



Case Study

Agile Transformation Significantly Improves Productivity for a Global Financial Giant

Key Highlights



Goal to achieve **35%** improvement in overall productivity



Support Platform Modernization through Agile operating model



3000+ members trained in role-based Agile practices



Accelerated solution delivery by transitioning to a capability-based model



Background

The client is one of the world's largest banking organizations with an asset base of \$2.4 trillion, a vast network of 4,600 branches spread across six continents, and a massive workforce of over 220,000 employees. Altimetrik's scope of engagement was within a major business unit of the bank consisting of multiple lines of business with approximately 11,000 technology team members.

Faced with recurring delays and infrequent releases, the Client had concerns about the Business Unit's ability to keep up with the rapidly changing market trends and meet customer expectation. Altimetrik was enlisted to assist in the transition of the Business Unit from traditional Waterfall to an Agile way of working, implementing a scaled operating model to achieve improved business outcomes.

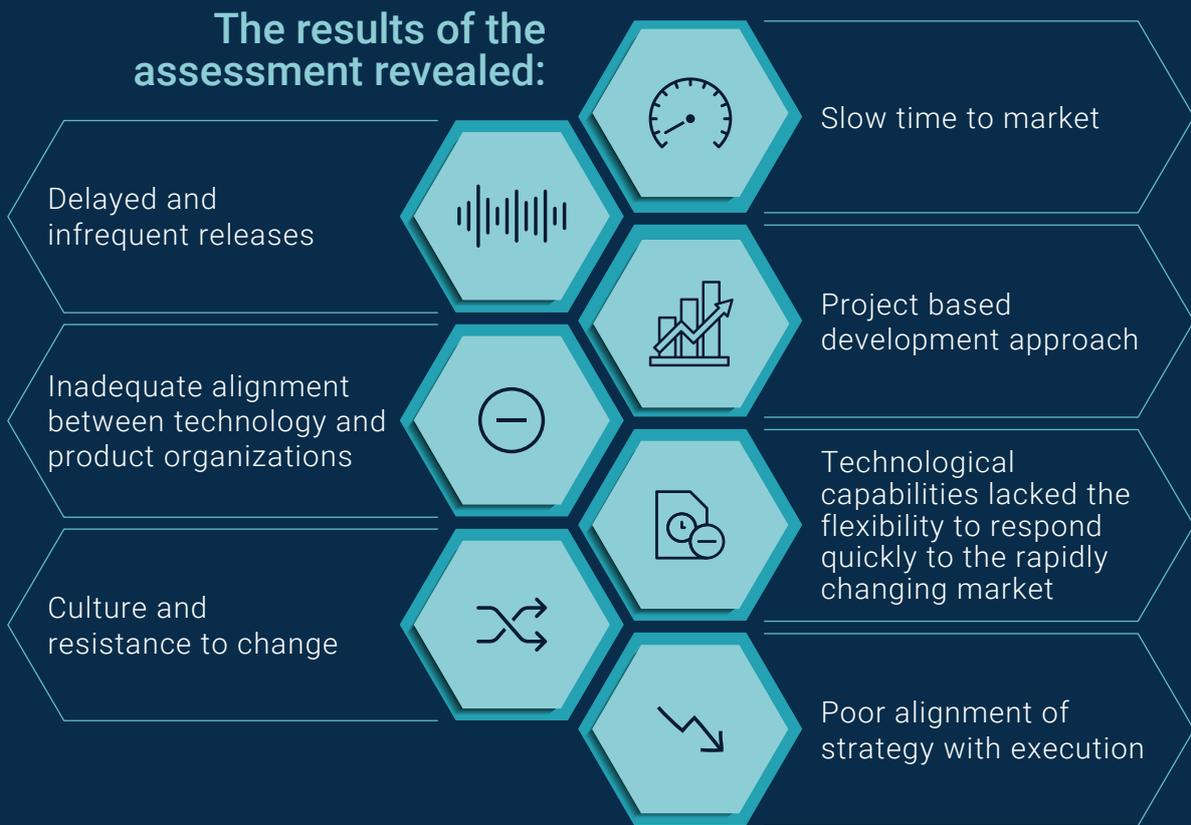
While Altimetrik is engaged with the client for a larger technology modernization effort, this case study delves into the specifics of the Agile transformation – the challenges, solutions, and how the entire transformation helped to achieve better outcomes.

Assessment

Altimetrik's Digital Business Methodology principally begins with a thorough assessment of the organization's current state. Our Agile Practice rolled out this assessment covering multiple areas, including the engineering teams, product teams, business operations, third-party vendors, capability areas, and interactions with the leadership.

The goal was to gain insights into existing practices, processes, and capabilities, allowing the team to project a future state and conduct a gap analysis aligned with the transformation objectives. By understanding the organization's strengths and areas for improvement, the initiative aimed to optimize Agile adoption and enhance overall effectiveness in delivering solutions to customers.

Assessment Observations



The Agile Implementation Strategy

The Agile Transformation was executed in 3 waves to achieve two main objectives: The first objective being to organize teams around value and capabilities while the second was to shift from project-based delivery to product delivery.

WAVE 1

Silos were broken down and cross-functional teams were established to adopt Agile practices.

WAVE 2

Value streams and capabilities were mapped; cross functional teams were organized as Teams of Teams (Agile Release Train) and a new scaled agile operating model implemented to drive delivery of product value. This model is currently being scaled across the organization.

WAVE 3

Scaling Agility to the portfolio.





The following key practices were adopted for product mindset development to enhance customer satisfaction

Transitioning from projects to customer needs: Shifting focus from project-based delivery to understanding and addressing customer needs and preferences

Prioritizing value delivery: Ensuring that product development efforts align with delivering maximum value to customers and the organization

Encouraging end-to-end ownership by cross-functional teams: Empowering cross-functional teams to take ownership of the entire product development lifecycle, from concept to delivery and support

Embracing iterative development: Adopting iterative and incremental development cycles, where products are continuously improved based on feedback and learning from each iteration

Aligning with business goals: Aligning product development initiatives with the broader strategic goals and objectives of the organization

Enabling business and technical agility through fit for purpose tools: Designed and implemented a new instance of Jira (aligned to the Scaled Agile Framework) to act as the single source of truth across Product, Operations and Technology domains to facilitate execution of Portfolio, Product and Solution artefacts and workflows.

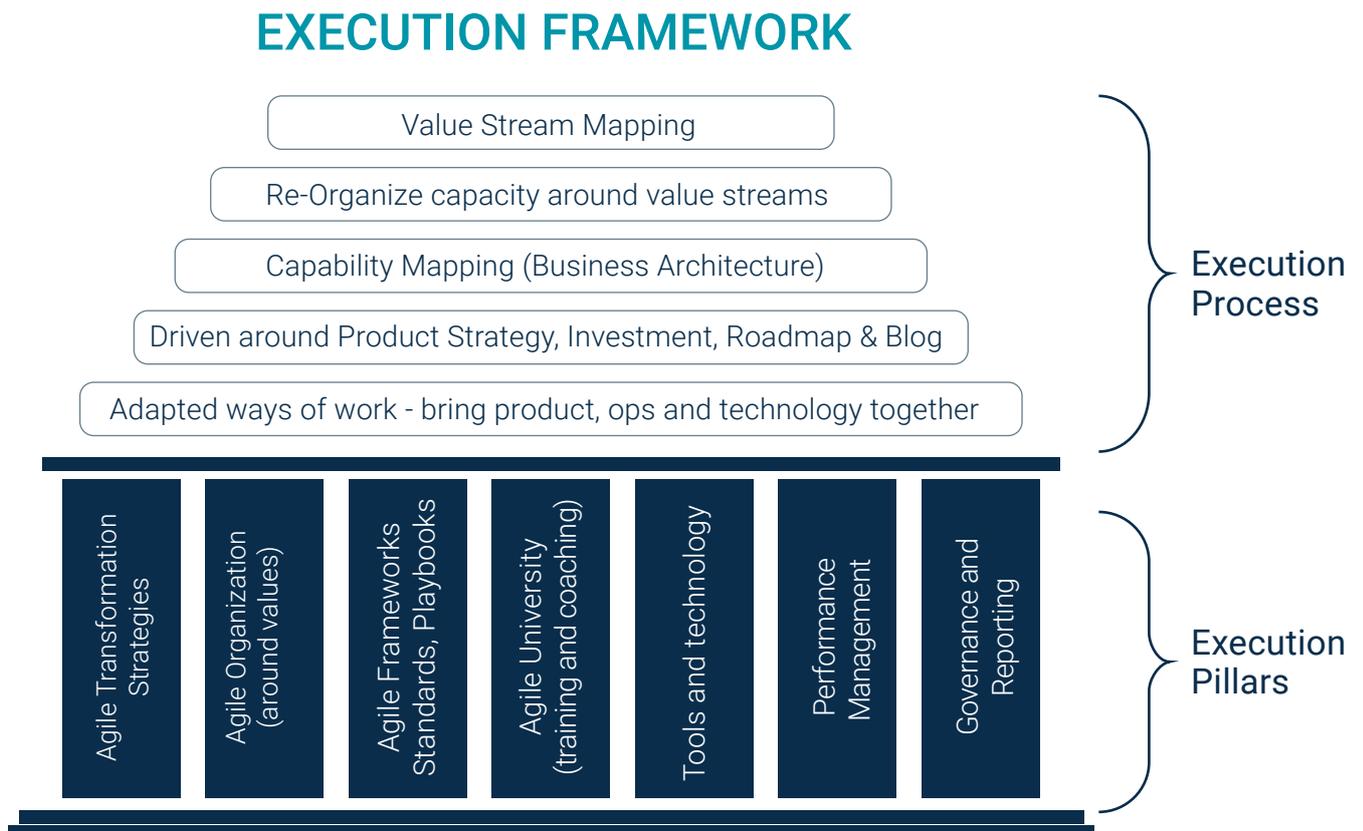
Promoting continuous learning: Cultivating a learning culture where teams regularly reflect on their work, gather insights from customer interactions, and use data-driven approaches to make informed product decisions

Agile Structures

Given its history as a long-standing financial institution, the bank has hierarchical, siloed structures that can be challenged when faced with the demands of expedited delivery. Breaking the siloes was a critical success factor to enabling faster, more efficient delivery of value to the customer.

As part of this exercise, cross-functional teams were organized into Agile Release Trains (ART), focused on product and business capability to support Agile practices of flexibility, collaboration, and adaptability. Dedicated roles across Product and Technology were assigned to each Agile Release Train to ensure effectiveness throughout the entire solution development lifecycle (from Product Ideation through to Solution Delivery) with new roles, such as Release Train Engineer being adopted to facilitate agile operations across the teams.

Each Agile team was structured to ensure cross-functional representation (development, testing, UX design) with a dedicated product owner and scrum master.



This framework aims to promote efficiency, collaboration and successful adoption of Agile principles throughout the organization

The Execution Process

Implementation of the Scaled Agile operating model was focused on:

Value Stream and Business Capability Mapping: Understanding of the business architecture modelled around business capabilities served as the foundation for identifying and evaluating the entire value stream with business and technology architects working together with the product team.

Re-organizing Capacity around Value Stream/Business Capabilities: Organizing teams and resources around business capability, rather than traditional functional silos fosters collaboration and efficiency in delivering value to customers.

Roles and Responsibilities: Assessing and mapping the skills, expertise, and capabilities of teams and individuals to ensure they align with the needs of the Agile transformation and newly established Agile Release Trains.

Driven around Product Strategy, Investment, Roadmaps, and Backlog: Aligning the Agile execution with the overall product strategy and investment decisions ensured that the Agile initiatives are in line with the organization's strategic objectives and priorities.

Adapted Way of Working: Facilitating seamless collaboration between Product, Operations, and Technology to enable end-to-end ownership and accountability, leading to better product development and delivery processes.

The Scaled Agile Framework was initially rolled out as a pilot within one Line of Business, where 20 Agile Release Trains, comprising average 6-7 teams were established, trained, coached, and launched in a highly accelerated timeline.

On the back of the success and learnings of the pilot, the Agile Transformation Roadmap includes future implementation of the Scaled Agile framework across all other Lines of Business in a phased and sequenced fashion through the remainder of 2023 and 2024.



Key Challenges Faced Thus Far

Leadership Buy In: In wave 1 of the Agile Transformation, leadership buy in across the Lines of Business was sporadic which stalled efforts to standardize Agile operations and evolve from team level model. This changed dramatically with the launch of wave 2 and the start of the pilot. Leadership played a driving role, with vested interest in the timeline, outcome, and success of the pilot. This shift was the most significant success factor.

Resistance to Change Due to Strong Organizational Culture: The strong organizational culture contributed to resistance to changing the ways of work, which initially was a major barrier to success. However, with the shift in leadership buy-in ahead of wave 2, it became easier to drive scaled Agile adoption.

Large Number of ARTs Launched as Pilot: The large number of Agile Release Trains (ARTs) launched as pilot posed some challenges in terms of coordination, alignment, and managing resources effectively during the early stages of the transformation. The aggressive timeline with a massive shift in the ways of work was also challenging.

Dependency Management: Managing dependencies between various teams, projects, and initiatives in an Agile environment can be complex, and failure to address this challenge may lead to delays or inefficiencies. There were several dependencies to manage, particularly across Product, Operations and Technology as well as third party vendor dependencies.

Capability Mapping: Identifying and mapping the skills and competencies needed for Agile transformation and guaranteeing that teams and Agile Release Trains have the essential expertise was a significant challenge. Again, with the shift in leadership buy-in ahead of wave 2, this became an easier hurdle to cross.

Shared Services Management: In a large organization like this, managing shared services in an Agile setup requires careful coordination and communication to ensure smooth operations and collaboration. Some of the key shared service areas are infrastructure to support the launch of the ART, appropriate environment, engineering excellence, DevOps practices, SRE and operations. These shared services were all outside of the Agile teams, and it was a challenging exercise to bring them all on board with the Agile way of working as part of a unified Agile process.

Third-Party Vendor Alignment: Aligning third-party vendors with Agile principles and practices posed challenges in terms of communication, integration, and collaboration. The third-party vendors were also on a different delivery cadence and the alignment in terms of planning and delivery with internal teams.

Outcomes Delivered

Having a sizeable number of Agile Coaches to provide the necessary assistance helped to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with too many teams for the pilot.

Adopting an effective change management strategy also contributed significantly to the success achieved. The effectiveness of the change was that over 3000 team members were trained in Agile methodologies, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Agile Release Train Launch: Successfully launched 20 Agile Release Trains (ARTs), each comprising multiple Agile teams working in sync to deliver value. Currently rolling out scaled Agile framework to the remaining ARTs across the Lines of Business.

Business and Technology Partnership – Over the course of the Agile transformation, the collaboration between business and technology progressed from operating in silos to aligning for better outcomes. Presently, there is a partnership between technology and business as they jointly drive the transformation.

Productivity Improvement Goal: The goal set to achieve a 35% improvement in productivity through agile practices and efficiency is underway and although productivity improvements have been recognized, there is still work to be done across Wave 2 and 3 to achieve this goal.

These results demonstrate the success and positive impact of Agile transformation, showcasing its commitment to enhancing customer experiences, optimizing operations, and driving value-driven innovation throughout the organization.

About Altimetrik

Altimetrik is a pure-play digital business company unlocking growth and opportunity with speed, scale, and consistency. We focus on delivering business outcomes with an agile, product-oriented approach. Our digital business methodology provides a blueprint to develop, scale, and launch new products to market faster. Our team of 5,500+ practitioners with software, data, and cloud engineering skills helps create a culture of innovation and agility that optimizes team performance, modernizes technology, and builds new business models. As a strategic partner and catalyst, Altimetrik quickly delivers results without disruption to the business.