

Less friction

How Adaptavist helped WD-40 Company become more Agile

WD-40 COMPANY NEEDED

- ✓ Help with adopting Jira and Agile
- ✓ More efficient IT project and portfolio management
- ✓ An improved relationship between IT and its stakeholders

ADAPTAVIST DELIVERED

- ✓ Bespoke Jira workflows and configuration
- ✓ Close collaboration to achieve a highly successful Agile adoption
- ✓ Expert help defining 'best practice' use of Jira and Confluence for WD-40
- ✓ "Above and beyond" service levels to ensure a successful project



BACKGROUND

The client

The WD-40 Company barely needs an introduction. Its flagship product has entered the language in much the same way as 'Hoover' and 'Sellotape'. The rust-preventing, degreasing blend was created for the aerospace industry in a small San Diego lab in 1953. The real stroke of genius was putting it in an aerosol can for consumers in 1957, since then the company has not looked back. Still headquartered in California, WD-40 Company now markets its famous lubricant in more than 176 countries alongside a range of other products. In 2017 the company posted global net sales worth \$380.5m.

THE CHALLENGE

Doug Cyphers joined WD-40 Company as its Director of IT Strategy and Leadership in November 2017. His team manages the company's IT across the Americas and the Asia Pacific. When he started in the new role, Cyphers could see that there was room for improvement. For one thing, there was little visibility of the tasks and steps in IT project execution – making it hard to assess how long projects would take to deliver. At the heart of the problem was the fact that stakeholders had little visibility of progress, and IT needed to improve how it assessed the complexity of requirements and set expectations for delivery.

Cyphers also found that Jira had been purchased but wasn't being fully utilised because Agile hadn't yet been introduced and no one was truly moving it forward in a meaningful way. He quickly realised that his challenge was to institute a better IT project management methodology and toolkit. This would streamline IT project delivery and improve the relationship between IT and the business.

SCOPING THE SOLUTION

To kick the project off, Cyphers and Adaptavist Principal Consultant Evan Golden had "a good conversation" about what WD-40 Company wanted. Specifically, Cyphers was seeking help with adopting an Agile philosophy and methodology and with utilising Jira effectively. Cyphers then worked with his team to put together a proposal and some key deliverables.



WD-40 Company's IT team delivers across four areas - Enterprise Resource Planning, Customer Relationship Management, Business Intelligence, and IT operations – with each team member specialising in one of these areas. Cyphers and Adaptavist discussed the merits of Scrum versus Kanban and concluded that Scrum would work better because Cyphers wanted to establish a consistent methodology across these four sub-teams.

PROJECT GOALS:



Gain better predictability of when projects will be completed



Increase collaboration and accountability for IT projects across the whole business



Achieve greater visibility into project requests to enable cost/benefit analyses



Acquire information to inform discussions on future resource investment



Gain the capacity to track work against capital or operational expenditure

ADOPTING AGILE

When the engagement began, Cyphers and Golden put terminology and process flow information into a central repository that people could easily access. They then made presentations to each of the four teams on why and how to adopt Agile and use Jira. These meetings outlined what team members were being asked to do and in particular explained the benefits of doing it. “We were a good team because we both believe in Agile and have a decent amount of real-life experience and conviction,” explains Cyphers.

A week or so later, after each team had time to assimilate the changes being asked of them, second follow-up meetings were held. These provided people with a chance to ask further questions. There were also demonstrations of how the toolset works and more explanations about the structure of the Agile methodology. By now Adaptavist had also created spaces in Confluence and projects in Jira to help the team break work down and track it. “Basically,” says Cyphers, “you helped bend the tool to the vision that I had.”

Communication was a vital aspect of the engagement. The WD-40 Company team were able to post requests for Adaptavist via chat as they dealt with the real-world experience of changing processes and behaviours. Cyphers notes that team members started responding to each other and that this self-regulation is, of course, a central pillar of Agile. However, the fact that Adaptavist was always there to answer questions “primed the pump”.

In addition, throughout the engagement, the Adaptavist team were on hand to make occasional necessary changes. For instance, if there was a field that was important to WD-40 but not available “out of the box”, it was created.

Finally, Golden attended bi-weekly meetings with key members of WD-40 Company's IT team to discuss the issues in play and identify solutions or adjustments. Together, the team would generate new ideas to make Jira work better.



RESULTS TO DATE

A mere eight weeks after the initial introductory meetings, all of WD-40 Company's IT teams had completed two two-week sprints and teams were enthusiastic about the change.

"One of the things I preach about the Agile methodology," says Cyphers, "is that every two weeks you get to see the work that's been completed and that you're winning. You start to understand what you can complete in a sprint. That helps the team become diligent and purposeful about what it's committed to. The reports then show what's been achieved and it makes Agile a great tool for collaborating and communicating with stakeholders."

Cyphers also believes that the implementation succeeded because it emphasised that Agile is really about bending the framework to meet the needs of each specific team. So, each implementation will be a bit different. Teams have to develop their own norms and do things their own way within the Agile framework and principles. "There wasn't a lot of me saying 'You will do this,'" he says, "It was me asking, 'How do you think this could help you?' There was an emphasis on the team being able to make it their own that I think was very helpful. And they could see this wasn't just another 'flavour of the week' project. That they would get something out of it."

WD-40 Company's IT teams were **enthusiastic** about the change.



THE DIFFERENCE THAT ADAPTAVIST MAKES

Cyphers found Adaptavist to be "extremely responsive". He recalls that whenever a team member had a question, there was usually little delay in getting an answer. "I could tell you were committed to the success of our project."

In particular, he praises the genuinely collaborative approach: "Many companies want to shove a standard format down your throat: the discovery phase, the planning phase, then the implementation. To me, that's all fairly bloated. Adaptavist was into listening. It was more what would work for us, rather than telling us what our needs were. At the end of the day, it worked out well."

Finally, Cyphers notes that Adaptavist delivered 'above and beyond'. "When you work with certain companies," he says, "they only deliver what you put on the statement of work. With you, I got what was on the statement of work and then whatever else was needed. And, in some cases, you do need to veer from the statement a bit because of what you learn along the way. I would say that Adaptavist went above and beyond this whole project, whatever it took."

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Doug Cyphers, Director of IT Strategy and Leadership | The WD-40 Company

CONCLUSIONS

Cyphers knows Agile very well, having spent five years supporting the implementation of it in a previous role. Working with Adaptavist, meant he was able to benefit from their deep expertise with Agile and Jira to build out a tailored process that was right for WD-40 Company. Cyphers reflects that this is one of the fastest adoptions of Agile and Jira that he's ever seen: "I think that's largely a result of the partnership and the complementary way we worked together."

Would Cyphers recommend Adaptavist to others? He replies that he already has. "I've introduced Adaptavist to another department in the process of converting over to an Agile format. I showed them what we've done, and they're extremely impressed with how far and fast we've come."

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ABOUT ADAPTAVIST

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Adaptavist is an Atlassian Platinum Solution Partner for the Enterprise and is widely recognised as the most technically advanced Enterprise Partner in the Atlassian ecosystem.

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