CASE STUDY
Department of Corrections Parole Board Calendar Module

Background:
The Department of Corrections' (DOC) State Board of Parole division is tasked with scheduling parole board hearings for offenders. Scheduling a hearing involves numerous logistics such as location, identification of all parties required to attend, and the Community Parole Officer in charge of transportation.

Approximately six years ago, a two-phased project was conceived to add a Parole Board Calendar module to DOCNet. In Phase I, the module was designed to facilitate the scheduling of parole hearings for offenders housed in DOC facilities. The next phase was to include the ability to schedule offenders based at community facilities (e.g., halfway houses) because it involved elements outside DOC's legacy system. Since then, DOC staff have been using a complicated and time-consuming process of scheduling those offenders for hearings via multiple, cross-referenced reports. A program that increased efficiency for staff in scheduling community parole board hearings was needed.

Proposed Solution and Process:
Solving this problem for the customer presented an opportunity for the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT) staff supporting DOC to utilize an Agile Scrum methodology rather than the traditional Waterfall approach. The self-directed project team led by the ScrumMaster included a developer, business analyst, tester, and product owners/customers.

The work involved refactoring the scheduling module and adding new requirements. It also presented an opportunity to optimize existing code. Starting with an outdated Phase II business requirements document, it was determined that much of the content was redundant. Three-fourths of the document was thus eliminated and replaced by current data, and assumptions were documented via updated user stories. Story points were determined and a tool was developed to estimate a projected completion date and to track team velocity. The work was divided into two-week sprints so that progress could be assessed as close to real time as possible. Testing occurred throughout development. In addition, the customer was brought into the process for mini demonstrations and when clarification was needed. This partnership was credited with identifying a significant workflow issue early in the process.

Result:
Product was exactly what the customer wanted and was delivered five weeks earlier than the estimated completion date.
What Worked:

- **Ongoing customer communication** was identified as the primary key to success. Mini-demos were presented to the customer throughout the process to increase project transparency and verify that the solution was meeting their needs and not moving in another direction (i.e., the right product was being developed).
- **Constant, thorough testing** was identified as a close second to customer communication as a key to success. The tester was part of the planning process and therefore could ask, "How will I test that?" to identify potential issues and solutions early in the process.
- **A cross-functional team approach** aided by physical proximity to one another (questions answered quickly and often face-to-face). Everyone was able to offer input during planning, development, and testing.
- Incorporating **adequate testing and refactoring time** into the story point estimates for development.
- **Twice weekly stand-up meetings** on project status held by team members; blockers identified and removed.
- **Two-week sprints** allowed the team to focus on specific goals and make sure they were meeting project deadlines. Retrospectives at the end of each sprint were also very helpful.
- **Allocating our resources** by applying Agile methodology to change orders as well as projects allowed us to understand and mitigate resource constraints more efficiently. Since work is allocated in small chunks, resource availability and overall OIT workload were taken into account in the short term, thus reducing the impact to DOC.

Customer Delight:

**Feedback from Andrea Clark, Administrative Assistant, State Board of Parole:**
"(The product) is amazing! It makes my life ridiculously better. I estimate it cuts my time on scheduling by 30%.”

**Feedback from Tammy Murphy, Office Manager, State Board of Parole:**
“We are very happy with the finished product and can’t thank you all enough!!! You chose the perfect team for this project, they were incredibly knowledgeable, engaged, and thorough!”