“We tried unsuccessfully for six months to adopt Agile methods for software delivery. SolutionsIQ came in and taught us Agile principles, which then spread organically across all of our teams. Scrum has become a pretty significant point of pride for the company. To be honest, I expected turnover; the reality is that we’ve not lost a single person as a result of the change from waterfall to Scrum. Now we’re excited about how we make software. It’s kind of unbelievable.”
— Gary Fortier, Vice President of Operations, PowerAdvocate

PowerAdvocate is an energy intelligence company delivering intelligence applications that incorporate the world’s largest FactBase of supply market data, helping energy executives restructure costs and steer company performance. The company combines best-in-class information, innovative technology, and expert services to provide superior market intelligence to over 50 of the largest North American energy companies. Since 1999, the company has focused on helping energy companies achieve operational and financial excellence, increase profitability, and optimize business performance by empowering supply chains with market data and solutions. Today, it delivers software-as-a-service through their Energy Intelligence Platform™, which expands the energy value chain to include transmission, distribution, and generation including renewable, and oil and gas.

**Challenge**

PowerAdvocate had four existing SaaS products and wanted to add a fifth, Contract Performance Intelligence™. The company wanted to introduce its new product to meet an important client deadline while simultaneously looking at more dependable and predictable ways to deliver software. PowerAdvocate also wanted to improve its ability to deliver the most important business value for each of its products — and wanted to achieve all of these objectives as quickly as possible.

Key goals included:

- Introducing PowerAdvocate Contract Performance Intelligence team members to Agile approaches and processes and the Scrum framework, while providing mentorship and techniques for iterative software development.

- Providing assistance in building the initial release of Contract Performance Intelligence using Agile practices and Scrum.
Solution

SolutionsIQ recommended an on-site, hybrid engagement consisting of team coaching and development. Two SolutionsIQ experts, an Agile consulting coach and an Agile development coach, worked with members of existing PowerAdvocate teams to establish a Scrum team, develop a product backlog from existing specifications, and begin iterative delivery.

After a few days of discovery and collaboration, the team began workshops on the Scrum framework and on writing user stories. The results were an actionable product backlog for the new product, a plan to build a framework for test-first development and continuous integration, an empowered product owner, and a delivery team that was ready to begin planning Sprint 1.

Within a few sprints, the team was employing pair programming, doing test-first development for a large portion of new code and writing tests for some of the legacy code. They also began continuously integrating the results of user stories with their growing codebase. Later, the Agile consultant, who had initially modeled the role of ScrumMaster for the new team, handed that role to a PowerAdvocate team member and began helping a second interested team to get to their own Sprint 1.

PowerAdvocate had seen so much value from SolutionsIQ’s presence that, by the end of six months, the engagement had been extended twice. By this time, most of the PowerAdvocate developers were working in Scrum teams, multiple ScrumMasters and product owners had been identified, trained, and coached, and product definition teams provided product owners with stakeholder input and support.

Results

Four PowerAdvocate Scrum delivery teams are currently delivering and supporting six products. The time required to prepare a release for production is now six working days, compared to the three-week timeframe required a year earlier, and no issues are encountered during deployments to production. The company’s in-house coach now provides training and support for new employees and existing teams.

A year after our initial engagement began, production time has been significantly reduced. The entire development process is now seamless, agile, and faster thanks to the successful reengineering efforts.