

Planit Case Study:

## Agile Competency Growth

How Planit embedded an Agile culture and practices across its entire operations, leading to over 90% of staff possessing practical Agile experience.



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*Leanne Howard  
Business Agility Practice  
Director,  
Planit*

The past 20 years has seen a substantial shift in the way products are delivered. At the heart of this change has been the uptake of Agile, which has grown to the point where it is being used by 97% of organisations. Spurred by today's competitive business environment, Agile's popularity stems from its ability to accelerate speed whilst enhancing quality and focusing on the customer in software delivery.

As a trusted quality assurance consultancy, clients depend on our advice to better deliver high quality products that their customers will love, and do so with speed and efficiency. Having identified the power of Agile and the inevitable upswing in adoption, we needed to respond and fast!

This led to the establishment of a Business Agility practice responsible for the uplift of our own capability, as well as that of our clients through consultancy, coaching, training and hands-on delivery. In the meantime, lured primarily by the promise of speed, the market caught Agile fever.

However, this focus on speed has all too often come at the cost of quality. Organisations are now using the agile ceremonies, but often not changing their culture or mindset which means they are not getting the value and benefits of being agile rather than just doing agile. Planit, as a company whose approach to Agile holds quality at its core, is in a unique position to partner with our clients.

***“In order to benefit from the Agile values, we understood that it was not good enough to just do Agile, but we needed to change our culture and mindsets to be Agile.”***

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Business Agility Practice  
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#### KEY OUTCOMES:

- Built Agile understanding and capability of Planit staff.
- Embedded an Agile culture and practices across Planit's operations.
- 69% of Planit staff possess an Agile qualification.
- Offices such as Hamilton have all consultants Agile certified.
- Over 90% of staff possess practical Agile experience.

## Aiming Towards Agility

Foreseeing the market demand, in June 2010 we formalised our Agile practice. At the helm was world-renowned Agile thought-leader, Leanne Howard, who established a strategic plan for uplifting our capability. That included:

1. Creating Agile training courses and learning resources
2. Building the Agile understanding and capability of all Planit staff
3. Embedding an Agile culture and practices across Planit's own operations
4. Disseminating Agile knowledge to clients via paid and unpaid engagements
5. Establishing a network of Agile champions and coaches across the Planit group
6. Growing our presence in our clients' quality-centred Agile transformations

## Creating Learning Resources

Given the strength of our internal skills, particularly in relation to the relatively immature external knowledge-base, we decided to create our own learning resources. That initially comprised our Agile 101 course, as well as an ever-growing Confluence repository of market research and best practice materials.

We quickly expanded upon that knowledge-base, and today we have built over eight Agile courses, including numerous that are taught globally as international best practice certifications. We are also a SAFe Silver Partner and Accredited Training Provider, teaching our clients how to succeed in applying Agile practices at scale.

69% of our staff currently possess some Agile qualifications. Offices such as Hamilton have all of their consultants certified, and the goal is to get all Planit offices close to this point.

## Building our Capability

Having a vetted library of learning resources around the quality-centric Agile practices, our next challenge was to impart that knowledge across our existing team, and for all new starters moving forward.

We did this by including Agile training and certification as an essential building block on the career path of every Planit consultant. All of our staff are kept current on agile trends; what is happening across the regions; innovative initiatives and the wider agile community through our monthly agile newsletter that has been running for five years.

It wasn't just an understanding of Agile that was needed. Our team needed to take on-board more varied roles in Agile projects. As a result, we included Scrum Master training for our senior staff with a focus on accelerating quality. This is re-inforced by our internal programme where they facilitate scrum projects with our staff. We also provided cross-functional training in areas such as Business Analysis.

#### **DELIVERED:**

- Business Agility
  - Agile & SAFe Training
  - Staff Augmentation
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#### **TECHNOLOGIES:**

- Microsoft Teams
- Atlassian Jira
- Atlassian Confluence

But it wasn't just about theory. Practical experience was required, so we introduced real Agile project work for team members when they arrived back on 'the hub' between client engagements. This enabled them to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date so that they would be able to hit the ground running at their next client engagement.

At the time of producing this case study, over 90% of our staff possess practical Agile experience.

## **Embedding an Agile Culture**

In parallel to building our capability, a conscious effort was made to embed a culture of Agility across the Planit organisation. That meant more than getting our consultants on-board - it was essential for everyone in the company to buy-in, including back-office staff and upper management.

We achieved the necessary buy-in and shift of behaviour through a long programme of training, brown-bag sessions, webinars, hackathons, lean coffee events and three community forums each month.

Today, everything from product development to team building activities are planned and executed using highly collaborative Agile tools including Microsoft Teams and Jira. We have squads who work together on specific initiatives and chapters that bring specialist skillsets and common best practice across the business.

## **Disseminating Knowledge to Clients**

It was important that we not only focus on bringing our own people up-to-speed with Agile. We also needed to impart that knowledge upon our clients who, like us, were also starting their Agile transformation journeys.

Through training, workshops, brown-bag sessions and consultancy, Leanne was able to help many of our clients find the right path for their Agile journey. Now as Global Business Agility Practice Director, Leanne is supported by a large network of Agile evangelists across the global Planit footprint, who are capable of aiding clients on their Agile journey.

For many of our clients this agile partnership starts with an Agile healthcheck. This assessment looks at your current levels of maturity and where you want to be, then collaboratively we work out the best roadmap to get you there. Uniquely we have developed a healthcheck that concentrates on the Agile manifesto and 12 Principles to accelerate you from doing agile to being Agile with a strong focus on quality and customer delighters.

## **Establishing Agile Champions and Coaches**

One critical step in formalising Agile best practices across our organisation was establishing dedicated Agile champions for each branch. They would be responsible for internal and external coaching, Agile solutioning and driving implementation of Agile best practices.

#### **ABOUT PLANIT:**

No matter where you are on your Agile transformation journey, we offer a broad range of consultation, assessment, training, and coaching services that enable your teams to deliver better outcomes faster, embed quality in every iteration, and adopt 'shift left' practices.

Find out how our Agile Quality experts can help you understand your Agile maturity and fast-track your journey to Agile success with quality embedded throughout.

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When looking internally, one area where the contribution of these champions is evident is in the uptake of Atlassian's Jira tool, with 89% of our team being proficient in this skillset. From an outward perspective, having a formal network of highly skilled Agile Champions has vastly improved our ability to service our clients on their Agile transformations.

These champions are constantly working on our agile strategic initiatives; sharing new trends and models; leading by example through practising what we preach and collaborating to continuously improve and innovate.

### **Growing Role in Client Agile Transformations**

Our clients' demand for Agile solutions has increased significantly over the past decade. By positioning ourselves as a quality partner who not only aids our clients in quality assurance and engineering, but also helps them deliver quality quicker through technical innovation and new ways of working, we have been able to become enablers on our clients' business transformations.

Having developed much collateral to help our own Business Agility transformation, we have proven agile accelerators to aid our clients. These include QA/Test frameworks which are tailorable and scalable; practice cards and automation solutions.

### **Conclusion**

Like many of our clients, we recognised the benefits of agility in growing our business and attracting new customers. In order to benefit from the agile values, we understood that it was not good enough to just do agile but we needed to change our culture and mindsets to be Agile.

As a company, we have long embraced and delivered on the transformational benefits of Agile. However, as we found out from our own experiences with business transformation, adopting Agile methodologies and moving to an Agile operating model is tough, particularly for an established company.

Fortunately, by drawing upon the consultancy work we already did for numerous clients, we realised early on that a company-wide Agile transformation needed to be both comprehensive and continuous. To that end, we implemented several new initiatives and solutions that would deliver meaningful change across the company's strategy, structure, people, process, and technology.

The outcome was both positive, collaborative and fundamentally aligned to Planit's core values. By proactively investing in the Agile understanding and growing the practical experience of our staff, we not only helped to develop the right and necessary skills across the organisation, we also helped make the idea and value of Agile common to all.