

Product Camp SoCal 2011

Driving Towards Success—Turning Around a
Poor Performing Development Team

Kelly Stephen

October 15, 2011

Agenda

- Introductions
- Symptoms
- Causes
- Impacts
- Remediation
- Review
- Questions

Introductions

- Who am I?
 - A career of leading product organizations building mission critical software products
 - Responsible for all aspects of product, from strategy and vision through construction, implementation, and technical support
 - Building products for global distribution and use
 - Leading global product teams
 - Variety of industries & variety of company sizes
 - Turn-around expert for failing organizations
- Who are you?

Symptoms

- Lack of product vision/strategy
- Poor portfolio synergy
- Unmet customer expectations
- Cost overruns
- Scope creep
- Incomplete release content
- Missing/incomplete requirements
- Late delivery
- Poor quality
- Poor communication on status
- General lack of execution

Case Study #1

- \$100 million software company
- My first week (February)—senior management strategy meeting
- Issue #1: Notified that “final” build of next release delivered to QA without key functionality
- Issue #2: VP of Product Management presentation: next major release to be delivered in September

What's the real problem here?

Causes

- Poor leadership
- Lack of direction
- Poor communication
- Lack of project management
- Resource over-allocation
- Time squeeze
- Process issues
- Poor technical skills
- Poor tools
- Poor estimating skills

Causes

- Customer needs
- Unrealistic expectations
- Late/incomplete requirements & specs
- Scope creep
- No customers sign-off process
- Too much focus on non-critical items

Case Study #2

- \$200 million software company
- 18 month “bet the company” new software product
 - Took 2.5 years
- New tools, platform, methodology
- But it was a success!
 - \$5 million product grew to \$125 million
 - Company went public based on this product
 - Changed the industry and the playing field against our competition

How is that possible?

Impact

- Irritated customers
- Customer attrition
- Missed revenue opportunity
- Decreased opportunity
- Missed opportunity
- Rework
- Inefficiency & waste
- Competitor growth and success

Impact

This is serious!

***The product TEAM is the
manufacturing engine for a
software company.***

If you fail, the company fails!

Case Study #3

- Small start-up company—very lean
- Initial focus on re-engineering company's core platform product
 - Very successful
- Then focused on adding new functionality
- Business development *needed* new products
 - Partnered with offshore team to build prototypes
 - Prototypes rolled out to customers
- Company floundered after that

Lack of overall strategy is very dangerous!

Remediation

- Focus on the fundamentals:
 - Project management
 - Technical skills
 - Communication
 - SDLC
 - Personnel
 - Communication
 - Focus
 - Leadership

But keep in mind: you don't own these resources

Remediation

- Do your job
- Get involved with the development team
- Ask how you can help
- Talk to your customers
- Communicate!
- Clear the air
- Define who is on *your* team
- Demand execution
 - From everyone, including yourself!

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What would your development team say about *you*?
 - Have you asked them?
- Are you doing everything you need to do to make the team successful?
 - Are you the solution or part of the problem?
- Have you sat down with customers?
- What does your product strategy look like?
 - Is it a product strategy, or a portfolio strategy?
- Who are your teammates?

Review

- Product Management and Product Engineering are a team
 - They cannot succeed alone
 - There can be no “us vs. them”
 - Winning requires you to work together
- Hold everyone accountable
- Make everyone responsible
- Stay focused
- Execute
- Have some fun and build some great products!

KELLY STEPHEN CONSULTING, LLC



KELLY STEPHEN CONSULTING, LLC

Thank You!

Enjoy the rest of

Product Camp SoCal!

www.kellystephenconsulting.com

