Agile - One Size does not fit All!!
Who We Are

• Israel: Agile Coach on this gig
• Alex: SCRUMmaster on the RedFlagDeals gig
• Maurizio: Head of QA for YP Canada

• As important as who we are, and possibly more, is the evolution of our relationships:
  – We became colleagues and friends in the course of the engagement.
What Our Overarching Message is

• The path to Agile depends critically on the level of software maturity we start with.

• Picking the wrong SDLC process could be poisonous to your organization.

• Specifically, for “less mature, ad hoc” software development environments there is a lot to be said for taking a two step path:
  – Ad Hoc $\rightarrow$ Incremental & Iterative (IID)
  – Incremental & Iterative $\rightarrow$ Agile

• The blueprint for so doing is anchored in our 2013-2014 experience at Yellow Pages (YP)
Cutter Overview

• A global think tank helping organizations forge solutions to business technology challenges since 1986
  – Cutter is consistently on the leading edge of emerging ideas

• Not a typical IT advisory or consulting firm
  – All products and services – consulting, training, and research – are supplied by internationally recognized thought leaders, expert practitioners, and top academics
  – In short, there are no junior staff members – every consultant carries out his/her engagements “A to Z”

• The Consortium’s great strength is that it can draw on its experts to assemble the ideal team to tackle any challenge that might arise during an engagement
  – Approximately 200 member-experts spanning all IT functional disciplines and industries

• The only analyst firm with zero ties to vendors
Cutter was engaged for 2 mandates at YP

– First was to implement Agile (training and coaching) at RedFlagDeals (RFD), a YP company.

– Second was to just do Agile training to mobile development teams at YP.
Overview of YellowPages (YP)

• YP is Canada’s largest provider of full-serve digital media and marketing solutions specifically for small businesses.
• Approx. 2300 employees.
• Approx. 1 billion in revenue.
• 2nd largest advertiser in Canada after Google.
YP’s Business Transformation

Our mission is to connect businesses and people like never before:

– Unlike the global Internet vendors, our focus is local

– Contribute to the success of SMEs
From Print to Digital Advertising

YP’s Digital Transformation

7.3 Million
Unique Visitors per Month

6.5 Million
Downloads!
Excellence in Software Engineering

Broad and deep excellence in Software Engineering is critical to YP’s digital transformation. Why?

– Window of opportunity.
– Need to excel at multiple levels in the software we develop.
– Customers do not possess strong brand loyalty.
Software Engineering at YP

15 Development Teams

Digital Fulfillment
Software Engineering at YP

• Re-Engineering of Software Engineering practices at YP started 2.5 Years Ago.

• Software development was being done by Contractors.

• Tools → JIRA, JIRA Agile, FishEye, Stash.

• Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) – What’s that?
Which SDLC for YP?

• Most projects at YP were using a either “ad-hoc” or a “Waterfall like” method.

• Which SDLC is right at YP for this transformation?
  – Waterfall
  – Incremental and Iterative Development (IID)
  – Agile
Incremental & Iterative Development

- Plan for **X weeks of Increments** followed by at least **2 Iterations**
- Typical release is planned between 6 to 12 weeks.

- Increments **do not** go to production.
- Not everything is tested within an increment/iteration
- 2 PhaseGates
- Last “golden” Iteration goes to production.
What’s in a Word

able to move quickly and easily…

AD-HOC  AGILE  AD-HOC

AD-HOC
One Step at a Time

AGILE
INCREMENTAL & ITERATIVE
Pilot at YPG

Take one self contained group

- **RedFlagDeals** (RFD) – The largest deals and coupons website in Canada.

- Successfully delivering software using a combination of Waterfall and IID but suffering many internal challenges.
Challenges at RFD

• Requirements delivered as long documents rather than “invitation for a dialog”
• Timelines very strict and not realistic
  – Community (PM) needs vis-à-vis quality standards
• No time for refactoring
• Many suboptimal yet permanent design decisions to “get there” faster
• Product Organization and Development not on friendly terms
• Many people on the team unhappy
Approach to Pilot

• Mentor is committed to spend enough time with team
• Getting prior acceptance from major stakeholders in all divisions
• Training in SCRUM “theory” for the whole team, including business all the way to GM
• Hands on training
• Flying solo with trainer’s oversight and active participation when needed for a couple of sprints
Approach to Pilot

Apply Agile theory by the book

– Dedicated product owners, Dev and QA resources
– Co-located
– 2 Week Sprints
– Use all of the Agile Principals (Stories, Product Backlog, Sprint Backlog, Daily Scrum Meeting, Sprint Planning Meeting, Poker Planning, Sprint Reviews, Sprint Retrospectives)
– Every Sprint is Production Ready
“RFD” Agile

- Mostly by the book (minus the projects are often sprint length)
- 2 weeks, deployable sprints
- BDD fleshed out stories
  - A human readable but structured way to express user stories and acceptance criteria
- Agreed on Engineering Tax per sprint to address Technical Debt
- Dev and QA building automation
- SCRUM master from the team (Dev Manager)
Before and After at RFD

• Changed interaction with PO
• The Team (Devs, QA) jelled with the PO
• Predictability
• Quality
• Frequency of releases
• Team job appreciation
What was Hard

• Initial buy in
• From requirements to user stories
• User stories as BDDs
• Getting used to the ceremonies
  – Engineering Tax (Address Technical Debt)
  – Definition of Done includes staging “UAT” by PO
  – Handling production issues
• Working with non Agile teams
• Getting used to releasing every 2 weeks (75% of the code increments were shipped upon completing the sprint)!
What was Easy

• Living without the spec
• Talking during the retrospectives
• Getting people to enjoy the reviews
• Getting rid of constant QA overtime
• Having a happier (but overworked) PO
RFD ‘Secret Sauce’

• Genuine desire to deliver software by using software engineering practices.

• Professional and personal maturity of team members:
  – GM, PO and SM in particular

• Multi-level alignment:
  – From the lowliest employee all the way to the CTO

• Strong support and encouragement by both CTO and CMO.
1 Down, 14 more to go

- We had a **corporate focus** on deploying better software engineering practices across all 15 Software Engineering Teams

- We did not change RFD in a vacuum
Who’s Next?

• As RFD gained experience at Agile, 14 other teams were working at getting good at Incremental & Iterative Development (IID).

• After 6 months of Agile success at RFD we organized Agile training for 4 other teams.
Who’s Next?

• Of the 4 teams trained, only 2 mobile development teams were picked to do Agile because:
  – Most committed to making it work.
  – We thought we had committed resources.

MT1        MT2
The remaining teams...

• Meanwhile, remaining 12 teams **did not** meet the **criteria** above but also didn’t:

• They continued with IID.
Agile Approach for Next 2 Teams

• Train the people that would become SCRUMmaster’s in one session.
  – A.K.A → recycled Project Managers

• Train the whole team, including newly minted SM’s on Agile practices in another session.
Mobile Team 1

• Key differences between MT1’s approach and RFD:
  – No Agile coaching
  – Difficult to focus
  – Resources were mostly dedicated... but got interrupted
  – Corporate priorities kept changing

• The initial attempt was not completed.
Mobile Team 1

- Mobile Team 1 then came back to Agile project 2 months later.
- The dedication of the people on the team, including the “stand-in” Scrum master, made it work!
- Team Self-Evaluation was done at the end and it was deemed a success.
Mobile Team 1 - ‘Secret Sauce’

• Team’s Buy-In to use Agile.
• Everyone understood their role.
• Used all of the Agile Ceremonies.
• Testing was mostly manual – Mobile APP.
• Automation was focused on a “Smoke Test”.
• Agreed on final Hardening Sprint.
  (1 out 7 or ~ 15%).
• SCRUMmaster from the team (BA).
A couple of key differences led to a Failed Agile implementation in this team:

– SCRUMmaster (A.K.A recycled Project Manager) really struggled to understand his new role.

– SCRUMmaster truly did not understand how Agile/Scrum works.
Where are the other 12 teams today?

Two other teams have successfully implemented Agile very similar to RFD.

**Key factor** → hiring of a SCRUMmaster that truly knew and understood how to drive the team.
Where are the other 12 teams today?

Most of the other teams have decided to use IID. Why?

– Teams are just not ready yet to adopt Agile.
– Product Owner role is not always clear.
– When a PO does exist, not always available. At best they attend the demos.
– Resources are not committed.
– No Agile Training has been provided.
– No SCRUMmaster role exists on the team.
– Use of traditional Project Managers.
Where are the other 12 teams today?

However, the teams are still delivering good quality software on a regular basis (6 to 8 weeks on average) so IID is working for them!
YP Secret Sauce

• The best sauces are the ones with simple ingredients...

• The YP Secret Sauce for choosing Agile/Scrum or IID is:
  – Can all actors in your organization commit to meeting ALL of the principals as prescribed by the Agile Manifesto?
  
    • If Yes → Then Agile/Scrum is for you
  
    • If no → then IID is for you.

  • Repeatable development process that involves all key players from the start of the project.
  • Allows for an organizations unexpected demands.
  • Allows for the change of resources.
  • Delivers functionality that has business value at a regular predictable pace.
Retrospective

Paracelsus – the founder of toxicology had the following saying...

The dose makes the poison

Pick a software process that fits your organizations realities today! Pick the right amount of process or it will be poisonous and lead to process failure!
Key Takeaways

Training and Coaching are vital to the success of any process deployment.

Have committed resources to implement and follow-up on the roll out of any process.
Key Takeaways

Have an amazing SCRUMmaster!

When you have multiple teams, some may be IID and some may be Agile.
By implementing Agile/Scrum and IID, YP has improved Software Engineering Practices!
Will the other teams make it to Agile?

See you at Agile 2015...
Q & A