



# 3 Day Playback

<Consultant Name> @ interim.team

13-15th January 201X

Version - Redacted

# Executive Summary

- This analysis is the result of interviews and interactions with <client name> team members between January 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 201X.
- In my opinion, the issues facing <client name> are not atypical of a company in the midst of “Digital” and “Agile” transformations, and my first impression that <client name> is a fantastic company with a great business model, team, and culture. (As an aside it might help to swap one Scrum team with one “business” team and mix “IT” and “The Business” up though).
- The <client name> IT Team is technically strong, motivated, empowered and in <client CTO> has a talented leader with high potential.
- In terms of people it is suggested that two ladders of advancement are created for the team (technology and leadership), people are formally appointed as Guild Heads, a Dev Ops person is hired, the key performers are locked into the team, the underperformer is managed “up or out”, communication is improved via the suggested mechanisms, <client CTO> “boils” the leadership frog, the scrum masters step up and provide more team leadership and the effectiveness of the Product Team is improved.
- In terms of technology is it recommended that the single points of failure are removed from the infrastructure, security is more front and centre in the team, database use, structure and platform is overhauled and a blueprint for a more horizontally scalable architecture is created and worked towards.
- Overall the IT team appears to have a good culture and more than its fair share of talented people. There are significant indicators to be optimistic that after some work and investment the team is more than capable of stepping up further and playing an even greater role in driving company growth and success.

# Evolving the Team Structure

- It is recommended that two ladders of advancement (Technology and Leadership) are created formally and presented to the team. The team need to feel that increased responsibility and remuneration are possible within the company without taking on line management responsibilities.
- People on the Technical ladder could also be appointed as Guild Heads (e.g. Dev Ops).
- The current team members should be mapped into these structures thereby creating a manageable direct report team size for <client CTO> that includes all the managers of people and Guild Heads.
- Modern flexible working practices such as planned home working should be adopted wherever possible to improve talent acquisition and retention.

<b>Technical Ladder</b>	<b>Leadership Ladder</b>
CTO	CIO
Architect	Head Of
Senior Technologist	Manager
Technologist	Lead

# Evolving Team Leadership and Communication

- IT Team morale is currently high, with all of the IT team members saying that they were happy here at the moment. All of the IT team members said that they would recommend working at <client name> to a friend. It would be interesting to track this “NPS” of 100 going forwards.
- Both scrum teams may benefit from a rebalancing of the personality types in the teams.
- All the IT team members were asked who our stars were, and who (if anyone) was struggling. Awarding one star for a positive mention, and deducting one star for a negative mention, produces the “Star Chart” in Appendix 2.
- Person 1, Person 2, Person 3 and Person 4 are obviously extremely well regarded by the IT Team as a whole and should be considered “key” people. They need to be locked in to the company and ideally this “lock in” would include substantial option grants vesting over four years. Conversely Person 14 does not have the confidence of the team and should be put on a performance plan resulting in an exit if necessary.
- Inter-team communication needs to be improved and a suggested rhythm is;
  - ❑ <client CTO>’s DR meeting (weekly).
  - ❑ <client CTO>’s Ramblings Email (weekly). A weekly email saying “One Thing I Did This Week”, “What Made Me Laugh This Week”, “Biz Stat of the Week”, “What I Learnt This Week” and so on (very much with an informal tone).
  - ❑ Team All Hands (monthly) - Forum to present and discuss high level strategy/business big picture.

# Evolving The Infrastructure

- The “database” is a single point of failure and slowing down software development. It is imperative that this constraint is removed ASAP and definitely within 201X.
- A blueprint of a more horizontally scalable and loosely coupled architecture needs to be created and evolved towards very much with the goal of successful implementation by the end of 201X.
- The key to scaling is *Automation*. In order to scale at the sort of rates described in the business plan all tools and process will need to be automated. Investment will be necessary to do this but without it growth very quickly gets constrained. All QA, build, deployment, monitoring, alerting and so on needs to be automated to the fullest extent possible.

A suggested sequence of events to address the database issues are;

- ❑ Bring in a MySQL performance expert to rationalise and optimise the application queries.
- ❑ Redesign the database schema. Optimise table, view and index structure given the application characteristics.
- ❑ Archive off stale data.
- ❑ Replatform the database system to something more resilient, scalable and performant such as Amazon RDS.

# Evolving The Product Function

- Although suffering from being at the interface between teams on different points of the Digital and Agile maturity curves the Product Team is not doing enough to protect the developer's time.
- Every minute a developer spends not writing software is sub-optimal and the Product Team need to help protect the developers from unnecessary meetings such as “refinement”.
- The Product Team needs to have the bandwidth and capability to translate desired business impact into the necessary and sufficient artifacts that developers can use to create working software.
- Overall business success may be enhanced by the hiring of an accomplished and experienced Head of Product.
- Given the business impact an increase in the activation % or the supporters per cause metrics would deliver it may be ROI positive to spin up two mission teams solely focussed on these KPIs. Mission Teams are like Scrum Teams only they exist to solve one simple mission/business problem. The team creates and executes its' own solutions to solve its' business problem.

# Top Twenty Key Recommendations

1. Database use, structure, efficiency, performance and platform needs to be overhauled.
2. The single points of failure need to be removed from the infrastructure.
3. A blueprint for a more horizontally scalable architecture needs to be created and worked towards.
4. At least one scrum team needs to be swapped with one “Business” team mixing “IT” and “The Business” up physically in the office.
5. The personality types in the two scrum teams should be rebalanced.
6. Two ladders of advancement for the team - Technology and Leadership need to be created.
7. People from the Technology ladder should be appointed as Guild Heads.
8. A Dev Ops/Sys Admin person needs to be hired.
9. All *company* (not just Dev) key performers need to be locked in - options are by far the most cost-effective way of doing this.
10. The Tech underperformer needs to be managed “up or out”.
11. Tech communication should be enhanced via the suggested mechanisms.
12. <client CTO> needs to “boil the the leadership frog” and gradually increase the overall leadership and direction in the team (without them noticing).
13. “Architectural” guidance need to be improved in the Tech Team.
14. The scrum masters need to step up, take more accountability, and provide more team leadership.
15. The effectiveness of the Product Team needs to be improved. They need to protect the developers from unproductive work more.
16. Security needs to come more more front and centre in the team. It is too easily neglected.
17. Modern flexible working practices enhance recruitment and retention and should be advocated.
18. The company should look to mature away from being quite so “personality” driven and leverage objective data more.
19. I would deploy two Mission Teams against A and B Per C..I sense you’re leaving money on the table at the moment.
20. <client CTO> should talk to the team members who said that they were struggling a little.

# The Three Silver Bullets of Scalability

➤ Agile

➤ Accountability

➤ Automation

# Conclusion

Overall <client name> is well led, in a good place, and is set fair to take advantage of its' huge business opportunity.

There are personal and team tensions due to people being on different points on the Agile and Digital journeys - but they are all resolvable.

I've made some specific suggestions in this report that I think would help overall execution.

As "friend of <client name>" I very much wish the company well and will look for any opportunity to help the company in the future.

# Appendix 1: 1:1 Questions

1. Are you enjoying it here at the moment?
2. What are our key responsibilities as a team do you think?
3. As a team, what do we do well do you think?
4. What do we need to get better at?
5. Who are our stars?
6. Does anyone in the team need help to be more successful?
7. How could we get more customer outcome focussed?
8. How could we move faster?
9. Would you recommend working here to a friend?
10. What three things would you do if you were CTO?
11. Anything else we should talk about?

# Appendix 2: Stars

People	Upvotes - Downvotes
Person 1	+10
Person 2	+7
Person 3	+4
Person 4	+2
Person 5	+2
Person 6	+2
Person 7	+1
Person 8	+1
Person 9	+1
Person 10	+1
Person 11	+1
Person 12	
Person 13	
Person 14	
Person 15	
Person 16	
Person 17	
Person 18	-2