# LEADING FINANCIAL ASSET MANAGEMENT COMPANY BOOSTS TEAM MORALE AND INCREASES COLLABORATION USING SCRUM WITH KANBAN

April 2023

**Scrum.org**
*The Home of Scrum*

## CASE STUDY

### THE ORGANIZATION

The organization is a leading global financial asset management company focused on trust funds, global asset management, movement of funds, and pensions.

The organization is a leading global financial asset management company focused on trust funds, global asset management, movement of funds, and pensions.

## The Challenge

This financial asset management company was in the midst of a digital adoption of their Financial Services products and services. One of the teams was facing several challenges in delivering value every Sprint. The team identified themselves as a Scrum Team, but they were not actually practicing Scrum. This team was focused on improving the user experience for customers logging into their products and services and also improving forgotten password journeys for over 50 applications.

They had a team of 9 people, which included a Scrum Master, Product Owner, 5 Developers and 2 managers. Work was often pushed onto the team and they were constantly changing direction within the Sprint, increasing their Work in Progress (WIP) and rarely completing work to meet their Definition of Done. Several team members were scattered across at least two other teams, which led to increasing cycle times and constantly blocked WIP.

The Product Owner, who had no formal training, was constantly changing the scope of work to be completed every few days, increasing the time it took the team to deliver something of value. There was little prioritization of the Product Backlog, limited visibility and an unclear Definition of Done. The team was also lacking a process to identify and remove dependencies effectively. Additionally, it became very difficult to track the team's impact,

which caused stakeholder frustration and instability on when things were getting done.

## The Solution

### Getting started

They decided that there was some help needed to overcome these challenges and brought in Haroon Khalil, an Agile consultant to help them move forward. Khalil had seen great success using Scrum with Kanban and focusing on improving flow. He also had taken the Scrum.org Professional Scrum with Kanban (PSK) training with Professional Scrum Trainer (PST) David Spinks.

The organization structured the Scrum Team with a Product Owner, a Scrum Master and 5 Developers working closely as a collaborative unit, with the 2 managers providing support from outside the Scrum Team when needed. This move helped the Scrum Team to become more self-managing. The team self-managed to choose how they would work and if they had extra time, they could pull additional work from the Sprint Backlog. When they got started, they played the TWiG Kanban game to help the team better understand flow metrics as they slowly introduced Scrum with Kanban. They held Open Space sessions that allowed everyone to ask questions.

### Metrics

A few Sprints in, they started to use an aging WIP chart and other Kanban practices, as well as the use of ActionableAgile to better visualize Flow. They focused on trends for WIP stability, throughput, cycle times, blocker management and risk reviews, while using Scrum. They also tracked the different types of value, for instance, operational efficiency, customer and regulatory value. The team also incorporated DORA metrics. The four metrics used were deployment frequency (DF), lead time for changes (LT), mean time to recovery (MTTR), and change failure rate (CFR). Once a month, the Product Owner would share a report of the business value with the wider department and leadership teams in an effort to increase transparency and motivate the Scrum Team, while celebrating the success of delivering real value to customers and the wider organization.

The Scrum Team also had learning goals. Once every 3 months, the whole department would have an innovation day outside of their day job to experiment with new product and engineering practices. This resulted in tackling challenges related to: existing products and services, technical debt, automation, ways of working, rapid experimentation of new features, discovering and resolving bugs collectively, learning something new and sharing what they learned with the greater organization. The department would track these innovations/ experiments using a visual board for the day, celebrating their successes together with a department-wide 'Show and Tell' to further celebrate and encourage people to collaborate outside of their team.

## Utilizing the Scrum Events and other activities to bring the team together

They started to use Sprint Reviews to visualize their Product Roadmap. The business sponsor, other stakeholders and other Scrum Teams within the organization all attended Sprint Reviews. This helped the team to inspect and adapt the delivery of their work and focus their future Sprint work based on direct feedback.

For Sprint Retrospectives, the team was getting bored of just looking at their numbers. They switched things up by using different Liberating Structures, at times they would have members of the team facilitate. The team began to become more predictable as a result of focusing as a single unit with reduced disruption, empowered ways of working, they deliberately lowered their Sprint WIP and adopted an attitude to get work complete rather than starting a lot of work all at once.

Prior to this transition, the Daily Scrum always needed to be in the same space although not everyone was in person and often exceeded a 15 minute time box. Since this was a hybrid environment, people dialing in couldn't see who was talking as it was on a conference call line so they switched to it being all remote. This switch helped the meeting become

much more meaningful. It became a space to plan their activities for their day and ask for help with a focus on the Sprint Goal.

One challenge prior to this transition was that they had dedicated testers on the team. They moved away from this so that all of the Developers learned how to test. This made the team more cross-functional. Every couple of months they held what they called a "bug bash". They had people volunteer across the department come in and collaborate with the team to complete testing. This was the Developers' idea to improve quality and accelerate testing collectively, shifting the ownership of testing as a team sport rather than focusing on a particular person in the team to test all the work.

## Results

The team delivered their initial product release on time and achieved this by first creating stability in the team. They now increased transparency much better within the team and with people outside of the team by visualizing their work. They became a healthier, more focused and collaborative team. They reduced the stress across the team relieving burn out and reducing their burdens with collaboration. This Scrum Team became known as one of the highest performing teams in the organization. By implementing Professional Scrum with Kanban, they delivered within time constraints and became more predictable in their delivery rhythm.

Once they were practicing Scrum, the team's morale and ability to feel a sense of purpose improved. They had better collaboration and honored their working agreements as well as team policies. They tracked several categories of value. They received positive feedback from customers about the improved user experience. On a monthly basis they tracked the impact they had on the different types of business value. One of these measures included the uptake of users experiencing the new customer journey and the time taken to access their profiles when they forgot their log-in details or password. They also conducted a real-time survey to gather feedback and add relevant improvements based on this feedback.

Additionally, during the course of this effort the team's WIP went from 22 PBIs on any given day to 8. They improved their throughput by almost 30%, and their cycle times for completing PBIs reduced significantly within a few months; the overall time it took for them to complete PBIs decreased by 66%. Overall, the team moved from fixed deadlines to probabilistic forecasting, which provided a data-enriched and risk-based planning approach to sharing delivery dates that were flexible and meaningful for stakeholders to understand. This helped them plan with confidence and probability for when work would be done.

The team categorized their work into a variety of value types and visualized this as part of Sprint Reviews. They deliberately began focusing on what value targets would be part of their product roadmap. A large part of their focus was on user value. They measured user value by observing trends from A/B testing, reducing risk by targeting a 10% customer base and providing them access to the new customer journeys. They also assessed the impact of calls to the contact center. Overall, there was a positive impact for people accessing the new customer journeys.

## About Scrum.org

Scrum.org, the Home of Scrum, was founded by Scrum co-creator Ken Schwaber as a mission-based organization to help people and teams solve complex problems. We do this by enabling people to apply Professional Scrum through training courses, certifications and ongoing learning all based on a common competency model.

◆ ◆ ◆