

**SolutionsIQ**

# A Capacity for Change

Case Study



How Agile coaching helped an industry pioneer go from stalled to stellar

## Just the Facts

### Industry

Broadband Internet

### Number of Employees

400+

### Length of Engagement

7 Months

### Number of Coaches

1

### Teams Launched

10

## Engagement Type

Agile Launch

## The Challenge

Train and launch Agile teams for the product group of a broadband Internet pioneer with 400+ employees

## The Goal

Better follow-through on execution, faster speed to market, higher quality

## The SolutionsIQ Solution

- » Assess the current situation and rally leadership around an organization-wide change roadmap.
- » Design a plan leveraging Scrum, XP, Lean Startup and other change approaches and techniques and begin execution.
- » Adjust the plan as needed, scale out small successes, and offer recommendations toward sustaining results.
- » Help client initiate culture shifts throughout the organization.

## Delivery

- » Successfully launch 10 Agile teams and two organization-wide enablement teams
- » Introduced elements of SAFe to give management higher visibility into organizational impediments
- » Implemented a prioritized product portfolio to ensure the most important work got done
- » Transformed company culture, extending Agility beyond software teams

## Abstract

Over a seven-month period, our Agile coach worked with a broadband Internet provider to launch 10 Agile teams with the goal of improving quality and speed to market. Using Agile Release Trains (ARTs), our Agile coach helped the client's leadership team better visualize the flow of work across the organization. This Big Picture view enabled them to reduce log jams by ensuring that work was pulled from a prioritized product portfolio. The client also implemented two Agile enablement teams, who are working to sustain success by extending Agility beyond the software teams.

## Overview

In our client engagements, we often find that improving the team's understanding of an Agile framework is just the first step in improving quality and speed to market. This particular broadband internet provider was no different. The product group was struggling to deliver updates and improvements to its recently released, groundbreaking technology. Their Chief Marketing Officer had seen Agile transformations at other organizations and knew that with Agile coaching, the group could move from stalled to stellar.

The technology group was not as enthusiastic. Though they agreed that an Agile process might be helpful, they didn't see the need for anything beyond a few days

of training. By the end of the engagement, however, they became some of our biggest champions and fans.

SolutionsIQ's coach launched 10 teams during the seven-month engagement. Our coach was able both to improve each team's process and also to pinpoint organizational blockers that were limiting success. Our coach used Agile Release Trains (ARTs) — a concept from the Scaled Agile Framework® (SAFe) — to show all of the organization's projects and their dependencies. This visualization helped uncover the number one issue the Agile teams at this organization were facing: too many concurrent projects. In short, demand outweighed capacity.

## Assess & Design

After having conversations with leadership about their goals and the team about their level of Agile understanding, our Agile coach recommended beginning with a pilot team. Together with management, the coach chose a team that would be tasked with developing the company's public-facing Web portal. This team had dipped their toes into the Agile waters and were going through a few of the motions of Scrum, such as holding daily standups, but initial assessments indicated that the team members really didn't have a firm grasp of the principles behind Scrum or the interdependency and interconnectivity of Scrum's roles, ceremonies and artifacts.

To alleviate this, the coach delivered a custom two-day Agile Foundations class to the team. Our Agile coach then worked with the team to prepare for the first Sprint. SolutionsIQ helped the team decide who would fill the various Scrum roles, develop working agreements and a definition of done, and conduct a product backlog workshop. We also counseled the team and organization on logistics such as the physical setup. With these elements in place, the team was ready to start.

“[Our] coach didn't help us make this happen from a pulpit. He truly coached us through it so that it would be genuine, so that it would stick... He rolled up his sleeves and helped us get started.”

## Start

To help the team quickly master new concepts and roles, our coach acted as ScrumMaster during the first Sprint, with the team's actual ScrumMaster shadowing. While the SolutionsIQ coach helped the team work through the mechanics of Sprint planning and operating as a cross-functional team, the ScrumMaster-in-training observed the facilitation techniques that our coach modeled, asked questions about impediment removal, and got a good behind-the-scenes look at the job of ScrumMaster. After Sprint 1, the roles were reversed, with the ScrumMaster acting independently while receiving shadow support from the Agile coach, who observed the day-to-

day activities and talked with the ScrumMaster about the things that were going well and things that could go better. Our Agile coach also met daily with the Product Owner and team members, answering questions and assisting with the specifics of their roles. By Sprint 3, the

team was ready to go it alone.

## Game Changer:

### WIP Limits & Prioritization

The Agile Release Trains and the planning events associated with their implementation were instrumental in helping management understand the true issues blocking the teams. The client abandoned their stalled, push system and began to pull work from a prioritized product portfolio. This propelled the company forward and helped them focus strategically on the most important work. As they began to change, so did their results.

## Scale

With the first team up and running, our coach then launched a new team following the same model. By the end of the engagement, the organization had launched 10 coached teams using this pattern.

As the number of teams grew, the coach introduced the client to a few elements of the SAFe framework. We showed them how Agile Release Trains (ARTs) and the planning events associated with them allow management to better coordinate plans among multiple projects and teams. The client implemented Scrum of Scrums rituals, a dependencies radiator, and PMO Agile metrics.

In working through these issues, the light bulb came on for management about the true issues blocking the teams. They were able to clearly visualize how much work they wanted to accomplish as compared to the teams' capacity to accomplish that work. What they realized as a result was that an unsustainable number of projects were underway. In other words, the portfolio work-in-process limit was much lower than they had once imagined.

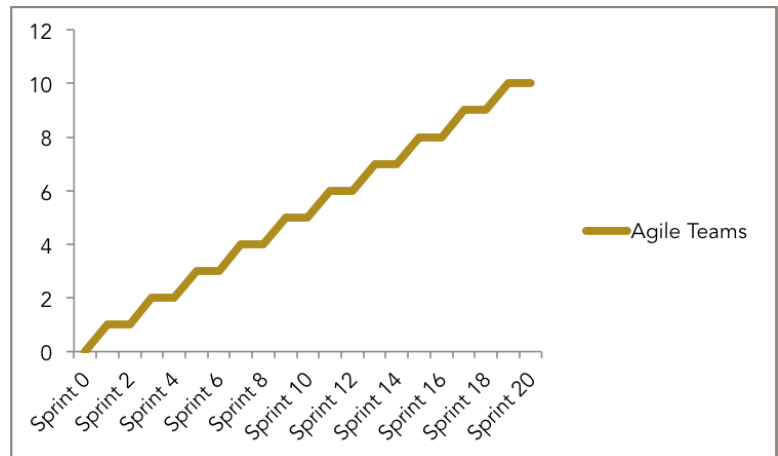
The SolutionsIQ coach showed the client how the push system they were using, which resulted in team members assigned to multiple projects and log jams in deployment and delivery, could be restructured. Our Agile coach helped them begin the conversion to a system where teams pull work from a prioritized product portfolio so that the organization is always working on the most important things.

Our Agile coach helped management and stakeholders across the organization understand the need for prioritization, balanced team structure, and dedicated resources. The

company began to reorganize themselves around value streams and products. This was a real turning point for the organization as a whole. As they began to change, so did their results.

## Sustain

By the end of the engagement, the company had 10 Agile teams, each releasing new products, enhancements and support services. They had also created two organization-wide enablement teams to implement and drive a system of continuous improvement in strategic and everyday operations.



Agile Teams Launched Over Time

The Agile teams are releasing updates in short, regular and controlled intervals, at higher levels of innovation and quality and with reduced levels of waste. As a whole, the organization has more transparency and awareness of its own capabilities than ever before. The high complexity and cross-functional nature of work is now better aligned for greater Agility at the business level.

Our Agile coach presented an end-of-engagement report that outlined opportunities to operate even smarter, faster, and better. Through our coach, SolutionsIQ reminded the organization that sustaining success requires ongoing deep commitment, nurturing, and strength—not just in team Agility but in organizational Agility as well. On the team side, areas for continued improvement include paying back the technical debt that built up with past practices, an increased focus on completing one or two small stories at a time, and growing the automated test suite.

We recommended that the client continue to implement XP practices, such as continuous integration, test-driven development, pair programming and other technical initiatives. We also cautioned them that these practices and disciplines alone would not be enough to sustain Agility. A true Agile transformation would require an increased focus on building capabilities at the leadership level and in designing environments that contribute toward greater Agility.

# Big Wins

- » Successful launch of 10 Agile teams & 2 organization-wide enablement teams
- » Introduced elements of SAFe framework to give management a Big Picture view into impediments to success
- » Prioritized product portfolio ensures the most important work is being done
- » Transformed company culture, extending Agility beyond software teams



Want to be the next  
success story?

**Contact us now to learn more about how  
SolutionsIQ can guide your Agile transformation!**

Visit [SolutionsIQ.com](https://solutionsiq.com)  
Email: [solutionsiq@accenture.com](mailto:solutionsiq@accenture.com)

Toll-Free: 1-800-235-4091  
Direct: 1-425-451-2727

Replicate this success with  
SolutionsIQ!