Keurig DrPepper

Breaking the Priority Gridlock: How a CPG Tech Team

Aligned Business Units with WSJF

The Challenge: When Everything is Priority #1

- A leading company in the consumer-packaged goods (CPG) industry faced a critical bottleneck. One of its technology teams was struggling to manage incoming work from five different business units—each demanding immediate attention. Without a single product manager or a unified backlog, the team found itself drowning in work-in-progress (WIP), unable to complete meaningful deliverables.

- To make matters worse, the teams operated in a traditional waterfall structure. Developers passed the work to testers, creating silos that slowed down delivery and amplified inefficiencies. The lack of prioritization and alignment left the team feeling stretched thin, with no clear path to success.

The Solution: Introducing WSJF to Bring Order to Chaos

- Recognizing the urgency of the situation, an Icon Agility coach introduced the concept of Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF) to the tech team leader. This prioritization framework, designed to balance urgency and effort, would help the business units see the trade-offs of their requests in a data-driven way.

- The tech leader took charge, bringing all five business units together to walk them through WSJF. They explained the team's limited capacity and how prioritization could unlock real value. Each business leader participated in scoring the Cost of Delay (COD) while the tech team estimated job sizes. The outcome? A clear, objective ranking of features to bring into Program Increment (PI) Planning—finally providing a structured way to decide what truly mattered most.

The Results: A Surprising Shift in Mindset

●For many in the room, the WSJF exercise was a revelation. By assigning numeric values to the Cost of Delay, business leaders didn't just see a number—they heard the story behind the number. This transparency shifted the conversation from territorial battles to enterprise-wide benefits.

●Instead of digging in their heels, leaders began yielding to each other,

recognizing when a different team's priority had greater strategic impact. The skepticism at the outset quickly turned into alignment as leaders saw the bigger picture.

One tech leader reflected:
"I was nervous coming into this session. I was sure it would not work and that each division head would hold their ground and claim their number one. I was wrong—I watched them agree with each other and yield, for the good of the company."

Key Takeaways: More Than Just a One-Time Fix

●Assumptions can be wrong – The tech leader initially feared that business leaders would refuse to compromise, but WSJF helped shift their perspective.

●Scoring drives alignment – Putting numbers to the Cost of Delay made prioritization a structured, rational discussion instead of a power struggle.

●The method is scalable – This approach is now being used internally across other teams struggling with similar challenges.

Next Steps: Bringing WSJF to More Teams

●To extend the impact of this success, we video-interviewed the tech leader who facilitated the session. These insights are now used in WSJF training and internal coaching to help other teams facing similar prioritization challenges.

●For organizations that haven't completed value stream identification or reorganized teams around single backlogs, this exercise provides a practical way to bring clarity and alignment—without waiting for a full structural overhaul.

If your teams are struggling with competing priorities, consider running a WSJF session. The results might surprise you.

Unlocking Alignment: How PI Planning Transformed a CPG Company's Agile Journey

The Challenge: Siloed Teams, Scattered Plans, and Limited Visibility

- A major consumer packaged goods (CPG) company had already attempted two large-scale Agile transformations with well-known consulting firms. Despite extensive training, the efforts fell short due to a lack of effective coaching and follow-through. When Icon Agility arrived as their third attempt at Agile transformation, the leaders made one thing clear—PI Planning would be the key to success.

- These leaders had experienced PI Planning at a different CPG company and were convinced that bringing teams and business partners together in a structured way would finally move the needle.

- At the time, three newly formed teams were working in Jira but planning in isolation, sprint by sprint. Although these teams supported the same business unit, the business partners struggled with visibility, prioritization, and tracking work progress. The lack of alignment was creating confusion, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities.

The Solution: A Focused Coaching Effort to Prepare for PI Planning

- Icon's coaches were embedded with a small slice of the business, working directly with three teams and their business partners. Their mission? Get these teams to their first PI Planning event.

- Leading up to the event, the teams received intensive coaching on backlog refinement—ensuring that stories and features were well-prepared and meaningful. With clear priorities and structured collaboration, the teams entered their first PI Planning session in February 2023.

The Results: From 3 Teams to 40 in Just Two Years

- The impact of that first PI Planning session was immediate and undeniable. The process provided a level of clarity and alignment that had been missing for years.

- Fast forward two years, and the company has gone from 3 teams planning together to nearly 40 teams conducting PI Planning on a regular cadence. What started as a small experiment has grown into an enterprise-wide practice, with a portfolio layer now being built out to further streamline and scale the approach.

A VP in Sales emphasized the importance of PI Planning:

- "This process has proven to be effective and critical to enabling success for our [sales division]. I remain a champion and enthusiastic partner of continuing to work in the PI discipline."

- Even skeptics came away impressed. A Senior Director in Sales reflected:
  "At first, PI Planning seemed over-produced and over-structured. But by the end, I thought, 'Oh, that's why.' It was an impressive way to get to a commitment."

Key Takeaways: Why PI Planning Works

- PI Planning remains one of SAFe's most powerful events, aligning tech and business in just two days—solving problems that would otherwise take months of emails and scattered meetings.

- Structured collaboration creates clarity. Even leaders who were initially skeptical saw the value of bringing everyone together in one room to prioritize and commit.

- Sustainable transformation requires follow-through. The difference between this attempt and the company's previous Agile failures was effective coaching and execution—not just training.

Next Steps: Scaling PI Planning Further

- The success of this initiative has sparked an ongoing Agile transformation, proving that with the right approach, PI Planning can unify teams, streamline priorities, and accelerate value delivery.

For organizations struggling with fragmented planning and disconnected business partners, PI Planning isn't just an event, it's a game-changer.

Would your teams benefit from structured collaboration? It might be time to give PI Planning a try.

White Paper: Shifting from Output to Outcome – Aligning Tech and Business for Measurable Impact

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🎯 **Introduction:**

Organizations that focus solely on **project completion** (outputs) often miss the opportunity to drive **measurable business impact** (outcomes). This white paper explores how our client, a multinational enterprise operating in a **lean environment** with 90% vendor support, shifted its focus from outputs to outcomes, resulting in improved business value, better alignment between business and technology, and enhanced flexibility.

🎯 Business Context:

Client operates in a complex environment with minimal full-time employees and high vendor dependency. Multiple lines of business independently prioritize their objectives, causing downstream impacts on shared delivery teams. With ongoing mergers and acquisitions, the organization faces continuous pressure to pivot swiftly while maintaining business continuity and minimizing disruption.

Additionally, the lack of a unified prioritization framework led to fragmented decision-making, and limited visibility into inflight work resulted in delayed responses to shifting business demands. The challenge was compounded by reliance on 12-week SAFe PI planning cycles, which reduced the organization's ability to adapt quickly to changing priorities.

⚡ Challenges:

Client encountered several key challenges that hindered the delivery of meaningful business outcomes:

1. **Focus on Outputs Instead of Outcomes and Misaligned Priorities:**
   - Delivery was measured based on project completion, not business impact or strategic value.
   - Conflicting priorities between business and technology led to misaligned efforts and suboptimal results.
2. **Lack of Measurable Outcomes:**
   - No formal framework existed to track and measure the impact of delivered work against business goals.
3. **Siloed Decision-Making:**
   - Business units prioritized their needs without considering the downstream impact on shared teams, creating friction and overburdening resources.

4. **Inflexible SAFe PI Planning:**
   ○ Adoption of 12-week PI planning cycles led to rigidity and reduced flexibility in responding to emerging business needs.
5. **Limited Visibility Across Initiatives:**
   ○ Lack of transparency in ongoing work across business units created blind spots that slowed decision-making and delivery.

The Solution:

To address these challenges, we adopted a **multi-pronged approach** to shift focus from project outputs to measurable business outcomes.

- Defined measurable business outcomes and success criteria to guide delivery efforts.
- Replaced the "project delivery" mindset with a focus on **value realization**.

- Introduced a **prioritization model** to align business and tech efforts, ensuring focus on high-impact initiatives and minimizing bottlenecks.

- Developed a **real-time visibility dashboard** to provide business and tech leaders with an integrated view of inflight strategic initiatives.
- Enabled data-backed decision-making by highlighting dependencies, risks, and progress.

- Provided **real-time coaching and feedback** to help teams quickly adopt new practices.
- Empowered teams to make immediate adjustments to enhance business impact.

- Moved away from rigid 12-week planning cycles to a more **adaptive, flexible approach** that allowed for mid-cycle course corrections.

- Established a system to track work inflight and align delivery capacity with demand.
- Enabled leadership to make informed decisions on resource allocation and project prioritization.

🎯 Key Results:

The implementation of these solutions led to measurable improvements, transforming the organization's delivery model and creating business impact:

- 🌟 **20% increase in business impact** by shifting the focus to outcome-driven delivery.
- 🌟 **25% improvement in prioritization efficiency,** ensuring high-impact initiatives received appropriate focus.
- 🌟 **100% visibility across strategic initiatives** through the real-time dashboard.
- 🌟 **Faster course corrections and increased flexibility** due to adaptive planning improvements.
- 🌟 **Improved trust and alignment** between business and technology, reducing delivery friction.

🎯 Client Testimonials:

"Thanks for all your support. I like having methodology and practicality working together."

"Shifting from outputs to outcomes has made a real difference. Now we're delivering value that aligns with business goals."

🎯 Lessons Learned & Key Takeaways:

- Measuring success based on business impact creates stronger alignment and enhances decision-making.

- A unified prioritization model ensures that high-impact initiatives receive appropriate focus.

- Providing immediate feedback helps teams adjust and adopt new practices quickly.

- Moving away from rigid planning cycles allows organizations to respond more effectively to evolving business needs.

- Real-time insight into inflight work helps organizations manage demand and optimize resource allocation.

🎯 Conclusion and Call-to-Action:

Is your organization ready to shift from project delivery to outcome-driven success?

We invite you to take the next step toward transforming your delivery model and achieving measurable business outcomes. Our proven strategies have helped organizations align business and technology efforts, increase flexibility, and improve delivery efficiency.

Contact us today to schedule a consultation and discover how we can help you unlock measurable business value.

Unlocking Value with Reusable Data Products at KDP

Executive Summary

Keurig Dr Pepper (KDP), a leading beverage company in North America, faced challenges with fragmented data product development. By adopting a reusable, scalable approach to Data

Products, KDP improved efficiency, reduced costs, and aligned development with business goals—ultimately driving long-term value.

About the Customer

KDP is a powerhouse in the beverage industry, with a portfolio of over 125 brands, including Keurig, Dr Pepper, and more. As a data-driven organization, KDP continuously seeks ways to optimize operations, streamline analytics, and enhance decision-making across its ecosystem.

The Challenge

KDP frequently collaborates with third-party vendors like PWC, EY, HCL, Cervelo, and Math Co to develop and enhance functionality across its data landscape. However, these projects often operated in silos, resulting in:

- Non-reusable builds that increased redundancy.
- Solutions that did not integrate well across the enterprise.
- High maintenance and support costs due to inefficiencies.

To stay competitive and data-driven, KDP needed a more cohesive approach to Data Products—one that ensured sustainability, scalability, and alignment with business objectives.

The Solution

To address these challenges, KDP implemented a structured approach:

- **Identify & Incrementally Build Reusable Data Products**: Ensuring alignment with enterprise architectural guardrails.
- **Launch DataUncapped Portfolio**: Establishing a portfolio of reusable Data Products with an Agile Release Train (ART) to streamline development.
- **Define & Enforce Non-Functional Requirements**: Standardizing data and visualization practices to ensure consistency and long-term supportability.

This approach enabled KDP to optimize data products, ensuring they seamlessly integrate into the organization's broader data ecosystem.

The Results

The impact of this transformation has been significant:

- **DataUncapped Portfolio launched**—providing a clear framework for reusable Data Products.
- **10 persistent Data & Analytics teams established** under SAFe, fostering collaboration and agility.

- **Backend Data Products and Visualization layers are now easier to support**, reducing maintenance burdens.
- **Seven out of fourteen identified Data Products continue to be enhanced**, with more in the pipeline.

Quotes & Testimonials

"Dora thinks it rules."

Lessons Learned & Key Takeaways

- Aligning early with business objectives is critical for long-term adoption.
- Stronger business partnerships from the start accelerate success.
- Demonstrating tangible value helps secure ongoing support and investment.

Call-to-Action & Next Steps

KDP is committed to continuously enhancing its Data Product library in alignment with its business vision. As additional funded Portfolio Epics emerge, the remaining Data Products and Visualization components will be developed in adherence to enterprise standards.

With a recent organizational restructure placing individuals in new roles, continued coaching and agile leadership development will be essential for sustained success. **Next up: Executing Portfolio Sync to maintain momentum and ensure enterprise-wide alignment.**