



Case Study:

Improving workflow and output in a scaled agile framework environment (SAFe)

How upskilling existing software engineering teams drove a culture of continuous improvement



INTRO

Two years into a modernization journey, this Fortune 100 insurance company was struggling to keep up with competitors and identified several pain points in its software engineering operations.

CHALLENGE

The Company was shifting from their legacy systems to a SAFe framework; however, the implementation process did not include investments into modernizing engineering practices.

Engineering teams were receiving stories by the business teams that were too large for their sprint cycles, and often had many unidentified requirements. Additionally, the engineering teams struggled to provide accurate estimates on project duration or granular visibility into their progress.

The Company identified the need to train its developers on how to create smaller and more testable stories to improve this workflow and increase output.

SOLUTION

After running assessments on the Company's talent pool, Galvanize delivered a customized version of the SAFe ScrumXP program, to empower developers to slice stories smaller, increase predictability, and accelerate delivery.

The training spanned 12 weeks of classroom and project work from the Company's backlog.

Galvanize provided weekly reporting to stakeholders, ensuring full accountability and visibility into the learning process. This included regular calls during the curriculum and product phase. Engagement managers constantly implemented feedback to improve the program throughout delivery.

In addition to the technical skills evaluation during the assessment process, the instructional team evaluated soft skills.

During the product work phase, Galvanize provided feedback and coaching on XP principles, effective teamwork, communication, and more.

While working alongside Galvanize instructors, the engineering teams were able to immediately start implementing these learnings into their work, giving the Company a quick return on investment for the training.

One team invalidated several features' worth of work by identifying and proposing several alternatives, which saved millions of dollars in developer time. Another team was able to replace a legacy system in a quarter of the time by leveraging testing approaches and the strangulation pattern.

OUTCOME/RESULTS

Galvanize training equipped the software engineering teams with the techniques they needed to work better with the business and product owners, by renegotiating sprint commitments, slicing stories smaller, and reducing stories into easily consumable items.

Team-level reporting indicates teams are achieving higher velocity than before - an increase of 25% - with less variability. Additionally, code quality has improved through a commitment to the TDD practices that matter most to SAFe's "Built-In Quality."

The Company's executive sponsor of the trainings noted that Galvanize's ability to take feedback and iterate on the programs mid-flight to optimize them for each team and audience, has been a critical component of the successes.



Topics that were covered included:

- Pair programming
- Behavior and test-driven development in Java/Spring and React/JavaScript
- SOLID design principles
- End-to-end testing applications
- Deploying applications via GitLab CI/CD
- Spring Boot API integration testing/deployment
- Modifying an existing codebase written by another pair
- Workflow (Planning work, story splitting, continuous improvement)
- Teaching XP engineering practices via full stack development

“The team is now completing stories faster and more effectively than before and tracking to finish their work ahead of schedule for the first time.”

– Team lead at the company