Evolve Agility

Bringing Agile Practices to Groundbreaking Breast Cancer Screening Technology

Case Study

KHEIRON
MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES

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Bringing Agile Practices to Groundbreaking Breast Cancer Screening Technology: How Evolve Agility helped Kheiron Medical Technologies increase Agility

Ambitious

Ask any ambitious startup leader about the company mission, and you're likely to hear, "We want to change the world." Kheiron Medical Technologies, however, wants to save the world — from cancer.

Their award-winning flagship product, Mammography Intelligent Assessment (MIA), allows radiologists to detect breast cancer far earlier and more accurately than traditional methods. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool acts as a virtual radiologist, improving recovery outcomes, preventing complex surgery, and reducing the need for chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

To develop MIA, Kheiron assembled a team of respected clinical radiologists, data scientists, machine learning researchers, systems engineers, and product managers from around the world. Located in the United Kingdom, Hungary, and the United States, the team works with hospitals, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the National Health System (NHS) to develop new capabilities in their life-saving algorithm. Winning the UK's Government award to help solve critical challenges in breast screening, MIA participated in an unprecedented 15-site clinical study across the UK.

In short, Kheiron has the skills, funding, expertise and drive to achieve their mission. What they needed was help adopting agile work processes to speed collaboration, improve communication, and hasten Kheiron's next breakthrough.

Bringing in Evolve Agility to reach a company-wide baseline

"We've been committed to agile from the start. We'd read books, and some of us had experience with it." And Kheiron was applying Agile, but not to full agility, said Tobias Rijken, Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of Kheiron. "Not many of us were trained formally. We were doing some things correctly, but we needed a crash course so that all of us were speaking the same language. We needed some basics."

To help them adopt the agile practices in ways that would support their vibrant start-up culture, the Kheiron leadership team engaged Evolve Agility, an agile training and coaching services company. An important objective would be to establish company-wide acceptance for agile process discipline, essential in the highly-regulated medical technologies domain.

Tobia Rijken, CTO of Kheiron

Dhaval Panchal,
Founder of Evolve Agility

"While working at other places, some of the team members had negative experiences with agile," said Dhaval Panchal, Founder of Evolve Agility. "So naturally, those people were reluctant to support it fully, while others were open to learning more skills."

Despite some ambivalence and the normal resistance to change, agile adoption has increased in medical technology development. Its popularity has increased because of its ability to spur innovation while accommodating regulatory issues. Agile offers solutions for companies that constrain innovation to adhere to regulatory concerns, or battle with compliance late in the trial process.

Baseline

Kheiron, already a believer, was ready to take the next step on their agile journey.

Tailoring a client-centered approach: Discovery to Training to Retrospectives

Members of the Evolve Agility team interviewed Kheiron's leadership and stakeholders to capture their concerns, roadblocks and goals. During our discovery conversations, we learned the challenges of developing a bleeding-edge AI product. One issue that emerged was the level of collaboration required between clinical radiologists, hospitals, and the technology team.

The company had recently completed a second round of trials. And although the team had been using some agile practices, like stand-ups and sprints, these weren't followed consistently or across the whole company.

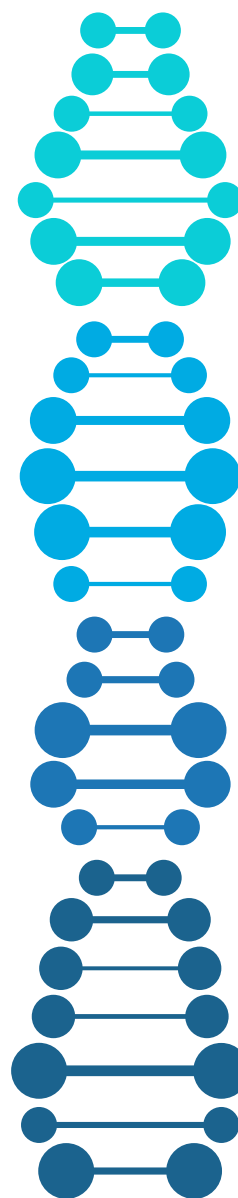Working with the Kheiron leadership, we agreed on a two-part engagement model:

1) Provide agile foundations training for the whole company virtually
2) Facilitate release retrospectives for teams

To begin, we established common interpretations of Scrum, Kanban, and relevant agile practices. Then, we facilitated release retrospectives, allowing the teams to reflect on their current processes and apply insights from training in their retrospective action items.

Tailored

4 Experiments — Design change experiments to action learnings from agile training

3 Retrospective — Cross-functional teams reflect on medical trials processes

2 Training — Learn together, to grow together

1 Discovery — Capture concerns, roadblocks, and goals.

Training that acknowledged time zone and personality differences

At Evolve Agility, we believe experiential training is the keystone to the successful adoption of agile processes, and thus, a core part of our services portfolio.

As a result, Kheiron's C-Level team members and the entire technology staff attended our Agile Team's Foundations Course. To accommodate the range of time-zone differences of the distributed team, we tailored a four-day series of four-hour training events. This modular structure allowed us to create a dedicated learning environment that the Kheiron team welcomed.

 "It was good to have a focused, let's-get-it-done mentality that everyone concentrated on this for four days. If we had tried to do this ourselves, it would have taken much longer," Rijken said. Through role-play simulations, case-study reviews, and group discussions, we lead highly engaging training events.

However, teaching doctors, PhDs and professionals who are at the top of their fields can be challenging. They're not shy about voicing opinions and speaking out when they disagree or if something doesn't make sense. Evolve Agility was an ideal match, because our courses are designed to allow participants to integrate real-world challenges and get actionable guidance from the training.

"Now we have more clarity on who is part of one team and what the roles are on that team," Rijken said. "We're making steps in the right direction."

A powerful, practical Retrospective after the training

Following the training event, we facilitated virtual release retrospectives for the team. First, we collected anonymous surveys to gain preliminary feedback on existing processes and to design release retrospective activities. Then,

Practical
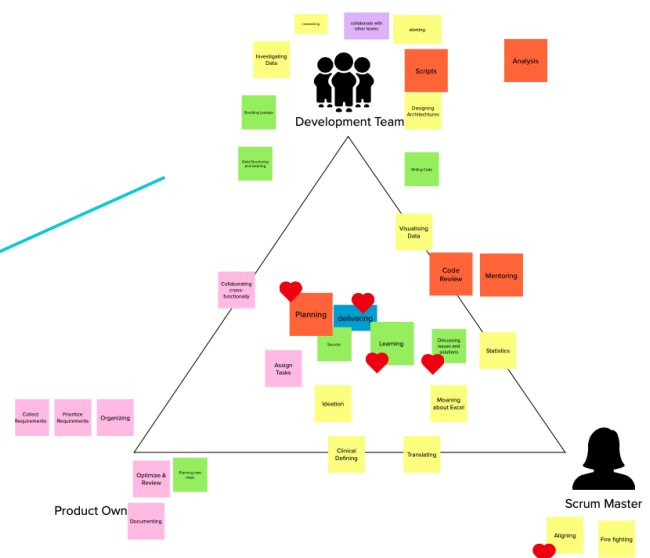
during the retrospective, we reflected on key events, dominant organization patterns and shifts, and areas for improvement. Because all the participants had attended the foundations training, they could now identify retrospective action items that aligned future processes to be more agile.

According to Karim Fanous, Kheiron's V.P. of Engineering, assessing team progress through the retrospective is vital benefit of agile training. "How do we get better at addressing retrospectives? How do we think about processes in general, across the teams? And how do the teams know that they're better at what they're doing and learning?" Retrospectives, he said, are vital for learning and growth.

In four days, the entire company had acquired a baseline understanding of agile, and achieved bottom-up buy-in to embrace agile methods. "The feedback," said Fanous, "was very, very positive."

Karim Fanous, Kheiron's V.P. of Engineering

About Evolve Agility

Evolve Agility is an agile transformation training and coaching services company. We are agile coaches and practitioners who also lead world-class training courses. Therefore clients at the bleeding edge of technology and innovation, trust us to guide their journey.

Contact us to learn how we can help you.
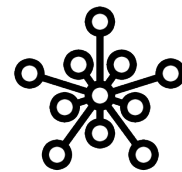
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Transformation