Launching Enterprise Products: How Dun & Bradstreet Uses Low-code to Quickly Test and Learn About New Product Offerings

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April 2019
The Business Challenge: Select, compare and analyse companies using International financial data in a consistent way

OVERTURE IS OUT THERE:
Enter the Information markets for standardised financials across Risk, Supply, Compliance and Business Intelligence

INCREASED CUSTOMER NEEDS:
Customers need consistent, detailed financial data delivered in a variety of ways. Data quality and latency has never been more scrutinised

TARGET THE BEST USE CASES:
Use the power and insight of the standardised data to target new customer prospects, identify risk and opportunity within current portfolio and grow your business from an informed perspective

FLEXIBLE MODERN CAPABILITY
Create a refined analytical dataset. Segment, Aggregate and Profile. Enable customer Access through UI/Batch API
Agile Product Innovation & Mendix

You have 6 months to build an entirely new production ready capability

This capability must deliver:

• An entirely new financial data capability
• A new fully hardened User Interface and batch delivery capability
• A full set of UI features (Search, List, Analyse, Custom Fields, Data Exports, etc.)
• A modern flexible architecture
• Standardise the financial data from 41 countries with real time currency conversion
• A new development and virtual business team across the World
• Sufficient coverage, volume and data quality to enter a competitive market
• Satisfy a group of investment partners who all have different priorities!

1. We need three more programmers.
2. Use agile programming methods.
3. Agile programming doesn’t just mean doing more work with fewer people.
4. Find me some words that do mean that and ask again.
Agile Product Innovation...the reality

Our ‘Agile Scrum Team’

• User interface – 2 Mendix developers (both part time)
• API and Back End – 6 developers
• QA team – 6 testers – significant automation for data and UI layers
• 3 Business Analysts, 3 Data Architects
• Leadership 1 x Scrum Master, 1x Programme Manager, 1x Product Owner
• 1 x Financial Data Lead + 1 x Content Project Manager (both part time)
• A network of >50 business affiliates with Local Financial Data expertise.
Key milestones

Challenge the team with frequent delivery goals – this forces you to focus on what is critical

• A development version of the Product - after 1 sprint - 3 weeks
• A test version (end to end) of the Product - after 2 sprints - 6 weeks
• A conference-ready Mendix UI demonstration - after 4 sprints - 3 months
• Beta Launch – after 6 sprints - 4 months –
• Fully seeded Minimum Viable Product (MVP) with associated Go to market and commercial launch – 9 Sprints, 6 Months
Do’s and Don’ts

**Do’s**

- Focus on the key goals to deliver for Stakeholders.
- Demonstrate frequent team ability to showcase progress.
- Have energy, be determined, focus on what you must do.
- Have a good set of standard artefacts ready
- Write a good set of Project documentation – like a Project Pack, that you can then reuse to cover a variety of stakeholder or corporate needs
- Use a good User-Story / Work management tool (Jira). Prioritise Consistently!
- Encourage the team and seek regular feedback.

**Don’t.**

- Allow yourself to be slowed to the pace of other teams or by cultural challenges!
- Hide from the crucial tasks
- Avoid required ceremonies or documentation Embrace them!
Architecture and Design principles

• Use ‘thick of the pack’ technologies
• Reuse, do not try to replicate functions that already exist (we are not rebuilding MS Excel!)
• Modern scalable, open, flexible cloud based architecture
• Iterate, do regular builds and upgrades
• Not sure about a direction – ‘Spike it’ – do a POC, innovate and fail quickly
• We spent our time on the ‘what’ not on the ‘how’
I have been skeptical about agile but having advised on this project I am now convinced all projects ought to be delivered this way

D&B - Lead Engineer
Architectural Design
Why Mendix works well within the Agile framework.

• You can build at speed. You are able to deliver and test the visual output very quickly
• Its flexible. You are able to experiment and collaborate (and avoid wasteful iterations of work)
• The environment is pre-hardened. You are able to focus on the functionality (and not security, browser compatibility, etc)
• The graphical build (in a low code environment) aligns well to business processes
• You start right with the visual aspects and building a web page directly (then move onto entities, microflows, etc which you pick from the menu)
• You still have the ability to write custom code in Java
• You can visualise the data in the microflows for debugging (and on the cloud)
• Areas for improvement – the included charting is basic and not flexible enough
Summary

The good:

• Delivered, on time, to budget, to quality
• Highest output team yet noted in the company
• Agile processes worked well and we adapted them as we progressed
• Retrospectives kept us honest!
• Built strong relationships with many colleagues across the Worldwide Network!
• 80/20 lens applied
Summary

The not so good:

• Graphs and Charting – neither the team, the organisation or Mendix are good at it!
• We had a tendency to overload our sprints which gave rise to a technical debt of bugs
• We didn’t resource the Mendix hardware adequately
Thank you

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