

Agile in Healthcare: a Case Study

DENTAL CHAIN

PresiDent

Moscow, Russia



www.prezi-dent.ru



+7 (495) 120-01-20



Company Description



27 branches

> 400 doctors and other specialists

Agile has grown beyond IT and is now being successfully applied in marketing, sales management, logistics, corporate governance, yet healthcare has been standing behind other financial sectors. Even though medicine has always been deemed commercially viable, it is still benched when it comes to applying new technologies and business-tools, making bold personnel decisions, or starting innovative marketing activities. Marina Alex and the SWAY team took the risk of starting the first Agile transformation in a healthcare company.

Dental chain "PreziDent" is among the largest dental groups in Moscow, Russia. The chain has 27 branches and employs over 400 doctors and other specialists.

The worst performing clinic in the chain was chosen as a pilot.

Agile Transformation: the Beginning

Initially, the company management asked Marina and her team to conduct a three-day Agile training workshop. Marina worked with top management of the chain as well as branch managers. After the workshop, the company tried to implement Agile on their own, but the attempt was not successful. As a result, the company turned to Marina for further assistance.

The branch that demonstrated the worst financial performance was chosen to be a pilot project.



The goal was to show that application of Agile methodology and SWAY techniques can not only boost sales but also increase employee engagement.

The measures of the transformation effectiveness included financial performance, the number of patients, the number of referrals, and so on.

Agile Transformation: the Process



The first step of the Agile transformation deals with building SWAY teams, choosing a **SWAY Coach** as well as the **Business Owner**. Three cross-functional teams were created out of 35 employees of the branch. Interestingly enough, one of the teams included the chief dentist and security guards, while the other one featured an assistant doctor and a janitor. Regardless of their status, the employees were grouped based on the shifts they usually shared during their working hours, so each team consisted of the people who interacted with one another on a regular basis.

Each of the teams chose a SWAY Coach who oversaw all the processes within the team. The role of the Business Owner was assumed by the Director of the dental chain. The Business Owner was responsible for the overall vision of the process, targeting, and prioritizing tasks in response to the feedback received from clients.

Each team worked within *Sprints*. Likewise, each team had regular 15-minute *Dailies*, *Demos* where the team was to demonstrate the results of their work to employees of other branches, and *Retrospective sessions* where the in-depth analysis of the weekly work was taking place.

3 cross-functional teams

35 associates

Agile Transformation: the Goals

The teams identified the following goals:

- boosting financial performance (100% as opposed to the 43% performance demonstrated by the branch at the beginning of the transformation);
- increasing the number of new patients;
- increasing the number of referrals;
- launching the operating room;
- creating a marketing division;
- instill the culture that celebrates values important to the clients;
- developing leadership philosophy and mentoring.



Boosting financial performance **100%** instead of **43%**

Instill the culture that celebrates values important to the clients

In addition, Marina and the SWAY team were faced with the global task of promoting Agile values in the whole chain.



Marina Alex:

«Because the chain is so big and the transformation happening in one branch was so important, it was crucial for us to come up with the solution that would allow all employees to have access to the transformation process. That is why a decision was made to install cameras in negotiating rooms where the pilot teams had their meetings. Thus, all events were recorded and then broadcast to the members of the closed group the employees created on Facebook. This way, every branch had the access to these educational videos. In a way, we launched a real PR-campaign to introduce Agile to every employee of the clinic. It was a true adventure!».



We launched a true PR campaign to introduce Agile to every employee of the clinic

It was a true adventure!

Agile Transformation: Challenges & Solutions



Despite the positive attitude top management of the clinic demonstrated towards Agile transformation, several difficulties had to be addressed.

First of all, there was no leadership culture in the company. It turned out that there was not a single person in the clinic who was ready to lead the others. None of the eight managers was willing to shoulder that kind of responsibility.

Further, three months after the beginning of the Agile transformation, the process stalled: the employees were uncertain about their further steps. The people seemed to have cooled off, and the performance indicators decreased as well - the sales plan was fulfilled by mere 40%. The teams blamed it all on Agile methodology thinking that meetings, discussions, and analyses had taken a huge chunk of their work time. The lack of motivation and overall negativity stirred up not just at the pilot branch, but at the whole chain. It was quite difficult to keep the faith and move forward: the old system proved to be unworkable, the new system has not been established yet, and performance numbers kept decreasing.

It took the intervention of the dental chain owner (who was an avid Agile believer) to change the mood in the team. The owner turned out to be a true leader who quickly managed to take the process to the next level. Only then did the Agile transformation work to its fullest, resulting in the change of the way the whole clinic operated.

As a result of applying the Agile principles and SWAY techniques, the pilot clinic changed beyond recognition. By the end of the accounting period, the plan performance of the clinic equaled 105%. This was the record not only for the branch but also for the whole chain.

The plan performance
of the clinic equaled **105%**

Agile Transformation: Results. Before and After

An open line of communication was successfully established among all the employees. This partially resulted from teaming up people regardless of their position within the company: this way, it was possible to get rid of managerial titles and overcome the hierarchy. In fact, only one person was "in charge" - the Business Owner whose role was assumed by the director of the clinic. Now the director did not impose the way the clinic was to fulfill the plan - he worked towards creating values.

The commitment displayed by the employees increased significantly. Once the people realized they are capable of impacting the company's performance directly, their engagement in the work process doubled.

A security guard has started welcoming patients and inquiring about their health and mood, whereas before he appeared uninterested. Now: smiling and joking, he helps the patients to their seats.

Before, the doctors at the clinic did not communicate much with each other. More experienced doctors who enjoyed a wide patient stream did not fancy sharing their knowledge while the young doctors were too shy to ask for advice. Everyone worked by themselves and for themselves. Besides, there was a certain caste system in the clinic: medical assistants and even younger doctors were looked down upon. Patients always know if there is no mutual respect between a doctor and an assistant as the quality of treatment tends to suffer as well. Now: Agile transformation served as a wake-up call for the employees: stereotypes were dissolved and client-oriented values were formed. Doctors saw the significance of teamwork and its impact on quality of service as well as patients' mood! For example, the doctors started to call patients directly (as opposed to referring that task to the receptionists). As a result, the clients started recommending the clinic to their friends and acquaintances.

Open communication line

Knowledge sharing system in place

The pilot team initiated a knowledge-sharing system. Before, specialists who had participated in the scientific conferences or attended professional development courses would keep the acquired information and experience to themselves; yet now the doctors share the valuable material with the colleagues.

260 improvements

The total number of improvements achieved by the pilot clinic during the whole project period amounted to 260. As a result, the branch has become the core of the chain. The overall achievements made by the branch, including financial performance, drew the attention of other branches: the employees of the whole chain ended up visiting the pilot branch in order to learn about Agile tools and SWAY techniques and work accordingly.