ULINE

ADOPTING AGILE FOR THE ENTERPRISE

Pursuing Operational Excellence at ULINE

Taha Suglatwala & Tim Zorich

Introductions

- Taha Suglatwala
  - 20+ years in Software Development
  - 17 years at Uline
  - Oversee E-commerce and Business Intelligence
  - MBA (Kellogg) and MS in Comp Sci (Buffalo)

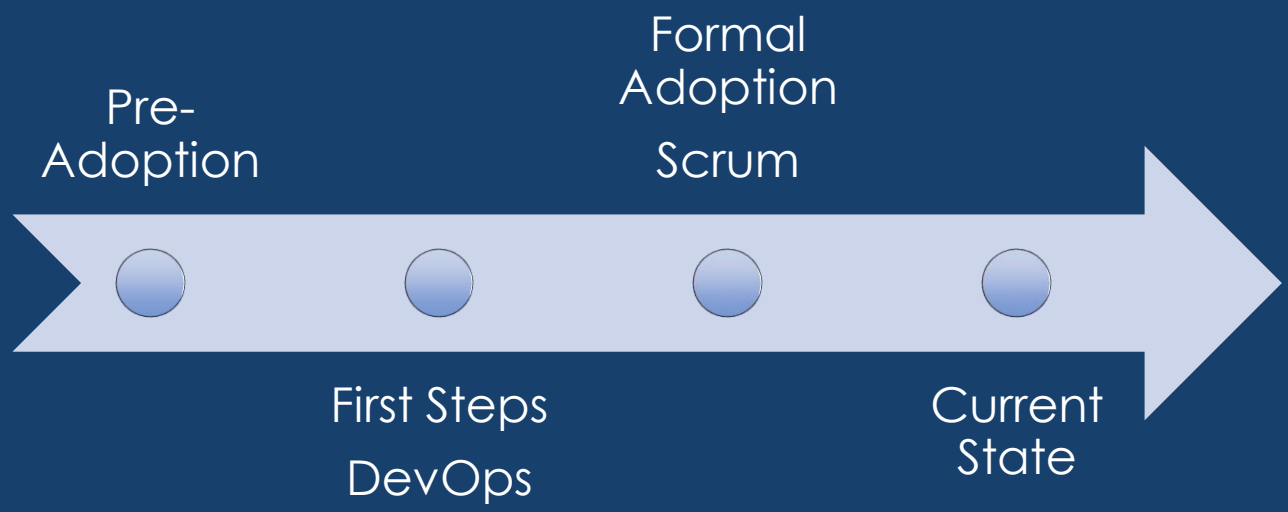
- Tim Zorich
  - 20+ years in software development
  - 9 years at Uline
  - Focus on e-commerce, devops and agile software development practices

ULINE

- Leading Distributor of shipping supplies, industrial supplies, packaging materials in North America
- E-Commerce and Catalog company
- 800 person IT Shop based in WI/IL
- Heavy custom software development focus

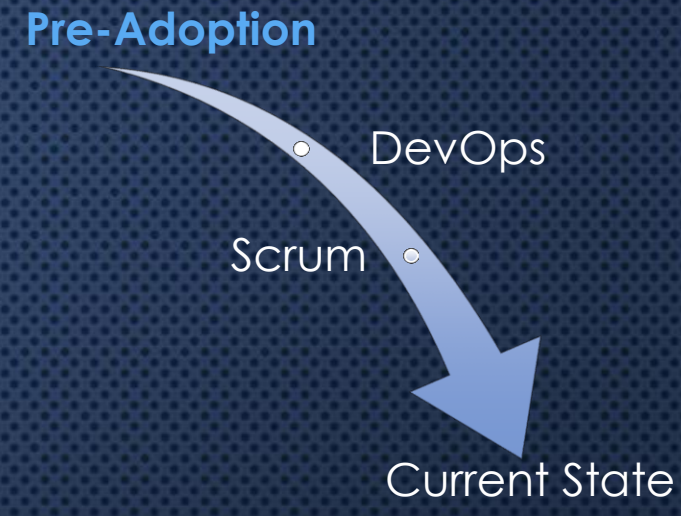
ULINE

AGILE ADOPTION TIMELINE

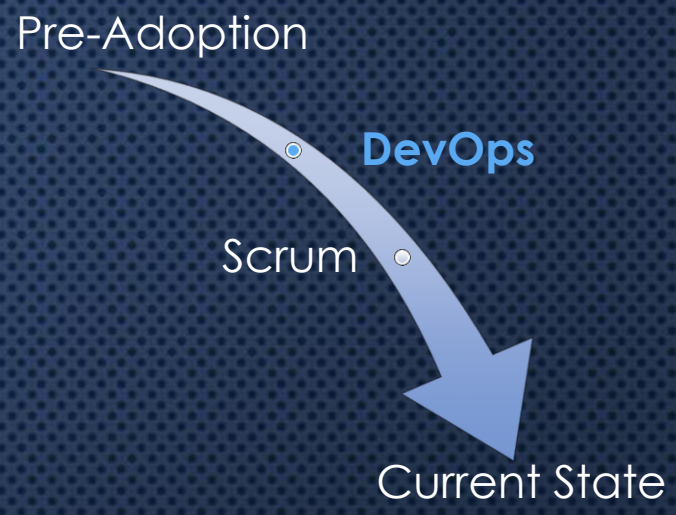


PRE-ADOPTION

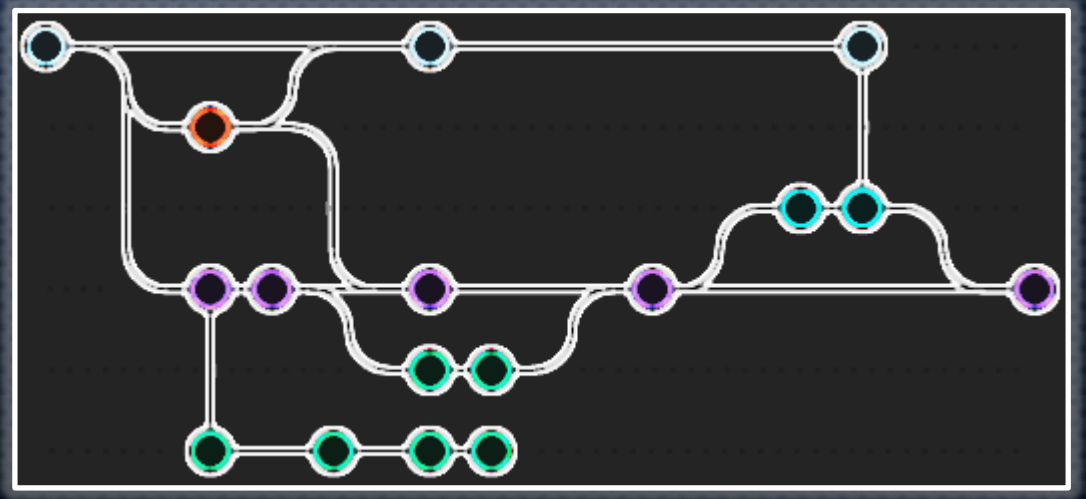
- Small Team of Experts
- Individual, siloed work streams
- Managers assigned most work
- Simpler to quantify who is doing what
- Priorities well-understood by only a few individuals



First Steps – DevOps

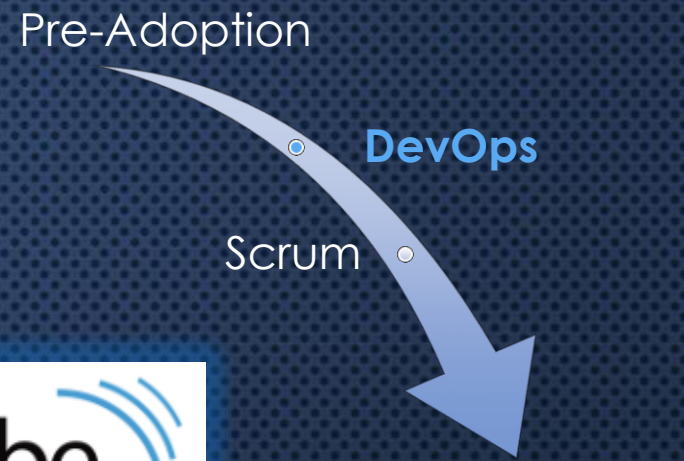


- Focus first on operational improvements within the team
  - Requires less buy-in
- Adopt a modern branching strategy
  - GitFlow
  - All parts of the process should feel "routine"
- Break down monolithic code
  - Versioning



FIRST STEPS – DEVOPS

- Better Quality Gates in the process
  - Pull Request Reviews
  - Code Coverage / Code Quality
  - QA Signoff
- Dedicated specialists to build/release process
  - Allowed development teams to focus on development
  - Team also handled other operational work
- Feature Flag adoption



sonarqube

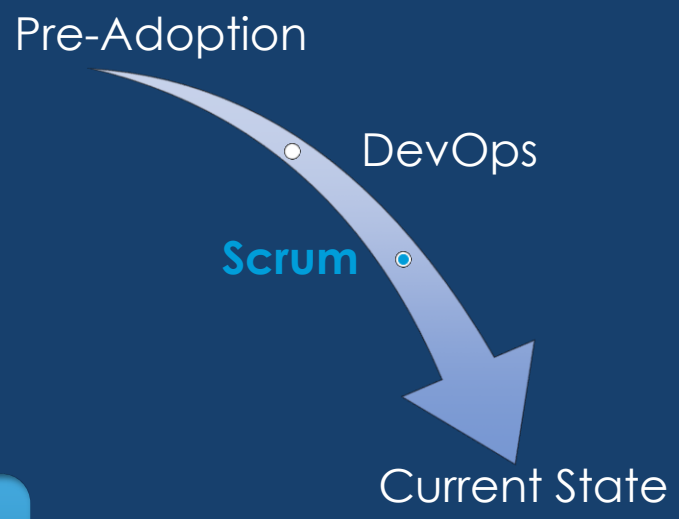
git

JFrog

Azure DevOps

LaunchDarkly

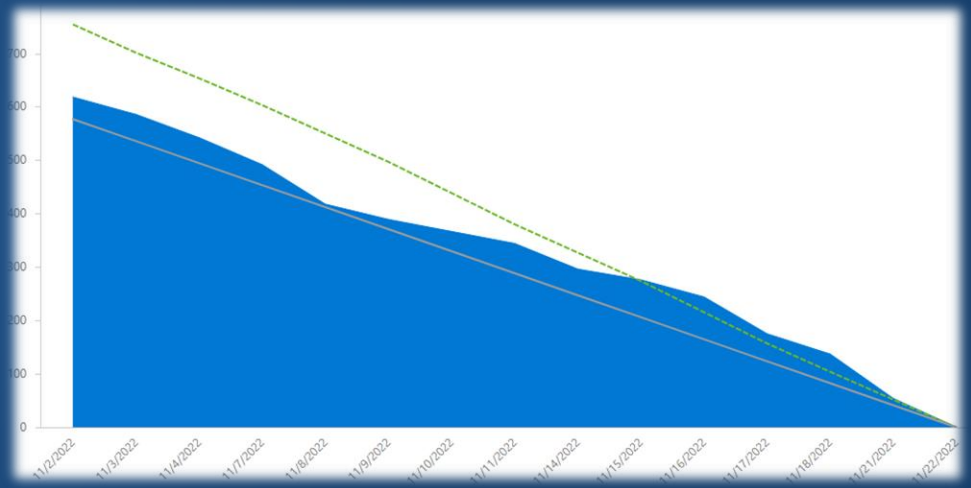
FORMAL ADOPTION: SCRUM



- Business buy-in
- Smaller Teams
- Scrum Masters
- Selling Points…

SELLING POINT #1 VISIBILITY

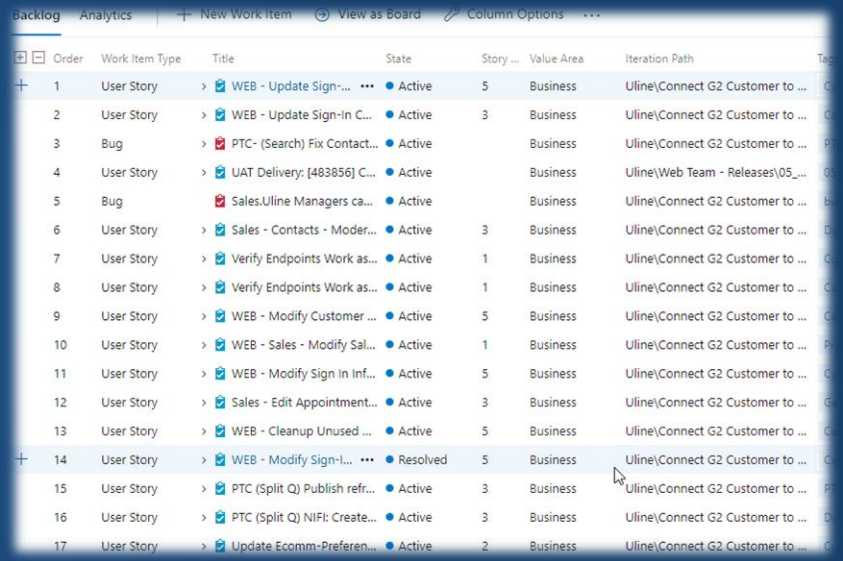
- Sprint backlog
- Burn down charts



- Challenge: Harder to quantify individual accomplishments

SELLING POINT #2 PRODUCT OWNERSHIP

- PRODUCT OWNER IN FULL CONTROL
- ALL STAKEHOLDERS CAN SEE THE PRODUCT BACKLOG



Order	Work Item Type	Title	State	Story ...	Value Area	Iteration Path
1	User Story	WEB - Update Sign-...	Active	5	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
2	User Story	WEB - Update Sign-In C...	Active	3	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
3	Bug	PTC- (Search) Fix Contact...	Active		Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
4	User Story	UAT Delivery: [483856] C...	Active		Business	Uline\Web Team - Releases\05_...
5	Bug	Sales.Uline Managers ca...	Active		Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
6	User Story	Sales - Contacts - Moder...	Active	3	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
7	User Story	Verify Endpoints Work as...	Active	1	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
8	User Story	Verify Endpoints Work as...	Active	1	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
9	User Story	WEB - Modify Customer ...	Active	5	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
10	User Story	WEB - Sales - Modify Sal...	Active	1	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
11	User Story	WEB - Modify Sign In Inf...	Active	5	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
12	User Story	Sales - Edit Appointment...	Active	3	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
13	User Story	WEB - Cleanup Unused ...	Active	5	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
14	User Story	WEB - Modify Sign-I...	Resolved	5	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
15	User Story	PTC (Split Q) Publish refr...	Active	3	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
16	User Story	PTC (Split Q) NIFI: Create...	Active	3	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...
17	User Story	Update Ecomm-Preferen...	Active	2	Business	Uline\Connect G2 Customer to ...

- CHALLENGE: ACCOUNTING FOR TECH-DEBT

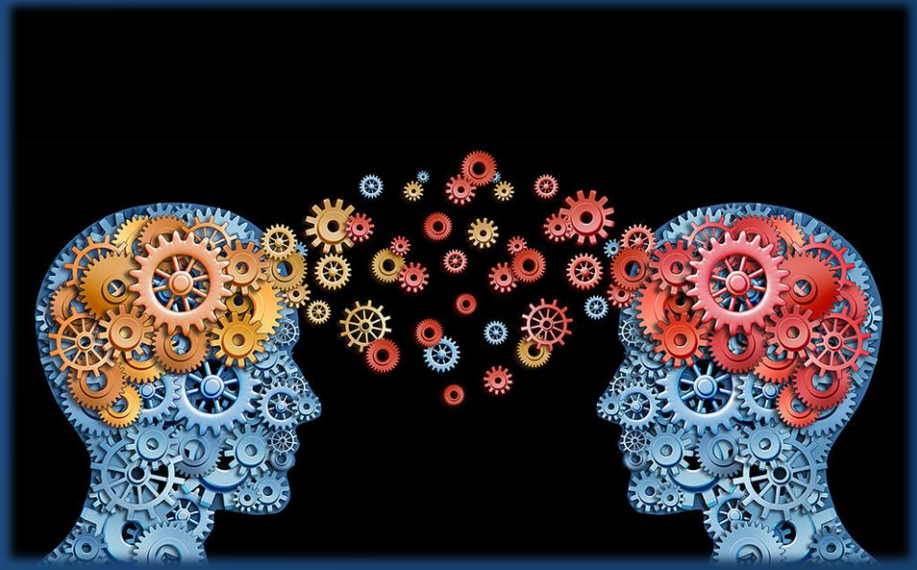
SELLING POINT #3 TEAM OWNERSHIP OF TASKS

- Allow teams to be accountable to each other.
- Self organization – empower the team to determine the best way to accomplish their work.

- Challenge: Big shift for organizations who value a centralized decision-making process

Selling Point #4 Knowledge Sharing

- Eliminate "pockets" of knowledge.
- Support new team members
- Help ensure junior developers get support to grow their skills.



- Challenge: Feels less productive at times
  - Pair programming
  - Buy-in is important

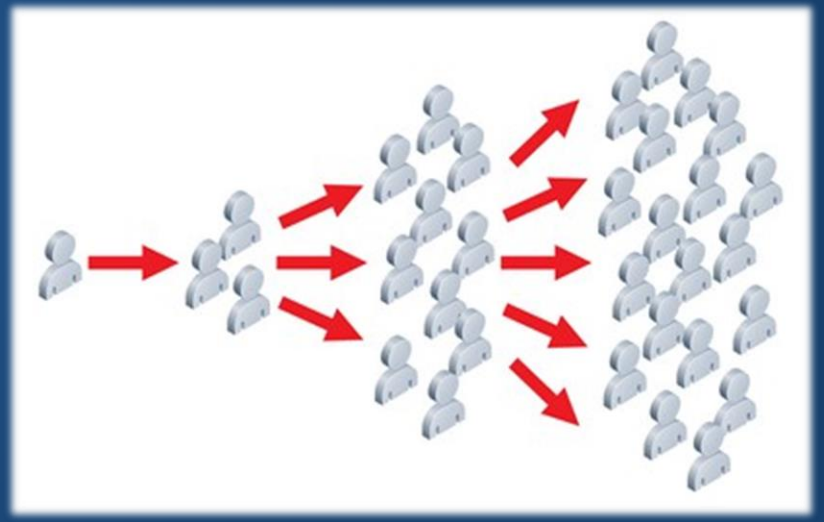
SELLING POINT #5 ACCOUNTABILITY

- Allows each team to commit to tasks over a two-week period.
- Allows teams to "fail fast" and improve the process.

- Challenge: Requires all parties to honor sprint boundaries.

SELLING POINT #6 SCALABILITY

- Original process did not scale well.
- Balances manager/lead to developer ratios better.



- Challenge: Coordination across teams can be difficult.

Where we are today

- Currently 7 Scrum Teams focusing on shared code bases
- Two full-time scrum masters that operate across the teams
- BA/QA teams are scrum team members

RECAP – TOP THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

HAVE AN AGILE MINDSET

BALANCE SCRUM PRINCIPLES WITH ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

MANAGE CHANGE AND BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK

FOCUS ON HIGHEST IMPACT ITEMS

THANK YOU