

Offshore Agile Maintenance - eXperience report

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- Project background
- Challenges with distributed/offshore team
- My observations
- The Holy Grail
- Small things that made a big difference
- Lessons for life
- Improvements on my future projects

- EAI project for back office data validation and billing system for a pay-per-view cable company in New York
- 2 years later, lack of funds to maintain the app
- Decision to offshore the project
- Ended up with one year maintenance contract.

- Decrease in communication bandwidth
- Lack of visibility into project status
- Configuration management
- Art of Command and Control structure
- Time difference
- Cultural difference

My observations

- Lack of trust
- Loss of context, both business and technical
- Delay in feedback cycle due to increase in distance and time difference
- Duplication of efforts
- Change is inevitable

- Planning game – 2 week iterations, story cards, Iteration Planning Meetings
- Small releases – 2 to 3 months
- Refactoring
- Pair Programming
- Collective code ownership
- Continuous integration/Automated Release
- Test Driven Development
- Standup meetings
- Coding standards

- Onsite Client
- Metaphor
- Simple Design
- 100% Automated testing
- 40 hour week / sustainable pace

General practices:

- Empowered small teams
- Freedom to try new things
- Fun work place with lots of outings, parties, ice-creams, food, etc

To address lack of trust:

- Results matter
- Life is more than just a pay cheque
- Building a personal rapport
- Brand ambassadors and cross pollination

To address delayed feedback cycles:

- Retrospectives
- Involve the customer
 - Daily client driven demo on Dev env
 - EOD Status mail
- Seamless collaboration between Developers and QA
- 100% Automation
- Refactoring fests
- Realistic measures of progress

To address loss of context of business/technical problems and decisions:

- Involve the customer
 - IM Chats
 - Regular Conference call
 - Demos and functional walk thru by Client
- Acceptance tests
- Brand ambassadors and cross pollination
- Pairing
- SCube sessions

Structure and execution of the project

- Planning
- During the iteration
- End of iteration
- Release process
- Big win!

How did we manage with lack of tests and documentation?

- Unit and functional tests
- QA Automation
- Red light goes on to say its time to begin
- Log files and other artifacts are your friends
- Positive feedback cycle: Refactoring

Automation is your friend till **THE END**

- Installation process
- Release process
- Configuration management
- Database change management
- Functional tests

- Heavy focus on automated tests and refactoring.
- Exchange programs
- Good roll-off plans for the team members.
- Scratch your personal itch day.

- **Decrease in communication bandwidth**
 - Communicate, communicate and over communicate
- **Lack of visibility into project status**
 - Correct and timely feedback
 - Open and honest work culture
- **Configuration management**
 - It's the tool, that differentiate Humans from the rest
- **Art of Command and Control structure**
 - Self organized team of motivated individuals
- **Cultural difference**
 - Is it a problem? Was fun!

- **Distributed Agile Development and the Death of Distance**
<http://www.thoughtworks.com/press-releases/Distributed-Agile-Development-and-the-Death-of-Distance.html>
- **Case Study: Distributed Agile Development**
http://www.pivolis.com/pdf/Distributed_Agile_V1.0.pdf
- **Distributed Agile**
<http://www.agilealliance.com/articles/steindlchristophdistr/file>
- **Using an Agile Software Process with Offshore Development**
<http://www.martinfowler.com/articles/agileOffshore.html>
- **C2 Wiki**
 - <http://c2.com/cgi/wiki>