

IMMOBILIEN SCOUT 24

BRANCH Web solutions

PERIOD 2008-2010

LOCATION Berlin/Germany

COMPANY ImmobilienScout24 GmbH

WEBSITE www.immobilienscout24.com

INITIAL SITUATION

Dr. Oliver Zeiler joined Immobilienscout24 as Technical Manager in 2007. Before that he had made his first experience with Scrum at Siemens/Beng. His task: to promote a more efficient and transparent software development.

SOLUTION

The company provided the organisational freedom and the time needed for a pilot project that could not be realised with the methods used to date. Its success convinced the entire management team and resulted in a transition to an extensive implementation of Scrum. Not just retrospective aspects, but first and foremost perspectives are the basis for further development in which external teams are also involved.

RESULTS

Today around 60 developers work in 15 Scrum teams on Immobilienscout 24 services and productivity is high on four-times higher compared to 2007. The bug rate has been cut by more than half. Goals 2010: Scrum 2.0, stronger anchoring of an agile approach even outside of IT and significant improvement of the aspect "Definition of Ready".

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ImmobilienScout 24: Scrum needs wholehearted commitment in order to work

Feigning vs. doing: Oliver Zeiler has experienced the difference. He had already had experience with Scrum before joining ImmobilienScout GmbH – especially with how rigid corporate structures can lead to its failure if it is regarded simply as an instrument of project management and of self-reassurance.



When Oliver Zeiler became Head of Development at ImmobilienScout GmbH in 2007 he took over two divisions whose development performance he was to make more efficient and more transparent. He was and still is convinced by agile development methods and Scrum. He is a resolute, goal-orientated person who knows that efficiency and transparency can only lead to success if the necessary attention is paid to the organisation. And Scrum is quite simply the most suitable method here.

FREEDOM LEAVES ROOM FOR SOLUTIONS

At the beginning of 2008 Oliver Zeiler sent two product managers and two team leaders from his division to a

Scrum training with Boris Gloger. Their set task: to find ways and means to implement agile development methods at ImmobilienScout24 GmbH. In summer 2008 Oliver Zeiler also took over responsibility for the operations, project management and quality assurance divisions as CTO. The company had been looking for a solution for a comparatively small project for a long time without success. Oliver Zeiler made this the first Scrum project and created very generous organisational framework conditions for its implementation. He did this despite the fact that Scrum philosophy had very little in common with the processes usually applied in product development at that time. Outside of the applicable processes and rules of the organisation, the team was given a great deal of freedom and a

six-month vote of confidence allowing it to organise itself and implement Scrum by-the-book as best it could. Looking back Oliver Zeiler says: “The willingness to let go of the team and leave it space for self-development, was one of my key contributions.”

SCRUM CALLS TASKS INTO QUESTION

The project was more successful than expected and rendered Scrum really interesting for the company. The entire management team took part in a Scrum training lasting several days. “The idea was that everyone should grasp whether they had taken the development closer to heart or not and what an agile approach really means. That was the second decisive contribution I made to the success of my teams with Scrum.” More and more teams were eager to work with Scrum and almost overtook the planned transition process. The question soon arose for Zeiler’s heads of department: “What is my task now?” Or the other way round: “my raison d’être?” Zeiler provided the answer during the hot discussions and talks that followed: “You now have more time to concentrate on the strategic development of our IT!” This not only expressed a key question for his heads of department, but for the management of Scrum organisations generally: namely the question of the task. Because managers often complain that they are so caught up in operative tasks they cannot find enough time for their strategic tasks. With his approach Zeiler achieved this key aspect of corporate added value: time for strategy without having to sacrifice operative profit.

EVEN EXTERNAL TEAMS MUST PULL THEIR WEIGHT

Despite the successes not everything ran smoothly at ImmobilienScout24. One of the challenges is the cooperation with external teams who also work with Scrum. The positive side is that these really do wish to satisfy the Product Owner. At the same time they are more bent on getting a lot of features instead of pursuing the quality and maintainability of their software. So Oliver Zeiler has to expand his reach and impose the demands the developers within Immobilien-Scout24 GmbH place on themselves on the external teams as well. This can be achieved to a certain extent with training, but “ensuring quality and demanding this remains a task for the operative cooperation.”

NEVER STAND STILL: SCRUM 2.0

In addition to the existing cooperation with Boris Gloger, Oliver Zeiler also invited Alan Atlas to a Scrum review lasting several days at the beginning of 2009. Under the internal slogan Scrum 2.0 they are considering how efficiency can be boosted even more through expedient further developments. Even more integrated teams with more extensive test competences are to be formed by creating interdisciplinary team constellations and incorporating what were previously side issues in the tasks of the teams. Another item on the agenda is the introduction of the „Definition of Ready“ according to Jeff Sutherland. The question here is when a user story is ready to be communicated to a team, which can then work on it efficiently. Oliver Zeiler also used this Scrum review as an opportunity to discuss and reflect the topic of Scrum, its goals and

approach to solutions on a broad basis within the company. With specialist lectures for the management and the teams as well as for external partners.

AND WHAT BENEFITS DOES IT BRING?

Convincing, in addition to all qualitative aspects of the success story of Immobilien-Scout24 GmbH, is the consistent management work, but also and most especially the quantitatively measurable results: productivity has quadrupled within three and half years, the bug rate has been cut by half. A spirited start with a vote of confidence as security, consistent team work encompassing all levels and potential for further development – Immobilien-Scout24 GmbH is the testimonial of a passion that appears almost matter-of-fact outwardly.



Dr. Oliver Zeiler

„My most important contribution was and is to give the teams the freedom to develop independently. That is a great challenge. Because not all teams are ready immediately to take on and really commit to responsibility. It is a process whose progress needs the utmost attention of all those in management and in the teams.”