



Headquartered in London, with offices in Hamburg, Stockholm and Madrid and customers in 19 countries, Livebookings is Europe's largest online marketing and reservations service

for the restaurant industry. The company is ranked as one of the top 30 fastest growing digital media companies in Europe. Livebookings enables free real-time, online reservations on restaurant websites and helps restaurants to access customers that would otherwise be difficult to reach through a global network of partners including Time Out, Bookatable.com, Qype, lastminute.com, and Ticketmaster.

Challenges

With a mobile booking interface, a complete restaurant guide, a real-time Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) trading platform for restaurants, multiple internal systems, plus products aimed at professional schedulers, Livebookings has a wide range of systems and products to support. Despite this large and growing portfolio, the engineering team at Livebookings is relatively small. A number of acquisitions and the ongoing required support of legacy systems left the development team limited by resources. In addition, last-minute requests and a large pipeline of needed integrations made it a challenge for the team to prioritise and effectively schedule projects.

The organisation began to look at Agile development practices as a way to more effectively schedule projects.

David Norris, Chief Operating Officer says, "When I arrived, I found that we had a massive funnel of good ideas, but we were limited by resources. Since I had used Agile practices in other companies, I knew that implementing Agile would be a way to effectively channel all these good ideas and help with the prioritisation process."

The Move to Agile

As the organisation began the transition to Agile, they also reviewed tooling options to manage their Agile development.

Magnus Hultberg, Head of Product Management, notes, "We have developers in several countries, including Sweden, Germany and the UK. Implementing a web-based tool while also putting Agile practices in place seemed like a natural progression for us, particularly because of the collaborative nature of our development teams."

The search for an Agile tool included an evaluation of ScrumWorks Pro and a few other tools. Because Livebookings extensively uses Salesforce.com as their CRM system, they also considered using it as a way to track development activities. Then they discovered Rally.

"Rally quickly became the favorite as soon as we learned that it had an integration with Salesforce.com. We also liked the fact that Rally has a SaaS-based model, multi-subscription fees and did not require any installation to use. And we were also impressed by the fact that tool serves to reinforce Agile practices," says David.



Company and Industry

- Industry: Online Marketing
- Europe's largest online marketing and reservations service for the restaurant industry

Development Environment

- Engineering team distributed in U.K., Sweden, and Germany
- Run on three to four-week iterations, with releases every month to four months, depending on product and delivery team
- Develop in .net and RUP

Challenges

- Relatively small development team challenged to support growing and diverse portfolio of products
- Difficulty in prioritising development projects

Solution

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

Results

- Increased efficiencies across the development organisation enables team to more effectively support portfolio
- Integration between Rally and Salesforce.com enables a complete end-to-end view of feature requests and product ideas, enabling more effective prioritisation



The process for justifying the purchase of Rally licenses to others in the organisation was relatively simple.

“Although we were conscious of licensing costs, Rally has a low monthly subscription fee. When we compared the cost of Rally against the cost of confusion and lost productivity, our decision to go with Rally was easy. We didn’t think we could be successful with our Agile implementation without Rally,” says Magnus.

Implementing Agile and Rally

Livebookings began their Rally implementation by using Rally’s free 30-day trial. In parallel, they also sent a couple of developers to Certified ScrumMaster training, along with Magnus attending Certified Product Owner training. Both Magnus and David credit the success of the Agile and Rally roll-out to the buy-in from the team.

“Our roll-out was supported by the management team. Everyone had the desire to change the way we were doing things so we didn’t have to spend time convincing people that this was the way to go. Both managers and team members understood the reasoning and wanted to change,” says David.

Magnus adds, “The way we structured the roll-out also made a big impact on the acceptance of Agile. We made sure that the organisation didn’t try to do everything at once. First a few key people went to classes, and then we started using Rally to track our progress. We found Rally’s inline help and their online customer community, Agile Commons, an enormous help as we made the transition.”

Finding Their Rhythm

Today, everyone at Livebookings is using Rally to track all development activities. In addition, the integration with Salesforce.com has given the development team complete visibility on feature requests, verified bugs and product ideas.

Magnus says, “We build our backlog in Salesforce.com. We can then easily transfer this into Rally using Rally’s Support Connector integration. Once we have it in Rally, we can break down the work by team and use it to plan iterations and releases. The integration enables us to have an end-to-end view of feature requests or product ideas all the way through to delivery.”

The team is also finding that Rally continues to help enforce Agile practices.

“Rally’s tool provides a work flow and structure to guide us through the process. We can easily add more developers or split teams and we know that Rally will continue to support us as we scale,” David notes.

Magnus adds, “With Agile and Rally, we have much better quality and traceability. As part of our drive towards test-driven development, we recently appointed a dedicated QA Manager. We have fundamentally changed the way we develop software since we implemented Agile and Rally.”

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The organisation also made the decision to clearly define the roles of Product Delivery and Product Owner.

“As we learned more about Agile practices, it became clear to us that the Product Delivery / Product Owner roles need to be split out as they often had conflicting priorities. Splitting up the role has enabled us to be much more effective, as one person can ensure we consistently gather market feedback and the other person can work with our development teams to turn that vision into reality,” says Magnus.

Realising Other Benefits

Recently, a member of the development team had to spend a few months in Uruguay. The flexibility of Rally’s web-based tool provided everything he and the team needed to enable him to work effectively at a distance.

In addition, the transition to Agile and Rally enables the development team to better predict how long each project will take.

“With Agile and Rally, people have gotten much better at estimating how long it will take to implement certain functionality. And, the transparency we now have gives our executives and customers the information they really need – when particular projects will be delivered,” says David.

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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David Norris
Chief Operating Officer
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Scaling Software Agility