

Case Study

MOBILE APP LAUNCH

SYNOPSIS

A multiple mobile app development effort for a large US organization was in jeopardy after a year of development and six rejected releases candidates.

Find out how 1Focus got our Client to a release in 45 days and a stable release schedule.



CUSTOMER BACKGROUND

Our Client is a highly successful, \$12B a year North American organization that has a history that goes back 132 years. They have robust leadership, capable technology teams across multiple business and technical disciplines, and close partnerships with several proficient national and global technology solutions partner. This was their first foray into mobile app development.

SITUATION

Our Client's executive leadership defined a new strategic initiative for increasing customer and partner engagement across multiple business lines via mobile applications. For example, enabling scheduling of services and sharing service outcomes between our Client's service providers and their customers. An experienced solutions partner was selected to work with our Client's internal technology and business teams to develop this new suite of mobile applications.



Project At Risk

A year later, our Client was struggling with releasing these mobile apps. Together with their technology partner, they had been in development for 12 months. Six additional months had gone by with six release candidates that were each rejected for technical reasons. They were at risk of missing a seventh. What had started out as an innovative effort was causing no small amount of heartburn and risking confidence in their leaders, teams, and partner. The project was also very much over budget.



SOLUTION

1Focus pitched our people-centered approach around our technology prowess and process maturity acumen. We agreed to a very specific scope and deployment roadmap. Collaboratively, we would bring focus on increasing functional collaboration across divisions, leaders & teams while maturing key processes and software development capabilities. This would in turn result in repeatable, dependable, successful releases. Our Client decided to move forward with 1Focus on our 3+3 product.



3+3 Creates a Sense of Urgency

Within two weeks of landing our team, we presented an initial set of findings where we identified 3 specific keystones that would be significant levers for immediate improvements for their people, process & technology capabilities. Our insight, candor, and firm commitment to stick to our 3+3 plan and scope established a high level of trust & respect with our executive sponsors across functional areas.

TECHNOLOGY

On the technology front, we uncovered inconsistent approaches to standards and architecture, even within the same teams. By relentlessly focusing on root cause, we traced these gaps back to a single, non-technical cause. Namely, the teams had stopped communicating with each other largely because they were so locked into a cycle of focusing on release. Engineering discipline was shredding apart. Our Client was stuck in a viscous, self-perpetuating cycle.

Through a process of incremental habit change, reframing mindsets and implementing best practice processes & automation, we were able to successfully bring the teams back into alignment over a period of two weeks. By breaking old cycles and teaching new capabilities, the technology teams were in closer alignment with each other, and the business units they served, and were able to focus on what was needed, and not get stuck on guessing what was wanted, when, and how.

PROCESS

On the process front, our Client was accustomed to Waterfall development cycles and was struggling with consistently applying more modern, Agile, processes consistently across their teams and their technology partners. In fact, one of the friction points was due to their partner using one iteration of Agile, some Client teams using another and the rest on Waterfall. This created significant breakdowns in



communication. Executive leadership was focused on results and were trusting their leaders to drive contributors to achieve those results. Contributors felt that their leaders and sponsors were not understanding the need to transform to Agile. This was a case where the all the distributed teams and leaders were not communicating effectively – each of them was seeing only a piece of the puzzle.

As we insist on safe and thoroughly candid conversations, we were able to foster the creation of an environment where all parties brought themselves into alignment. In effect, this fire put itself out. This was not a case where an all-out change exercise was called for – rather, it was about harmonizing processes through better communications and process mapping to ensure change *could* occur at a pace that was appropriate and cost effective while yielding results – especially as work could not stop on these products.

PEOPLE

On the people front - leaders and teams had been in crunch mode for months and, as is to be expected, communication broke down and technology teams became disengaged from their customers. As this continued, more assumptions were made leading to perceptions not based on facts.



Renewed Collaboration Between Teams

By driving to root cause this issue and, again, ensuring we were having safe, candid conversations, both business and technology rapidly brought themselves into alignment after re-establishing connections. Relationships that had been shredded were mended. The focus shifted to a negotiated, agreed on list of features divided between must-haves and nice-to-haves. It was gratifying, and rewarding, to see how the initial momentum we imparted yielded high value conversations. These led to a restoration of trust, stronger relationships and clear alignment. We had agreement on necessary objectives that led to that first, then subsequent, releases. Our Client was on a sustainable transformed and renewed path.



OUTCOME

In each case, we drove a tandem path. Focusing on root causes of people, process and technology issues and teaching, showing, and doing alongside leaders and contributors. In imparting our momentum, our Client, like all of our clients, quickly latched onto this new modality and was able to increase their velocity, going from peak to peak and showing measurable ability to deal with dips and surprises.

45 days in from the start of our relationship, our Client soft-launched the first version of their mobile app to great celebration and fanfare. They proceeded to release three incremental versions over the next six months, building confidence and demonstrating the necessary capability to make this repeatable. Each release also brought incremental foundational changes, such as refactoring architectural limitations. We were also able to address new enhanced security requirements required by their industry. These additional capabilities were a bonus to implementing our methods and product.

While we addressed technical & architectural challenges and implemented a process maturity path, we were also addressing cultural debt that had accrued at our Client. Combined with tools and processes, leaders at every level, and contributors, felt heard, engaged and empowered to execute and deliver and *not stuck in a perpetual crunch mode and fear cycle*. As proud as we were of our ability to rally the team and hone their energy, we were just as proud of restoring personal and professional relationships across our Client that had eroded.



A successful mobile app launch!

As anticipated and reinforced by academic research and experience, the happier workspace yielded many additional benefits. A keystone benefit was our Client's new ability to collaborate across functional teams and divisions on this project – and laying out a framework for how future efforts would proceed.

METRICS

Each failed release cost our Client approximately \$1M USD in labor, lost productivity, opportunity cost & impact to the organization. Given their trajectory, we saved our Client at least \$3M USD – allowing them to redeploy those savings into productive outcomes. Our follow-up post-mortem did call out a few areas for our Client to be watchful for falling back on bad habits and encouraged them to continue to maintain



radical candor and extreme ownership with themselves, first and foremost, and their peers. We were encouraged by our Client's responsiveness as they continued to use our methodology & products more consistently across teams. Subsequently, our Client's delivery went from zero success rate to an 85% success rate over the next 12 months.

Our Client indicated they were interested in 1Focus' methods & product on other projects that had been dealing with similar failure rates. A memorable quote was when one of their chief executive's asked us to take on one of those. He stated he needed us to continue to teach our approaches and use our product across different business units, especially given the results we had demonstrated – normalizing teams and empowering them with new capabilities. He especially called out our consistent ability to have transparent conversations with all stakeholders. This is a key side benefit to our 3+3 approach & product.

CONCLUSION

This is just one example of the success our customers have using our product. We are sure there is a familiar project where our product would pay dividends at your company, addressing process and technology challenges, with people, your people, firmly at the center of any effort.

We look forward to honest conversations about how 1Focus can create a similar success story in your organization.

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