My Agile Journey!

How we are transforming Srijan
agile attitude book business company design developer different dominant easy end enough focus followed gratitude grow guess guts hard heart helped huge ideas leadership network path people person problem process projects rather reason relate role smarts sprint srijan story successful team testing thinking thought work years
No Grand Vision!

**Mission Statement =**
What’s wrong with the world and how you intend to fix it.

**Vision Statement =**
What the world will look like after you’ve finished changing it.
The Journey :: 2002 - 2003

- Estb 2002
- No grand vision, no grand ideas!
- Simple personal pursuit of ‘pushing boundaries’
The Journey :: 2002 - 2003

- Estb 2002
- No grand vision, no grand ideas!
- Personal pursuit of ‘pushing boundaries’
- Srijan was doing custom PHP and ASP -- hand-coded CMSs
- Got opportunity to have a booth at ICT4D fair in Geneva via the World Bank
- Breakthrough: IDRC (ENRAP on Postnuked)
The Journey :: Mar - Jun 04

- Impressed with what Open Source Postnuke could do
- Came across TYPO3
- My jaw dropped on reading the feature list -- all open source and free! Yikes!
- June 2004 we had an incoming lead from a 200-chain retail store from Germany
The Journey :: 2004 - 2007

- Small Team 10-15 people
- Short-term projects
- Fairly Profitable
- Mostly incoming leads
- Nearly all TYPO3, Germany + Netherlands
- Airtel, Bharti -- TYPO3; Srijan was among the first to implement open source CMS in enterprises
The Journey :: Our Values and Culture

- Chance meetings with coaches -- values started evolving
- Team oriented
- Take on challenges
- Work very hard
- Nimble, Responsive, Responsible
- Less processes (chaos + processes)
2002 - 2011

- Short-term projects
- Fixed Cost
- Incorrect estimations (nearly always)
- Tail of the projects always dragged (endlessly)
- Each time we bore the brunt (of such cost over-runs)
- Change requests were “difficult to capture”, “scope” and estimate
- Fingers pointing all over (sales -- developers)
2002 - 2011

- Financial constraints led to staffing developers on new projects (before completing one at hand – endless project tail!)
- One-person-team staffed on a project, was not unusual
- Low developer morale
- Low leadership morale
- Poor financial health (even after a lot of hard-work for years)
Role of Luck & Serendipity
Role of Luck & Serendipity

“Lucky people have an openness, an authenticity, and a generosity towards embracing people - without overthinking ‘what’s the value exchange?’”

~ Anthony Tjan,

Co-author of “Heart, Smarts, Guts & Luck”
Role of Luck & Serendipity

Varun Singh; From Dharamshala; Pursuit of “purpose”

Krishnan N., Bangalorean; 22 yrs in embedded sys; Mountaineer
Role of Luck & Serendipity

View from our Dharamshala office;

2011
Role of Luck & Serendipity

- A Phone call -- the most important one I ever received!
- Small beginnings with a large management consulting firm
Role of Luck & Serendipity

NASSCOM #EMERGEOUT 2012

- Heard a speaker from the NASSCOM mentoring program:

  "Infosys knows its revenues 2 years ahead"

  "I got out of projects; looked for clients offering long-term contracts"

- Enrollment into an owner-manager program
And i got thinking...

“How could i get long-term contracts for Srijan?”

“How could i negotiate with clients wanting to build products, that fixed costs won’t work?”
Role of Luck & Serendipity

Agilecon - Feb, 2012

- Speaker presentation on “Distributed Startups”
- Met an Agile Coach

“Break your projects down into phases; charge for estimation. Products evolve! It’s a bad idea to write hundreds of pages of requirements & tech documentation”
Managing the stress!

- A renewed “vision” for Srijan was emerging
  - find a product development client; convince them on Agile contracting & development
  - got into Agile-SCRUM trainings
  - refused fixed-cost projects, incl a “really” large one
    - “The purpose of a business is to do business!” - CIAM
Managing the stress!

- Had stress with my then partner -- lifestyle OR scale?
- Partner-CTO moved out (merger; de-merger)
- The management consulting firm offered the financial cushion needed
Breakthroughs!

- The management consulting firm, were Agile believers -- all our gyan and “common language” was working
- Converted a fixed-cost product development client to an *Agile engagement*
  - our refusal to do business under fixed-cost attracted them
  - they loved “our integrity”
What was now changing?

- Staffing Teams
- Focus on delivery every 2 weeks
- Client Demos
- Engaged clients
- Billing cycles became month-wise / sprint-wise; leading to financial health, better cash-flows
- Project changes were being managed well
What was now changing?

- Devs were focused on one-project-at-a-time
- No one-person-project-”team”!!
- Long-term contracts and cash flows enabled hiring better people
- Higher employee-engagement, satisfaction
Where are we now?

- Chaos!!!
- In pursuit of excellence. But dissatisfied/discontent with where we are!
- Agile adoption is not uniform
- Sprint Cadence missing in most projects
- Not enough SM leadership (we’ve been a company of engineers!)
Where are we now?

- Long-term contracts with a few clients -- we’ve “hugged” them
- Our customers love us!
- Deeply “motivated leaders” -- to uphold our core values
- “Standing Teams”
  - Group Leader (across 3-4 teams)
  - Team (SM, Dev, CSS)
  - Architect (across 2 teams)
Committed to this journey!

● Raising the bar on everyone
  ○ by restructuring roles and responsibilities
  ○ hiring better, motivated, passionate people

● Changing tools -- Pivotal Tracker to JIRA

● Tying “Performance Management” to Customer Happiness -- further linked with Sprint Deliveries
About Srijan

- **11 year old** web services consulting company based in *New Delhi, Dharamshala (India) and Delaware, USA*
- **75+ motivated team members**
- **150+ happy clients** across US, Europe, Middle East and APAC in 10 Industry Domains
- Consulting, designing and engineering products and solutions for online businesses
- Supporting / maintaining applications and websites
Areas of Expertise - Technologies

Content Management System:
- Drupal

Document Management System:
- Alfresco

Coding Languages:
- AngularJS
- PHP
- jQuery
- HTML5
- CSS

Quality Assurance:
- Selenium

Web Server:
- Apache

Search Engine:
- Apache Solr

Database Management:
- MySQL
- MongoDB
Reaching me

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Thank You!