CASE STUDY

BORIS GLOGER®

ABOUT DB STATION&SERVICE AG
As a wholly-owned subsidiary of the DeutscheBahn AG, the DB Station&Service AG is responsible for constructing, operating, maintaining and enhancing train stations in Germany. Each year, approximately 700 million Euros are invested in construction and modernization projects.

SITUATION
The Rhein-Ruhr-Express (RRX) is one of the most important rail infrastructure projects of the Deutsche Bahn. On the route Cologne-Dusseldorf-Duisburg-Dortmund, additional capacity is being set up for travelers and commuters, but better connections from the "outer branches" are needed by the end of 2019. To update these 52 train stations, the Regional Office West of the DB Station&Service needs to request funding. There are many steps to manage to get funding approval.

SOLUTION
To maintain an overview of all 52 sub-projects and accelerate the process, the team responsible for the applications visualized the process on a board. Every work day in the morning, the status of all the projects is discussed within 15 minutes. For issues where the solution requires the collaboration of several people knowledgeable of the situation, changing from meetings to cross-functional work meetings have proven useful because at the end of the meeting, there needs to be a result. Even financing representatives were invited and transparency has been achieved with internal and external lists of open tasks.

RESULT
Through the transparency that has been created, the application process is completed more quickly. Work satisfaction has noticeably increased because the distribution of tasks is clearer, there is direct communication with each other and progress can be viewed on the board.

Agile Multi-project Management at DB Station&Service: How to Adapt 52 Train Stations for the RRX within 2 years

In the future, the Rhein-Ruhr-Express will operate at 15-minute intervals between Cologne and Dortmund. With the new trains also come new challenges: 52 train stations on the feeder routes – the "outer branches" – need to be updated. The DB Station&Service AG Regional Office West in Dusseldorf is responsible for these enhancements, and one of the most important processes is now running smoothly and punctually with the help of Scrum boards and a new meeting culture.

Der Bundesverkehrswegeplan 2030
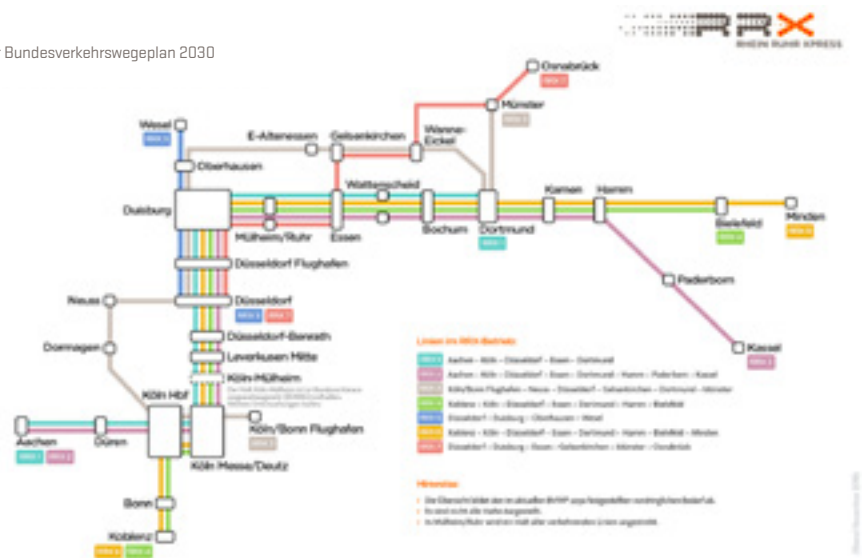
The DB Station&Service AG has a clear mission: "We construct and manage train stations." This Deutsche Bahn subsidiary ensures that approximately 20 million travelers every day have a pleasant experience traveling through Germany's 5,400 train stations. In addition, the seven regional offices are responsible for updating – if necessary – these train stations. Nordrhein-Westfalen (NRW) is the location of the Regional Office West of the DB Station&Service AG, which is headquartered in Dusseldorf and responsible for approximately 700 train stations. In NRW alone, nearly 500 million people use the rail network each year, which is why the Rhein-Ruhr-Express (RRX) will be one of the most important rail infrastructure projects

implemented. On the main rail line Cologne-Dusseldorf-Duisburg-Dortmund, the considerably longer RRX should run at 15-minute intervals in order to create additional capacity. Roughly stated, there are two measures that need to be undertaken:

1. Integrating six individual lines in the region – the so-called outer branches – that are not coordinated with each other and on which 52 train stations are located.

2. Adapting the height and length of the station platform at these train stations to meet the requirements of the new trains, to allow the passengers a level entry to and exit from the train, as well as making it disabled accessible.

This is where Dr. Gitta Raulin, head of Finance & Controlling for the Regional Office West, and her team come into play. Sebastian Michalsky and Sebastian Adam – both regional managers for commercial project management – along with 15 colleagues from Construction and Facility Management, are responsible for the update work on the RRX outer branches in the NRW.

DEPENDENCIES CREATE COMPLEXITY AND SLOW DOWN THE PROJECT

On Dr. Gitta Raulin's office door, there is a sign stating "There is definitely not enough glitter on matters of fact". No kidding. Updating 52 train station within two years, applying for funding and then implementing the updates doesn't sound glamorous, it sounds like a huge challenge. The DB Station&Service AG is 100 percent government-owned, and it is absolutely necessary to use taxpayer's money responsibly. That is why there are clearly defined application processes to follow in order to get financing approval from the NRW state government. Before that point is reached, there are many internal and external processes to deal with, and this wasn't really working at the start of the RRX outer branch project in 2017, Sebastian Michalsky explained.

Although the workflow to get funding approval seems simple from the outside, greater complexity can arise during the process, in addition to the dependencies. For example, if it becomes clear during ongoing renovation work that the condition of a platform varies from the plan, the work needs to be adapted ad hoc. Such changes must be registered with the financer and the original application will need to be amended. Thus, the process starts

all over until an updated approval is received, or there are questions from the financer that require several departments to be involved in answering them. "Now, imagine that for 52 projects without visualization. It was sometimes difficult to know the status of the individual projects. Did the financer already receive an application, what is the status of the budget, who needs to work on it? This is the difficulty: many steps, a work flow in which you sometimes jump backwards, and even if the work flow has been completed, there can be additional work tacked on", as Sebastian Michalsky describes the dilemma facing his team in 2017.

52 PROJECTS ORGANIZED ON ONE BOARD

Dr. Raulin did manage to bring some glamour into her department. She suspected that agile methods might be able to help get the processes under control. During the training with Boris Gloger, her team not only touched on the idea of a Scrum board, they also gained a new perspective on meetings, a matter that we will come back to later. Sebastian Adam admits he wasn't immediately thrilled: "On the first day, I thought 'the only things he

understands is train station'. But it isn't necessary for Mr. Gloger to understand the railway. He provides an impulse to help us understand things differently. Once we realized this during the training, combined with Dr. Raulin's support, things started rolling." But not everything ran smoothly at the start. Shortly after the training, the team tried to press their workflow into a traditional Scrum board design – but that didn't work for managing 52 projects. A board for each project also wasn't the solution because the entire office would have been covered in boards. Individual team members experimented with the board idea for their projects, and one colleague, Mr. Cömez, found a variation that was able to provide an overview of all 52 projects.

The RRX outer branch project board hangs in a corridor where all colleagues – not just those involved – can easily view it. It is approximately four meters long and two and a half meters high, and all 52 train station projects – clustered according to the six branch lines – are listed in the columns. Every project is provided with a project number, project volume and construction timeframe. At the very right of the board are columns for additional projects that arise from one of the main
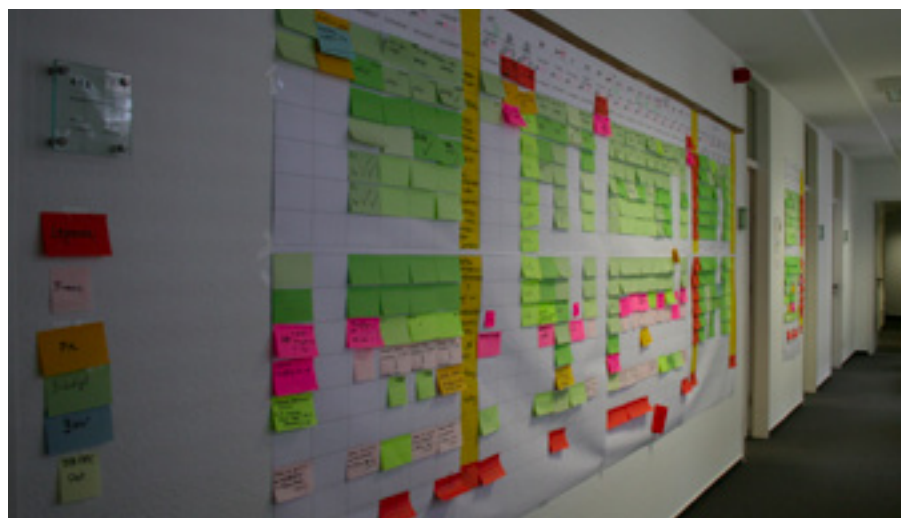
projects. The team visualizes their work flow in the rows so it is clear for each individual project what is needed from whom by when in order to move to the next step. To make the visualization even clearer, every department is given a unique color sticky note. Everyone's favorite color, though, is green, because this denotes "finished". That means DB Station&Service completed the application for funding, and in collaboration with the financer, received funding approval. Even if, for example, questions arise, it might be necessary to jump back in the work flow, but the internal coordination runs more quickly and efficiently thanks to the visibility on the board.

MAINTAINING AN OVERVIEW WITH 15 MINUTES OF FOCUS

The team meets every work day punctually at 8:45 am "at the wall" – depending on the mood, sometimes referred to as the Wailing Wall – and discuss the status of all 52 projects within 15 minutes. How can this be accomplished? Both Sebastian Adam and Sebastian Michalsky agree that "focus" is the key, which was important right from the start. Each Daily is facilitated by a different team member, known as the "focus keeper", who makes sure that everyone stays on topic. As soon as a discussion sprouts up, the focus keeper points out that the topic should be discussed after the meeting. According to Sebastian Michalsky, it's rare to have discussions pop up now because it's much clearer to everyone what needs to be done. If there is something to discuss, the point of contention is usually a post-it note that hasn't moved further in the process for a time. This creates its own dynamic, Sebastian Adam says, because everyone wants the sticker to move on.

For this to happen, the team needed to radically change their meeting culture. As soon as an issue requiring coordination between several parties comes up, there is – styled after a papal election – a "Pope Meeting" set up, which was also an idea from the training with Boris Gloger. Boris said: "You don't go to a meeting to discuss what needs to be done – you do what needs to be done in the meeting!" Before, coordination was done via Email and went on for so long that nobody knew the status anymore, causing much time to be lost. Today, all the necessary team members needed for working out a particular issue gather together in a room. For example, budget planning requires the financer, accountant, planner, project manager and management assistant. These five people collaborate on the budget until everyone involved has signed off on it. Only when, figuratively speaking, white smoke rises, i.e. all the open questions have been resolved, is the meeting ended. If there are still open issues, those involved commit themselves to a time and place for the next work meeting.

Sebastian Michalsky and Sebastian Adam are pleased with the results from the Pope Meetings. Not only are important topics clarified in a much shorter time period, the team member's mindset has also changed. An angry Email can be quickly written, but if you are sitting in a room together with your colleagues, you get a feeling for the entire project and the challenges your colleagues are dealing with. It doesn't matter if a team member has nothing to do for 30 minutes during a Pope Meeting – they can support the others in the meantime, even if it just means making fresh coffee.

INCLUDING THE FINANCING REPRESENTATIVES

Meetings with financing representatives, who are responsible for approving the applications, were also tested using the "Pope" principle. However, there are limits to what can feasibly be accomplished need to be accepted. Often, the financing representatives are unable to give a direct approval for legal reasons and instead must review things in private. The attempt at involving the most important stakeholder in this way was still important, according to the regional manager, because it helped the team to understand the approval processes from the financing authorities' point of view. A tool was created from this, which helped both sides. The team from DB Station&Service gives the financing authorities "pendulum lists" with a coordinated prioritization of the projects and a description of tasks that are still open or already completed for both sides. With the information on the board, the feedback from the financing representatives and the pendulum lists, it can quickly be seen if those responsible for the project should get to work finding out if documents need to be submitted or questions need to be answered.

SUCCESS AND GREATER SATISFACTION THROUGH IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

What was the result of visualizing the approval process and transforming meetings into working sessions? One figure is the most important: The number of approvals received increased from 3 in 2017 to 35 in 2018. According to Sebastian Michalsky and Sebastian Adam, the visualized work flow drastically changed communication within the team. Instead of tons of Email, there are more face-to-face discussions in which things

can be clarified more quickly without misunderstandings. This transparency noticeably improved satisfaction within the team because everyone can see that progress is being made. And even if something isn't progressing, the reason is clear, says Sebastian Michalsky: "If someone hasn't sent me a response for two weeks, I think to myself, 'He hasn't done anything for two weeks.' But if I look at the board and see that they have five other projects with higher priority, it's clear to me that they are working on more important things." The overview also makes it easier for the managers to redistribute resources in the case something gets stuck. Likewise, the managers are available for at least 15 minutes each day for anyone who wants to bring up an issue. However, Sebastian Adam emphasizes that there is no hierarchy in front of the board. There, only facts are leading to the next logical step for the organization.

It is sometimes difficult for the team because everyone tries to be quick and flexible, but then reaches the limits of the system at the interface to the customer. "At the same time, though, the colleagues realize they are part of something that you don't find in other companies. They can bring in their own

ideas and help create solutions", as Sebastian Michalsky describes the atmosphere. This is an advantage when looking for new employees. Many applicants are surprised that agile methods are encouraged by the rail company, and it seems to be a deciding factor for many young colleagues who are now working for DB Station&Service in Dusseldorf. Since agile work in multi-project management is spreading, Sebastian Adam tells us: "Construction volume is steadily increasing, and with it the number of programs. A board similar to the RRX Outer Branch is used on the other side of the corridor for the Modernization Offensive 2. This deals with the final report for the financer, i.e. accounting to the cent for the correct use of the financing." In the meantime, some team members have started organizing their own tasks on personal boards.

MOST IMPORTANT FOR SUCCESS: SUPPORT FROM ABOVE AND JUST DOING IT

The chance to use agile methods in the DB Station&Services AG Regional Office West is all thanks to Dr. Gitta Raulin, say both regional managers. She

made it possible, but never insisted that the ideas from the training with Boris Gloger be implemented. As the team started using the board in earnest, Dr. Gitta Raulin took 15 minutes of her time every day at 8:45 am to attend the Daily. That helped the team in situations where they could no longer see the forest through the trees – Dr. Raulin could use her outsider's perspective to show the way.

When asked what advice they could give, Sebastian Adam and Sebastian Michalsky agree: "Put aside your skepticism and simply do it." Of course mistakes will be made along the way. After the team placed the notes for the first board neatly on a mat, everything had landed on the floor by the next morning – but the team quickly found a solution for doing it better. A change in the failure culture and dealing with transparency are the biggest challenges, but also provide the greatest relief and success: "You take something in your hand, you look each other in the eye, you understand each other. This would be difficult to achieve on a digital basis."

❞ **Being open to new ideas and becoming creative – that was the key to our success.**

Dr. Gitta Raulin | Head of Finance & Controlling – DB Station & Service AG