



VOK DAMS AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT

**VOK DAMS WORLDWIDE:
THE “AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY”**

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VOK DAMS.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the event industry has focused on which innovative event formats can and should be implemented to best reach the respective target groups. But what does the event of the future look like in times of digital transformation? That was, and still is the central question for both concept developers on the agency side and for marketing specialists on the client side.

However, so far, little attention has been paid to the fact that first and foremost the way agencies work and cooperate with clients has to change fundamentally. Pressure is increasing: results are to be achieved faster, more effectively and more efficiently. And budgets need to be allocated wisely in the context of live-marketing measures. Innovative event solutions fortify the client's image among its target group. Work-life-blending and the desire for ever shorter working hours lead to the compression of daily work. In order for the motivation on both sides – client and agency – to remain high or even to increase, working in a team and in cooperation has to be fun.

Only this can ensure that both the quality and the success of brand communication continues.

More responsibility in the teams is the order of the day. Flexibility alone is no longer enough, now agility is required. Therefore it's obvious that the positive experiences in agile project management – as it is known from the digital field – should be transferred to the event industry.

This is why VOK DAMS Worldwide has switched to Agile Event Management as the first in the industry. The VOK DAMS DIN ISO 9001 quality management system – which was introduced 15 years ago – has accordingly been enhanced with agile methods such as Scrum, Kanban and Design Thinking.

Every agile tool has been tested and adapted to the specific requirements of the industry. But the basis for this is the change in the mindset of all employees to an agile way of thinking.

VOK DAMS has organized this way of working and thinking in 12 agile principles:

1. CHANGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY

We welcome change to requirements, even if they occur late during the process. Agile processes utilize change to the competitive advantage of the client.

2. SPRINTS

The project work is done step by step.

The team defines the number of steps and the time frame.

3. REFLECTION

The team reflects at regular intervals on how it can become more effective and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.

4. TIME

Time is our most important asset.

ABSTRACT

5. PERMANENT COOPERATION

Customers and agencies must work closely together in the project.

6. SELF-ORGANIZED TEAMS

The best strategies, concepts and implementation ideas emerge in teams that organize themselves effectively. .

7. TEAM SUPPORT

Use motivated individuals in the projects. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to do the job they best they can.

8. FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

Face-to-face conversation is the most efficient and effective way to share information with and within an agile project team (especially when dealing with direct communication to defined audiences – such as with an event agency).

9. TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Agile processes promote lasting development.

The project team (client + agency + 3rd party partners) should maintain a steady pace without interruption.

10. AGILE MINDSET

Broadening horizons, striving for innovations and applying trends, promote and condition our agile mindset.

11. QUALITY

We deliver punctual, honest, high quality and result driven creative solutions throughout the project.

12. SIMPLICITY

Simplicity is good. We like to keep things simple

With Agile Event Management, VOK DAMS introduces a new chapter in the way event agencies work.

Agile Event Management is the future – and the future has already begun.

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INTRODUCTION

FROM „WOW“ TO „HOW“ IN SUCCESSFUL EVENT MANAGEMENT

For long we have only dealt with the „Wow“: the best formats of successful direct business

communication. And we have been very successful with this approach, which resulted in new conceptual formats such as ‘Hybrid Events’ and ‘Live Campaigns’.

‘Hybrid Events’ is the combination of a live experience with the opportunities of web-based communication (mobile applications, social , media, location-based services). Live Camp-. aigns go one step further. They put the live experience at the centre of a marketing campaign. The event becomes the content source for all other communications within the campaign. With these proven concepts, we have created the formats of the future that are now well on their way to becoming mainstream.

However, the „How“ was kind of neglected while developing the new formats of the future.

In an area where time is a limited asset and which is characterized by constant changes, classic project management has reached its limits.

This is why we have developed VOK DAMS Agile Event Management. Based on the best of the agile management approaches of the software industry (Scrum, Kanban and Design Thinking) combined it with our proven ISO 9001 ff quality management system.

Agile project event management provides the answer to the requirements of all those involved in the implementation of efficient and complex communication strategies. With our

agile project event management, we have now replaced the previous and more traditional working method of VOK DAMS.

Agile Event Management champions initiative and responsibility, with adaptive planning,

quick coordination and the courage to change when required.

The result: VOK DAMS worldwide is now an „Agile Agency“ based on the implementation of

our Agile Event Management approach. With this white paper we would like to inform

you about this exciting new chapter in our agency history.

Have fun reading.



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1. THE NEED FOR AN AGILE WAY OF WORKING

Ever since the dawn of the event industry, classic project management theories have been applied by the industry, albeit very flexible and dynamically.

However, it is increasingly becoming apparent that the path of classical project management is no longer the only path that can be taken. What's more; digitalization and constant changes in the project progression force the industry to rethink. Clients want to cooperate with agencies at eye level. Agency employees expect to be actively involved and have impact on the project.

Previously, clients would issue an event brief as part of the classic RFP process (Request for Proposal). On the basis of this briefing agencies developed creative concepts and detailed offers. The contract was then awarded and nothing changed significantly in the course of the project until the actual event was going live. Typically, this phase of concept development and event preparation took 9 to 12 months.

Today's client briefings are becoming more detailed and call for ever more detailed offers in return. Due to the fast pace of today's business, in many industries the briefing will usually change considerably soon after signing the agency. Short-term changes and constant adjustment of priorities have thus become commonplace.

For reasons of purchasing optimization, a lot of time is invested in the bidding and selection process. The expense for clients and agencies alike is often disproportionate to the objective and valuable capacities are lost in the creation and implementation process. The consequences can be destructive:



Innovation is left behind

Especially for annual events, the tenders are always „optimized“. The result is a grid that helps to find the cheapest provider, but does not allow for no strategic / creative inventiveness. As a result, the chosen concepts become interchangeable.



Implementation processes are becoming more expensive

Since the timing of the event is predetermined, constant adjustments in the course of the project production (influenced by political, internal, industry and competition factors) require additional capacity on both client and agency side. This leads to additional costs



Motivation is lost during implementation

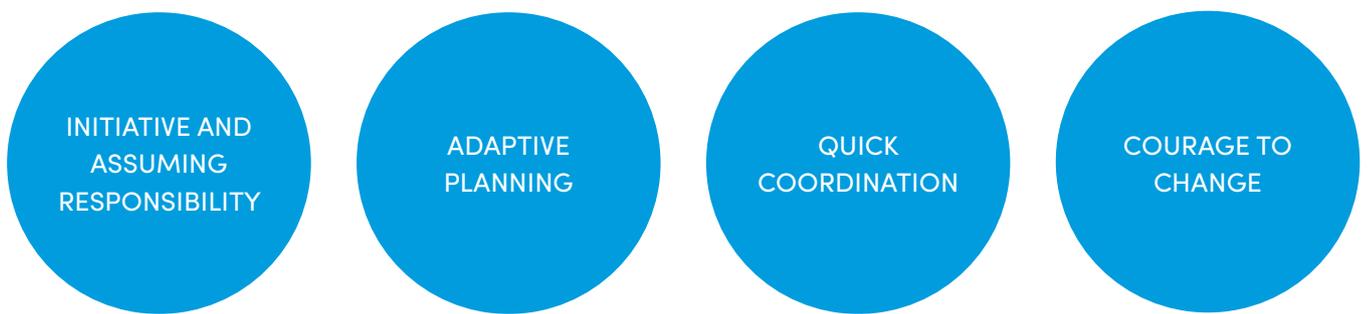
On the client side, willingness to perform is characterized by a very high level of C-level awareness, even independent of the defined objectives. Especially the cooperation within the agency team and the client / agency relationship, strengthen each other and leads to increased dedication. Fun is success and success is fun. Failure to enjoy the implementation also means that success will not be achieved in the long term.

1. THE NEED FOR AN AGILE WAY OF WORKING

Interestingly, the IT industry faced the same challenge already in the 1990s. IT projects were started with elaborate specifications / specifications and classic project management approach. However, the technologies changed in the course of the project - clients had to constantly adapt to new circumstances in their environment. Quite a few projects were endless stories or faulty software, which was eventually fixed afterwards by the client.

The agile approach gathered awareness with the publication of the Agile Manifesto in 2001. Kent Beck¹ and other programmers developed values, principles and methods that led to more successful software development. With the Agile Manifesto, they laid the foundation for agile project management. Methods such as Scrum, Kanban and Design Thinking emerged and have been developed further since then.

The essential themes of the Agile Manifesto:



INITIATIVE AND
ASSUMING
RESPONSIBILITY

ADAPTIVE
PLANNING

QUICK
COORDINATION

COURAGE TO
CHANGE

¹KENT BECK (2000): Extreme Programming. Die revolutionäre Methode für Softwareentwicklung in kleinen Teams. München: Addison-Wesley

1. THE NEED FOR AN AGILE WAY OF WORKING

The question arises:

Why do I actually need a new Agile approach to project management?

The differences between the classical approach and agile project management are the answer to this question. In classical project management, the stakeholders can – at the project start – have a lot of influence (briefing / concept development) on the project design, without having too much an impact on cost and timing. However, as the project progresses, this impact is associated with the amount and timing of change (capacity / cost). The later changes are made, the more expensive the result becomes. By contrast, stakeholders in Agile Project Management can always exert influence and keep costs under control. Dealing with changes is thus significantly optimized.

Independent of developments in agile project management, researchers Decy / Ryan² have empirically demonstrated the following three basic psychological needs of each person: competence, autonomy and social inclusion (kinship). Agile project work specifically satisfies these basic needs. Competence means being able to act as effectively as possible on the things understood as important. Autonomy is understood as a feeling of voluntariness. And social inclusion defines the importance of each member in the socio-cultural context of the working group. Satisfying these basic psychological needs is one of the reasons for the growing popularity of agile project management.

It was therefore a logical step to integrate agility into live marketing project management to make processes more effective, faster and to increase the motivation of the employees. VOK DAMS adapted the agile values, principles, team structure, methods and techniques of the original IT industry agile approach and developed Agile Event Management.

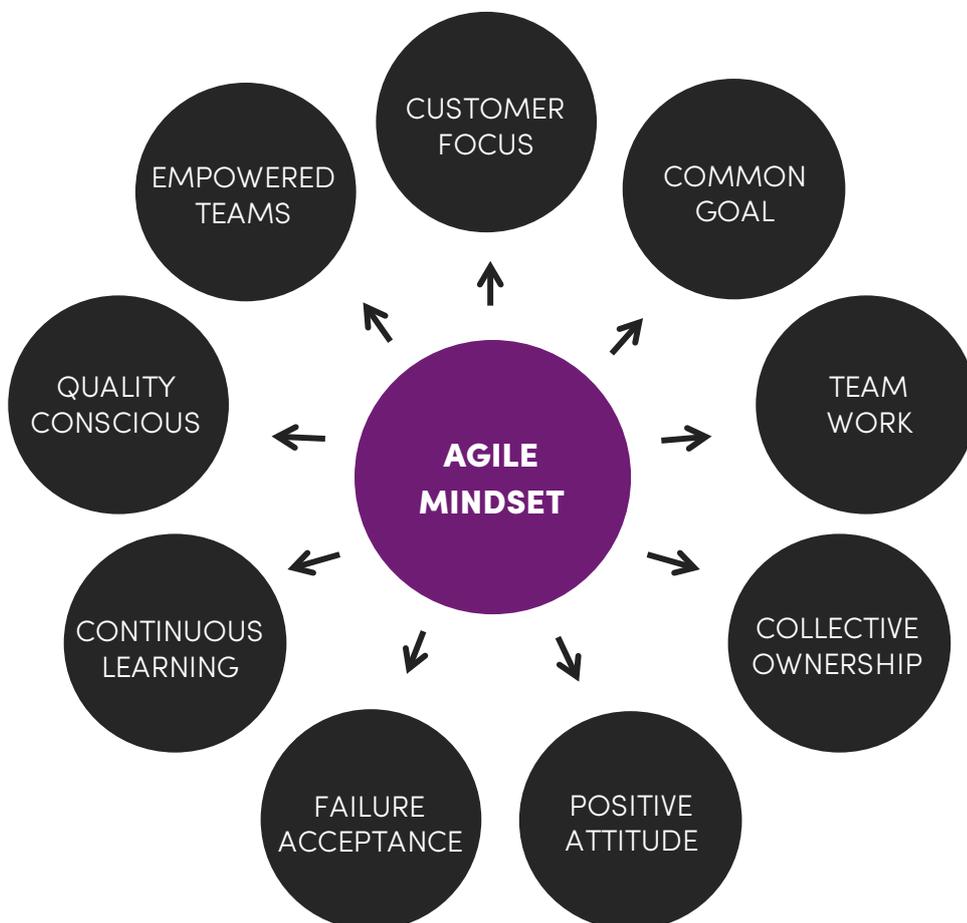
²EDWARD L. DECI, & RICHARD M. RYAN (2008): Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health, S. 183. In: Canadian Psychology 49, 182–185.

2. AGILE MINDSET

The agile mindset describes the attitude that people can expand their skills through learning. Contrary to the fixed mindset, which starts from the assumption that abilities are innate - or can no longer be developed after a certain age. In the fixed mindset, challenges are seen as a threat. Threats that are better not exposed. The fear of failure prevents the acceptance of the challenge as an opportunity.

To take advantage of these opportunities, to constantly evolve, is the core of the agile mindset. With the help of trials, mistakes and exertion, information is gathered that makes learning possible in the first place and thus creates the basis for spiritual growth. The constant desire to become better is

the inner drive of the agile mindset. Agile Mindset is the basis for the successful launch of Agile Event Management. The question arises, how can the already existing Agile Mindset be promoted and expanded? Personal and institutional experiences define lived norms and values. Feedback and praise therefore have a crucial impact on the lives of norms and values in the organization. In addition to praising results, the praise of self-initiative, independence, readiness, commitment and effort sustainably promotes the agile mindset.



3. AGILE CORE VALUES - AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT VS. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT

AGILE CORE VALUES IN AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

To understand agile project management, a distinction is made between agile values, principles, techniques and methods.

Based on the Agile Manifesto, the basic values of agile form the foundation:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Client cooperation over contract negotiation

Functioning software over comprehensive documentation

Responding to change over following a plan

These values refer to agile software development, but can also be translated specifically to Agile Event Management. This clearly shows that natural agility already exists in event-management. It should be noted that these values are not an „either-or“, but with „is about“/ „is more important than“ define the prioritization. For example, responding to change is more important than following a plan, to illustrate the prioritization ranking.

It's advisable to work together in the organization to develop an individual agile manifesto. Together, the members of an agile organization define their aspiration: how they want to behave. Furthermore, the manifest defines which mindset each action is derived from.

3. AGILE CORE VALUES - AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT VS. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT

AGILE CORE VALUES OF VOK DAMS AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT

The following basic values were defined by VOK DAMS agency:

People and their collaboration are more important than processes and tools

Live communication is about people - the direct experience and result-oriented communication with people. It should be self-evident that the human being is at the centre of attention. But in many cases, processes and tools have taken on higher priorities than people. This contradicts the Agile Event Management thought. Processes and technologies have become indispensable in professional event management - but they must not become a means to an end themselves.

Especially in an event agency, internal communication within the team is a most decisive factor in the success of the project.

The result is more important than the written proof of individual activities

Live communication is always time sensitive. Whenever guests are invited, whether to an anniversary gala, trade fair or management meeting - the date and time are fixed.

Today's compliance, auditing and budget responsibility often require excessive documentation of all decisions and working stages. This can't be completely avoided - but should not become a burden to the project staff. At the end of the day, the measurable result counts and not the demonstrably documented coverage.

At VOK DAMS, we sum up this dimension with „Creating Better Results“. Creating better results is our most important objective. It serves as a performance promise to clients and is an internal claim at the same time.

Mutual trust in cooperation is more important than contract negotiation

Particularly in the case of time-critical projects, the danger of losing valuable creation and implementation time in contract negotiations is high. Trust is the basis here. Constant feedback between client and agency ensures this confidence.

This value refers specifically to the client / agency relationship. The dialogue between client representatives and agency project staff is regarded as the key success factor here. Contracts are not unimportant, but they are the summary of cooperation based on mutual trust and being eye-to-eye.

Acting on change is more important than sticking to the plan

Clients, their brands and products are subject to countless external factors. Be it a strike grounding an airline, an unexpected product recall or a sudden political decision that interrupts the market movements.

Pro-active response compared to reacting to change is extremely important to agile organizations. This also instigates questions about which tasks have to be done when.

4. AGILE PRINCIPLES

AGILE PRINCIPLES OF AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Agile Principles are based on the Agile Values. Originally 12 „Commandments“ were developed in agile project management. Some are very specific to the software development process and are thus disregarded here.

Iteration / increments

The project work is done step by step. After each step, the client's feedback is obtained, e.g. the client is included in individual location research results. After each iteration, the client sees a functioning partial product increment - for example, a graphic design of an invitation card.

Simplicity

Only necessary work is done, redundant activity is to be avoided.

Welcome change

Changes in the course of the project are considered normal, embraced and do not lead to setbacks in the project.

Reviews

Partial results are regularly presented to the client and feedback is requested. The team's ongoing work is frequently reviewed and constantly improved.

Retrospectives

The team's ongoing work is frequently reviewed and constantly improved

Self-organized teams

The teams organize themselves. As a result, they work more efficiently, take on more responsibility and have more fun. The new flexibility in project management requires a rethink on the part of client and agency. The concept of iteration - working in cycles - is one of the most important components of agile project management. The classical project process works in stages. This involved long periods of time without review or evaluation. Only at the end of each stage were the work results presented to the client. In agile projects, these periods are greatly reduced.

Work-in-progress results are exchanged at an early stage and valuable feedback is given. This constant, built-in improvement process leads to a better overall result.

4. AGILE PRINCIPLES

Receiving change requests in the course of the project is one of the biggest challenges for teams which have worked mostly in classical project management context. The agile process not only allows change – it also welcomes it. While changes are always seen as a problem in the classic project, they are perceived as an opportunity in the agile project. Not every requested change, however, makes sense or is required. Here, it depends on the advisory competence of the team – to advise and convince the client accordingly.

Only doing the necessary and neglecting the superfluous seems blatantly obvious. However, the iterative approach, with its short voting intervals only makes this possible. There is a focus on working in the particular cycle of the iteration. Well-intentioned anticipatory work – that is, doing what you expect in the future to be required – involves the danger of working on the superfluous.

The aim of ongoing reviews is to constantly query the project requirements. Since these can change in agile project management, the highest possible client satisfaction is the goal here. Especially in hierarchical organizations it is a challenge to get the necessary decision makers together for the review. The basic requirement here is that all responsible decision makers are present at a review. Review appointments can be scheduled periodically during the project.

The retrospective is the basis of the continuous improvement process in the team. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how it can become more effective and adjusts its behaviour accordingly. The team members critically question how the team and each individual team member – works and cooperates with the other team members. In classical project management, usually only a „lessons learned“ meeting takes place after the project has been completed, with a written analysis which, in most cases, has no influence on follow-up projects. Regular retrospectives throughout the project allows to implement the improvements directly. The project results strongly benefit from this process.

The self-organization of the team is one of the key principles of agile project management. The strengths of self-organization benefit many teams directly. First and foremost, **self-organization means:**

Decide independently what is being processed:

The team decides how it uses its capacities and what workload it can handle.

Decide independently when it will be processed:

Each individual team member decides which work package will be processed next, or which work step makes sense to be next in line.

Proactive support:

The team supports each other out of their own accord.

4. AGILE PRINCIPLES

The advantage of self-organization lies in the transition to self-responsibility. The responsibility of each individual is encouraged. A great opportunity, but the individual also has to be able to handle the freedom and accompanying responsibility. Each individual team member sees him/herself in overall responsibility for the project's success. Success is not divisible. Even self-organized teams need guidance. Leadership of self-organized teams, however, is different than hierarchical leadership. Here the agile techniques can support.

AGILE PRINCIPLES OF VOK DAMS AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT

During the application of the agile principles into Agile Event Management, every single principle was checked and adapted to the daily project activities.

As part of the changeover at VOK DAMS³, the teams jointly defined the following guidelines for guidance and orientation. These guidelines are implemented throughout the daily activities and constantly reviewed. Through the joint creation of an Agile Manifesto, the following principles have been defined, serving as guidelines in the daily work processes:

1. APM (Agile Project Management): welcome change

Changes in the course of the project are considered normal, embraced and do not lead to setbacks in the project

VOK DAMS AEM (Agile Event Management): change as an opportunity

We welcome changes to requirements, even late in the process. Agile processes use change for the competitive advantage of the client.

2. APM: iteration / increments

The project work is done step by step.

VOK DAMS AEM: Sprints

The team defines the number of steps and the required time frame.

3. APM: Retrospective

The team's ongoing work is frequently reviewed and constantly improved

VOK DAMS AEM: Reflection

The team reflects at regular intervals on how it can become more effective and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.

4. APM: simplicity

Only necessary work is done, redundant activity is to be avoided.

VOK DAMS AEM: Time

Time is our most important asset.

³ VOK DAMS intern July 2017

4. AGILE PRINCIPLES

5. APM: Reviews

Partial results are regularly presented to the client and feedback is requested.

VOK DAMS AEM: Permanent cooperation

Clients and agency have to work together on a daily basis in the project.

6. APM: Self-organized teams

The teams organize themselves. As a result, they work more efficiently, take on more responsibility and have more fun.

VOK DAMS AEM: Self-organized teams

The best strategies, concepts and implementation ideas emerge in teams that organize themselves.

7. VOK DAMS AEM only: Team support

Use motivated individuals in the projects. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done without constant guidance.

8. VOK DAMS AEM only: Face-to-face communication

Face-to-face conversation is the most efficient and effective way to share information with and within an agile project team (especially when dealing with direct communication with defined audiences – such as at an event agency)

9. VOK DAMS AEM only: Team Development

Agile processes promote sustainable development. The project team (client + agency + partner) should maintain a steady pace without interruption.

10. VOK DAMS AEM only: Agile Mindset

Broadening horizons, striving for use of innovations and applying trends promotes and conditions our agile mindset.

11. VOK DAMS AEM only: quality standards

We deliver punctual, honest, high quality, economical, creative solutions throughout the project.

12. VOK DAMS AEM only: simplicity

Simplicity is essential.

5. AGILE METHODS

There are now a variety of agile methods providing the framework for agile techniques. The most common agile method is Scrum⁴. Scrum has a special position because it was formulated specifically for software development with a very flexible setup, easily adaptable to other industries. The two equally well-known and used agile methods are Kanban and Design Thinking.

SCRUM IN SHORT

Scrum is the best-known method for agile project management. It defines three roles that are responsible for the process: the product owner, the scrum master and the team.

The product owner is primarily responsible for the success and pursues a vision. To accomplish this, he creates the Product Backlog - a list of prioritized requirements.

The Scrum Master is the coach of the team. He coordinates, moderates and is responsible for process management. He backs the team, clears any obstacles and keeps them out of the way, so that the team can focus on the agreed goals and deliver higher quality. He also moderates the meetings.

The team is a heterogeneous, multidisciplinary group with no rigid hierarchical structures and consists of 3 to 9 members who organize themselves.

The work process is divided into Sprints and Daily Scrum Meetings.

The sprint defines a cycle over several days (i.e., 14 to 30 days), in which the practical implementation is carried out. During a sprint planning meeting, a task list, called a sprint backlog, defines tasks that the development team will handle within the sprint. The tasks are derived from the high priority requirements of the Product Backlog.

In the Daily Scrum Meeting the work progress and the next tasks are discussed daily within 15 minutes on the basis of the following three questions or reported about problems.

1. What have I done since the last Daily Scrum that brings us closer to the sprint goal?
2. What obstacles do I see on the way to the sprint goal?
3. What am I planning to do until the next Daily Scrum that brings us closer to the sprint goal?

At the end of each Sprint, the results are presented to the Product Owner and stakeholders in Sprint Reviews.

After the Sprint Review, the Sprint Retrospective takes place. Here, the development team and product owner share experiences to identify opportunities for improvement that they want to implement in the next sprint.

⁴ KEN SCHWABER & JEFF SUTHERLAND: The Scrum Guide 2016, S. 7 f.
<http://www.scrumguides.org/docs/scrumguide/v2016/2016-Scrum-Guide-German.pdf>

5. AGILE METHODS

The feedback from the review and the retrospective feeds into the Sprint Planning meeting before the next sprint, closing the circle until the vision becomes reality.

The advantages of SCRUM:

- _The client experiences how each task is carried out
- _ Clearly defined roles
- _ Structured, yet flexible process
- _The highest possible degree of transparency regarding the current state of development and obstacles enables timely countermeasures
- _Distinct team spirit - often better final results through group dynamic processes and mutual motivation
- _Effective, single-minded and focused work through step-by-step realization
- _Guaranteed continuous improvement process
- _Focus on quality: adding value is more important than meeting a deadline

By using the Scrum method goals are achieved faster, an innovative way of working is used, resulting in more fun for the team working on the task. This was a key reason for VOK DAMS to adapt this method for its Agile Event Management.

5. AGILE METHODS

KANBAN IN SHORT

The Kanban principle was originally developed in 1947 by Taiichi Ohno at Toyota Motor Corporation. The goal was to increase productivity and efficiency in order to gain an advantage over the competition.. With the help of Kanban, Toyota was able to control production much more flexible and efficiently. The result was remarkable: an increase in productivity while reducing costly inventories of raw material, semi-finished and finished products.

Kanban is a system for controlling material flow and production according to the „pull principle“. In this case, so-called self-regulating control loops are used to ensure the material supply. At Kanban, material supply is based solely on the consumption of the production or logistics process.

Traditional Kanban systems usually use Kanban cards as information carriers in a cycle to visually control the production process. A Kanban for the internal or external supplier corresponds to a production order.

A Kanban is thus the smallest unit for the respective component or assembly. Depending on requirements, replenishment lead time and desired safety stock, the number of required Kanban can be calculated using a simple formula. Gridded boxes, pallets, small load carriers, boxes, etc. can act as load carriers.

If the last part has been removed from a Kanban container (in some companies also the first part), the Kanban signal is sent from the user location to the storage / production location e.g. in the form of the Kanban card or container with the card attached. This creates a cycle called the Kanban control loop.

The visualization of the production order is created by the empty container at the corresponding location or via a Kanban board, on which the cards or orders are sorted. If there is no Kanban signal, i.e. no production order, then no production will take place.

After refilling the defined unit, the full Kanban container is returned to the user location. The parts are then provided in a so-called Kanban supermarket.

The main advantages of a Kanban system are:

- _ Avoidance of overproduction
- _ Higher material availability,
- _ Shorter delivery times and higher delivery reliability,
- _ Faster processing times in production,
- _ Reduction of planning and control effort
- _ And thus, higher productivity in purchasing, procurement, planning and control,
- _ An increase in inventory turnover,
- _ Less needed storage space.

Kanban does not have the same meaning in agile project management as Scrum. The reason for this is that Kanban is focused on the optimization of the production flow. The method aims for a continuous work process and is therefore often used in troubleshooting software development.

5. AGILE METHODS

DESIGN THINKING IN SHORT

The slightly misleading phrase Design Thinking erroneously suggests a close connection to the creative agency business. But Design Thinking is not about design in its usual agency-related meaning. On the contrary - it is more about the direct conversion of abstract moments into tangible items. Hence, it's not about (event) design, but about reinventing and directing.

Design Thinking uses an empathic, intuitive and practical approach. The focus is on the visual and interactive communication and communication of new ideas. Not to be confused with the „packaging“ of existing ideas.

In retrospect, the roots of Design Thinking can probably already be seen in the motto „form follows function“ coined by the American architects of the Chicago School. The saying „form follows function“ here represents the focus on the end user, as the centre of all action.

Design Thinking was invented in the 70's / 80's at Stanford University by the founders of the future innovation agency IDEO⁵. The method gained prominence with the support of SAP founder Hasso Plattner. In collaboration with Stanford University and the Hasso Plattner Institute in Potsdam, the School of Design Thinking was founded in 2007⁶.

In essence the core aspects of Design Thinking are:

- _User-centricity**
- _Multidisciplinary**
- _Iterative approach**

User-centricity

In Design Thinking, user-orientation is the starting point of every task. It's not about „selling“ a solution to a future user (client) - but about considering the task from the user's point of view right at the beginning of the task. Only in the next step the technical options and the economic aspects are considered.

Every Design Thinking Process begins with a targeted analysis of the actual user needs, with the aim to find a client-oriented solution. The process begins with a detailed analysis of the problem to make sure whether solving the „obvious problem“ really helps the user. With the help of problem hypotheses, a broad starting position is created. The design thinking process helps to find possible solutions.

⁵ <https://www.ideo.com/>

⁶ <https://hpi.de/school-of-design-thinking.html>

5. AGILE METHODS

Multidisciplinary

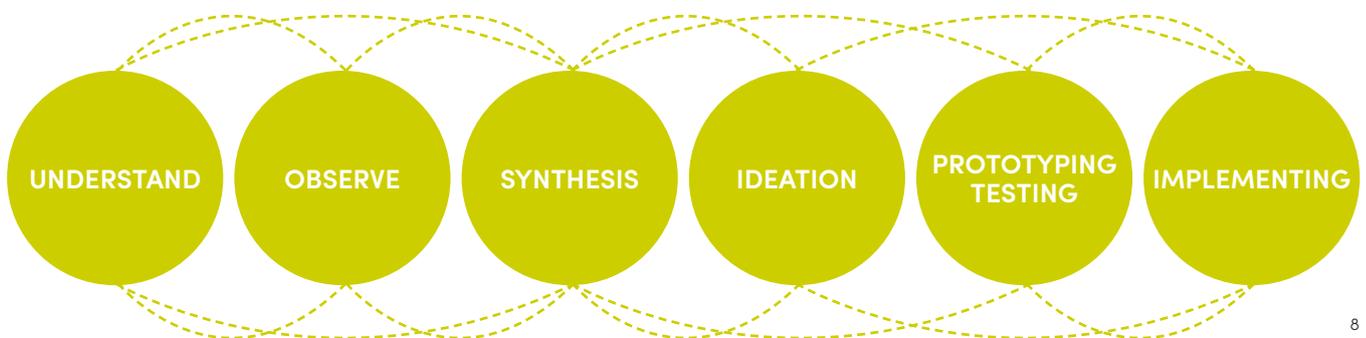
The predominant assumption in the development of design thinking was that multidisciplinary comes before individual specializations. Designers and engineers joined together at an early stage of idea development instead of starting in their own domain and cooperating later in the project. The approach: the different perspectives and expertise together bring out a viable solution. Design Thinking is thus a structured method for jointly developing solutions and innovations.

It is aimed at eliminating restricting silo thinking and taking a full and clear 360-degree perspective.

Iterative procedures are systemic in all agile methods. This systematic approach, which originates from computer science, enables a continuous culture of learning. Early and frequent failures are no longer criticized in the process as malpractice, but embraced as one of the most important moments in cost-saving innovation processes. The School of Design Thinking speaks of „learning to go forward“.

One of the best-known methods of design thinking in marketing is client journey mapping, where the interactions of potential clients and the identifiable preferences, experiences and emotions are measured and displayed on as many touchpoints as possible. Surveys and interviews are linked to technically measured data. The resulting user models are referred to as persona⁷.

Iterative approach



8

Design Thinking is more than just a method, approach or process - Design Thinking is understood as an attitude that shapes (corporate) culture.

⁷ Michael Lewrick; Link, Patrick; Leifer, Larry: Das Design Thinking Playbook: mit traditionellen, aktuellen und zukünftigen Erfolgsfaktoren. Verlag Franz Vahlen GmbH, München, ISBN 978-3-8006-5384-3

⁸ Source: The Design Thinking process, referring to an Anja Wölbling, Kira Krämer, Clemens N. Buss, Katrin Dribbisch, Peter LoBue, and Abraham Taherivand 2012. „Design Thinking: An Innovative Concept for Developing User-Centered Software“, in Software for People, Mädche, Alexander (eds.), Berlin: Springer, pp. 121ff.

6. AGILE APPROACH

The VOK DAMS Agile Event Management approach uses the best of the different methods and complements these with our fully implemented Quality Management system. Our QMS describes a quality assurance process that has been certified for over 12 years. It is conveyed in an extensive employee manual. This manual allows new employees to educate themselves about the QM

quickly and effortlessly. In addition, the QM system creates space for generating creative ideas.

The Agile Event Management process starts with a project initiation stage similar to classic project management. Followed by the planning stage, implementation (on site), follow-up and completion.

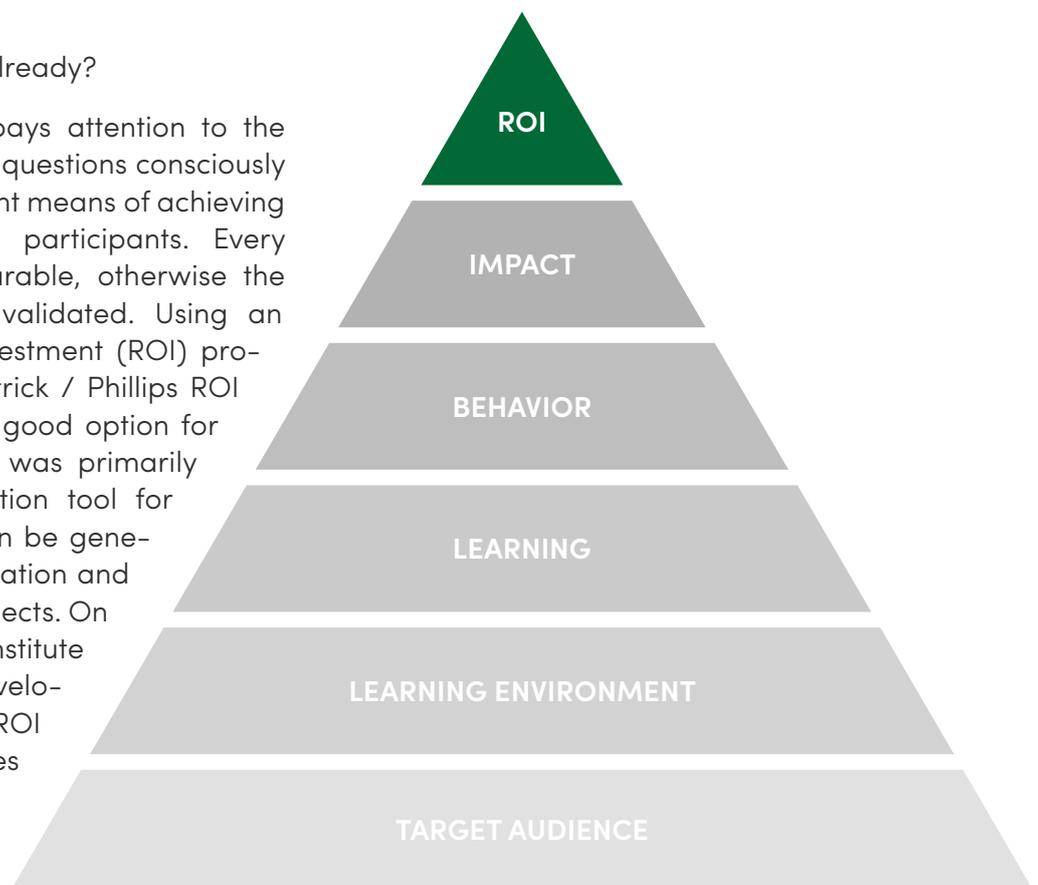


PROJECT INITIATION AND ROI

At the beginning, a clear definition of the objective and the target group of the event is important. Two simple guiding questions help to achieve this:

- a) What should the participants do (differently) after the event?
- b) Why don't they do this already?

While the first question pays attention to the objective, the second one, questions consciously whether an event is the right means of achieving this change among the participants. Every objective must be measurable, otherwise the achievement cannot be validated. Using an established Return on Investment (ROI) process based on the Kirkpatrick / Phillips ROI methodology model⁹ is a good option for this. Although the system was primarily developed as an evaluation tool for training in the 1980s, it can be generally transferred as an initiation and planning tool for event projects. On this basis, the event ROI Institute of Hamso / Dzeik¹⁰ has developed a practicable event ROI process. Each level requires clear criteria of success (KPIs - key performance indicators).



[ROI Pyramid© Event ROI Institute]

⁹ JJ KIRKPATRICK (1998): Evaluating corporate training: Models and issues. Berlin: Springer

¹⁰ Elling Hamso & Ilka Dzeik Event ROI Institute Norway and Germany

6. AGILE APPROACH

The top (level 5) is the actual ROI – calculating / measuring the net result of the event (minus all event related costs). The ROI thus defines the measurable value of the event.

The Impact Level 4 states which action leads to the actual ROI. Here, increase in sales is mostly the leading ROI impact.

The Behaviour Objectives Level 3 answer the actual key question „What should the participants do at / after the event?“.

Learning Objectives Level 2 answers the question „What do the participants need to learn and / or to act the desired way?“.

Learning Environment Objectives Level 1 define the optimal environment for learning.

Level 0 defines the target audience. Even if this seems banal, projects often fail on level 0, if the right decision makers target group is not at the event.

A professional ROI process is essential in agile projects, but it is time-consuming to implement and requires a high degree of willingness to review from all stakeholders. Many companies combine the development of an event ROI process with the introduction of a corporate event guide. Similar to a style guide for digital or analogue communication measures, a corporate event guide defines clear requirements for level 0 and 1. Processes are often grouped in a standardized manner in such an event manual.

Companies that shy away from the consulting and implementation efforts of an Event ROI system run the risk of remaining in at Level 1 Learning Environment. In these cases, valuation is often limited to basic queries like „How did you like the hotel?“.

A simple – albeit scientifically controversial – evaluation method is the focus group comparison. Assuming the right audience was invited for the event – there will always be participants – who for various reasons (vacation, illness, client appointments, etc.) could not attend. This automatically results in a comparison group. This comparison group makes it relatively easy to check how the Behaviour / Impact Level 4 has developed. If you compare the participants with the non-participants, you can clearly distinguish trends here.

AGILE TOOLS

There are a variety of agile techniques and tools.

After thorough testing, experimentation and use, the techniques described below have become fixtures in the introduction of Agile Event Management. Special emphasis was placed on the simplicity of the introduction, the direct benefit and thus easier acceptance by the project participants.

6. AGILE APPROACH

Task

Tasks correspond to the smallest unit of a task package. In Agile Event Management, tasks are sorted by specializations. Across these specializations, the combined tasks are made into sprints.

A professional Agile Event Management approach requires effective software support. For example, JIRA and TRELLO by Atlassian¹² have proven track records in this field. An organization-wide roll-out of such a system is associated with extensive time and capacity investments. That is why we focus on the „offline“ variant, to illustrate the Agile Event Management techniques and tools.

An important difference to the traditional project approach is that Agile Event Management relies on the self-organization of the team. As part of an initial project meeting, the team jointly defines the individual tasks. The project is broken down into individual work packages. Each work package, each task contains:

- _Title (used as task identifier throughout the project)
- _Additional keywords (maximum three, for a better description of the task)

During the project initiation the following fields are additionally defined. When creating the task card, they stay blank for the time being:

- _Time requirement (time is the highest asset in Agile Event Management) / Time Box
- _Name abbreviation of the responsible team member

Companies still in the agile project management pilot phase, tend to use manual documentation of the tasks of the individual teams. Post-It notes have proven themselves here. With the aid of different colours, the priorities of the individual tasks are displayed.

Together, the priorities are set with help of the Eisenhower¹³ known/urgent matrix. The task types are subdivided into A, B, C, and D tasks and split into four quadrants. Hereby D-tasks, which are neither important nor urgent, can be discarded directly. This is the first - if small - positive result of the agile process!

Eisenhower Matrix

The individual priorities are assigned the most common Post-it colors. The added contrast of the post-it pastel colors displayed here is to increase readability.



¹² www.atlassian.com

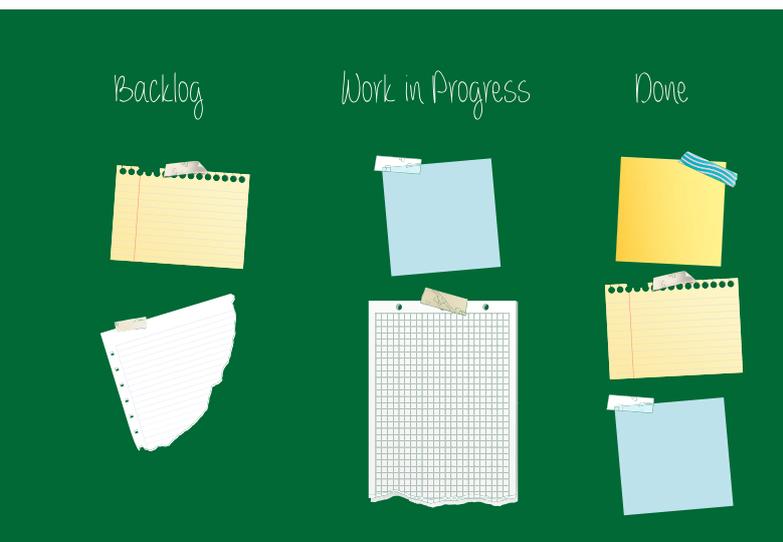
¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EotToFSd8o8

6. AGILE APPROACH

Project board

A central project board (also referred to as task board) is the basic tool for a clear presentation of tasks. Although there's an abundance of software-based task boards, we focus here on „analogue“ board to represent the system, for clarity. A simple task board has three stacks:

- _Backlog
- _Work in progress
- _Done



All tasks created are stored in the backlog at the beginning of the project. The backlog defines which tasks are still pending. For recurring projects, it is useful to assemble the task maps in advance with frequently used tasks as the base template. However, with all the hazards inherent to this checklist-like approach, it also offers amazing time savings in the project initiation phase. It is important to constantly question the template base, to adapt it and not to treat it as „fixed“.

The most important difference to classical project management is that tasks are not assigned by an authority (e.g. a project manager) - but are freely chosen by the team members. Exactly this independent election process leads to the assumption of responsibility of the individual. Herein lies the magic of Agile Event Management.

Each team member is responsible for making his tasks appear on the task board and visible to the project team. Concerns are often expressed during the initial phases of Agile Event Management, such as:

- _Nobody chooses to take care of the difficult / toxic tasks.
- _Certain tasks require specific qualifications. What do we do when people take on a task they cannot fulfill?

—...

Agile Event Management practice has shown that these fears are usually unfounded. Nevertheless, they have to be taken seriously and addressed openly. Especially well-seasoned senior team members could have a hard time letting go of certain tasks, and still take responsibility.

6. AGILE APPROACH

Backlog

Based on available templates, the team creates the initial Project Backlog. All tasks are grouped into units controlled by the project team.

Then there is the distribution of available man power required for the planned project management. The distribution to individual tasks is done as a team with the help of Planning Poker.

A distinction is made between a project backlog, which contains all open tasks and a sprint backlog, which only contains the relevant tasks for the current sprint. Both backlogs must be checked regularly, at the latest after each sprint.

Work in Progress

As soon as a team member has taken over a task, this task is transferred from the backlog to the Work In Progress area. Now this team member task is placed in the time box.

Only tasks that are necessary to fulfil the next sprint target are accepted. Preliminary work on tasks that are needed later in the project will be ignored at this stage. Due to the expected changes in the course of the project, many of these pre-processed tasks become redundant or have to be reshaped so that they have to be started again. This unnecessary work needs to be avoided.

It is important that a single team member does not take on too many tasks in parallel. The number of tasks that can be processed in parallel depends on the project and the employee. Basically, it is important to limit the number of open tasks per employee. This is the only way to ensure that no employee can overload himself or herself with a multitude of tasks. In Agile Event Management this is referred to as WIP limit (WIP is short for work in progress). The starting point is the empirically proven assumption that overall productivity decreases substantially when handling parallel tasks. Each team will define its own WIP limits depending on the project and the complexity of the tasks. The agile coach makes sure all team members adhere to the set limits. The idea of the WIP limits comes from the agile process control and optimization method Kanban¹⁴.

Done

If the task has been successfully processed, it will be moved from 'Work in Progress' to 'Done'. The completed task is evaluated to determine whether the calculated effort matches the actual effort consumed. This is part of the Sprint Review.

As soon as a team member has time capacities, a new task is taken over or the capacities are offered to other team members or teams.

¹⁴ G. GEIGER, E. HERING, R. KUMMER (2003): Kanban. 2. Auflage. München/Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag

6. AGILE APPROACH

Time Boxing

The initially agreed upon Sprint duration is strictly adhered. This aspect is used to increase efficiency and is referred to as time boxing. Time is the highest asset in Agile Event Management. Therefore, it is essential to meet the agreed times unconditionally.

If parts of a task are still open after the set Sprint duration expires, then these parts are moved to the next time box or deleted.

Tools help to detect that the calculated costs match the actual expenses. Each employee has their own time box capacities on their own responsibility in the sense of project success.

Sprint

Tasks are grouped into work sections called sprints. A sprint originally corresponded to the increment of product functionality in software development. At VOK DAMS, they correspond to a defined and measurable unit. Each Sprint starts with a Sprint Planning and ends with a Sprint Review and a Sprint Retrospective. Sprints always follow each other directly. During a sprint, no changes are allowed that can significantly affect the sprint target.

All sprints in the project should have the same length and timing. A duration of one to three weeks has been proven useful, depending on the entire project duration. Longer sprint periods make little sense, as there would be too many changes over this space of time.

A Sprint always ends at the time agreed upon, there are no Sprint extensions or cancelations. There are two exceptions: the team has completely misjudged the time required to reach the goal or the product owner no longer needs the increment result.

Only in these cases may the project owner cancel the sprint. The cancelled sprint ends with a sprint retrospective. This is followed by a new sprint that starts with a new sprint planning.

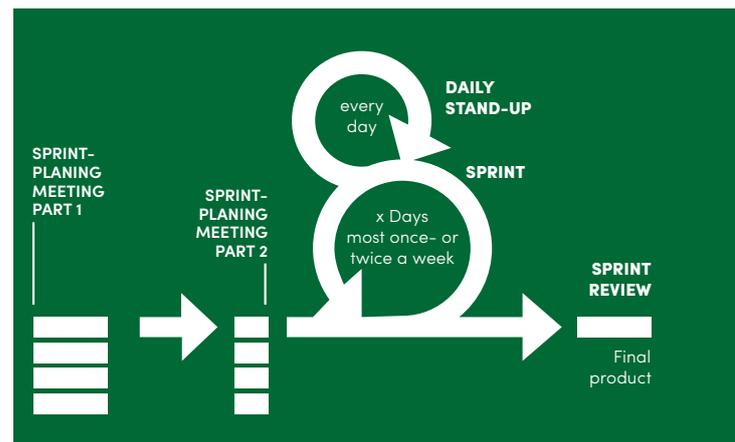
Sprint-Planning

In sprint planning, two specific questions need to be answered:



1. What can be developed in the upcoming sprint?
2. How will the upcoming work be done in the upcoming sprint (broken down into individual tasks)?

Thus, the sprint planning is divided into two parts. Limited to a maximum of 2h per Sprint Week (2h / 1 Sprint Week - 4h / 2 Sprint Weeks - 6h / 3 Sprint Weeks etc.).



6. AGILE VORGEHENSWEISE

Delegation Poker

The delegation is often reduced to „I do it“ or „You do it“. But there are seven levels of delegation. Delegation Poker is used to clarify who is responsible for what at what level. This is a methodology that encourages employee engagement through controlled self-organization and clarified value and decision making.

How to play

First, build a list of predefined cases or situations in which you want to create a delegation policy and determine who has what impact. This can range from project design to the definition of new team members.

Each team member receives a set of cards numbered 1 through 7 that describes the seven levels of delegation.

The team members repeat the following steps for each predefined case:

1. A person reads a situation or tells a story from his own experience.
2. Each player chooses one of the seven delegation cards and reflects on how he would delegate the decision in this particular situation.
3. When all players have decided, they reveal their selected cards.
4. Have the staff with the highest and lowest cards explain the reasons for their choice.
5. Based on the revealed cards, a delegation board can be created. Here, the consensus of the participants on the corresponding situations can be recorded.

The Delegation Poker Cards (example)



6. AGILE APPROACH

Planning Poker

Time is the key asset in Agile Event Management. With Planning Poker, the project team has the opportunity to jointly estimate and agree upon the time spent on each task. Ideally, Planning Poker is already implemented while submitting the budget / cost estimate at the start of the project.

Planning Poker's primary goal is to achieve a common understanding of the effort required to complete the task. With „definition of done“, the result of the task is clearly defined and the question “When is the task considered to be done?” is answered.

The Planning Poker process is very simple. Each team member has a deck of cards at their disposal. This deck is structured as follows: 0.5 – 40. The numbers represent an estimated workload in hours. Usually, a number series with larger distances between the numbers is used.

The reason for this is, that with larger work duration estimates, the exact number of units is difficult to estimate in detail. Planning Poker uses a number series based on the Fibonacci series:

0,5; 1; 2; 3; 5; 8; 13; 20; 40; 60; 100



In addition to the actual number cards, the game contains additional special cards:

- 0 The task is too small and needs to be combined with another task
- ∞ The task is too big and has to be divided into small tasks
- ? The task is not clear to me
- ☕ Coffee cup – I need a break

Planning Poker playing cards are available in stores. But can also be created quickly. A digital alternative are Planning Poker Apps¹⁵. These can be used similar to the physical deck. By swiping horizontally, each team member can select the necessary card value and place his / her smartphone on the table in the course of the planning session.

All team members participate in Planning Poker. The Agile Master (at VOK DAMS this is the Account Director) opens the game. The time unit is determined together. In most cases as hours, so that the playing card 0.5 corresponds to 30 minutes. For longer sprint periods, other time units may be used. Single tasks are presented one after the other. For each task, each team member places a playing card face down on the table.

¹⁵ <http://planningpoker.vokdams.de>
Die VOK DAMS AEM Planning Poker App

6. AGILE APPROACH

Once everyone has dealt their cards, all team members turn over their cards. When all team members are in the same range with their time unit, then there is no further need for discussion and the next task is called.

If significant deviations in individual time estimates come up, then these are discussed with the full team. In many cases, there are different views on when the task is considered completed (definition of done) and what effort it requires. Since the discussion only refers to the tasks in which there is a different understanding, a significant time saving is already achieved in the planning meeting. Different views thus do not cause any „disappointment“ later in the project.

In case seriously high task numbers cards (values 60; 100 or ∞) appear, an attempt will be made to split the task and allocate it into several smaller tasks. These new tasks are then added to the Planning Poker task list separately.

Example

The task „Security Concept“ is called for evaluation. The team members place cards with 20; 40; 60; 100; 40; 60; ∞ ; 40 on the table. It becomes clear that there is a need for clarification about the scope of the task. Furthermore, due to the high numbers, it becomes clear that the task has to be split into smaller tasks. In this case, one could offer the following sub-tasks: risk assessment, security assessment, editorial preparations, coordination with client-group security and security guide creation.

Some agile methodologies recommend adding gaming elements to the planning poker sequence; the player who has set the lowest time unit “wins” the task. This approach is not suitable for Agile Event Management as the mutually agreed “definition of done” will be lost. Furthermore, it promotes “tactical” planning poker, with team members not wanting to do a certain task, overestimating the workload on purpose.

Daily-Stand-up Meeting (Daily)

As part of the Agile Event Management, meetings are not abandoned, but the overall meeting approach changes considerably. Meetings are shorter and take place standing up. The standing-up design provides a sense of dynamism and prevents drawn-out meetings while kicking back in comfy chairs. Even an enforced „leaning ban“ has proven to speed up meetings.

It is important that everyone feels that this daily meeting is meaningful. Only then the communication flow within the agile team can positively add to the process.

The daily stand-up meeting has a maximum duration of 3 minutes per team member (10 team members = 30 minutes) daily. The sooner in the day, the better. It should take place live and in-person (without team members calling in) directly in front of the task board.

6. AGILE APPROACH

Each team member answers the following questions in turn:



- _ How did I get on with my work yesterday?
- _ What are my tasks today?
- _ What are the current obstacles that prevent the on time completion of my work?

The individual team members all have max. 3 minutes per person to answer the three questions. The Project / Account Director moderates the Daily Stand-up Meeting. When an obstacle is addressed by a team member, the solution to this obstacle is not discussed in the Daily Stand-up Meeting, but in a separate obstacle-related group of participants following the Daily Stand-up Meeting. Exceptions are obstacles that affect all team members and could therefore lead to the standstill of further work. In this (very rare) case, the Daily Stand-up Meeting is extended beyond the 3 minutes per participant rule. This is the only case of a possible extension of the Daily Stand-up Meeting.

Phrases like „no change - everything like yesterday“ are not allowed. This is where the Project / Account Director in his role as moderator steps in by requesting more detailed answers. Without this moderation, you run the risk that everyone will only report „same as yesterday“ and thus rendering the daily stand-up meeting worthless. Maintaining the overall dynamics of the meeting is the main task of the moderator.

Weekly Sprint Meeting

Sprint Meetings take place in the sprint intervals agreed with the project owner. Any interval is allowed but it has been proven that weekly meetings are most beneficial to the process and the team. Also known as Weekly for short.

Compared to the Daily Stand Up Meeting, in the Weekly, the actual work results are presented and discussed with the project owner.

Sprint Retrospective

The sprint meeting will be followed by the Sprint Retrospective. The team reflects at regular intervals on how it can become more effective and adjusts its behaviour accordingly.

“Silent fox”

In addition to the institutionalized meetings (Daily / Weekly Sprint), it is important to promote osmotic communication in the project team. Osmotic communication plays an important role in Agile Event Management. This informal communication is also appropriately called “the High Art of Communication in Team Space”¹⁶. It is important to have the team sit together in a project room. Virtual chat rooms also have their charm - but do not replace face-to-face communication in the team. Described by Alistair Cockburn¹⁷ as early as 2004, Osmotic communication is the process of recording information in the background from the exchange of information between other team members. This can also be done by direct questions in the project round.

¹⁶ <https://agilegamba.wordpress.com/2013/09/10/osmotische-kommunikation-die-kunst-der-kommunikation-im-teamraum/>

¹⁷ ALISTAIR COCKBURN (2004): Crystal Clear: A Human-powered Methodology for Small Teams. München: Addison-Wesley

6. AGILE APPROACH

Ideally the working areas of the agile project management team are split into different areas. Agile organizations distinguish between workspaces for collaborative project and team work, formal meeting spaces, shared informal exchange / dialogue spaces, and retreats for activities that require high individual concentration. For example, Microsoft distinguishes between Think Space, Accomplish Space, Converse Space and Share & Discuss Space in its German headquarters¹⁸.

In today's smaller agency units, project offices, and flexible workspaces throughout, such dedicated areas are rarely available. The use of different locations such as workspace, home office, coffee shops, co-working space has its charm but also has a negative impact on the required "closeness" of the agile team.

A disadvantage of working in close proximity is the lack of individual quiet space, regularly needed for intensive jobs which require a high level of focus and concentration.

For this reason, there needs to be an agreement to fix certain time periods for these activities. In Agile Event Management we call this „Schweige-fuchs“ (Silent fox). Loosely translated as “Silent Fox”, this is based on the German concept of “quiet time” in Kindergarten. Teachers would indicate “quiet time” to the pupils with a hand gesture:

The English-speaking staff within VOK DAMS have coined the phrase “Cone of Silence” as spirited translation of the German “Schweigefuchs”

In Agile Event Management teams, the team agrees on a specific period of time, depending on the project and the phase, which is reserved for the “Schweigefuchs”. Phone calls and verbal communication are not allowed in this space of time. The following timing for this period has been proven to be successful:

9.00 - 9.10h Daily Stand Up Meeting

10.00 - 12.30h Cone of Silence

These daily silent periods should always be at the same time, not interrupted, or split into several periods. „If a member of the team violates“ Schweigefuchs / Cone of Silence „, colleagues will display the associated hand gesture to restore quiet time.



¹⁸ Die neue Deutschlandzentrale von Microsoft auf einen Blick - https://ncmedia.azur-reedee.net/ncmedia/2016/05/20160513_Factsheet_Schwabing.pdf

7. THE AGILE TEAM



The agile team setup is aimed at self-responsibility without hierarchy. The following roles exist in an agile team:

Client Project Owner

is the contracting authority on the client side.

Project Owner

At VOK DAMS this is the Account Director on agency side. The project owner is also a team member.

Agile master

Has an agile process support / coaching role

Stakeholder

Persons directly or indirectly affected by the project.

Project Team

The project team consists of team members without hierarchy including the project owner. It is characterized by having shared accountability AND a high individual degree of self-responsibility. The project team organizes itself as much as possible. Self-organization is one of the key assets of Agile Event Management’s success.

Self-organization means that the team decides for itself which workload to manage and which work step comes next. The team supports itself autonomously.

7. THE AGILE TEAM

Client Project Owner

The client project owner on the client side is responsible for the success of the project from the client's point of view. Implementing agile management can be a challenge at the client side. Especially in mature, strong hierarchical organizations, with established roles and responsibilities. Ideally the Client Project Owner:

- _Is available at short notice
- _Has decision making power

As Client Project Owner he defines the properties / quality and costs. The Client Project Owner is always a natural person - never a decision-making committee.

Project Owner (Agency)

The Project Owner is the first contact person of the Client Project Owner on the agency side. The Project Owner (agency) is part of the hierarchy-free project team. In addition to the active participation in the team, the project owner also has an active role as moderator within the team.

The most important difference to the classic project manager role is that the project manager no longer decides the work load and allocates among the team members, thus fulfilling merely a delegation and control function. The Agile Event Management role focuses on the self-organization of the team. The Project Owner is characterized by:

- _Active participation in the project team at eye-level**
- _Exemplary examples of agile values, responsibility and commitment**
- _Training / development of the team**
- _Active support of less experienced team members**

- _Manage time (the most important asset) and external costs**
- _Motivate**
- _Stimulate innovation**
- _Moderate**
- _Coach**

Agile Master

The Agile Master (Scrum-Master at Scrum) is predominantly a coaching role.

Aside:

In pure agile systems like Scrum, the position of the project owner does not exist. It is taken over by the project team as a whole, since this is a fundamentally hierarchical-free working process. However, especially in introductory phases you cannot do without a management framework. Often, the role of the Project Owner may be associated with subtasks of the Agile Masters. Even though this dual role can present dangers and challenges, the positive developments and chances of introducing Agile Event Management outweigh them. Large agile teams sometimes require another management framework with additional features.

The agile values and principles set the framework for agile project management. Agile methods and agile techniques and tools help with the concrete implementation of agile project management. A project manager is still responsible, just no longer as a hierarchical superior but as a team member. In addition to his / her role as a controller, he / she has a strong coaching responsibility within the team. His her task of control, however, must be in accordance with the agile principles. Agile methods and techniques support this control / monitoring task.

8. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT AND CLIENT

The Agile Event Management also takes the relationship between agency - client to a new level. The most important requirement is cooperation at eye-level. In addition, the client must have the time and decision-making skills to successfully implement the agile process. Clients which are willing and able to get involved in Agile Event Management are rewarded by significant advantages over traditional project collaboration.

Client advantages

The advantages of Agile Event Management for clients are manifold. It saves time, manpower and - last but not least - costs. Agile Event Management cooperation between client and agency offers:

- _Direct feedback
- _Possibility to cooperate in all phases of the project
- _Proactive partnership with the agency

- _Flexibility regarding project objectives
- _The agile agency mindset

Given these advantages, every client should at least consider agile competence when selecting their agency.

AGENCY SELECTION

The classic agency pitch process has been more or less stationary for decades. Companies create a briefing and request proposals and at number (anything between 3 to 10) of agencies. The agencies develop a concept and a cost estimate on the basis of the briefing. If lucky the agency receives a pitching fee for its work, but this is more the exception than the rule. Clients ultimately decide on an agency based on strategic, creative and monetary aspects.

For agile projects, this classic pitch process has been replaced by a multi-level selection mechanism. This mechanism comprises four phases.

8. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT AND CLIENT

Request for Information (RFI)

A questionnaire requests interested agencies to provide information for selection. Queried information can include (but is not limited to):

- _Basic agency information (founding date / liability capital / turnover data)
- _Proof of quality management systems (e.g. ISO 9001: 2008)
- _Agile Event Management if required
- _Current project examples comparable to the upcoming task

The RFI goes to a finite number of potential agencies. Based on the returned RFI documents, maximum five agencies are selected. The RFI is usually not remunerated. When invited to the next step, agencies will receive an expense allowance (e.g. travel expenses).

7.2. Chemistry Meeting

Based on a briefing, the agency is invited to introduce itself in a one-hour face-to-face chemistry meeting. Followed by a half-hour question and answer session. All relevant stakeholders, both on client and agency side are represented in this meeting.

Based on the outcome of the chemistry meeting, a maximum of three agencies is invited for the last selection step. From this step, a flat rate remuneration of the agencies is implemented. Agency daily rates apply after qualification.

7.3. Assessment Workshop

All stakeholders of the client side and the selected team of agency side, come together in a – usually one day long – workshop and discuss pertinent questions regarding the event and its objectives. Examples of relevant topics are:

- _What should the target group / guests do (differently) after attending the event?
- _Why are they not doing this already?

8. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT AND CLIENT

Based on the workshop course, the client selects an agency. The remuneration of the agency is defined by time cost accounting rates based on 8 hours per day. The remuneration depends on the required task and performance level. Commonly the available staff levels are:

- _Director Strategy / Concept
- _Creative Director - Senior Consultant
- _Consultant
- _Junior Consultant
- _Assistant Consultant

Based on the different competencies and requirements, a tailor-made agency team is put together for the project. The amount of work modules (hours / days) is defined on the basis of the task and the project timeline. The work modules include all remaining working days up to the event, plus the time on site and the necessary follow-up phase.

The contract design for agile projects is an aspect of contention. Agile Event Management is a fluid process, made to cope efficiently with concept and strategy changes. It's therefore possible that the Scope of Service is not 100% defined at the time of contract signing.

The client needs to give up its fixed planning guarantees in part - but wins by the agile approach. Especially with projects without clearly defined objectives and requirements, Agile Event Management offers great opportunities. Studies show that one of the biggest challenges facing agile projects is Purchasing Departments accepting continuous changes in the process¹⁹. Agile methods will have a deep impact on the purchasing process and negotiations.

As a first step, the agency constructs a simplified budget allocation. At this stage it's important to define the so-called „Eh-Da costs“ first. „Eh-Da costs“ are all positions that are always there (‘Eh Da’ is German for ‘anyway’), regardless of strategic and / or creative concept. For example, “Eh-Da” costs are venue rent, catering, guest accommodation and transportation. This budget allocation provides the basis for a first overall budget estimate.

With regard to awarding contracts and the drafting of contracts, it is recommended to differentiate between „**agency fee**“ and „**project budget**“ (excluding agency fees).

Depending on the project and the respective framework conditions, the team may be deployed every working day or even calendar day, whereby it is important to ensure an even workflow in order to get the best results. These monthly phases are also the billing cycles of the agency fee. This process allows planning for the amount of the agency fee and defines the time allocation of the agency team. With that, it is a clear framework for cooperation.

Since Agile Event Management already incorporates the concept of change „as a matter of fact“, both parties should also agree on how to handle this at the start of the project. For example, how much extra (or less) unplanned work can be billed without pre-approval (for example, 20%) and how declaration and approval of additional or reduced fees will be handled in an agile way. The monthly billing cycles already allow transparency in agency fees.

¹⁹ <https://www.process-and-project.net/studie-agiler-einkauf/>

8. AGILE EVENT MANAGEMENT AND CLIENT

For the **project budget**, a planning estimate is typically used as a framework at the start of the project. In addition to defining the financial framework, a clear definition of what is in the budget is also very important. So-called „internal costs“ on the client side (for example, internal services such as IT, vehicles, graphics, etc.) must be included in the project budget or, if necessary, excluded from the agency responsibilities.

In addition, it should be defined for the project budget, how the availability (possibly divided into calendar years) of the funds is planned and which positions should be commissioned by the agency.

Essential to the agile way of working is the ability to respond to changes positively. Changes are opportunities to improve the project and should be treated as such. Changes in the project budget may relate to the amount of the budget and / or the budget items with regards to scope of services and level of performance or implementation quality. In Agile Event Management the project budget is subject to a constant process of perfecting the assets. This might be changing the amounts of the individual budget positions, or a shift from one position to another (or new) position.

This process is both conscious and anticipated by both client and agency team. Experience has shown that this leads to a more effective use of budget resources and a more accurate budget planning process. The framework parameters to the project budget and the individual „rules of the game“ should be recorded at the beginning of the project and, preferably, included in the contract.

The first step in the planning process of the project budget is a mutually agreed upon budget allocation. Here it is important to firstly define the so-called „Eh-Da costs“. These are cost which are always part of an event budget („Eh Da“ means „existing anyway“), regardless of the chosen strategic and creative concept. For example, venue rental fees, catering and guests accommodation / transportation. The budget allocation is the basis for a first overall budget estimate. In the following on-boarding process client and agency team will be working together on the same level of knowledge. Not only the alignment and positioning, but culture too plays here an important role. Based on the US Psychologist Tuckman (1965) the team building phases has to be taken into account here. It starts with a determination phase (forming) in which the team members get to know each other and their define relationships among each other. Followed often from a phase of conflict (Storming). Here there are disputes over roles and priorities. The following phase of the Convention (standardization) then leads to the performance phase (Performing).

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

All industries are currently experiencing serious challenges. The digital revolution in communication, triggered above all by the mobile web, is forcing agencies and clients alike to reconsider their brand communication.

Drivers of this development include clients, for whom the handling of digital technologies and communication channels have become a matter of course, allowing them to actively and directly get involved in the communication process.

For years, VOK DAMS has developed innovative formats such as 'Hybrid Events' and 'Live Campaigns' to provide clients with solutions that enable more efficient and more successful and target group-appropriate communication.

With this approach, the „Wow“, of communications is secured, which leaves the process – the „How“ – ready for improvement.

Therefore we – as the first event communication agency in the industry – have entered the next phase of our quality management system and launched Agile Event Management.

The agile basic values, principles, techniques and methods as well as the cooperation in agile teams, derived from the digital industry, are consistently adapted to industry-leading, innovative marketing in our agency.

We work on the basis of a clear project structuring in connection with a self-responsible team organization and a maximum of flexibility, which is already integrated into the process at the beginning of a project.

“Agility puts an end to the cosy brand romance of bygone days,” author Katrin Böhme writes in *Absatzwirtschaft* (1/2 2017) and concludes with: “the transparency of information in the digital world makes consumers more self-determining. Consumers themselves decide which brands they are interested in and want to hear from / interact with, which forces brands to respond more quickly and more personally to remain relevant to customers”. And on this basis, she poses the question, “Is adaptability today even more important than strategy?”

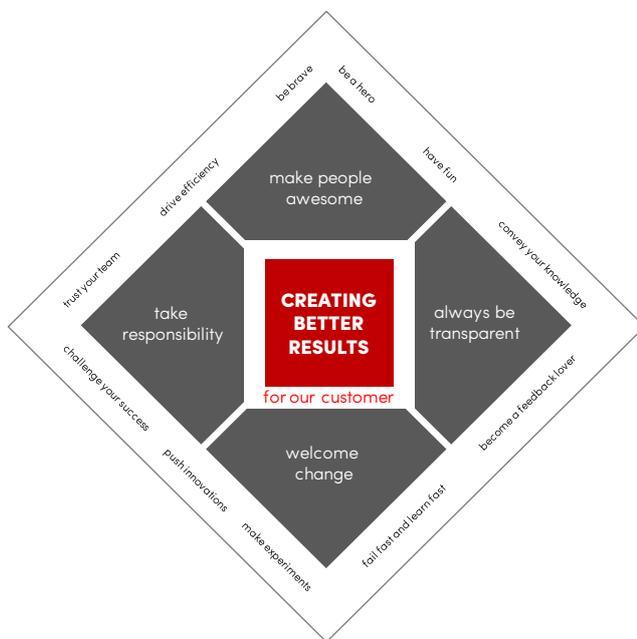
In fact, nowadays quick decisions are needed on a daily basis. What kind of impact does this have on positioning strategies and brand concepts, on how to communicate with customers and, ultimately, on the working relationship with agencies?

“The agile approach was developed in software development in 2001 and enshrined in the Agile Manifesto”, the author continued, „The goal of the Agile Manifesto was (and is) to respond faster and more effectively to the market changes.“

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The fact that this method of interacting with customers directly and flexibly to meet a wide variety of requirements, would also be a good choice for marketing teams and cooperation with agencies, was quickly recognized.

Nevertheless it took a little longer until agile project management was embraced on the agency side.



So it was up to us, VOK DAMS worldwide as the first agency in the field of direct business communication (events + live-marketing) completely transpose on agile project and event Management. We are in good tradition with our claim, which is referred to

as „KommunikationDirekt“ since the 1970s. Always in search of the

more intensive and more successful communication, which has set standards in the direct target group address. As marketing specialists we have very quickly recognized which possibilities the digital channels offer the users. For the first

time active intervention in brand communication is possible – we are talking about „user generated brand communication“. Connected with new possibilities, to increase trust and ranges of coverage. With the result to generate more earned value for companies, products and services. The combination of live experiences that are essential for the developing personal and confidence-building measures, and web-based communication, standing for frequency, range and availability are the success parameters. This is how VOK DAMS developed innovative solutions for live communication at your disposal: Hybrid Events, that is the connection of Live and MoSo-Lo (mobile applications, social media, location based services) and the currently most successful format Live Campaigns. Here the event will not only take centre stage of a campaign but also as a content provider that supports all communication channels for a campaign.

What all formats have in common is the lower distance between producers and consumers, a faster change between targets and measures and a higher complexity and networking of all actions. It is a matter of fact that marketing teams, communication and event agencies awaits a special challenge.

We look forward to an agile future.

APPENDIX

CASES



LEXUS Press Conference IAA

The task

Develop a bold and innovative concept for the LEXUS press conference at the IAA. The aim was to offer the journalists an event that is out of the ordinary and has the potential to become the „Talk of the Fair“.

Why Agile Event Management?

Especially the client's desire to implement a particularly innovative press conference - i.e. a solution that was unique and close to the needs of journalists, required intensive cooperation between the client and the agency. Since the final outcome of the event solution was to be developed as part of this collaboration, using Agile Event Management was the only sensible approach.

The event solution

LEXUS clearly exceeded the limits of a usual press conference at the IAA in Frankfurt.

In line with the Lexus brand tagline „Experience amazing“, we developed a mixed reality solution for the first time, in the shape of an individual experience in the form of a AR guided press conference through the innovative world of LEXUS.

The journalists were not tied to any fixed time slots for the press conference, but could enjoy the hybrid experience of the booth at any time, individually fitting it best to their own schedules.

The approximately 15-minute interactive presentation was carried out using „Microsoft HoloLens“ mixed-reality glasses.

Projected into the glasses, experts from LEXUS accompanied and guided the journalists over the LEXUS booth. The viewing of the vehicles and

CASES



LEXUS Pressekonferenz IAA

exhibits was thus enhanced with speeches, graphics, 3D animations, short video recordings and mapping on the vehicles. All important information was virtually in the field of vision of each journalist.

The information included speeches by Lexus European boss Alain Uyttenhoven and the LEXUS product specialists. This new way of communication pays homage to the Japanese tradition of hospitality - called Omotenashi - which is consistently oriented to the needs of the guests.

The implementation of Agile Event Management

The key tools in the ongoing agile process were the weekly Sprints with Sprint reviews to the client and the Daily Stand-Up Meetings. The weekly meetings with the client increased the process speed of the project, as the client received direct feedback and was always able to communicate directly to the agency team

without further coordination. The fun in the team on both agency and client side increased steadily in the course of the project. A mood that mobilized power reserves and promoted the commitment of all.

The result

An innovative result that successfully met all the goals set. A completely new, innovative format was developed. A format that will set new standards at press conferences at automotive trade fairs in the future.

CASES



IBM

IBM Watson IoT Experience Center

The task

With the new „Watson IoT Center“ in Munich, IBM offers a variety of solutions. For the next few years, IBM will invite its clients to business meetings in Munich and discuss the challenges and opportunities of Watson Cognitive Computing and IoT. The task was clearly defined: to make artificial intelligence tangible and accessible.

Why Agile Event Management?

IBM demands the agile way of working with its agency partners. Especially the challenges working within the ever-changing nature of innovative technologies like Cognitive computing and IoT can only be implemented in an intensive dialogue driven setup. The introduction of Agile Event Management was certainly an important criterion for IBM to award the contract to VOK DAMS.

The event solution

The journey of clients from the airport to the meeting is already a special experience. The purpose-built autonomous shuttle to the center is an integral part of the journey, producing personalized data that will become part of the IoT Story just minutes after arrival. The data sculpture in the lobby provides an artistic impression of various types of live data processed by IBM's own Watson.

The most exciting part of the journey begins on the 20th floor. Visitors are greeted by 150 sensors from the shuttle. With a view over Munich, they get a sense of the ubiquity of sensors and data, the basis of every IoT application.

In the „Library,“ 168,000 book pages visualize the guest data, which was generated while driving from the airport to the Watson IoT Center. They show the enormous data volume, generated during only one minute of the journey, and make visible the diversity and speed of IoT.

CASES



IBM Watson IoT Experience Center

As part of the business meeting, the experience continues with a full-HD introduction to Watson IoT on the stunning 9x2m Triptychon. Finally, the guests gather around a projection table experiencing what can be done with the data collected. It showcases actual IBM client projects with innovative and interactive storytelling technologies that effortlessly combine physical, digital and human elements of storytelling. Following this in-depth introduction of IBM's offerings to Cognitive IoT, the table magically transforms into meeting mode and offers the opportunity to discuss custom topics.

The implementation of Agile Event Management

A full year was available from briefing until final execution of the experience.

The agile team consisted of Architects and Product Design, Creative Team, Project Steering, and a Technical Director. In monthly client workshops, the ideas and further procedures were jointly developed with the involvement of the en-

tire IBM project team. On the agency side, concept development was promoted in daily sessions with participants from the USA, London and Hamburg. Slack was the group communication tool of choice.

The result

Thanks to Agile Event Management, the client's expectations could be exceeded. An innovative solution for an innovative product was convincingly implemented. The cooperation of the international team went smoothly. The unanimous conclusion of the visitors: Business Meetings have never been staged in a more exciting and convincing setting.

CASES



BASF Creator Space™ Tour

The task

The multinational BASF celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015. Instead of an ostentatious anniversary celebration, BASF chose to use this historic occasion for a worldwide networked outlook into the future – together with its stakeholders. It was to become a global event concept with online, offline and live elements, inviting international experts from industry, academia and the relevant public to co-creation activities to address the most pressing challenges of the modern world. The worldwide tour with stops in Mumbai, Shanghai, New York, Sao Paulo, Barcelona and Ludwigshafen was to become a platform for renowned and creative, external experts and BASF.

Why Agile Event Management?

This project was characterized by an extremely long lead time (1.5 years) and a conversion period of about 1 year. A second challenge was the size and international orientation of the client and agency team. This time-based and complex challenge could only be solved through

agile working methods. Here, the motivation of all those involved had to be maintained over a long period of time. The participants had to turn the project into „their“ project.

The event solution

The Creator Space™ Tour was based on a modular setup to bring 6 different locations to life and provide functional flexibility for all formats: each part was used. Transport cases were used as event furniture, build entire rooms. Tour usability, weight savings and efficient use of space played a special role, so everything could be shipped without additional packaging material in a few shipping containers.

Thanks to the flexibility of the set-up, an average of 10 events in a variety of formats took place at each stop of the tour: a 2-day Summit, Idea Pitches, 24-hour „Creatathons“ and a diverse cultural program with local artists – from subject-specific, high technological solutions to entertaining, playful events – everything was represented.

CASES



BASF Creator Space™ tour

This made co-creation unique to all audiences, bringing everyone closer to the grand goal in an authentic and touching way: together, we can create a sustainable future. This resulted in a corporate communications campaign with authentic content.

The implementation of Agile Event Management

Due to the complexity of the project, all available Agile Event Management tools were used. The focus was on the use of a project board to divide the task into different tasks. The project board formed the basis for the clear presentation of the project. Another challenge was resource planning. Here Planning Poker – used to self-determine the workload in the team – provided immense help.

The result

Each local event was different with locally relevant content focus, but all events resulted in genuine and realistic solutions of local real-life challenges. Next to this, BASF also generated a large volume of PR coverage and an extensive amount of content to continue the co-creation of real life solutions long after the creator space global tour finished. BASF also interacted with press, clients, employees and the general public in a meaningful way, not only exchanging ideas but also learning as a company from the world around it.

GLOSSAR

Agile manifesto

A compact document defining agile values and agile principles

Agile principles

Describe the basic agile procedure

Agile values

Describe the basic approach of Agile Event Management

Backlog

Agile tool to use with sprints

Burn-Down-Chart

Shows the work status over a defined period

Daily Stand-up Meeting

Daily short (15 minutes) meeting of the team to coordinate the development of the project. Takes place standing up

Definition of Done

The agile team definition of when a task is considered done

Earned Value

In Earned Value diagrams the project costs are continuously compared to the completed tasks

Inkrement

Part of the agile development

Iteration

Phase in the project, during which a partial

Kanban

Agile method for process control

Planning Poker

A dynamic team valuation to estimate the most effective time spent

Product Owner

Role in agile teams. At VOK DAMS a distinction is made between the product owner on the client and agency side

Retrospektive

Review of the project to define process improvements for the future

Review

Reporting of the current work results

Scrum

Best known agile method

Scrum Master

In the agile team responsible for the process compliance

Sprint

Definition of a time phase required for the next sub goal

Stakeholder

Persons who are directly or indirectly affected by the project

Task Board

Visualization of the current project status

Timeboxing

Strict adherence to a given time frame

WIP-Limit

Limiting parallel tasks per single team member (work in progress limit)

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THE AUTHOR



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CEO VOK DAMS worldwide

Colja M. Dams has been managing partner of the VOK DAMS agency for events and live marketing since 1998. Since its foundation in 1971, the company has specialized in direct, experience- and result-oriented marketing communication.

The Economist – and keen amateur magician – graduated from the University of Witten / Herdecke, and early on recognized the significance of the internationalization of the industry, as well as the importance of proximity to clients and therefore developed networked strategies.

Thanks to his commitment, the Wuppertal event agency now has additional German locations in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt and Stuttgart, as well as branches in Brazil, France, the UK, the Czech Republic, Spain, the USA, China and Dubai.

With innovative approaches, he continues to set new standards in events and live marketing, which are constantly being developed by VOK DAMS Strategic Solutions in line with the trending market forces.