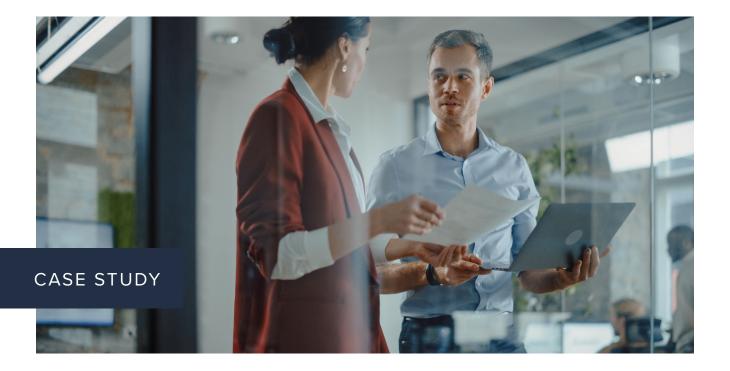# Leapfrogging into Agile: Assurity Consulting delivers capability uplift with Argos Solutions

CASE STUDY

When it set about transforming a core legacy application, financial services software provider Argos realised the Agile methodology would help achieve the desired results faster while delivering a fit-for-purpose solution.

With this being its first major Agile project, Argos looked to Assurity Consulting for an Agile capability uplift engagement, with the result that its 'Project Leapfrog' is now progressing smoothly and ready to take Argos into a bright future.

Headquartered in Christchurch, Argos Solutions has provided Finance Administration and Loan Administration Software to companies offering lending, investment, and leasing products. With the last major update to its core software completed in the 2000s, the company is in the process of executing a rebuild of its applications into a cloud-hosted a Software as a Service model. The initiative is known as 'Project Leapfrog'.

assurity

ARGOS SOLUTIONS

Situation

Argos Solutions founder Greg Beale says the driving motivation behind Project Leapfrog is quite simple. "Software development has moved on. Customers want improved user experience and cloud solutions that deliver more flexibility and resilience. And, of course, a lot has changed in the two decades since the last major upgrade to our financial administration solutions."

Project Leapfrog, he points out, is no small undertaking. Not only will it take several years to complete, but to some extent, the future of Argos Solutions rests on its success. As is often the case with modernising existing software, Argos must also run its current solution while developing the new one.

The benefits of an Agile Scrum methodology include faster product development as goals are completed within specifically delineated time frames known as sprints. It also requires frequent planning and goal setting, focusing the Scrum team on current sprint objectives and improving productivity.

The team soon appreciated that it required assistance in bolstering the effectiveness of its Agile practices and structures. "We did have some difficulties, specifically around structure and putting business processes around our sprints – but the team recognised the shortcomings and the necessity for quality support for our Agile capability," explains Argos general manager Roger Heale.

Solution

Having engaged with Assurity Consulting on Agile practices and a successful Scrum implementation before, Beale knew where to turn for help with Project Leapfrog. He says Assurity demonstrated its capability immediately through a combination of discussions aimed at understanding the challenges faced by his team, then producing clear documentation on the path forward. "Notably, Assurity engaged individually with key people involved in the delivery, gaining a highly granular picture of where and what those issues are."

This was determined after identifying shortcomings in running Scrums within recognised structures and processes and inadequate writing of user requirements and user stories, considered essential in facilitating an effective Agile project. Rather than delivering a workshop, Assurity instead recommended coaching, where its consultants worked directly alongside and within the Argos team, observing and providing support as required.

Heale says this process rapidly elevated his team's Agile capabilities. "That included improving understanding from a product owner perspective into understanding user requirements, so they are better delineated, and then breaking down stories into smaller pieces which allow for easier adoption," he explains.

"Assurity also introduced a dedicated Scrum Master to keep everyone on track with their responsibilities, and established a Scrum board for managing and bringing visibility to sprint backlog items."

Roger Heale
General Manager, Argos Solutions

Results

Right now, the Argos team estimates it is somewhere near the halfway mark with Project Leapfrog. Through its engagement with Assurity Consulting, Beale says the team and the company have considerably improved confidence in achieving rollout to the minimum viable product – which is itself named Leapfrog – and ultimately, introducing the new product to customers.

He points out that careful management of costs is essential; with Assurity participating in sprint review and planning, the Argos team is empowered to get more done in less time. "They've helped with everything from writing requirements to understanding how to roadmap, break tasks down into sprints, and getting it done within every sprint. On Assurity's recommendation, we stopped doing demos at the end of the sprint. This highlighted things we'd developed that needed further work. And by insisting on reviews every two weeks rather than quarterly, we saw increased velocity."

Heale says he rates the impact of this relatively short engagement – just a few weeks – as an 8 out of 10 for results. "And that's only because I don't give a 10. If we had an unlimited budget I would, without doubt, engage Assurity for other work."

"We opted for an Agile Scrum approach as the transformation meant breaking our boundaries across multiple facets of the business while we explore new ways of working. Cascading approaches like waterfall were deemed unsuitable for the delivery of Project Leapfrog."

Greg Beale
Founder, Argos Solutions

"Assurity has brought clarity and coaxed out the issues so we can tackle them with confidence. They have helped upskill and mature our Agile capability rapidly, and that means Project Leapfrog is on track to deliver many of the enhanced features we envisioned."

Roger Heale
General Manager, Argos Solutions

At a glance

ARGOS SOLUTIONS	**Company:** Argos Solutions	**Industry:** Technology

Situation:

When it set about transforming a core legacy application, financial services software provider Argos realised the Agile methodology would help achieve the desired results faster while delivering a fit-for-purpose solution. With this being its first major Agile project, Argos looked to Assurity Consulting for an Agile capability uplift engagement, with the result that its 'Project Leapfrog' is now progressing smoothly and ready to take Argos into a bright future.

Outcomes achieved:

- Improved confidence in achieving rollout to minimum viable product and introducing the new product to customers.

- Helped upskill and mature Argos' Agile capability rapidly

- Increased velocity in product development.

Approach:

- Capability uplift on Agile and Scrum practices.

- Dedicated scrum master.