IDC
Analyze the Future

IDC CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Agile Portfolio Management: Getty Images Gains Visibility and Alignment with Kanban Portfolios

December 2011

Sponsored by Rally Software

Introduction: Transitioning to Agile Planning

Gaining accurate, timely information about key project and portfolio progress is business-critical. It's also one of the toughest things we do as business and development leaders. Even more challenging is knitting together rapidly changing agile projects and programs to gain the dynamic benefits of agile approaches to software and business development while providing coherent portfolio management. Few companies have succeeded in moving beyond static, up-front timelines and road maps to manage work dynamically with agile teams "pulling" in the work rather than having it "pushed" out to them. Getty Images provides an excellent example of a way to make the transition.

Getty Images offers products and services for creative professionals and communicators by leveraging a collection of 80,000,000+ stock photographs and editorial images to 50,000 hours of film, video, music, and multimedia content. Getty Images' client base includes small and large businesses that rely on imagery as part of their work. Core target markets include entertainment, advertising, graphic design, print and online media, and corporate marketing and sales for this 2,000-employee organization headquartered in Seattle.

Software projects drive company success, and the company's project and program management group works closely with its executive team to align technology with strategic business goals. One team of program managers (PMs) partners with specific line-of-business (LOB) stakeholders to break down ideas and formulate business cases to help ensure that they are working on the right things in the right order. Separate, coordinated project management staff focus on IT execution and delivery. The company's senior director of planning and program management, Nina Schoen, coordinates this effort. Although the program management teams collaborate with the information technology team, they are not "technical managers." Getty Images' program management organization (PMO) sits as close to the business as possible.

Solution Snapshot

Organization: Getty Images

Operational Challenge: One-off approaches with poor visibility into the status of an agile Kanban IT project portfolio led to inaccurate project information and delayed delivery to the business with ineffective collaboration and little or no prioritization possible.

Solution: Rally Software's Agile ALM platform, Rally Portfolio Manager, and AgileZen

Project Duration: 3–6 months

Benefit: Getty Images now has the flexibility to deliver projects dynamically according to its own workflow and IT readiness to move forward while providing business executives with updated, accurate project and program status. The IT portfolio management team is able to effectively prioritize to align with business demand and to more quickly deliver targeted value.

The technology team at Getty Images transitioned to agile and lean practices approximately three years ago, creating 20+ scrum teams with approximately 200 application developers. The transition provided great benefits, allowing most of all for improved time to market. The transition, however, quickly highlighted the need for agile planning methods. The desire from the business was to improve predictability and visibility and to make better sense of the endless queues of work. To help solve this problem, Getty Images chose to work with Rally Software as a beta customer on the development of Rally Portfolio Manager. This way, Getty Images could be intrinsically involved in creating product capabilities that would support intuitive portfolio management for Getty Images' Kanban needs, as well as enterprise rollups of agile and other program and project information.

Implementation: Dealing with Predictability and Workload Visibility

Getty Images tried a variety of tools for transitioning to lean and agile development. In early 2010, an agile product that it initially used ran out of capability as Getty Images scaled its scrum projects to the enterprise. As the company evaluated alternatives, it decided to focus on principles of methodology and workflow rather than fixed, time-boxed process approaches. What Getty Images liked about Rally's ALM platform and products was the flexibility it offered to manage the project work the way they needed to, based on weekly assessments of team readiness rather than arbitrary, unrealistic commitments, and enabled them to change approaches as their workflow needs evolved.

Over time, the agile transition for application development became quite successful. The next area of focus quickly became demand and portfolio management. Getty Images executives, business owners, and technology management wanted to focus on improving the prioritization process, visibility into technology work, and predictability. The Program Management Organization (PMO) had built some homegrown tools and processes to manage demand, prioritization, and create visibility, but they often times fell short.

Seeking a solution and prior to bringing in Rally Portfolio Manager, Getty Images evaluated high-end IT project portfolio management tools, but Agile and Kanban support from those products was limited or nonexistent, and enterprise IT PPM tools were too expensive for the company's budget and the product capabilities were overkill for the company's needs.

Initially, Getty Images' teams were unable to find software that would solve their problem to give them both the management they needed and the flexibility their IT development teams wanted. Since Getty Images was already using Rally for development, it became interested in participating in a new, beta agile portfolio management solution that Rally Software was developing. Over the past year, this joint development effort resulted in Rally Portfolio Manager, a solution which now enables Getty Images to manage all efforts on Kanban boards with visibility into more accurate, current project portfolio status for the PMO and the business. The company has been able to do away with structured quarterly timeline commitments, giving project teams the flexibility to pull in new project work dynamically as they complete core initiatives.

Planning is now dynamically updated with real-time project status. This reflects current project "reality" to be useful in managing and communicating to help direct business demand, replacing former static road map approaches with dynamic planning. This approach has been so successful on the IT side that Getty Images is now moving these capabilities to other business-oriented areas.

"Our big accomplishments are pulling projects into development when they're ready for more, in separating planning from delivery, and also managing prioritization by line of business through our use of Rally," said Schoen. "Recently, our marketing team also adopted Rally, moving beyond just IT." She added that business executives are using Rally's AgileZen (www.agilezen.com) board to make information visible to their peers, since the user interface is easy to digest and will be incorporated into Rally Portfolio Manager. "A lot of technical tools are so complicated that you get lost in the weeds. With AgileZen, the eye focuses on what's most important. Tagging lets you see and

filter by data elements, which are easy to maintain and update. Using a Kanban board to manage work makes it easier to see problems and progress."

Schoen manages allocation of technology resources across the company's LOBs (such as marketing and ecommerce) so that they don't compete with one another for projects, while individually, each group prioritizes in a focused way.

Getty Images' teams recently eliminated hard timeline commitments in project road maps. Although the company plans at a high level what work will be accomplished, at a detailed level, it commits only to work that's about 60 days out and reviews those commitments at a regular cadence, using the workflow that Rally helps it automate. "We've gotten rid of false notions of delivery time frames, and it's a beautiful thing," said Schoen, who manages planning work on the company's Kanban board with Rally Portfolio Manager now.

The teams focus on what they call "minimum viable features" to break down the initiatives into core chunks of business value and to prioritize them, but the IT teams don't pull in additional work until they're ready to take on more. "This prevents business churn later on and is much more efficient. Our reporting shows that we're delivering much more to the business because we've separated out the planning churn from delivery and allowed the team to focus on what's most important," she added.

Challenges: Evolving Agile Portfolio Management

Although the company had already been doing agile projects, making adoption consistent was a necessity and took additional organizational effort. Overall, Getty Images' staff found the process of partnering with Rally Software to create Rally Portfolio Manager to be exhilarating and engaging. They were able to be on the cutting edge with Rally Software to support the team in creating the features and functionality most important to addressing their business needs. They knew what they were signing up for and were fully committed to the joint development process. While this process brought key benefits to Getty Images (and saved the company the considerable effort and challenge of creating its own Kanban-based portfolio management tool), it also brought the usual challenges of dealing with unfinished code that was a "work in progress."

Getty Images is looking forward to improvements in the portfolio dashboard presentation for the executive teams as the product evolves. The teams at Getty Images found that the advantages of participating in the development process far outweighed the challenges of dealing with alpha and beta code for Rally's new product. Because the teams were able to tailor the features to address their needs and workflow demands, user uptake also benefited, and Rally Software is now launching production-quality software with Rally Portfolio Manager that Getty Images has incorporated into its development and business strategy.

Benefits: Prioritizing Effectively to Meet Changing Business Needs

Core qualitative benefits to Getty Images of the Kanban-based agile portfolio management initiative include better alignment between strategy and execution by being able to provide the business with up-to-date, current IT project information and metrics that enable predictable planning and more effective, targeted prioritization to help meet changing business needs.

The adoption of agile portfolio management using Rally's solutions and Kanban approaches has enabled Getty Images to significantly increase IT efficiency. While still gathering baselines, the company believes it has increased project throughput by at least 20%. Being able to manage work by LOB and to plan work in a Kanban style so that development teams pull work in by request rather than having worked pushed on them has resulted in higher success overall and faster delivery of relevant features. The Kanban approach enables a continuous flow for the company's strategic

planning process; every week, the company evaluates what the agile teams have for available capacity, and based on the backlog of most valuable features, decides what to do next.

The company now has fresh, up-to-date visual access to project and program information by pulling data from Rally Portfolio Manager (and Rally's Agile ALM platform) and putting it on the corporate wiki, with information including features listed by the dates they were launched. By looking at the Kanban board, the teams are able to determine what to accomplish in priority order, including feature backlog specifics and status by line of business; they are able to review that information weekly and make more effective decisions. (Previously, they did not have access to cross-project information.)

Resource allocation graphics enable visibility into how the projects are split up across LOBs, including what's planned, what's been delivered so far, and what's remaining. From project concept to discovery, planning, and delivery, Getty Images can be more effective and adaptive, saving time, resources, and money and gaining the ability to be more responsive to its demanding customer base in a dynamic market with rapidly changing technology needs.

Methodology

The project and company information contained in this document was obtained from multiple sources, including information supplied by Rally Software, questions posed by IDC directly to Getty Images' staff, Getty Images' corporate documents, and publicly available information.

A B O U T T H I S P U B L I C A T I O N

This publication was produced by IDC Go-to-Market Services. The opinion, analysis, and research results presented herein are drawn from more detailed research and analysis independently conducted and published by IDC, unless specific vendor sponsorship is noted. IDC Go-to-Market Services makes IDC content available in a wide range of formats for distribution by various companies. A license to distribute IDC content does not imply endorsement of or opinion about the licensee.

C O P Y R I G H T A N D R E S T R I C T I O N S

Any IDC information or reference to IDC that is to be used in advertising, press releases, or promotional materials requires prior written approval from IDC. For permission requests, contact the GMS information line at 508-988-7610 or gms@idc.com. Translation and/or localization of this document requires an additional license from IDC.

For more information, on IDC visit www.idc.com. For more information on IDC GMS, visit www.idc.com/gms.

Global Headquarters: 5 Speen Street Framingham, MA 01701 USA P.508.872.8200 F.508.935.4015 www.idc.com