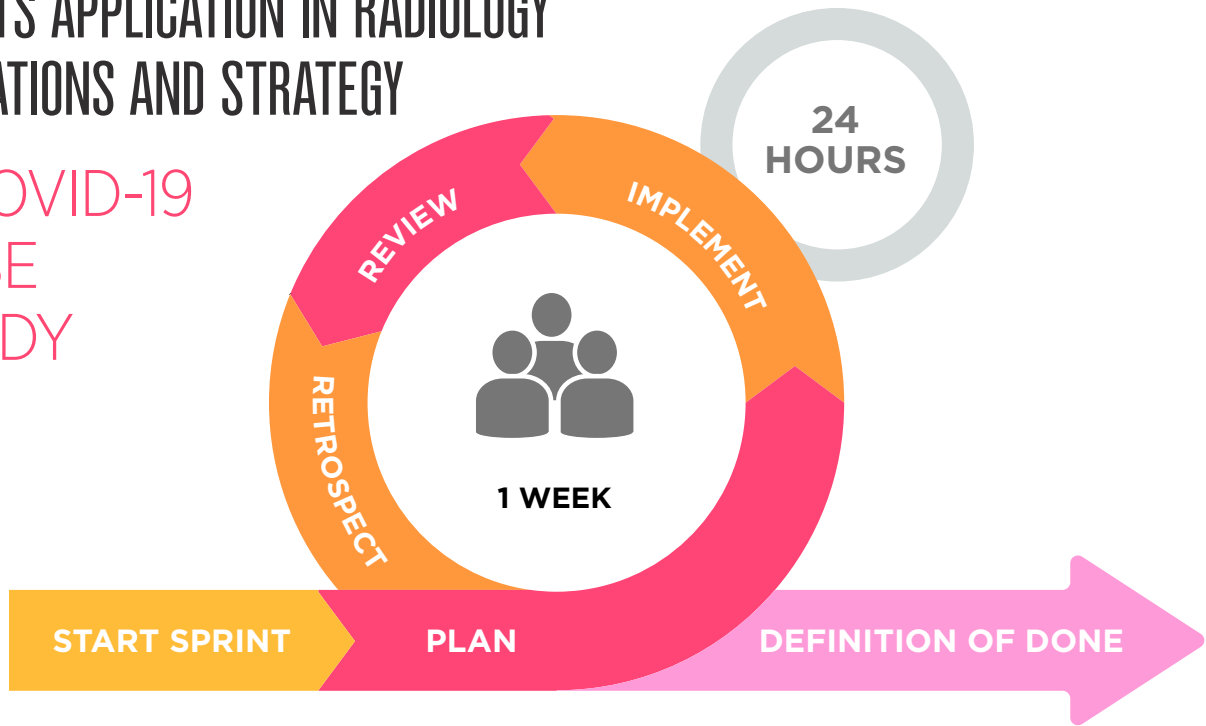




SCRUM METHODOLOGY

AND ITS APPLICATION IN RADIOLOGY OPERATIONS AND STRATEGY

A COVID-19 CASE STUDY



Our healthcare environment is constantly evolving. Yet, what we are trying to achieve remains constant: better patient experience, improved health, increased value, and care team well-being. But how we achieve those things requires a flexible approach.

There are many benefits of using an Agile approach to practice management and Scrum methodology to enhance teamwork, accelerate organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and deliver higher quality care.

WHAT IS AGILE?

The Agile Approach recognizes and accepts the level of uncertainty in a given situation, emphasizes getting started quickly and is based on using an iterative approach to refine the solution as the project is in progress rather than waiting for the solution to be defined before getting started.

The ability to start and create a minimum viable product/service (MVP) that will be improved upon and changed given stakeholder needs is the key to being Agile. And not something we are used to doing in traditional practice management.

WHY SCRUM?

Scrum is one of the Agile methodologies designed to guide teams in the iterative and incremental delivery of a product.

Scrum methodology uses a variety of non-traditional roles, responsibilities, tools, and meetings to create a cadence of communication and project execution that is continuous and focused on progress rather than perfection.



CHARLOTTE RADIOLOGY AND COVID-19: A CASE STUDY

In mid-March of 2020, Charlotte Radiology’s health system partner announced that all elective surgeries, ambulatory appointments, and procedures would be rescheduled/canceled until further notice. At that point, Charlotte Radiology had 24-48 hours to shut down all 16 of our mammography centers and two vein centers, limit hours at our outpatient imaging centers, make our remaining centers COVID safe, designate one site for Oncology patients with COVID to be seen, and then – most importantly - communicate with staff, patients, radiologists and our hospital partner as to what we were doing and how we were doing it. The list of things to do and stakeholders to serve was endless and continued long after the initial shut down into our reopening.

We began to tackle this in a traditional, waterfall-type approach. We identified what we needed to do, then tried to assign leaders for each task and created a timeline for implementation. Unfortunately, it just wasn’t working. Too much was changing every hour, tasks were dependent on each other, and we did not have the tools to communicate in real-time to make it happen quickly. The impact of COVID was HUGE, and we needed a different approach.

As CEO, I had previous experience with Scrum and knew enough to be dangerous. Thankfully, a member of our Senior Leadership Team was trained in Scrum methodology. As soon as I mentioned it as a potential solution, the team agreed to try it.

WE STARTED SIMPLY:

- We decided that each Sprint (fixed length of time in which the team commits to specific to-dos) would be one week.
- We held a daily huddle (a meeting at the same time every day) via Zoom with minimal in-person attendance. The team and Scrum Master (facilitator) met and answered three questions – What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? Are there any obstacles?
- Everything was documented on a Scrum or Kan-Ban Board such as the one below. This was our project plan.
- At the end of each Sprint (week), we had a visual representation of what was accomplished, what was pending, and what was on deck for next week.

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED:

- Closed all mammography screening centers and reopened to record volumes

- Enhanced our alignment with hospital partners by being responsive to their needs
- Kept the trust of our patients by prioritizing their health and safety in line with national organizations such as SBI (Society of Breast Imaging) and ACR (American College of Radiology)
- Retained 90% of our staff by regularly communicating and ensuring they were taken care of (mentally and physically)
- Retained the business of our referring providers by communicating in real-time about our closure and reopening to give them assurance we were taking all necessary precautions for the safety of their patients and providing needed access
- Created alternate methods to disseminate information quickly and regularly (i.e., policy changes kept up with CDC policy changes)

In sum, Scrum methodology fostered a level of confidence from the radiologists (MD leaders along with frontline Rads) in the administrative leadership and among staff, patients, and partners. Decisions and strategy were based on a solid approach that was responsive and tactical in a very fluid and uncertain time.

