

VIEWPOINT BASIC COLLABORATION CASE STUDY

AUGUST 2014

“We are not dealing with the silly challenges any more of not knowing how to work together and how to collaborate, but now we are focusing on real business challenges.”

—Strategic Product Owner

CLIENT OVERVIEW

REGION

United States

INDUSTRY

Information Technology

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Dātu Health is a technology company that produces software for the healthcare industry.

BUSINESS SITUATION

Constantly shifting demands created internal resource conflicts. Frustrated by missed delivery dates, the executive management team recognized a need for assistance in developing a process, training employees and integrating best practices into the growing company's fiber, placing additional burdens on the development team.

SOLUTION

Pinnacle Strategies helped the Dātu team visualize its workflow, focus priorities, reduce work in progress, and collaborate on common goals system, and to apply new insights to communications, buffer management and metrics.

Software Development Company Increases Velocity and Improves Productivity by more than 300% in less than 3 months

CHALLENGE

Software Development Performance Threatens Client Relationship

Dātu Health, a provider of health care software, was experiencing rapid growth with the prospect of still more opportunities. However, the development organization was not fully prepared for this growth, and the current projects were at risk for late delivery.

Dātu was using an Agile development process, with a software delivery team of approximately 50 people. While the process was flexible, the workflow proved difficult to manage. In the midst of rising customer demand for more software features, delivery could not keep pace with the workload. More and more resources were added to satisfy rising expectations, but despite long hours and many weekends writing code, the company remained challenged by promised delivery dates.

The stakes were high: by complying with new government regulations around Meaningful Use principles, the customer would benefit financially—but only if they implemented the new program by its targeted date. Discouraged by delays and the lack of finished features, both the customer and Dātu recognized a need for process improvement in order to improve productivity.

SOLUTION

ViewPoint Basic Collaboration to Get Control of the Work and Workflow

Right from the start, the team quickly realized that they didn't have visibility into all of the work in the system. Without visibility into the workflow, Dātu could not get control of the system. The ViewPoint framework complemented and supplemented the Agile model in use with formalized management processes, built around proven principles, that would enable an increase in feature deliveries. The implementation involved:

COLLABORATIVE EXECUTION Without a “big picture” understanding of the entire project, developers were working in the dark, blind to the collective goal. To create a foundation for collaborative action, Pinnacle Strategies created a visual project execution process. Immediately, the entire team could see the “log jams” that required the most urgent attention. With simple, daily, short stand-up meetings, the team was able to effectively collaborate, rapidly identifying problems and resolve obstacles, dramatically increasing the velocity of feature completions.

CONTROLLING WORK IN PROCESS Like many teams under pressure, the team had started too many tasks at once, creating a “hurry up and stall” dilemma that clogged the workflow with unfinished work. Using the execution process, Pinnacle Strategies and Dātu

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

RATE OF COMPLETION INCREASED
BY MORE THAN **300%** WITH
SAME RESOURCES OVER A TIME PERIOD
OF 3 MONTHS

MET PRODUCT RELEASE DELIVERY
COMMITMENTS

selected a constraint—or pacing process—that dictated the delivery cadence for the entire workflow. By syncing task starts to this constraint, the team limited the excess work in progress (WIP), thereby increasing the productivity of the entire team. As for the existing work, they froze about one-fourth of the current active features and ensured that people (or teams) were not working on more than a limited number of features a day to restore flow and prevent the constraint process from being starved for lack of work.

In a continued effort to reduce multitasking and increase velocity, Dātu focused on completing the feature sets for which the team had complete input requirements. Pinnacle Strategies encouraged the management to not release anything that cannot be completed.

PRIORITY CONTROL The team created a managed priority system that reflected the global focus and was used for all development work; setting priorities based on the feature sets that were most important to the client. The priority control system maintained consistency of task priorities throughout the development workflow, aligning local priorities with the client's goals and commitments. This increased programmer productivity.

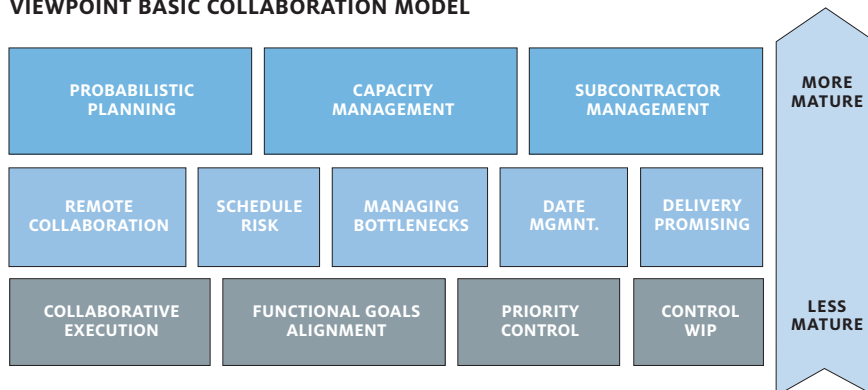
FUNCTIONAL ALIGNMENT Before Pinnacle Strategies arrived, individuals and teams measured their progress in terms of their assigned tasks, regardless of impact on the overall goal. Pinnacle Strategies helped Dātu realign the entire development team to its collective objective: completing work for the client. Together, the team defined metrics, supported by the executive team, which drove more value to the customer. These measurements also facilitated, increased completion velocity and greater quality. In addition, the team reduced rework by applying clean start requirements for critical handover points between project management and the design, development and data/infrastructure process.

RESULTS

Work completed by scheduled date and with committed scope—with less stress

Within the first three months of implementing ViewPoint Basic Collaboration, the Dātu team increased feature completions more than 300%. Additionally, there was significantly less stress and frustration among the team, thus improving morale. The team met the next two major release dates, each time with less conflict, fire-fighting and last minute drama.

VIEWPOINT BASIC COLLABORATION MODEL



ABOUT VIEWPOINT BASIC COLLABORATION

The implementation fulfilled for Dātu reflects one level of the Project Execution Maturity Model, Basic Collaboration. Each level of maturity is a reflection of an organization's capability to manage activity and time.

BASIC COLLABORATION applies to a local work group and completion of its tasks currently in progress. The main emphasis of Basic Collaboration is on task velocity and synchronizing the team.

IMPROVED COORDINATION extends capabilities to remote work groups and extends beyond current tasks to those in the near future. The main emphasis of Improved Coordination is on delivery date performance and if necessary, integrates remote teams into the collaborative execution process.

INTEGRATED PLANNING AND EXECUTION creates a closed-loop process between planning and execution that drives ongoing project performance improvement. The main emphasis is on managing the future—planning for and managing risks and resources, and developing process capability for ongoing improvements.

The **Project Execution Maturity Model** gives managers confidence in the change process, by:

- Matching project execution behaviors and processes against best practice
- Testing behaviors and processes for consistency across functions
- Checking for organizational alignment

It guides the organization as it progresses from local, ad hoc execution methods to integrated, *repeatable* practices that systematically deliver projects on time, at lower costs.

BEST PRACTICES SOLUTIONS

Pinnacle Strategies is an international management consulting firm focused on operations management excellence. We work with organizations to increase shareholder value by developing high-performance business processes that significantly enhance productivity, reduce costs and time to market, improving profitability and accelerating sustainable growth. Pinnacle Strategies offers results-driven consulting solutions in the areas of performance management, project management, operations management, and supply chain.

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