Innovation Loves a Crisis

How to maintain efficiency and productivity in times of crisis

Did you know the common zipper was invented during the war? Technically it wasn't invented during World War I, but it became mainstream when military suppliers suddenly had a massive need for flight jackets and other military clothing.

Even though the situation we're in on Curaçao, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is creating so much uncertainty, it's also an opportunity for innovation and new ways of working.

We decided to work fully remotely using all tools at hand to stay productive. We'd like to tell you more on how we achieved this.

■ Lean Daily Management:

Across our project teams we virtually get together to discuss the activities of the previous day and discuss the activities of the day ahead. The difference now is we've fully switched to a remote set-up using a web conferencing tool and a digital whiteboard to track activities. For the virtual meeting we have a recurring time every morning. We have a set of 'agreements' for this meeting, taking into account the specific nature of the virtual working reality we're in. Everyone starts with expressing how they feel by means of color coding (green, amber, red). All sorts of topics can be addressed, now a lot of Covid-19 related concerns are shared. Such a check-in creates an atmosphere that all sorts of topics, also feelings, can be addressed. Now, more than ever, it is important to check the team's 'spirit', especially in times of such extreme situations. After this check-in, individually, we elaborate on personal activities, reflect on yesterday's status and plan for today. Efficiently keeping the overall meeting within a half-hour and everyone's round to about 3 minutes.

■ Lean Visual Management:

The digital whiteboard we use is set up as a Kanban board. A Kanban board is a Lean management tool designed to help visualize work, limit work-in-progress, and maximize throughput efficiency (or flow). Under normal circumstances we use a regular white board and Posts-its but during lock down we use a digital one, and it seems this will be our new standard going forward. Typically, you have 3 or 4 columns, we use the categories: to do, doing, done & parked. Everyone adds activities to the board and defines a smart realistic planning for the activity. This is a transparent way of working within a team and also identifies where work in progress is situated and it helps people to reduce too much work in progress by focusing on finishing tasks.

There are many tools you can use for the two mentioned strategies; it is important to be set up with a few valuable tools to start with. There are a lot of free version tools, if you use them please be smart about the information you share. If you're in doubt about what information is allowed in the free version tools, consult your information security officer. Look forward to more on this issue in one of our next posts "Keeping client data secure while working remotely".

Here's just a few of these tools:
Conferencing: Skype, Teams, Zoom, Hangout;
Visual Management: Planner, Jira, Trello, Miro.

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