



AutoVIN, The Automated Vehicle Information Network, provides professional field information services. AutoVIN's services include vehicle

condition reporting, inventory verification auditing, program compliance auditing and facility inspections. AutoVIN goes beyond the boundaries of traditional field service organizations by using highly qualified, company-employed field managers and advanced computer technology to process data accurately and deliver actionable results in a timely manner.



Company Challenges

When Darren Shipp, Vice President of Software Development, arrived at AutoVIN he found a mix of development methodologies being used by the development team. While the company put out weekly releases, the releases were ad-hoc and not related to a larger strategic vision for the product. In addition, with no defined product backlog, customer requests were not always top-of-mind and sometimes needed to be completed at the last-minute. This environment made it difficult for the development team to be as effective as they could be and frustrated customers who wanted defined predictable releases. It was clear that a new software development practice was required.

Moving to Agile

Darren had implemented Agile at other companies and was confident that moving to Agile practices would provide AutoVIN with the release predictability needed and make the development team dramatically more effective and productive.

"I don't think there is a one-size-fits-all for Agile," he says. "You definitely need to tweak Agile to fit your company's particular needs. At AutoVIN, I analyzed what Agile practices would work for us and began implementing them, both by hiring people who had Agile experience and using a "train the trainer" approach with my colleagues based on my past experience."

As the development team became familiar with using Agile, they used an in-house solution to track development progress.

Darren says, "I am a firm believer that you should never determine process by a tool. I wanted to make sure that we had a process that worked for us first and then we could evaluate tools."

Search for An Agile Solution

Once AutoVIN was comfortable with Agile practices, it became obvious that they would quickly outgrow their homegrown solution. As they began the search for an Agile tool, they first looked to use an issue and tracking product that was already in place.

"Even though we had a tracking product in place, it didn't offer any sort of framework for our Agile practices and there was no structured concept of moving a change request down the path to determine what it would look like in our system," notes Darren. The reinforcement of Agile practices was one of the most critical elements in evaluating an Agile tool since the AutoVIN team was still learning how to use Agile. But, the team also wanted a tool they could customize for their specific needs.

Company and Industry

- Industry: Automotive
- AutoVIN's services include vehicle condition reporting, inventory verification auditing, program compliance auditing and facility inspections

Development Environment

- Run on two-week iterations, with releases every six weeks
- Develop in .net and also use legacy tools such as ASP

Challenges

- Weekly ad-hoc releases responsible for \$40,000 in yearly overhead costs
- Inability to accurately track development time made capital expense allocation difficult

Solution

- Implemented Rally's Agile lifecycle management solutions, providing end-to-end visibility on development progress and releases across the organization

Results

- Project saving \$800,000 in yearly overhead costs
- Accurate tracking of development time enables compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley and correct capitalization allocation

Scaling Software Agility[®]



“I believe tools come in two forms. One is a tool that is completely open, but needs to be extensively customized. The other extreme is a tool that dictates the way you do your job so that you need to force your process to fit the way the tool works. Rally is in between. I can customize Rally so that it works in different environments, but it also serves to reinforce some basic Agile best practices,” says Darren.

Another factor that sold AutoVIN on moving to Rally was the cost savings over the tool they had been using.

Darren notes, “We had a robust, expensive issue management tool in place and we still had a lot of issues, mostly around usability. Rally was a fraction of the cost of the other tool, but could still do everything we needed it to do.”

Implementing & Using Rally

Since Darren and a few other members of the development team had used Rally at previous employers, implementation was fairly straight forward. They had some training provided by Rally’s services team and they facilitated a “train the trainer” approach with individuals who had previous experience with Agile and Rally. Plus, the team assessed Rally’s online help and resources for additional assistance in getting up and running quickly.

Not only is the entire development team using Rally Enterprise on a daily basis, AutoVIN is also using Rally Product Manager (RPM) which integrates to Salesforce.com. RPM gives data analysts and the delivery teams the details they need on customer-reported defects and feature requests so they can bring this into release planning. In addition, AutoVIN’s support and sales teams have a complete view of customer requests that they can then report back on, further enhancing customer communication.

Seeing the Benefits

One of AutoVIN’s biggest issues prior to implementing Agile and Rally was communication and visibility, particularly between Operations and IT. One way this was dealt with in the past was by both teams maintaining separate and often conflicting reports on project status.

Darren explains, “Now instead of Operations and IT writing reports about status, each team can go in to Rally and know instantly whether or not we are on track for a particular release.”

Rally has also enabled teams to be cross-functional as needed.

“Although it isn’t necessarily considered Agile, we have one large delivery team for over a dozen different products. Since we can track velocity within Rally, we can easily have individuals shift to higher priority projects as needed, greatly reducing any development downtime. This ensures we have the resources we need available at any time,” says Darren.

“With Agile and Rally, we have now halved the number of releases we do in a year to fifteen to twenty releases and project a savings of \$800,000 in overhead costs. Plus, the releases we do put out meet the needs of our customers.”

Darren Shipp
VP, Software Development
AutoVIN.com



Many companies tout one of the benefits of Rally as being able to release more often. AutoVIN actually found they needed to release less often.

“Prior to implementing Agile and Rally, we did releases every two to three weeks, with forty-five releases last year. While this may sound great to many people, it costs us about \$40,000 in overhead per release. The push to release often also made it a struggle to have quality predictable releases since we often had to add in last-minute items. We have now halved the number of releases we do in a year to fifteen to twenty releases and we are projecting a savings of \$800,000 in overhead costs. Plus, the releases we do put out meet the needs of our customers,” notes Darren.

In addition to the savings AutoVIN has realized, they are now able to better manage development-related expenses for capitalization and compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley.

Darren says, “I use controls that are built-in to Rally to manage capitalized development expenses and to ensure we are in compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley. I’ve also implemented time accounting into Rally.”

Future Direction with Rally

Now that the development team is consistently using Rally, AutoVIN looks to expand the use of RPM.

“As the use of Rally expands to our infrastructure and support teams, we are looking to grow our usage of RPM to more effectively track and manage support issues. RPM lets us easily see exactly what features are requested, how often particular features are requested and the customers who request certain features. We can then report back internally and externally on what was delivered and when it was delivered,” says Darren.

About Rally

Rally is the leader in Agile application lifecycle management (ALM) dedicated to making leaner development organizations that respond faster to changing customer needs. According to a study by QSM Associates, teams that rely on Rally’s Agile lifecycle management products and services are 50% faster to market and 25% more productive than industry averages. Rally’s products were honored with four consecutive Jolt Awards (the software industry’s equivalent of the Oscar® award) in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. The company’s end-to-end solutions for Agile development also include Agile University, the largest source for Agile training, and Agile Commons, the largest collaborative Web 2.0 community dedicated to advancing software agility.

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