Chapter 10: Enhancing Existing Risk Management in National Statistical Institutes by Using Agile Principles (in English)

CASE STUDIES:

Ireland, Central Statistics Office (CSO)

CSO’s Household Survey Development Project (HSDP)

The purpose of the HSDP is to create a new household survey environment to meet additional national and international needs for a wider range of social statistics. The key aim of this modernisation programme of related projects is to develop an efficient integrated system for household surveys across multiple collection modes thus enabling the CSO to deliver on the expanding requirements for social statistics in a cost effective and timely manner.

For example one of the sub-projects in this overall programme of projects is the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) project which involves the outsourcing of interviewing for waves 2 to 5 of the QNHS (Labour Force survey) to an external call centre.

The HSDP has and remains a very significant modernization programme for CSO, spanning several years in terms of delivery and involving significant numbers of staff and management from both the IT side and business side of the Office.

Agile project management has been employed extensively during the HSDP to maximize delivery of desired outcomes. For example daily Agile scrums and regular Agile sprints maximize achievement of deliverables. Agile management has ensured that active and dynamic management of project risks happens and so risks that have potential to impact development progress are dealt with as they arise.

Agile practices ensure project teams are suitably empowered to drive deliverables but this is matched with regular assurance processes to most senior managers to ensure overall desired corporate direction is achieved.

Agile management practices have and are significantly enhancing the risk management on our HSDP.

UK, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

RRM’s Scheduling and Workflow Mechanism.

The Response and Respondent Management system (RRM) was looking to integrate a scheduling and workflow mechanism that would be strategic to the entire office.

There was a threat to delivery of RRM, as this was needed for a forthcoming survey, but early indication was that the work was potentially too much for the time available (or else workarounds would be costly).

An Agile approach meant that its implementation had been put off, as the team always prioritized value, and this was never the most valuable thing at earlier stages. Then there was a significant strategic shift - RRM stopped being the long term strategic solution for that component of the system, and it was given a limited lifespan.

Although this was disappointing to the team, it meant the scheduling and workflow mechanism no longer needed to be strategic - they could implement something quickly and easily that just did the job. Being strict about prioritizing by value (an important agile concept) postponed the decision and sure enough the landscape changed in the time of the postponement so that when the decision had to be made it became much more achievable.

Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT)

Territorial Bases System

Purpose of the project
The purpose of the TBS was to create a new system to update via web the territorial basis by municipalities. The key aim of this project was to develop an efficient system, with a limited number of accesses (more or less 8500 municipalities), to update the territorial basis for Census. The whole system, reachable through authentication, is divided in two separated areas, Front Office accessed by municipalities and Back Office, accessed by Istat Personnel.

After a short description, on the home page there is a login/password box. After authentication, for security reasons, the Responsible of Municipality of territorial bases had to fill in a form with his data to associate a Municipality to a physical person.

The main implemented features for the Front End are:

1. A download section with one or more PDF file with the territory map, an application to modify these files, an Access MDB with 2-3 tables;
2. An upload section where to put the modified files;
3. A documental area that contains the software manuals and user guides, legal documents, and a movie with the operating instructions;
4. An area with history files related to the territorial basis of the last Census (2001).

Software application and documental area are common. Other materials are specific for each Municipality.

The Back Office area contains a monitoring system to trace all operations referred to each Municipality.

**Relationship between Istat’s Census Department and ICT Department**

The project owner was the Istat’s Census Department which played the client role. The ICT Department supplied this service and the project manager belonged to ICT Department.

**Main critical issues of the project**

This project presented some critical point, summarized in: limited time to deliver, no margin for error, due to the compliance with current regulation for Census and the involvement of 8.500 municipalities.

**Advantages to use agile approach**

To mitigate risk of failure, Agile project management has been employed extensively during this project to maximize delivery of desired outcomes. Not only weekly meetings were held to verify together, client and supplier, each system release, but also the project manager obtained a resource (programmer) from Census Department, for 5 weeks, to work in his team. In this way, the customer had his own/assigned person to monitor the progress of the project and to actively contribute at the job development. The supplier engaged the client to share the responsibility of each deliverable. As consequence, the strong collaboration between Departments made impressive the speed and the quality of releases.

Comparing agile and traditional methods of project management, there is no doubt that Agile enables collaboration among structures. Moreover, traditional PM doesn't take in account that often customers change requirements during the project. In fact, during the deployment phase, the client really understands the potential of the system and asked for new features. As well known, change requests are often very expensive. Agile method mitigates this risk.

For Istat, this is a good example of successful project, carried on through an Agile approach.