HALV/K

A Case Study in Agile Transformation

SUMMARY

USPTO employs more than 10,000 people, including attorneys, engineering professionals, scientists, analysts, computer specialists and information technology professionals. The majority of Agile projects within the USPTO portfolio are staffed by Agile practitioners who represent a variety of contracting vendor partners. The Halvik Team is supporting USPTO in the use of consistent Agile processes and implementation of the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) methodology including DevOps integration across the enterprise. Halvik provides Agile/Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who work with existing USPTO Agile/SAFe Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to ensure coaching support is aligned with the current direction of the Agile 2.0 project across the entire agency.

USPTO AGILE TRANSFORMATION

In 2011, USPTO formally adopted the use of the Agile Scrum methodology for IT development projects and revised their Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) processes and standards to include Agile practices. Since 2011, with the goal of increasing its efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of the products and services it delivers to its customers, USPTO has invested substantial resources in its Agile Transformation efforts which have been implemented in a decentralized manner across the organization.

During the Agile Transformation process, USPTO determined that it faced the following challenges:

- Critical Agile practices and processes were inconsistently applied and followed by vendors partners contracted for Agile development and testing projects;
- The resulting significant variation in the application of common Agile practices across the enterprise severely constrained and limited USPTO's ability to:
  - Capture consistent, accurate and meaningful Program, Portfolio and Team metrics across the agency
  - Define a consistent reporting structure within the Agile Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) tool
  - Achieve high quality standards and increases in development velocity due to the impact of disparate contractor team processes;

In an effort to strengthen and scale the current Agile foundational processes and practices effectively, USPTO began adopting the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®) as its end state vision, providing USPTO a roadmap to drive consistency and commonality in Agile practices. This approach to Agile transformation would facilitate the organization's ability to deliver consistent results and provide the flexibility needed by its various programs and portfolios to meet its customers' business objectives
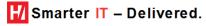
IMPLEMENTING THE ROADMAP

In 2015, USPTO tasked Halvik to assist in this process by providing a planned and coordinated Agile coaching program to stabilize, standardize and facilitate the expansion of Agile Transformation efforts. We began by reviewing current practices to identify weaknesses in USPTO Agile/SAFe implementation or execution. This initial assessment resulted in the following specific findings:

- Inconsistency in practice and integrity of the data being captured within Rally (an Agile software project management application);
- A significant number of Agile practitioners were inadequately trained and did not have the skills necessary to move seamlessly from the traditional waterfall practice to Agile;
- Insufficient Agile documentation, governance and controls.

To facilitate the maturation of USPTO's Agile competencies effectively and to build a solid foundation on which to build successful adoption of the SAFe framework, Halvik began by leading the creation and implementation of a set of critical Agile Foundational Practices:

- We provided Scrum coaching to stabilize the existing Agile/SAFe processes and to implement approved Agile processes across USPTO.
- We supported Agile development teams and provided mentoring for Scrum Masters, Product Owners,

Management, and other Agile process stakeholders.

- We provided written inputs to draft Agile/SAFE processes and procedures, and developed plans for implementation. Additionally, we developed and implemented coaching plans as well as provided regular written assessments of USPTO Agile team progress.
- We provided independent governance through assessment of USPTO Agile development teams and provided coaching to guide the teams toward consistent practices aligned with approved USPTO Agile/SAFe procedures.
- We defined & implemented an Agile metrics framework that facilitates the capture of accurate, meaningful and actionable Portfolio, Program & team metrics across the enterprise to aid in ensuring adoption of consistent & common Agile practices & processes across all Agile programs and projects.

To support continuous improvement:

- Halvik provided a full suite of Agile in-house training classes taught by our coaches on a regular and frequent basis for developers, stakeholders, and executive sponsors.
- We created a Scrum Master/Scrum Coach Community of Practice staffed with executive leadership and Program and Portfolio coaches.
- We brought these roles together regularly to provide a forum for Agile practitioners to interact and to share experiences.
- Supported by Halvik, the USPTO Community of Practice was able to establish Agile best practices and a "learn how to do it better" mindset.
- To institutionalize progress in stabilizing and maturing existing Agile teams, processes and practices, we facilitated the establishment of an Enterprise Agile Center of Excellence (aCoE) that all Agile practitioners can utilize as a source for coaching, training, best practices/process and Agile ALM tool support.

RESULTS

Halvik has developed and implemented standardized Agile process and metrics governed through an Agile Center of Excellence. We have supported over 23 custom tailored Agile training sessions to aid in Agile practice roll-out that have trained over 350 federal and contracting partner stakeholders across 32 program and delivery teams. Our coaching, mentoring, and custom training is provided across the entire agency for critical divisions such as architecture, cybersecurity, application development, and testing automation teams.

Through Halvik's support, USPTO is now better positioned to ensure adherence to and adoption of industry standard best practices across their portfolio of Agile projects by both government and contractor Agile practitioners. USPTO has significantly increased its efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of the products and services it delivers to its customers, thus increasing the alignment between its business and IT strategies. The Center of Excellence is now fully functional and the necessary ground work has been established to stabilize and mature existing Agile teams and practices. The tactical planning for scaling Agile across the enterprise is underway.

Learn more of how Halvik can help assess and standardize your Agile Development practices at www.halvik.com