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**EXPERIENCE REPORTS PRESENTED AT AGILE 2018**

**Abstract**

The paper is all about an experience report of Agile conference where the key problem has been identified. The case study of AEP is discussed where the agile transformation is going to take place. In this work, team management of the incoming project work has been highlighted. This venture is into its nine years of agile journey. This organisation builds project with the help of agile methodology however, a cultural change takes place that makes the company to transform its approach further. The major issue of poor technical excellence is prevalent in the case and it needs to be eradicated properly so that suitable outcome can be ascertained. Innovative steps are taken for ensuring a good execution of the work of the employees. Apart from this, new arena has been set up for the employees of the office for a better progress in the work. Skilled employees are necessary in order to execute the project management work in a suitable manner.

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# Executive summary

**American Electric Power (AEP)**

American Electric Power (AEP) is known as the major-owned electric utility company in the United States of America, providing electricity to not less than four million customers in 10 states. AEP is also known as the nation’s largest generators providing electricity. Corporate body owns approximately 37000 megawatts of generating capacity in the U.S. The organization also owns the largest electricity transmission systems of the nation that includes 765-kilovolt ultra-high voltage transmission lines combining all other transmission systems. Hence, the company is working together with the communities and customers to create the future of energy. The corporate body is facing many issues such as lack of skills in the employees, lack of commitments and absence of technical skills in the employees. AEP is empowered by its team members, their passions and their goal to make a huge difference in the communities they are serving. The company believes in using a different fuel mix to produce electricity. Strategies for a diversified portfolio to serve the customers with a clean energy solution as per their requirements are also adopted by the company.

# Mission and objectives

The main aim of the company is to reformulate the future of energy along with the customers. The corporate sector also focuses to develop innovative solutions that improve lives and power of the communities. AEP worked for nine years into the journey of agile transformation. In the year 2009, the AEP was involved with a deal with the solarpower energy to purchase power from the largest solar fields within the United States. The vision statement of this company is to produce electricity at an affordable price for the communities and customers. AEP is effective in serving the customers along with the community within the US. The company has developed many emerging ways that deliver and produce reliable and affordable energy that is helpful in producing electricity to millions of businesses and homes.

# Issues that they are trying to address with the project

The teams involved in the distribution department within American Electric Power (AEP) have faced many problems in their agile transformational phase. Lack of technical skills was observed among the employees involved in this project. Employees of this corporate sector did not have enough knowledge regarding the agile transformation. The main reason behind this issue was the employees were not provided with proper training in order to deal with this project.

# Issues or problems that the company faced during the project

The venture faced many issues including the lack in technical skills in the employees, lack of commitments lack of technical skills in the employees of AEP. In order to resolve this problem the company decided to hire new employees who are having much experience in the agile transformation project.

There were two most critical barriers that were involved in the project of agile transformation such as:

# Lack of technical excellence

The agile transformation process represents an effective way of working that creates a collaborative culture with supportive tools and processes. In the adoption programs of agile transformation technical Agile practices need to focus in order to deliver a better and faster service.

**Lack of executive commitment**

Agile transformation program has put a huge impact on the employees in the company. At the executive level, the limitation of political dynamics and communication leads to lack of involvement. The executives have the major responsibilities to act as being idealistic for the program, involved with working teams on a daily basis.

# Strategies they have been used

The department has taken some effective strategies to overcome issues while doing the project. The strategies include:

* The department is planning to hire the employees and contractors who have a good experience in the agile transformation project.
* The venture has divided the employees into two teams so that each team can innovate new ideas to make the project successful.

# An outcome for this issue

The company have shifted their office and allowed the team to enter in their new agile rooms including the furniture options, projector location, lighting, whiteboard options and so on. The crucial outcome that has been observed was, that the two teams Distribution Outage Validation System (DOVS) and Data Divergence (DD) have chosen different furniture configuration in order to make the project more innovative. The company has used many strategies to overcome issues such as the department planned to select new employees who have a good experience in the agile transformation project.

# Report

# Introduction

American Electric Power (AEP) serves about 5.3 million customers within the United States. AEP is running in its fourth year of the agile transformation project. According to the report the department within AEP was involved with the agile transformational phase. The project focused on the management support of allowing the teams to be self-organised. AEP was involved for nine years into the journey of agile transformation. In the year 2009, the AEP has signed a deal with the Solar LLC to purchase power from the largest solar fields of United States. The present report discusses a small overview of the issues faced by the company during the journey of agile transformation. The report also sheds light on the critical review of the chosen issue. The theory also analyses the current practices for overcoming the issue.

# An overview of the case study

Department of AEP has created two agile teams that processed on longer-term projects. The company was also focusing on to have a third team to control the project for a short period of time (Collet *et al.* 2015). Both the agile teams were created by the IT department manager along with the project manager.

# Agile transformation project

The first team was known as the Distribution Outage Validation System (DOVS) team. DOVS was moving to be a waterfall project, but the department has implemented the scrum framework earlier (agilealliance.org, 2019). There was a boot camp held by the team, along with three agile coaches to guide the team about the process of Scrum framework.

The second team was known as the Data Divergence (DD) team. As opined by Hurrell, (2016), the DD team was mainly made to work in the Scrum framework from the beginning. This team was also involved in the Scrum boot camp in order to learn the process of Scrum framework with the help of the agile coaches.

These two teams moved forward to their journey of agile transformation, and they develop more knowledge regarding the agile mind-set learned the process of Scrum framework guided the team to work on one project at a time, in order to serve value to the business(agilealliance.org, 2019).There were some continuous development items implemented along with communication and capability. In the words of Mansour, and Dean (2016), the department of AEP has always.

In the year 2017, the DOVS work was about to complete within the given deadline, a new project was about the start based on the business unit identifying the highest priority project to be accomplished. This new project required some new skills that were lacking in DOVS team (Akella and Rao 2016).

# A critical review of the chosen issue

As AEP is involved in its fourth year of the agile transformation project, this venture faces some issues by which the work of this project could not be completed. One of the most vital issues that have been found was a lack of technical skills in the employees who were involved in the project(agilealliance.org, 2019).

The employees were not having all the information regarding the project. The teams engaged with the distribution department within AEP were not trained about the process of agile transformation. In the words of Ahmed *et al.* (2015), the employees were having a lack of automation tools and technical practices. Due to this issue, the venture cannot accomplish the project.

There were many problems with adjusting to the new employees on the existing DD and DOVS teams. After the involvement of the new members of the team, the DOVS started their project with more innovations. While involving some experienced employees in the department, the team was successful and was able to complete the project in the given time (Cimatti 2016).

# Current practice for overcoming the issue

In order to overcome this issue, the company has planned to hire more employees and contractors. Now, the department takes interview of the candidates who are highly experienced in the agile transformation project. After the interview process, the enterprise takes a decision to hire new people to get engaged in the agile teams (Ahadiat and Martin, 2015).

The venture has moved to a new location so that there are all the requirements related to the agile transformation project. The company has allowed the teams Data Divergence (DD) that operates for a short period of time, and Distribution Outage Validation System (DOVS) that runs for longer-term projects (agilealliance.org, 2019). The IT manager has planned to include some experienced members in the project so that the project can be more innovative and can be accomplished in a short period of time.

As the department was developing, there were a number of projects taken by the company. The teams and people involved in the company were not enough for implementing all the projects together (Bartos and Chester, 2015). In order to hire more people, the company has planned to develop two more new positions that have been added to the company. The company has to analyse when and how to train the employees among the two agile teams.

# Analysing the effective actions

The company has taken a very effective action by hiring some experienced people for competing for the project and making it successful. In order to make the project more innovative, the company has formed different teams who worked for this project for a longer time period and a shorter time period. The DOVS teams were only involved with the agile transformation project and DD project worked for the Scrum framework. In the end, the DOVS team have been proven to be the most successful team for two years (agilealliance.org, 2019). Apart from this, the DD team had just to see for their success with successful departments. Overall the team members were able to analyse their missing skills that were required for the project and this has served an actionable guide for the management to help the whole-team learning. The project managers helped his company in the process of agile transformation by supporting the management for analysing the new mind-sets and concepts (agilealliance.org, 2019).

# Other issues related to the actions taken

The company has planned many strategies for overcoming the issues that were lacking in the employees. While applying these strategies, other issues including misunderstanding within the old and new employees were evident in the workplace. While hiring the new employees for the DOVS team, it can be possible that the existing members are not agreeing with the ideas of the new employees. Due to this reason, the team may not be able to complete the project on time (agilealliance.org, 2019).

# Recommendation

* It has been analysed that the venture is facing issues such as lack of technical excellence in the employees, lack of commitments and absence of technical skills in the employees. In order to resolve this problem the company decided to hire new employees who are having much experience in the agile transformation project.
* The main motive of the company is to enhance the future of energy by satisfying the needs of the customers. The venture also focuses to enhance more innovative solutions that develop lives along with the power of the communities. The vision statement of this company is to produce electricity at an affordable price for the communities and customers.
* Agile transformation program highly affected the employees involved in the company. The boundaries of communication have resulted in a lack of involvement. The managers have the main responsibilities to be a real mentor for the program and also engaged with working teams on aregular basis.
* The department of AEP was engaged with the agile transformational phase. The project was depended on the management support of enabling the teams to be self-organised. AEP has worked for nine years into the journey of agile transformation.
* The main motive of the company was to provide electricity that would be cheap for the customers for the communities and customers. AEP is effective in providing services to customers with the community within the US. The company have emerged in many effective ways that produce and deliver reliable and affordable energy that is supportive in producing electricity to millions of businesses and homes.
* The company has used many strategies to overcome issues such as the department planned to hire new employees who are experienced in the agile transformation project. Secondly, the venture has formed two teams such as Data Divergence (DD) that runs for a short period of time, and Distribution Outage Validation System (DOVS) that runs for longer-term projects. The company has formed this team so that each team can creative new ideas to make the project successful.
* In order to resolve the problems related to agile transformation, the venture has planned to hire more employees and contractors. After the interview process, the enterprise guides the team about the agile transformation process with the help of scrum boot camps.
* Hence the company is developed by its team members, along with their goals and their skills to make a huge change in the communities they are providing. The company focuses to use mixed fuel in order to produce electricity. The company also comprises of a different portfolio to provide the customers with a proper energy solution that they need.
* In order to resolve these issues, the company have moved their location for bringing emerging change in the project and also allowed the team to get engaged in their new agile rooms along with the furniture options, projector location, lighting, whiteboard options and so on. It has been also found that, that the two teams have chosen different furniture configuration in order to make the project more innovative.

# Conclusion

The company aims to provide electricity to the customers in cheap and affordable prices as compared to other energy providers. The company is involved with the communities and customers in order to produce electricity. The corporate body faces different issues including lack of skills in the employees where the lack of commitments and absence of technical skills is present. The boundaries of an effective communication and political dynamics lead to lack of involvement. The mangers play an important role in acting for the program, involved with working teams on a daily basis. After the new employees are, the DOVS implement their project with more creativity. While hiring the employees with a good experience, the team was successful and has completed the project in the given time. The employees lacking with all the information related to the project. The teams involved with the distribution department within AEP were not properly trained for the agile transformation project.

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