



Agile at Scale Training and Coaching for Government Contractors

A case study on providing Agile training and coaching to multiple teams involved in a government project.

Executive Summary

The Ecosystem At A Glance

- **Bhutan is a developing country.**
- **Bhutan wants to introduce GST to mobilise internal revenue and assist with COVID-19 recovery via a proprietary IT system.**
- **The project was struggling and was behind schedule during the first 18 months.**
- **Bhutan's local IT capacity and capability is in its early stages of development.**

The Bhutanese government's Department of Revenue and Customs (DRC) and their delivery partner Thimphu TechPark Limited (TTPL) have been working on building an IT system for Bhutan for the last few years. This IT system is tasked to manage revenue collection and the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) in the country.

The joint parties had completed phase 1A of the project (i.e. the registration of taxpayers) but were struggling to make headway on the GST registration and lodgement phase of the project using the waterfall model. Despite promises made by the delivery partners (including a third-party subcontractor), progress had virtually stalled when Capability Wise (CW) was asked to assist.

Led by our Managing Director, Matt Lewis, and assisted by Senior Consultant, Jared Cane, Capability Wise was tasked to provide Agile training using the Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe). CW also managed the Release Train Launch and Program Increment (PI) planning (PI 1, 2, and 3).

Thanks to CW's highly structured Agile project management training, the teams were able to shift to an Agile mindset and deliver results incrementally. More transparency was also achieved within the teams and progress could be gauged more accurately.

The Challenges

While Bhutan remains a lower-middle income country, it has undergone rapid economic growth over the last two decades, thanks in part to the implementation of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index. As part of the government's commitment to economic development, there has been a strong focus on digitising government services. A major impediment to this goal is the country's underdeveloped IT infrastructure and emerging (but immature) IT workforce.

These issues were directly impacting the IT system being developed for the DRC by TTPL. The waterfall model was ineffective at delivering results, and the delivery partners were struggling to complete the project's GST registration and lodgement phase by the expected deadline.

To further complicate the issue, it was unclear what the different teams involved in the project were actually doing or what their bottlenecks were. There was also ineffective internal communication and a lack of accountability among the stakeholders.

Matt, who was doing technical assurance work for the project, closely examined the solutions architecture of the system. He suggested that the implementation team use the SAFe framework to deliver tangible results within a reasonable timeframe.

The DRC brought Matt and Jared on to facilitate Agile coaching and restructure the project using Scaled Agile Framework principles.

How Capability Wise Helped

We trained the implementation team in the SAFe framework in two stages. During the first stage, we trained the senior leaders of the project in the Leading SAFe course. During the second stage, we trained the rest of the team in the SAFe for Teams training course.

We also met with the DRC's product owners to understand their business priorities. Their main focus was on releasing a working GST application form and payment processing system that could be connected to a general ledger. Using this information, we were able to guide the teams in creating a backlog of features based on the business priorities. We also helped the teams establish quality standards for the project (including the definition of done).

In the next phase, we held the first Program Increment (PI) Planning sessions with the implementation team to guide them through the planning process and set PI objectives. Agile coaching was performed remotely, and we attended team ceremonies such as standups, team planning, scrum of scrums, product owner (PO) syncs, and system demos, among others.

These team ceremonies were performed to support the product owners, team members, and scrum masters, as well as steer all stakeholders in the right direction when they were going off track.

Our overall engagement with the implementation team lasted six months, from October 2021 to April 2022.

"Capability Wise was all about going straight for the value and guiding us on how to do it in the most lean and effective way possible."

Sonam Dendup

Former TTPL BITS Project Manager

The Results

Thanks to Capability Wise's transformative Agile project management training, the teams were able to shift to an Agile mindset and deliver results incrementally.

When obstacles were encountered, we guided the teams towards optimal solutions, reducing bottlenecks and boosting efficiency. Team dependencies were identified early on to ensure the delivery of features in a workable sequence

There was also greater transparency among the teams, which meant that overall progress on the project could be gauged more accurately. This allowed senior managers in the DRC to accurately track progress and hold the delivery partners accountable for any issues or delays.