

AUTO SCOUT24

BRANCH Online car market

PERIOD 2008-2010

LOCATION Munich/Germany

COMPANY AutoScout24 GmbH

WEBSITE www.autoscout24.com

ABOUT AUTOScout24

AutoScout24 is Europe's biggest online car market. Over 1.8 million vehicle offers are available around the clock to the 13 million users a year (ACTA 2009) in five different markets: new and used vehicles, commercial vehicles and motorcycles as well as parts & accessories. More than 37,000 dealers throughout Europe use AutoScout24. AutoScout24 is part of the Scout24 Group with its brands ElectronicScout24, Finance-Scout24, Friend-Scout24, ImmobilienScout24, JobScout24 and TravelScout24. Scout24 is part of the Deutsche Telekom Group.

INITIAL SITUATION

A complex project planned in the year 2007 pushed the project management and development methods used by AutoScout24 to their absolute limits. The challenges it involved were analysed and the company created the freedom needed to push forward vital changes.

SOLUTION

At the beginning of 2008 the company decided to use agile management and development methods. AutoScout24 began with a soft Scrum change process, which was supported wholeheartedly by the management. Initially the process was limited to software development, but after a year it was expanded to include product management and other divisions involved in product development with the support of coaching provided by Boris Gloger.

RESULTS

A two-third reduction of the bug rate, significantly higher calculated business value, praise from the customers, close dovetailing of development and product management are some of the successes that Auto-Scout24 can already look back on. Product development is now far more transparent vis-à-vis the management, other departments, stakeholders and customers.

AutoScout24: Keeping an eye on the big picture means better products reach the market faster

There are usually two options open to you when faced with challenges: either you simply carry on along the same path as before or you analyse the situation to see if there is a different way that would address weak points more effectively. AutoScout24 resolutely decided on the latter option.



“We realised that using the classic project management system Delta as a control instrument was effected either at the expense of the set deadlines, the quality or the costs and that this in no way met the demands we placed on the success of our projects”, is how Joachim Gmeinwieser, team leader & Scrum coach at AutoScout24 sketches the dilemma. “At the end of the day we were indeed glad when a project was concluded, but success was sometimes marred by the one or other bitter pill.” AutoScout24 also realised that in the medium term the period in which new products were delivered had to be significantly improved in order to meet the demands the company set itself. The introduction of Scrum was pushed by the Head of Software Development, Matthias Patzak and the Vice President IT, Carsten Bernhard. The management and the Vice President of Product Management and Business Development,

Johannes Bernhardt, were the driving force behind its further expansion to encompass product management. The team from borisgloger consulting took over responsibility for the necessary training and coaching.

SOFT START AND GRADUAL MOVING CLOSER TOGETHER

AutoScout24 was sure in the very early stages that a “big bang” introduction of Scrum would put too great a strain on the company. That is why a soft change process was started in 2008, one that was initially limited to the software development. While product management continued to write specifications in the classic way, the developers held their daily Scrums and ScrumMaster training sessions were provided for individual employees. Scrum was met with a very positive response from the developers, to begin with under the motto „We

can do what we like now!". The project managers underwent training in June 2008 to help them get such freedom onto the right track. "It was a great challenge to get the message across that freedom entails the exercising of rights and obligations and that the assuming and allocating of responsibility is what makes cooperation within a team successful. Speedy, on-time delivery of a complex project in the first year of the introduction of Scrum, in which all the newly formed teams were involved, confirmed that we had made the right decision", explains Joachim Gmeinwieser. It is true that the product managers in particular were sceptical to start with, but their curiosity was awakened as soon as they saw the positive changes. It was interesting for outsiders to see that the teams sat together in one room and that, in contrast to the way things were done before, even the project leaders had there allocated places side-by-side with the teams. The visits of the product managers grew in number until meanwhile all Scrum team members, including Product Owners, sit together in one room. This moving closer together was only possible because the company left the teams a lot of freedom and provided them with whatever they needed; in a nutshell: it gave the introduction of Scrum its wholehearted support. This physical proximity has brought with it the insight that we can only achieve anything if we work together.

AN ORGANISATION SCRUTINISES ITSELF

Based on the positive experiences from the first months, the management deemed it expedient to introduce Scrum across all divisions. Product management whose curiosity had been aroused was brought on board, while at the same time it became clear that not only the operative level

was affected, but that organisational changes were necessary if the potential of the system was to be exploited to the full. "That is why coaching was regarded as an important investment, one that also had to be financially viable", says Gemeinwieser. A transition team was put together for the new phase, which was responsible for the speedy elimination of cross-team and organisational impediments. In order to make the transition easier after external coaching, an internal coach was appointed to support the transition team as a ScrumMaster and in the role of coach to advise the teams with any questions concerning methods. The certified ScrumMaster (CSM) Joachim Gemeinwieser was chosen for this role. The goals were agreed with the management: more efficiency in product development, both in product management and in implementation, enhanced quality, shorter times-to-market, better communication between the departments and divisions, transparency vis-à-vis the stakeholders and customers.

THE ROI OF COACHING

The number of bugs was reduced by two-thirds thanks to improved communication, so that products are now delivered largely bug-free. The teams are suddenly receiving praise directly from the customers – a new and motivating experience for them. The business value calculated in June 2010 was significantly higher than it was in the same period of 2009. In addition, the organisation changed from being project-driven to become product-driven. Today each team is responsible for a product division and takes care of the products for which it is responsible over their entire service life. Additional features are regarded as product enhancements, not as projects that are soon forgotten when concluded.

THE HUMAN FACTOR

During the change process Joachim Gmeinwieser pointed out that individuals within an organisation working alone can only achieve goals to a certain degree. Gemeinwieser is convinced, "Teams concentrate on the essential". "Each person knows his/her role, the interaction between the roles brings the organisation forward." The introduction of Scrum also saw the promotion of pair programming, test-driven development and pair reviews. The fundamental infrastructure was also revised and optimised in order to exploit the benefits of continuous development and integration to the full. Of course, things didn't always run smoothly at AutoScout24. The decision to completely restart bug tracking gave rise to hot discussions. Although employee fluctuation was very low in the course of the introduction, not every employee was suited to Scrum. A lack of team spirit came to light quite clearly. For others Scrum proved to be the biotope in which they could blossom. The Scrum coach was surprised that, "Those who had said the least before, were now the people who participated the most". One of the key issues: assuming and delegating responsibility. To begin with the ScrumMasters were forced into the role of decision-makers for the team, due not least to the fact that the hybrid character of "ScrumMaster/project leader" constituted the link to the management. But it was soon entrenched that ScrumMasters, Product Owners and the team operate at eye level. Steering committees were done away with after the coaching, the management now got its information from the task boards, backlogs and Scrum reviews or spontaneously in one-to-one talks. Things also changed for the developers.

All team members take on the responsibility for a release in turn. There is a team leader for development in each Scrum team, who takes on the role of mentor and coach as well as exercising disciplinary leadership, but who does not intervene in the work process itself where role allocation is concerned. "I was sceptical as to whether this would work or not, but it does so surprisingly well", says

Gmeinwieser. "Obviously someone is needed to take the lead in stalemate situations, the team leaders take their responsibility and Scrum very seriously." In the meantime team goals are agreed for the career development of the employees. Work for the team and a view of the big picture are now required, not only individual performance.



Joachim Gmeinwieser

"I find it particularly fascinating how much can be achieved in the process as a whole thanks to the team focus. It is also important here, that infrastructure and framework conditions change simultaneously. I have made the personal discovery that social skills are far more important than professional ones where Scrum is concerned."

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