



**Idaho Department
of Health & Welfare**

Boise, Idaho

www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov

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—Michael James, Certified Scrum Trainer, Danube Technologies, Inc.

Situation

In 1986, Idaho State’s Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) introduced a new mainframe system to help manage the vital resources and assistance it provides for Idahoans in need, who make up more than 25 percent of the state’s population. Unfortunately, the newly implemented EPICS system repeatedly crashed, causing ongoing disruptions and effectively interfering with the State’s delivery of those benefits.

After struggling to address the rampant bugs crippling the EPICS system for nearly two decades, IDHW concluded that it had no choice but to replace the legacy mainframe. But how could management, led by Ryan Fullmer and Randy Ashton, ensure that history did not repeat itself when the replacement system was introduced?

Application

IDHW management knew that to avoid the same pitfalls they’d encountered with the legacy system, the replacement mainframe project—known as EPICS Replacement—would require its software to be developed incrementally, so that bugs could be addressed immediately to minimize similar disruptions. Due to its iterative, incremental nature, the Scrum method of agile software development emerged as IDHW’s leading solution. However, given the considerable differences between Scrum and traditional project management practices as well as the complexity of the project, IDHW engaged Danube Technologies, Inc. in 2006 to help guide them through the process.

To begin, Danube Certified Scrum Trainer Michael James worked with IDHW management on-site in Boise to assemble an integrated organization of more than 65 developers, internal stakeholders, and Product Owners to complete the four-phase, three-year project. Working from an embedded perspective, James was able to observe IDHW’s most significant impediments first-hand and provide tailored consultation. When IDHW began to see how Scrum could help re-engineer business processes to maximize efficiency, the department took another step toward uniting its teams with Danube’s Scrum management tool, ScrumWorks® Pro, which helped team members update key tasks and, consequently, remain apprised of the entire project’s progress. Additionally, ScrumWorks Pro allowed Product Owners and stakeholders to manage every aspect of the Scrum lifecycle at the program, product release and Sprint levels. It also provided role-based project tracking, reporting and



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requirements traceability for building successful Scrum projects based on best practices.

After this initial three-month implementation, in which James provided both coaching and Certified ScrumMaster training for IDHW employees, he frequently checked in with Ashton and Fullmer to assess how well Scrum was “sticking” in the organization.

“When I dropped in on the IDHW team recently, I was particularly impressed that the transformation had become ‘self-sustaining,’ said James, after a visit in September 2008. “With more than two years of experience, the organization has become even more committed to Scrum, agile, and lean principles. The fact that Randy and Ryan overcame all the challenges of state government bureaucracy to accomplish this is all the more impressive. I’m proud that Danube’s products and services contributed to this success.”

Solution

Today, the EPICS Replacement project is well underway for phased deployment in 2009. The State has remained on track through both the Scrum management framework and the support of the ScrumWorks Pro tool, which is now used by 150 IDHW contractors and employees. According to the IDHW team, the tool has enabled the following benefits:

- Increased accessibility to view all project Sprints along with expected dates of delivery;
- Ability for the entire department to view impediments and assist in removing these barriers to keep the project on track;
- Enhanced prioritization of work identified and ability to load tasks into new distinct products inside of ScrumWorks Pro, resulting in improved communications between the project and management; and
- Success of project in streamlining essential services to the citizens of Idaho has established a foundation for future software development projects in the state.

The EPICS Replacement project received the 2008 Governor’s Award for Project Innovation, proving the value of Lean, agile, and Scrum.

