

THE VALUE OF COMBINING TEAMS FOR AGILE SPRINT REVIEWS



They say no man is an island. In software, you could say no code is an island either. Everything you write and maintain is linked to something else, and often that means you have distributed and mainframe teams that are dependent on each other, with mainframe applications supporting engagement technologies that in turn drive mainframe activity.

As people start to accept that mainframe development teams need to evolve and develop in the same ecosystem as their distributed counterparts, you need to keep teams on the same page when working on projects that involve both sides. While there are several ways that this can be accomplished, one of the things that we have found works well for us is doing a combined Agile sprint review with both teams.

For those who aren't familiar with Agile sprint reviews, these are meetings held at the ends of sprints—short development cycles used to build minimum viable products—where teams demo new functionality and discuss with stakeholders and others what was accomplished during the sprint.

Matt's Experience as a Scrum Master

Holding a combined Agile sprint review with both distributed and mainframe people gives each team the benefit of seeing what the other is doing as well as the opportunity to give feedback on that. Combined reviews also make it easier to plan cross-team work because the teams can demo mainframe and distributed components together and pinpoint dependencies between the systems

before working on future functionality.

While this is something that has worked well for us, it wouldn't in all cases. I think it can be a helpful approach if some of the following points are true for your organization:

- You have two teams that work together often on cross-platform projects.
- You have individuals working across platforms who would benefit from more knowledge transfer.
- The teams would benefit from greater visibility.
- Stakeholders are the same group of people for both teams.

Mark's Experience as a Product Owner

As a product owner, you have a vision for delivering a delightful experience to the end user. This should not be limited by the fact that the work required for that delightful experience will span both mainframe and distributed teams.

This "span" can often be a source of miscommunication between the teams, which causes delays. Getting teams to understand the vision and end-user experience is key.

I've found that having the teams gather for periodic sessions to discuss the joint vision is helpful—but the best thing we've done is hold joint Agile sprint reviews. This gives the teams the opportunity to see how things fit together.

It's important that not just representatives are attending, but whole teams. This makes everyone feel involved, and you don't have to have a separate debriefing session. At the end of the session you can also give a preview of the work to come so they can see how it will all fit together.

At large organizations, the most important customer-facing innovations increasingly rely on or touch the mainframe, with 64 percent of mainframe-enabled organizations claiming over half their mission-critical workloads will reside on the mainframe by 2019. As more innovation spans platforms, bridging your mainframe and distributed islands by having both together for Agile sprint reviews could be an important step to helping your organization increase its overall agility and quality.