



CTG Implements Agile SDLC for Independent Health

Driving Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Consistency

Client

The Independent Health Association (IHA) is a large payer organization based in Western New York. Established in 1980, IHA consistently rates among the top health plans in the U.S. for customer service and member satisfaction. IHA's offerings include HMO, POS, PPO, and EPO products; Medicare and Medicaid plans; traditional indemnity insurance; consumer-directed plans; coverage for self-funded employers; and health savings account and pharmacy benefit management services. The organization provides health benefits and services to nearly 400,000 total individuals.

Challenges

IHA was utilizing two distinct Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) methodologies—Agile Scrum and Waterfall—and wanted to merge them into one, hybrid SDLC process. Additionally, they wanted to identify a best practice approach that would allow them to align five critical SDLC aspects:

- **Work Prioritization:** Projects were being initiated in multiple areas within the client, each using different business value metrics for prioritization.
- **Estimation and Metrics:** A lack of consistent metrics and measurement processes across the organization made it difficult to effectively identify project completion dates, which was resulting in negative impacts to other committed dates and release schedules.
- **Resource Allocation:** Resources were assigned based on unreliable or inconsistent estimates and many times to multiple efforts, resulting in diminished focus and bottlenecks within development and testing.
- **Documentation:** Requirements documentation was inconsistent:

- Agile project work requirements were documented using user stories. User stories were many times too large and teams struggled with breaking them into incremental work pieces.
- Waterfall project work utilized Requirements Specification Documents (RSD). However, completion of the RSDs was inconsistent—some too lengthy, others high level and vague—resulting in difficulty in understanding true business needs.
- **Audits:** IHA had inconsistent audit control points, resulting in difficulty in meeting internal and external audits criteria. CTG's Solution

The CTG Solution

In order to consolidate and align the SDLC, a team of experienced CTG SDLC consultants worked with the IHA team members to:

- Establish a project steering committee, made up of their Chief Information Officer and many of his direct reports, to assist with project governance, decision making, and to support and drive change throughout the organization
- Conduct a comprehensive discovery assessment, including meetings with multiple IT and business teams to document current SDLC processes and procedures and with internal auditors to validate the control points necessary to meet both audit and Control Objectives for Information and Related Technology (COBIT) standards
- Compare validated SDLC methodologies against industry best practices and identify potential deficiencies and areas for improvement
- Create detailed documentation of the recommendations for the proposed hybrid SDLC, including process flows, swim lanes, and user training presentations

- Organize and facilitate the process to identify which recommendations to implement with senior leadership and IT associates
- Implement a Project Kanban that included Work in Process (WIP) limits to control the amount of work committed to at one time and Definition of Done (DoD) criteria for each work queue that defined when a project was approved as complete by all stakeholders
- Break down larger projects into more manageable “features,” allowing work to be completed on larger projects in a more consistent and incremental way
- Provide enterprise-wide strategic direction, coaching, and support during the implementation of changes in order to foster adoption of the new hybrid methodology and processes

Results

CTG’s healthcare industry knowledge, technical strength, and the project team’s strong collaboration with IHA leadership and IT and business teams from across the organization resulted in the transition to a more efficient and consistent project development lifecycle that addressed the challenges presented at the onset of the project and resulted in:

- Improved workload prioritization and resource allocation
- Created consistent audit standards, allowing the organization to meet the expectations of both internal and external auditors
- Improved project deliverables, adherence to stated project timelines, and accuracy of release management and planning
- Shortened project timelines due to improved customer feedback channels and a more efficient SDLC process overall

IN THEIR WORDS...

“We brought in CTG to help transition our project development lifecycle to a more efficient model that meets our audit/control requirements. Our organization completed a large four-year implementation program that utilized Agile/Scrum methods and we wanted to keep the successful components of that. We also needed to incorporate the rest of the organization’s projects which ran in variations of Waterfall and Agile. We were also implementing a partially-outsourced model for development.

CTG’s consultant gathered the requirements of our stakeholders and recommended large changes and some tweaks to processes that met those requirements. He has an ability to work with all levels of management and associates to ensure goals were met and objections were addressed. He worked with internal auditors to document/validate processes and incorporated practices from several internal development organizations. The SDLC that was produced covered enough detail to satisfy best practice requirements and was flexible enough to satisfy development groups using disparate tools. He held trainings and delivered to various stakeholders with top-notch communication.”
 – Director, Information Technology



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