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Reinventing financial services
Banking on agile methodology for dynamic product releases

As financial services companies transform themselves into nimble technology companies able to meet the demands of the digital age, many find their efforts stymied by an ingrained, industry-wide resistance to change. One global financial services company turned to Deloitte when it sought a new way to develop software that would help enable new digital banking options for its customers.
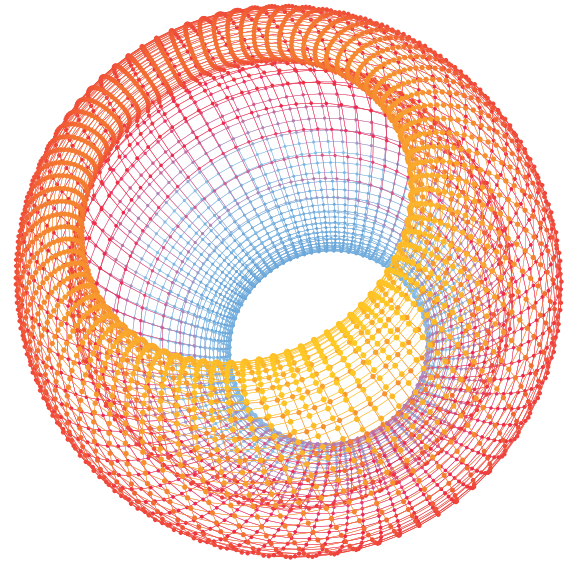
The case for agile

Because innovation was the client's priority, they engaged the Deloitte team to help scale and accelerate agile adoption. The approach comprises product-based teams that innovate and deploy their products independently across the platform. Using practices like feature toggling and continuous integration, delays in one team's releases would not hold up advances from others. However, with a unified architectural vision, all teams can share and reuse common components to speed up delivery. Additionally, tight integration of business and technology teams through a Product Owner, who is empowered to make development decisions, keeps the teams moving. By adopting an agile software development and delivery process, the financial services company could quickly scale up its digital capabilities while ensuring the quality of products and services for which it is known.

How we helped

The first step was introducing a new organizational and team structure. Deloitte reorganized the product and technology groups into 35 cross-functional teams; each

team has ownership of a platform service or application and is responsible for a set of key performance indicators.

Next, the client team refactored the platform into a discrete set of services and applications. With the service-oriented architectures (SOA) in place, teams could focus on product stewardship and technical debt reduction to drive quality improvements. Then, new agile management techniques and automation tools were introduced, which helped teams manage programs and backlogs as well as automate continuous integration and deployment.

Finally, with a new end-to-end Agile system in place for intake, program, product, and release processes, feature releases became non-events that occurred every two weeks across the platform. The process addressed the key challenges the client would face in scaling up to meet the needs of its growing organization:

- **Large programs:** Unwieldy programs were broken down into minimum viable products (MVPs) through story mapping and other agile practices to increase

development and delivery speed. The empowered product teams used a collaborative approach to define user stories that touched their product areas and to manage dependencies across the release train.

- **Prioritization:** The team prioritized product releases based on value stream, and product teams pulled from global priorities based on their capacity.

- **Risk and compliance:** Controls check points, a review of products associated with each program, and a controls demo day were set up to provide feedback/acceptance on delivered functionality.

- **Engineering:** The client engineering team was engaged to support the product teams in decoupling owned components to support independent releases. Engineers also drove automation of the new functionality to help with fast regression testing. They coached teams on generating clean code during each sprint to improve product quality, and they automated the "build" and "deploy" processes to establish a two-week cadence for releasing software.
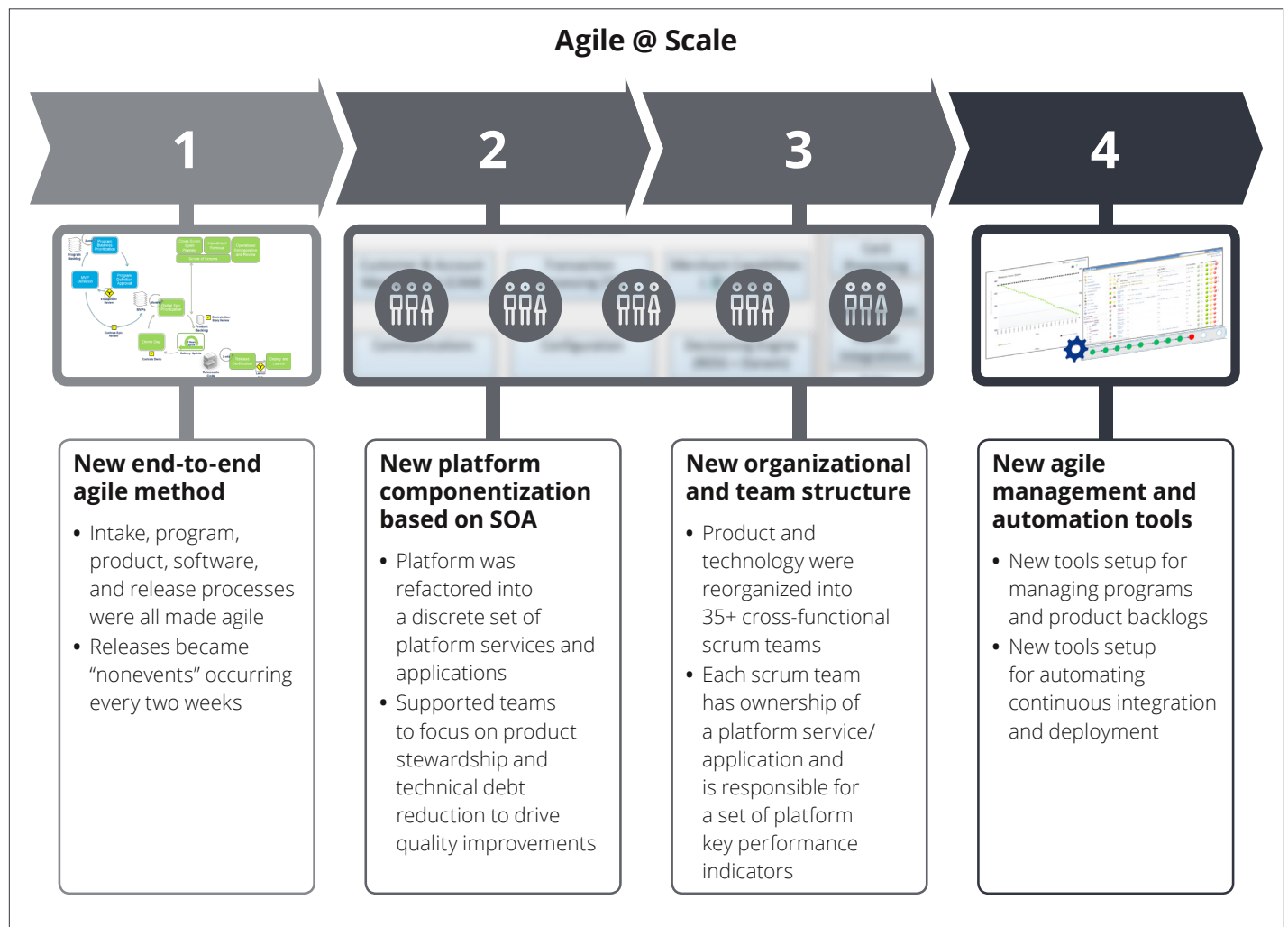
Results

The client saw quantifiable results almost immediately. The method became the new norm, with agile ceremonies running in parallel across 35 product teams each day. Platform-level testing went from seven days to under three hours with automated testing, and team output immediately increased by 120 percent. The reduced cycle time means teams are producing and releasing around 300 user stories, representing real value to the business, every two weeks.

Additionally, the quality of work improved with no cost to performance. Production defects reduced by 88 percent over the course of the first year, and the client scored in the 80th percentile for predictability according to an industry standard survey. Most importantly, customer satisfaction ratings jumped from 19 to 46 percent for core financial services products.

Finally, the team consistently met customer demand, delivering 40 releases versus seven the previous year. Moreover, teams launched nine major initiatives—up from two the previous year—demonstrating the business value of the agile transformation.

Agile transformation overview

The result was a broad-based transformation across the enterprise

Agile @ Scale

1

New end-to-end agile method

- Intake, program, product, software, and release processes were all made agile
- Releases became "nonevents" occurring every two weeks

2

New platform componentization based on SOA

- Platform was refactored into a discrete set of platform services and applications
- Supported teams to focus on product stewardship and technical debt reduction to drive quality improvements

3

New organizational and team structure

- Product and technology were reorganized into 35+ cross-functional scrum teams
- Each scrum team has ownership of a platform service/application and is responsible for a set of platform key performance indicators

4

New agile management and automation tools

- New tools setup for managing programs and product backlogs
- New tools setup for automating continuous integration and deployment