

BRANCH Digital brand communication

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COMPANY P//MOD München

WEBSITE www.p-mod.de

ABOUT P//MOD

P//MOD is the digital agency brand of Publicis Germany and part of the international digital network Publicis Modem. The specialists are active in Erlangen, Munich, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and Frankfurt on the Main.

INITIAL SITUATION

Day-to-day life in the agency is hectic, characterised by deadlines and last-minute customer wishes – especially in digital communication. An excessive workload dampens the motivation of employees in the long run and can have a negative impact on quality and the meeting of delivery dates

SOLUTION

Scrum enables reliable planning despite the unpredictability of some issues, even the requirements of New Business and Creation can be integrated. Clear goals communicated in the Company Backlog, explicit commitments, the removal of knowledge monopolies and talking to each other result in a new quality of day-to-day life in the agency.

RESULTS

The new transparency to which everyone is committed has a motivating effect. There is a distinct improvement in the quality of the development. Problems and bottlenecks are detected earlier, satisfaction and identification with the agency grow.

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Planning the unpredictable: Scrum in the digital marketing agency P//MOD

Everyone thinks working in advertising agencies and their digital communication divisions is laid-back and relaxed. But in fact routine work is an exception in such an agency.



In contrast to classic software development, the rule here is that last-minute orders with tight deadlines continuously upset carefully laid plans. If the volume that has to be squeezed through the tight time framework is constantly increasing, the workload becomes unsustainable and clashes with quality requirements and adherence to delivery dates. Joel Flammann (General Manager) and Christian Müller (Business Director) noticed how the constant pressure of work diminishes the motivation of the employees at P//MOD, the digital agency brand of Publicis Deutschland and in the long run not only harmed the individual, but the agency itself as an organisation. While searching for a solution they came across Scrum – which is rather unusual for the agency sector.

THE TEAM WANTS SCRUM, WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT SCRUM IS

In October 2003 the Munich agency invited its employees to a team-building session. The message that Joel Flammann heard there from his employees sounded all too familiar. The teams want clear roles and responsibilities, but nevertheless a certain degree of flexibility. They want more rules of the game, for employees and the company alike. And they want more transparency, planning capability and communication. “A few days previously I had been to a lecture by Boris Gloger and what he told us about Scrum complied to a large extent with what the employees wanted”, says Joel Flammann. The decision to apply Scrum was quickly made and P//Mod

got down to brass tacks straight away - shortly after the aforementioned workshop the “big bang” implementation of Scrum got underway with the support of the Boris Gloger team.

ARE 10 CUSTOMER CONSULTANTS ALSO 10 PRODUCT OWNERS?

Knowledge and expertise was well distributed during the putting together of the team and knowledge monopolies slowly broken down. Talking to each other instead of mailing and being able to question issues directly, lifted the mood significantly and prevented misunderstandings.

The greatest challenge lay in integrating customer consulting and Scrum teams. A string of consultants took care of a whole string of customers. It was obvious that not every consultant could also be a Product Owner, that would have caused an absolute shambles. Each team has just one Product Owner, who is responsible for working on the stories. All other consultants were organised into content-related advisory groups around the PO. These groups are the interface to the customer. When a consultant receives a request from a customer, he/she passes this task on to the PO, but still takes part in all Sprint Planning Sessions and Reviews. The yardstick in prioritisation is the jointly developed Business Value which, as an overriding goal, functions as a vision.

INTEGRATION OF NEW BUSINESS AND CREATION

The development processes in agencies are not only interrupted for longer periods by last-minute customer requests but also all too often by business opportunities in the form of pitches. “During the planning of the story points we have developed

a feeling for routine interruptions and take these into account in the process”, explains Flammann. “But the work on pitches must be integrated ad hoc and we must be sure that the preparations take place quickly despite Scrum. To achieve this we have put together a New Business team that works with weekly sprints and where necessary gathers expertise from other teams.” In Munich P//MOD focuses on technical services and also offers its own software products based on the ASP model. Creation is of greater importance in the Erlangen and Düsseldorf sites. And it is exactly this aspect that will constitute one of the next challenges: reconciling creative processes with Scrum processes, because Erlangen is also currently starting with Scrum. “We realise that creative people and developers have different approaches. The brainstorming process is to continue as usual in future, in line with the methods of the creative people, but must nevertheless be incorporated in the Scrum process, not just the final concept”, explains Joel Flammann.

TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION SOW THE SEEDS OF SATISFACTION

The wishes of the employees at P//MOD with regard to team building have now become reality. The pressure on the individual has been reduced, because the sharing of knowledge functions better now. Not one single project was closed late and the required quality was delivered every time. Improved planning and the questioning of issues in the sprint planning means that any missing information from customers is detected at an earlier stage. Customers are also told “no” more often, whenever this serves to ensure timely

deliveries and the quality of a project. The aim is to integrate customers even more closely in the planning and review. It has also been recognised that Scrum is not a panacea for everything, on the contrary it raises questions that must be clarified by the organisation. Even Scrum cannot help in the long-term if the management ignores these questions. The management participates actively at P//MOD and has thus developed far sounder bases for decision-making. It sees itself as the supporter of the teams and thanks to the meanwhile good internal communication can prioritise points in need of improvement more easily. However, for Joel Flammann it is of vital importance that the employees are satisfied with their roles, responsibilities and degree of flexibility and that they identify more closely with the company. And that solutions emerge from the dialogue between the team and the company and not from any instructions given.



Joel Flammann

“I do not think that the introduction of Scrum would have worked if a bottom-up approach had been taken. I believe it is extremely important that the management supports Scrum wholeheartedly. Otherwise, there would be 20 reasons a day why Scrum does not work.”