

SuperSoftware House – Let's do it better!

*Improving processes and getting sh*t done with agility*

Overview

The need

SuperSoftware House had identified that old processes were not working for their new ventures. Time and money was being invested, without any value being delivered.

The solution

To explore and implement an agile way of working, the Development Manager engaged an external player to objectively look into the problem. A multi-faceted approach was designed to ensure that the strategy would be implemented across the board. Michi achieved this through a combination of training, expert coaching and individual mentoring.

The benefit

The company has seen greater engagement and accountabilities among employees. The Software Development Manager stated "there definitely has been a lot more communication amongst the team which has led to greater transparency and trust."

The take-away

"Start as soon as you can. Don't put your transformation off any longer. The longer you put it off, the harder it gets. If there's something you know you need to change, you just have to go ahead and do it."

A note from michi

While this client was originally very happy to create a case study about their agility journey, the clients' CEO withdrew permission to use the companies' name upon seeing the phrase "get shit done" in the final paragraph. Despite offering to work with obfuscation, distinctive layout and formatting, or the inclusion of a disclaimer, the CEO did not feel that any of the suggestions made were acceptable. After multiple unsuccessful attempts, I have decided to publish the case study anonymously and all names and places have been amended to distance the client from agile attitude's tag line. I trust you will still find the case study interesting and useful and – if your team could do with getting some shit done – give me a call any time!

michi tyson

director & chief idea generator

The Business

A leader in their industry, SuperSoftware House has been delivering business management solutions to Australian businesses for more than 2 decades. During that time, SuperSoftware House has built a successful enterprise by developing software that gives their clients' accesses to accurate, up-to-date information they need to budget, plan and make smart business decisions.

"It was clear that the processes that we used weren't going to work in this case"

*CEO of
SuperSoftware
House*

The Situation and the Problem

After leading the way in the software industry for nearly a quarter of a century, SuperSoftware House saw the opportunity to use its skills in IT development, financial management, and business to disrupt the financial software market.

The plan was to develop this new software using the company's existing internal process. More than 12 months into development, however, the team realised that their existing way of working could not cope with the introduction of a new tech stack, a new problem domain for the development team, and the product's sheer complexity. As said by the CEO of SuperSoftware House, "It was clear that the processes that we used weren't going to work in this case".

The team was struggling to make sufficient progress and to quickly respond to project manager requests. Product quality was deteriorating dramatically. Time and money were going in but no value was being delivered by the team.

The Development Manager decided it was time to explore an agile way of working. "I could see that we weren't making any headway with our existing process. Work was being handed out, but it was in sort of large-ish chunks. We never got to the point where we were breaking things down small enough, which we then found very hard to keep track of," he said. "We were losing any sense of transparency and consistency."

Looking for an external, independent view of the situation and impressed by her immediate ability to understand SuperSoftware House's problem and to see an achievable solution on the horizon, the Development Manager engaged Michi to direct them towards agility.



**"What if we don't change at all ...
and something magical just happens?"**

“With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better to implement agility principles at the beginning of the project, rather than part the way through.”

*CEO of
SuperSoftware
House*

The Solution

Michi spent time with the Development Manager to identify the possibilities for change within SuperSoftware House's current processes before developing an agile adoption plan that would improve productivity, increase transparency regarding process and future deliverables, and enable better team-wide planning.

Training

It was important for Michi to expose the software development team to the skills necessary for agility in order to foster a shared understanding and common language to use going forward.

The first step was '[agile 101](#)', a three-day agile certification course to introduce SuperSoftware House's team to key concepts, processes and practices of agility. Broken down into digestible bits, each session took the team through the steps to delivering cutting-edge products more efficiently and effectively by utilising goal-based work breakdown structures and embracing collaborative development practices. With Michi's support, the team was encouraged to define value and learn how to tackle risks, constraints and changes with an agile mindset.

In SuperSoftware House's case, those at the executive level opted not to participate in the initial agility training. "Participation here could have probably circumvented some later frustrations, or perhaps changed our 'Definition of Done' at the various levels," said the Development Manager. In hindsight, both the Development Manager and the CEO agree they would have insisted on executive management involvement throughout the entire agility process for a more coherent understanding throughout the company.

Coaching

Realising that learning the fundamentals of agility and actually implementing them is not always an easy process, Michi continued to support the SuperSoftware House team with a coaching plan that aligned with its organisational goals. This was essential to adapting the principles of agility to SuperSoftware House's specific situation.

Over the course of approximately three months, Michi engaged in weekly online coaching with the team, including three on-site coaching days, while also offering individual mentoring whenever needed.

“We’re gaining confidence. The whole business now actually has a better understanding of where we’re going.”

*The
Development
Manager of
SuperSoftware
House*

This constant, focused communication meant members of the software development team could raise concerns and create a deeper understanding of agility at any stage of the project.

Whilst conversing with Michi about making herself available for individual online mentoring, the Development Manager said, “I think it was good having that opportunity for the team to be able to talk to somebody other than me to air frustrations or just get confirmation on direction.”

He noted the particular advantage of Michi’s ability, as an external coach, to be unbiased and unrestrained when tackling problems, bringing new ideas to what otherwise can be a narrow focus.



The Result

SuperSoftware House’s agility journey certainly wasn’t an easy one. “We weren’t starting on something new,” said the Development Manager, “which certainly made the estimation process more complex and the story writing process trickier.” But the Development Manager is quick to point out that he and his team have taken a great deal of learnings from the process, and continue to learn as they evolve their product and understanding of iterative and incremental delivery processes.

Despite facing what initially seemed like an insurmountable challenge, at the time of writing this case study, SuperSoftware House’s product development is running six weeks ahead of schedule, following just five months of agility training and coaching. The company has seen significant improvements in terms of the team’s communication, project reporting, and understanding among team members, managers and other stakeholders.

“There’s definitely been a lot more communication amongst the team which has led to greater transparency and trust,” said the Development Manager. “We’re gaining confidence.”

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"The whole business now actually has a better understanding of where we're going." On an individual level, the company has seen greater staff engagement and accountability among team members.

Perhaps best of all, SuperSoftware House considers their agility training as something that will continue to benefit the company long term. "We see it as a type of risk management tool," said the CEO. "This agile approach is about shared responsibility and greater awareness between team members about what's going on. We're less susceptible to being in the drink if a key person leaves."

The benefits have been so great that SuperSoftware House is looking to adopt agility concepts and principles across the entire company.

"We probably should have done this much earlier," said the CEO. "With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better to implement agility principles at the beginning of the project, rather than part the way through."

"Start as soon as you can," stated the Development Manager. "Transformation off, the harder it gets. If there's something you know you need to change, you've just got to go ahead and do it."

Ready to get sh*t done?

Stuck in a rut? Ready to get your team working faster and smarter, with greater accountability, team synergy, and across-the-board communication? If you're ready for your business to become leaner and meaner with a positive, refreshed team behind you, give Michi Tyson a call. She can't wait to help you figure out how to kick things up a notch and start getting shit done.

GET
SHIT
DONE