

# Scrum in Sales

## *How to improve account management and sales processes*

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### **Summary**

In the fall of 2010 the iSense sales and account management teams adopted Scrum for their sales processes. In this presentation, one of the sales managers will share his experiences by presenting the processes, lessons learned and main achievements, of using Scrum in sales. The most stringent effect of using Scrum in sales was the insight that the direct cause and effect for closing a sales deal, can be detected and as such controlled. Through the usage of Scrum, the sales teams learned that there are early indicators that have a direct relation with final sales results. As such, it becomes easier to predict final order intake and sales numbers. When early indicators, such as the number of visitors to customer events, or number of vacancies, is below the known boundaries, it is clear that sales numbers will drop several months later. Before using Scrum, everyone in sales shared a common agreement that sales is a random process which is ultimately impossible to control. After all, the customer decides to buy and not sales. Now, the sales teams learned that they have early predictive indicators that help them to control their final outputs. Furthermore, they have their processes much better under control, they improve them continuously and they simply have more fun in their work.

### **1. Introduction and overall contents**

As a follow-up to the ‘Scrumification’ of its software development processes, iSense is rolling out Scrum in all of its departments, including their account and sales teams.

In this presentation we will share:

- the reasons of the sales and account teams to start with Scrum,
- the situation before adopting Scrum,
- the actual change in the teams,
- the current Scrum processes in sales,
- lessons learned, major achievements and next steps.

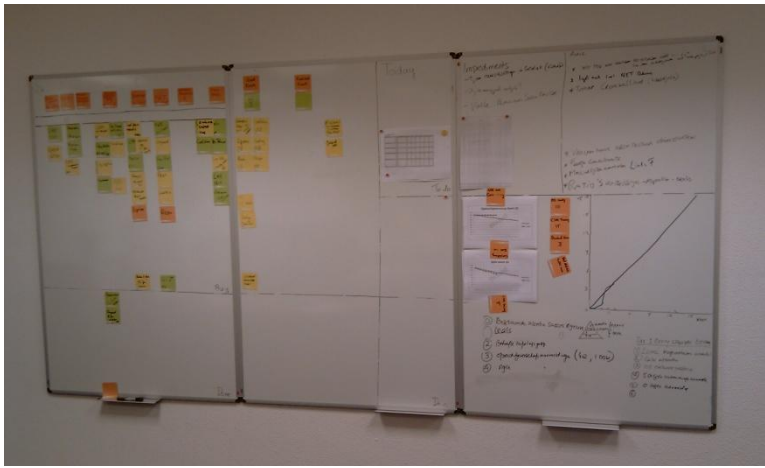
This outline proposal gives some overall insights; the final paper will contain more details and examples.

### **2. Situation before the deployment of Scrum**

1. Unclear status of sales processes, individual work and progress
2. Only insight in final sales numbers (process output)
3. No insight in causes and effects in individual steps in the sales process on its final results
4. No reflection on sales activities and no improvement cycle present

### **3. Intervention**

1. First Scrum team (the team that was selling Scrum consultancy) decided to ‘eat-their-own-dog food’ and adopt Scrum for their own sales work too
2. They took a ‘just-do-it’ approach and just started:
  - a. Weekly sprints that start on Monday with retrospective and sprint planning
  - b. Quarterly focus on sales target (13 sprints till ‘release’)
  - c. Inspect and adapt every week: learn the way to do it by doing it
  - d. Scrum board with tasks and burn-downs for the early indicators and burn-up for order intake
  - e. Daily stand-up at 9:30 in front of the Scrum board
3. All other sales and account teams followed due to the increased transparency in this first team and the enthusiasm coming from company management.



Picture: the Scrum board of one of the teams

#### 4. Lessons learned

1. Sales is predictable; cause and effects can be learned and when known it is possible to control order intake for a sales team. For the Scrum consultancy unit this meant: cold calling for free awareness event, attend awareness event to detect warm leads, contact warm leads to discuss collaboration and turn into hot leads, close hot leads into deals, start delivery of services to the customer. Eventually it became clear how many cold calls will lead to awareness event participants to warm leads and so on. This way made it clearer on how many cold calls are needed to make a deal.
2. The awareness within the sales teams that sales alone is not sufficient; total value delivery is crucial. As an effect they learned that when they make the sale but cannot deliver there is still no value. As such, account managers started to participate in recruitment processes when the total number of available consultants was much lower than they could sell. Currently, they are even promoting to create cross-functional teams in which sales, recruitment, marketing and consultants take part.
3. The awareness within the sales teams that instead of their primary focus on creating new business, they learned that there is more to win with existing customers by which they already finished a deal.
4. The retrospective and goal setting led to creative thinking on improving the ratio's of cold calling to deals.

#### 5. Major achievements

1. Company revenue increased by 100% after Scrum implementation in the first quarter. Although market changes also contributed to this result, the general manager indicates that at least 50% of the revenue increase can be contributed to the adoption of Scrum.
2. Sales teams are more focused as they know how their process works and how they control it. This results in continuous prioritization and reprioritization with focus on highest value first. This has the effect of less panicking, because there are early indicators pointing at sales fluctuations.
3. Sales teams learned that even their sales processes contain a clear cause-effect relation between what they do and the order intake they get. Before starting they claimed that this was not the case and that software development is different from sales. After learning these cause-effect relations they learned that they have a much larger control on their order intake than they previously understood. Trying to close a deal is like giving a demo. As team you are not a 100% sure that the client got what they needed, but a great scrum team will come close every time. A great sales scrum team will hit it's targets most of the time, if not all the time.

#### 6. Mistakes/what to do differently

1. In early stages of Scrum deployment there was no rhythm; stand-up meetings were not at the same time because team members were not on one location. As an effect Scrum deteriorated slowly. Also one of the reasons was that there was no real Scrum master in the teams. This has been resolved.
2. Functional focus on sales only is not ideal. Value delivery to customers exceeds sales only. As such sales teams want to increase the complete value chain into their teams.
3. Initially there was no real improvement cycle. Teams now define one major improvement per week that gets the highest priority of all tasks. After all, that task makes the sprint really better than the previous sprint.