

Agile Processes

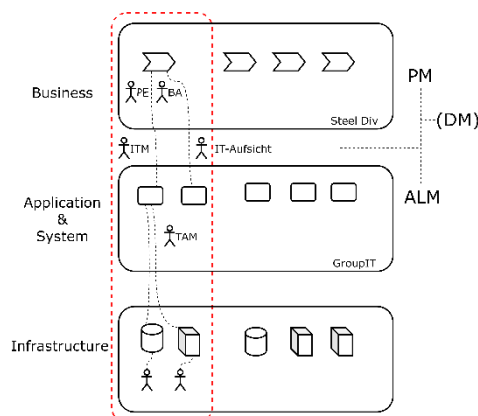
Management Paper

Problem description

As an Austrian industrial company which produces steel products in various forms, the voestalpine group is divided into several divisions. In addition to the main divisions, there is a further subsidiary company called voestalpine group-IT, which functions as a group intern IT service distributor.

The majority of the IT processes of the Steel Division rely on a non-agile structure which leaves room for improvement in generating fast results. Therefore, it can take a long time from an initial request to the production of results. Furthermore, most of these processes have a scope beyond the Steel Division. This is due to the fact that Application Lifecycle Management spans over multiple IT departments, some of which are located outside the Steel Division. The processes, which support the ALM, should be redesigned into an agile structure. Currently, processes are not strongly structured by services or products. However, after the transformation into an agile structure, the processes should be designed around products which are not evaluated and defined yet.

Research question and objectives



How should an organizational structure be conceptualized in order to create an agile business process environment within the Application Lifecycle Management concerning a mature and complex industrial enterprise?

The Goal therefore is to deliver an agile organizational structure and if possible, define a product which the processes focus at. Beside the definition of the new introduced roles in the new structure an assignment of current roles to them is required. Furthermore, the success factors need to be evaluated and stated which are critical with the proposed structure.

Methodology:

Analyzing the existing structure and roles:

In order to choose possible frameworks from which structure can be extracted from the existing structure and environment had to be analyzed. By making use of the given documents about existing roles, processes, and cultures of the company and more inputs in form of meetings and conversation the problem got clearer. With that a rough selection of in question frameworks and structures was possible.

Researching possible agile process frameworks:

To get a comprehensive view of the literature the eight most popular frameworks connected to agility were chosen and investigated in detail. Discovering their specialties and the most critical requirements of each framework, gave a good overview.

Developing and fitting a suitable structure:

To be able to fit one of the frameworks and structures to the voestalpine Steel Division more

detailed information was necessary. To gather this information an interview guideline was created and the five interviews with the most important roles of the current structure helped to recognize which frameworks and processes are fitting best to the needs of the company.

Results:

By combining the knowledge of the literature about Product Teams with the information gained throughout the interviews a structure of a Product Team fitted to the voestalpine Steel Division was created. The roles of the Product team (in Red) are mainly responsible for the projects which all have a prioritized Backlog (in Blue). One major requirement of this structure is that the two roles “Product Owner” and “Team Lead” have to work closely together because they determine and prioritize the subprojects for optimal efficiency. Certain projects cannot be handled agilely and therefore it was not possible to fit an all-agile structure which anyways should not be the goal.

A Product is a piece of software or a module of a software that can be developed and maintained by a team of people largely independently of other software projects. Since different software systems are in productive use in the voestalpine Steel Division, it was not possible to split the information infrastructure into Products.

Furthermore, we strongly recommend interpreting agility more as a way of thinking about communication, rather than trying to aim for more iterative steps that don't meet the high criticality often stated. As the concept of regular communication seems already well integrated this should clearly be maintained and could even be raised further. In addition, our proposal should imply the need for a simple and clear structure, as seen in all agile frameworks we analyzed and should allow for better focus and less distraction. During the development of a suitable structure, some difficulties in resource allocation in the current decision-making structure were indicated in the interviews. In agile environment this is handled by clear structures and communication groups that work on that question.

