Collaboratively, we help our customers transform, evolve and become agile.
Zen Ex Machina is the most experienced Federal Government agile coaching and training consultancy in Canberra

Zen Ex Machina enables agility

ZXM’s consultants have been coaching and training in Federal Government for over a decade. We’re experienced with agility across software and policy teams, coaching Product Owners and Scrum Masters, as well as Directors and Executives. We’ve extensive applied, pragmatic experience in supporting portfolio, program and team-level agile digital transformations, with significant expertise in integrating the DTA's Digital Service Standard (DSS) into complex, compliance environments from the ATO and AUSTRAC to digital privacy in ehealth.
Focus on changing culture through behavioural and organisational psychology

ZXM’s uses behavioural, cultural and social psychology to inform its coaching practices. We believe strongly in helping our clients achieve sustainable change, so our frameworks are chosen for their practicality, robustness, internal reliability and repeatability.

This approach helps improve agile adoption through encouraging behaviours that promote trust, transparency, openness, and focus over just implementing software tools.
Our challenge
Coach and support the program and development teams in the implementation the
**Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe®) and Scrum across Digital Enabling Services** for the Priority Digital Services Release Train.

Our solution
ZXM created a dual track coaching framework that simultaneously supported the needs of both Product Owners and Scrum Masters with two specialist agile coaches, while the Release Train grew in numbers from 18 to 80 in as little as 8 weeks. The ultimate goal was to promote self-organisation through direct support of these two roles to help their Development Teams.

ZXM developed targeted knowledge sessions for the two Scrum roles, delivered agile essentials courses to help with onboarding new Development Team members, and instigated Product Owner and Scrum Master retrospectives to help teams share experiences and lessons learned each and every Sprint. In addition, we instigated and led Product Owner Council Daily Scrums and Scrum of Scrums with Scrum Masters to promote collaboration, learning and support between teams.
Our challenge
With a new product launching soon, and only a few weeks to deliver, eBay engaged ZXM to provide Agile UX experience to help their team turn their UX/visual design into a Product Backlog to enable them to quickly commence their first Scrum Sprint.

Our solution
ZXM used Story Mapping to rapidly create a shared understanding of the product and its functionality amongst the team. The end-to-end story map highlighted the use of the product from the perspective of eBay's customers described as Personas to help translate the ways in which the product would be used, the context, and the users' needs. Within a few short days, ZXM and the eBay team had built a Product Backlog and quickly commenced its first development Sprint. ZXM then helped to create focus and discipline by coaching the team through weekly Sprints. Specifically, ZXM supported eBay's Scrum Master and Product Owner by providing advice, teaching them new techniques and practices, and helping make minor adjustments to the team's collaborative behaviour, to help them deliver on-time.
Our challenge

Train and coach the Department’s first Scrum team. This involved utilising an adapted Prosci® AKDAR® model to train and coach the Product Manager, Delivery Manager, Team and other stakeholders in Agile, Lean, Kanban and User-Centred methods and leveraging a decade of experience in pharmaceuticals, PBS, eHealth records, community pharmacy and the TGA.

Our solution

ZXM supporting the team through its first Sprints with coaching the Development Team through its key events. We then switched to coaching the business’ Product Owner to manage the Product Backlog through use of user-centred design tools and techniques and alignment with portfolio outcomes.

ZXM assessed the Scrum Team’s agile capability maturity each month, encompassing agile techniques as well as behavioural and cultural change goals. This enables us to report to executive on their investment in agile capability as well as to assist with adjustments to the adoption roadmap.
Our challenge
Support the AIS to redesign its project management processes, practices and methodologies to align with the Federal Government’s P3M3 requirements as well as emerging 21st century best-practice.

Our solution
ZXM’s focus was to address traditional project management concerns including documentation, scheduling, estimation, client/stakeholder management, and release planning through the introduction of core agile concepts – fast-feedback to reduce risk, transparency, working to a cadence, and visualising delivery through Product Backlogs aligned to the portfolio of over 30 projects a year, Kanban and Sprint Backlogs, and the introduction of Scrum Masters to support the Development Team to continuously improve. Key to a successful and sustainable outcome was the embedding of agile values into the PMO and promote it as a key enabler and supporter of pragmatic agility, transparency and delivery excellence.

Australia’s primary national sports administration and advisory agency, and the cornerstone of a wide-ranging sports system.

12 months
15 teams
30 projects
Agile Lean PMO
Radical transparency
+250% productivity
Our challenge
Improve the existing baseline of agile capability maturity by assisting the Digital Document Management Development Team (DDM) to work iteratively, apply advanced agile practices to deliver the Document Hub (Doc Hub) product solution.

Our solution
ZXM coaches concentrated on working closely with the Product Owner and Scrum Master to build their understanding of agile principles and patterns. This helped create ownership of the application of new techniques and facilitate and build an agile, user-centred capability and maturity within the Development Team. Specifically, this includes using design thinking techniques to build a product roadmap, learning to define and test a minimal viable product, and learning to create the capability to release on demand, independent of the Scrum Team’s Sprints.

A Federal Government Agency dedicated to enabling growth and productivity for globally competitive industries.

4 months
Product Owner coaching
Improved business collaboration
Improved MVP definition and slicing
Scrum and MVP
+200% productivity
Our challenge

Support the evolution of the Digital Delivery Branch and their design studio – video production, animation, UI, UX, and visual design – to adopt agile frameworks to improve transparency of work including developing and implementing an agile operating model.

Our solution

ZXM’s solution focussed on creating transparency for decision-making using fast feedback loops and understanding value for prioritisation of work over non-economic models. ZXM first coached managers, supporting them with our deep knowledge of government and experience with agile frameworks to solve strategic and tactical issues at a Director level using Design Thinking. ZXM supported all managers to become a single Scrum Team, working to a cadence that could then inform team-level work. ZXM then rolled-out training across their sites across the country and coached support their teams through their first steps to being agile. We used techniques including self-selection, HR management through Product Owners, cross-team collaboration using Scrum of Scrums, and knowledge sharing along capability lines with Communities of Practice.
Our challenge
Zen Ex Machina was engaged to assist the project manager of one of the ACMA’s key business projects move the project to using Scrum to hasten its delivery after some time of analysis paralysis. Key to a successful outcome, was to ensure that the project team could improve its capability to manage the Scrum process successfully itself without continued coaching support.

Our solution
ZXM first trained the team on the essentials of Scrum. This was followed by stakeholder workshops inviting key business stakeholders to assist producing and ranking the Product Backlog using Design Thinking and UX activities. Over the coming three months, ZXM employed behavioural modelling technique to improve the team members’ competence with the roles of Scrum Master and Product Owner. By focussing on key meetings, the team reached a level of unconscious competence within three months.
Our challenge
What do you do when you want to leverage Scrum’s powerful inspect/adapt processes but you can’t wait until the next Sprint to create reports on changes to the energy market?

Our solution
ZXM trained Origin’s three data management teams in Sydney on the essentials of Lean, Kanban and Scrum. This training included teaching communicate complex agile concepts through the game-based play. Once training was completed, ZXM helped Origin create a Scrumban approach to their business-as-usual and project work and then assisted the program manager embed these new agile behaviours in his team leads.
Our challenge
It can take a long time to get a project started, particularly when you’re used to undertaking big, up-front design activities before commencing software development efforts. SuperChoice engaged ZXM to provide expertise in user-experience (UX) and user-centred design in Scrum environments to reduce the lead time that it takes to kick-start its projects.

Our solution
ZXM used collaborative workshop techniques with the team over the first few days of the project. These sessions were designed to generate an understanding of the consumers of the product and also the context its use. ZXM first helped the team to document pragmatic personas and then employed a storymapping to quickly cover the main logical flow of use of the product, its alternate flows, and then the feature sets and architecture as Epics. ZXM then helped the team to break Epics into smaller, User Stories, with strong traceability to the context of the storymaps and the identified Personas.
Our challenge
Assist the Incoming Government Brief (IGB) task force to be agile, and work iteratively, and apply agile practices to deliver the “Red Book” and “Blue Book” of the Incoming Government Brief. This was a non-ICT area and involved working with Business stakeholders within the policy domain.

Our solution
ZXM’s Agile Coaches worked with the IGB Leads, and their teams across 12 branches, to align iterations of draft policy documentation to articulate the details and costing of policy initiatives from each of the major political parties in the lead up to the Federal election on 2 July 2016 (the taskforce was pulled together to deliver the IGB over 6 weeks). Specifically, Kanban and Lean were chosen as the method for delivery.
Contact us

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