



Clarus™

Case study: Trimble benefits from Clarus Scrum training



Clarus Scrum training delivers 'massive value' for Trimble product development



More than a global leader in GPS technology Trimble is a \$1b revenue company that leads the way in developing position-centric solutions to address some of the world's most complex challenges.

With more than 500 products operating in five core market segments - Engineering and Construction, Agriculture, the Mobile and Field Workforce, and Advanced Devices – Trimble's technology is everywhere: in consumer and commercial vehicles, construction equipment, farm machinery, computers, PDAs, smart phones and more.

Innovative applications include dispatching and managing fleets, surveying and building roads, monitoring and mapping earthquake damage, recording and synchronising international financial transactions, and improving the efficiency of wireless communications networks.

Since it was formed in 1978, Trimble has progressively moved away from a 'box product' mentality towards a portfolio of products and solutions that enhance productivity. To realise both this strategy and its investment in R&D Trimble decided in 2008 to become an Agile organisation.

Trimble engages Clarus to adopt Scrum

VirtualSite Solutions (VSS) is a second joint venture between Trimble and Caterpillar with a development team of just under 100 staff geographically spread across India, New Zealand and the USA.

The aim of the venture, which was established in October 2008, is to integrate the product design and software development expertise of both companies to create information rich worksites that would allow customers to: more efficiently and safely manage their equipment fleets, reduce operating costs and improve productivity in the area of fuel consumption, maintenance, worksite productivity and fleet logistics.

A problem arose when the New Zealand team found itself struggling to adapt to the dynamically changing business priorities. Not only were the hardware teams tending to drive the software teams, which forced the software teams to be more adaptive, but also the interdependency on each team, lack of visibility with other groups within the business, and lack of planning horizons were creating considerable confusion.

Jeff Tait, Product Manager of Trimble NZ, said that the main cause of the problem was that the distributed teams were not aligned. “Previously we would embark on a large project to try to hit what was often a moving target with masses of dependencies. The only way we knew then was to try to heavily lock the project down and try to resist change. Four months prior to a customer release we would freeze change and initiate a mad dash to meet our deadlines.”

To achieve parity, Trimble recognised that their New Zealand teams needed to adopt the Scrum Agile framework to better align with the Colorado team which had already successfully adopted the process. Their objectives were to be able to effectively plan releases and to increase predictability and process visibility.

The VSS venture integrates product design and software development expertise for fleet management and logistics

On positive recommendation Trimble engaged New Zealand Scrum experts, Clarus, to help their New Zealand team to adopt Scrum.

Edwin Dando, Managing Director and Founder of Clarus explained, “Essentially what the VSS team in New Zealand needed was predictability. Staff were finding it very difficult to plan across the many groups within the country. What they needed was to establish an interactive, transparent process that would enable them to ask 'which way did the world just turn overnight' so they could adapt accordingly.



Edwin Dando, Clarus

“They needed to adopt Scrum to know what features could be delivered and when; what pace each teams could run at; what could and couldn't be achieved in a set timeframe; how to manage stakeholder expectations; and how to get distributed teams to work as story teams (virtual teams).”

Scrum Agile

Since the early 1990's, Agile frameworks and methodologies adopted within product development organisations have been credited for increasing the likelihood of project success with delivery on time and to budget, and for mitigating delays and crisis points that can lead to project failure.

Product development usually involves a number of phases and cross functional teams. To coordinate these teams and streamline the activity many organisations are adopting Scrum to increase the speed and flexibility in the development by way of a holistic approach.



Likened to its rugby namesake, Scrum is an Agile development methodology and a process skeleton that contains sets of practices and predefined roles, with cross-functional Scrum teams working together towards a common goal and across the different project phases.

A number of companies worldwide are already using Scrum as a competitive advantage and because it works. It is the approach adopted by over 80% of Agile teams.

Clarus has been offering Scrum courses in New Zealand since 2006 and has the exclusive and official New Zealand partnership with the Scrum Training Institute (STI).

The company's core objectives with Scrum is to help New Zealand practitioners raise the bar in Agile awareness and knowledge across all levels of from business owners, business analysts, software developers, testers and Scrum Masters. Clarus helps New Zealand companies adopt Scrum via a mixture of customised in-house training combined with hands-on coaching to truly embed the processes. The company also regularly runs Certified Scrum Master and Certified Product Owner classes with STI's founder and creator of Scrum, Jeff Sutherland, and his colleagues at STI.

Hands-on, practical Scrum orientation for immediate start

After their Scrum training led by Clarus, Trimble staff felt that they knew what to do and were confident in their ability to start their first Scrum project.

Raymond Wilson, VSS Engineering Team Leader, said, "Clarus well and truly exceeded our expectations. We were originally expecting to do a two day course based on one-on-one directional learning, and to absorb enough to stumble our way onto our first Sprint. But what we got was a hands-on, practical orientation of Scrum that allowed us to apply Scrum immediately. Given the sheer amount of material we got through the training could have been very dry, but the enthusiasm and experience of the Clarus team came through loud and clear which made the course extremely engaging and fun.

"Clarus clearly know their stuff and are passionate about making sure everyone understands Scrum. They listened to our questions about our environment and provided practical guidance on how Scrum should be applied to maximum effect. They also included loads of practical exercises which really helped our learning. The anecdotes and real life project experience was utterly invaluable. It provided a context for learning that explained what worked, what didn't work and why. It was this approach that empowered us to be able to start Scrum as if it had been us that had been through those projects."



Jeff Tait, Product Manager and Raymond Wilson, VSS Engineering Team Leader

Jeff Tait said that doing Scrum as part of the course was 'a total immersion from the outset', with stand-up meetings, retrospectives and Sprint planning meetings. It was also important that the Trimble team who would be doing Scrum did the course together in a private setting.

"It allowed us to get the most from the training. I think if we had sent one or two people along on a public course using a 'train the trainer' approach we wouldn't have got anywhere near the value we did. This really became obvious as we started applying Scrum. If one of us were to misapply it others can correct them and remind them of the Clarus training. I can't stress how valuable this has been.

"Before Scrum the usual problems on projects would occur, but we never saw them until it was too late. With Scrum we now have visibility that allows us to address issues or factor them in," he said.



Benefits of Scrum

For VSS and Trimble, the benefits of adopting Scrum have been immediate. The team are now confident using the process, committed, focused and constantly improving. They are also enjoying themselves.

“While all the books on Scrum tell you this, you don't really appreciate how powerful the process is until you do it. It is quite funny to look back on how Raymond and I used to communicate as team leader and manager. We used to have the standard weekly one hour one-on-one meeting, which frankly has about one percent the usefulness of the communication we now get from Scrum daily,” said Jeff.

Edwin Dando, Clarus managing director and Agile coach, who led the Scrum implementation for Trimble together with seasoned software testing professional Ian Ross, said, “Prior to adopting Scrum the Trimble teams were struggling to synchronise their activity with the rest of the organisation, which put a lot of pressure on them to keep up. With the transparency that Scrum provides, the team now have confidence in their ability to plan key dates.”

While it continues to be a process of constant improvement - both for Trimble New Zealand and for the broader organisation - the reward, satisfaction and empowerment that Scrum provides has created a positive buzz in the team.

“The best thing about using Scrum is knowing exactly where we are at and what we are doing as a team. We can now rectify issues and see results immediately thanks to Scrum's feedback,” said Raymond.

When asked if Trimble would recommend Clarus to other organisations Jeff Tait replied, “The experience and professionalism of Clarus's approach was pivotal to our successful adoption of Scrum. Our ability to deliver products has now significantly increased along with our ability to mitigate risks. I am also anticipating that we will see the alignment of revenue against this investment.

“Did we get value for money? Definitely. We have already noticed that we have saved on average 74 hours per Sprint on unrelated project activity. The visibility this gives means that Clarus's Scrum training paid for itself within three weeks. We got a real bargain with Clarus - they could double their prices and still deliver massive value!”



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