An Agile Release Train in a Campus Solutions world

StAART - Student Administration Agile Release Train @ RMIT
Introduction

Who we are

Catherine Haugh
Senior Portfolio Manager - Release Train Engineer

Terence Le Grange
CS Team Lead - Iteration Manager

Claire Sanders
Lead Functional Analyst - Functional Chapter Lead

How we’re doing this

● Our presentation Kanban wall - we’ll track our progress and keep a backlog of questions to answer
● Time boxing - each section will run for 10 mins and then we’ll have 15 mins for questions
● Tweet your questions if you like – @rmitstaart
“This session will describe what has been learnt so far - trials and tribulations, managing the zealots, and making ceremonies work - with a non-technical introduction to the world of agile projects.”
Why did we need to change?

Imagine if you could increase productivity, eliminate waste, release value faster and increase staff engagement…..

@rwbrown: #Agile Irony: People who used to wait a year for the wrong thing now can't wait four weeks for the right one.
Agile in 60 seconds
What is a release train?

“A long-lived, self-organizing team-of-agile-teams that delivers solutions.”

“The purpose of the release train is aligning a group of teams to a common vision.”
What is SAFe?

We use a delivery framework called "Scaled Agile Framework" (SAFe).

SAFe is designed for organisations that have teams delivering work across multiple, interlinked projects.

- Kanban
- Lean
- Scrum
- Kaizen
- Servant leadership

Teams are at the heart of SAFe

This image is known as The Big Picture. It describes the structure of a SAFe working environment, from the grassroots level of squads doing technical delivery (Team level) up to the management of major projects across the organisation (Portfolio level).
Squadification

6 squads with a functional focus
1 system team with technical specialists
The system of the Release Train drives the train.

The Release Train Engineer leads and fosters a culture that enables the system to work:
- open
- building cross-skilled resourcing
- collaborative
- an end-result attitude
Release Train Cycle Timeline & Rituals

- Week prior…
  - PSI Planning Days

Program Increment - PI

- 12 week cycle

1st Iteration
2nd Iteration
3rd Iteration
4th Iteration
5th Iteration
6th Iteration (Hardening Innovation Planning (HIP))

- 2 wks
- 12 wks

After...
- Inspect & Adapt Workshop

- Cadence
- Synchronisation
- Conversation
- Capacity
- Velocity
- Fast feedback

- Continuous collaboration
- Visibility
- Transparency
- Shared understanding
Release Planning
Inspect and Adapt

Everyone was eager to start the job.

But what's missing from the picture?
Introduction

Defining the work

Alliance 2014 Kanban Wall

Agile & train intro

SAFe

Why change?

Squads

Release cycle

Introduction

Backlog

Architecture

Deployment

Environments

Tech foundation

Feature wall

Automated Testing

Bundles

Iteration cycle

Stories

Doing

Deployment

A day in the life

Tech foundation

Defining the work

Done

 INTRODUCTION

 Agile & train intro

 Squads

 Release cycle

 SAFe

 why change?
Defining the work

The release train is responsible for delivery

Benefits & Value

- Project or Work request

Delivery

- EPIC
  - FEATURE
    - STORY
    - STORY
  - FEATURE
    - STORY
    - STORY
  - FEATURE
    - STORY
    - STORY
  - FEATURE
    - STORY
    - STORY
Feature wall
Release Train Cycle Timeline & Rituals

Iteration Rituals

2 week cycle

Day 1...
- 9.15 - 10 am Iteration Kickoff
- 10 - 12 pm Squad Iteration Planning Sessions

Everyday...
- 9.15 - 9.30 am Squad Standups
- 9.30 - 9.45 am Scrum of Scrums Standup

Last day...
- 2 - 4 pm Iteration Showcase
- 4 - 5 pm Squad Retros
- 5 - 5.30 pm Retro Bubble up

Mid-Iteration - Backlog Refinement Planning
Iteration Kick-off

Day 1 of iteration..
Iteration Planning
A day in the life of a Squad

Everyday...

9.15 - 9.30 am Squad Standups

● Face to face
● Story progress
● Coordination
● Blocker resolution/escalation
As a Customer Service team member, I need Campus Solutions to stop me generating a request for an Academic Statement if the student has an NSI, so that I can efficiently serve students without having to check multiple pages.
Prior to StAART we would have written a long specification...
With StAART we have a conversation

We need this page to error under these conditions

Can we have different messages for the different reasons?

Sure, but we need variable data; where do I get that?

On this sub-page. It’s required data so you can rely on it.

Great! Let’s update the acceptance criteria, documentation and get back together for a desk-check later
Showcase

Last day of iteration...
Alliance 2014 Kanban Wall

Backlog:
- Deployment
- Environments
- Bundles
- Automated Testing

Doing:
- Tech Foundation
- Architecture

Done:
- Stories
- Iteration cycle
- Why change?
- Agile & train intro
- Squads
- Release cycle
- Defining the work
- SAFe
- Feature wall

A day in the life
- A day in the life
A stable foundation

- System team to manage platform
- Unix, DBA, PS Sys Admin
- We achieved a lot:
  - Storage
  - DR
  - Database Upgrade
  - OS Upgrade
  - Bundles 21-34 (and others!)
The challenges Oracle presents us
The challenges Oracle presents us
The challenges Oracle presents us
Continuous Development

- Allow multiple teams to develop despite challenges of bundles
- Retrofit often
- Release into PRD from FNL during go-live
Squad demands on environments

Before:
Many Solaris Zones
Days / weeks to provision

After:
Consolidation of zones
Hours to provision
Continuous Testing

Test automation remains a challenge

- We have a plan to automate:
  - BPT
  - PTF
  - SoapUI
  - etc
- On a daily / reqd. basis
Alliance 2014 Kanban Wall

- Introduction
- Alliance 2014
- Kanban Wall
- Agile & train intro
- SAFe
- Stories
- Tech foundation
- Iteration cycle
- Why change?
- A day in the life
- Feature wall
- Deployment
- Squads
- Architectures
- Environments
- Definition of work
- Bundles
- Release cycle
- Automated testing
- Feature wall
How work gets onto the train

- Current projects
- Work requests to enhance and support Student Administration systems

Program Increment (PI)
Pipeline & Demand Management

Prioritisation

Program Increment (PI) Planning Days

Program Increment (PI) Delivery

- User Business Value
- Time Criticality
- Risk
- Reduction/Opportunity Enablement Value
- Job/Batch Size

Continuous deployment

Cadence

Program Increment - PI

Iterations

1 2 3 4 5 6

2 wks 12 wks

More info
Lessons and challenges

What have we learnt?

● 2 week iterations work at scale
● Conversation is key

Challenges

● Shifting culture
● Being iterative in a fixed world e.g. funding
● Organisational disruption
● Business driven development
“High performance isn’t, ultimately, about running faster, throwing harder, or leaping farther. It’s about something much simpler: getting better at getting better.”

*from Better All the Time, by James Surowieke, in The New Yorker, November 10, 2014*
Questions?

From the backlog ...
From the floor...

Ask @rmitstaaart questions throughout HEUG!
Going Agile

Maddy McMaster

RMIT Academic Registrar - StAART Business Sponsor

Fri 7 November - 10.20 - 11.05

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Contact us

Catherine Haugh
Senior Portfolio Manager - Release Train Engineer
catherine.haugh@rmit.edu.au

Terence Le Grange
SAMS Team Lead - Iteration Manager
terence.legrange@rmit.edu.au

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Lead Functional Analyst - Functional Chapter Lead
claire.sanders@rmit.edu.au
About the conference
What is the HEUG?

The **Higher Education User Group (HEUG)** is an international organization consisting of Higher Education institutions that use application software from the Oracle Corporation.

The HEUG's objectives are:

- To provide a mechanism for sharing information and experience among Higher Education customers on selection, implementation and cost-effective use of Oracle application software.
- To provide a means by which the HEUG can speak with a common voice to Oracle on matters of common interests, thereby improving its members’ communication and influence regarding product expectations and recommendations for improvement in Oracle products used in Higher Education.
- To provide opportunities for communication between Oracle management, developers and business partners and the HEUG, in order to keep HEUG members informed as to product plans, new developments and directions, and other areas of concern.
What is the HEUG Alliance Downunder 2014?

The **Australian New Zealand Higher Education Users Group (HEUG) 2014 Alliance Down Under Conference** was held at the Gold Coast on November 5 - 7 2014.

The program catered for the interests of all aspects of the use of PeopleSoft and Oracle technologies in and was supported by key vendors. In addition to the main conference program, there was an Executive Forum and Academic Registrars' Forum held during the course of the conference. There were also pre-conference workshops held in the days leading up to the conference.

There were keynote speakers and presentations across five tracks: Technical, HR, Finance, Student and CRM.

RMIT uses the Oracle Campus Solutions student administration system.