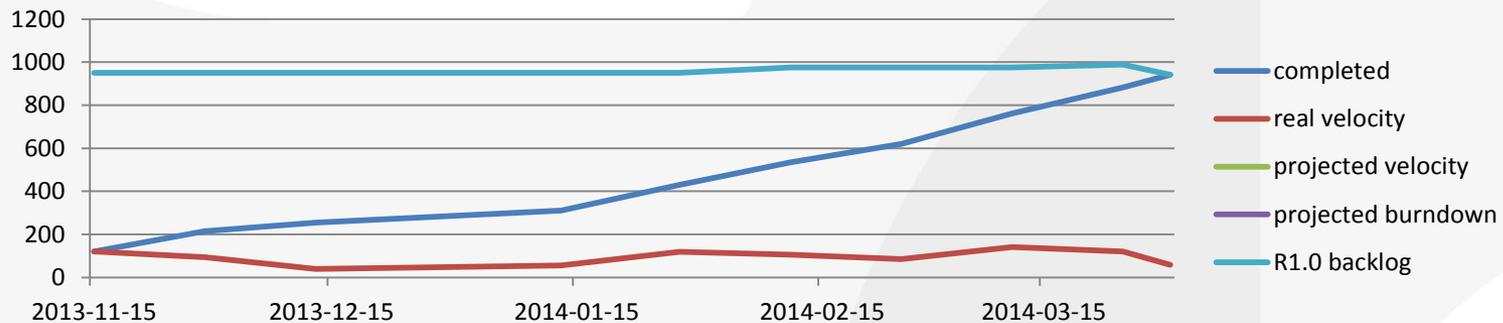
Evaluation…
Pilot project

What were the biggest problems?

- Get started with something

- Team stability (other projects)

- Lack of communication / cooperation in the Engineering team

- Wrong distribution of user stories across the team
  - GUI versus CORE

- Product owner's attention – tight cooperation needed

- Clearly defined roles/responsibilities (scrum master vs team manager)

No other way?! ☺

- ## Is there a better way than SCRUM?

  - ### Probably not
    - Mini change requests (waterfall)
    - Maintenance work (Kanban)

  - ### Certainly not
    - New (big) development → SCRUM

- ## Did we meet our expectations?
  - Ability to start a new product
  - Better cooperation with PM
  - Mind set change
  - Predictability/performance

Spreading SCRUM and Kanban across other products

- **Everywhere?**
  - No, where it makes sense
- **More difficult than pilot?**
  - Yes – more teams, more problems
- **Have roles changed?**
  - Yes – Key is the group of SCRUM Masters
  - PM structure was looked at too
- **Stay in touch**
  - Radek and Martijn must be closely aligned and supportive to the teams
- **Key challenge**
  - Product with multiple teams – coordination

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Evaluation…
Learnings!

Learnings

- Every product is slightly different
  - Product, People, Attitude
- Invest upfront in
  - Boards on the wall
  - Continuous Integration
  - Automated testing
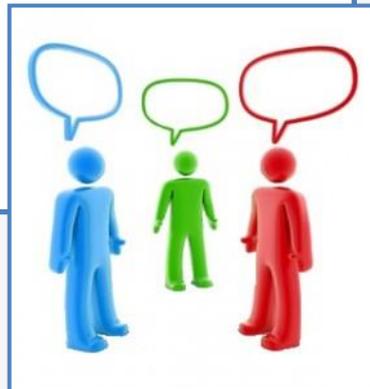
Critical success factors

- Willingness to make it work
- Trust
- Coaching
- Flexibility in the approach
- Continues communication at all levels

Questions now <u>or</u> with drinks;-)

Talking to Zuzana leads to.........

Colors everywhere ;-)

Thank YOU