

BLOG

# “As an agile consultant I want everyone in the team **to grow**”

## Martijn's Challenge



**Martijn van de Haterd**

Agile consultant at Improve Quality Services

Martijn van de Haterd is an agile consultant at Improve Quality Services, which is part of ICT Group. With great enthusiasm he guides teams and organisations through an agile transition. 'As a consultant in an agile environment, you work on the growth and commitment of all employees in your team. Openness and transparency about the process and everyone's role in it is the key to success', says Martijn.

From his online marketing background and later as Functional Administrator of the internet domain, Martijn ended up in the IT industry. 'Here I feel completely at home', says Martijn. Agile is about people, not about frameworks. I like to help people grow. I put them at ease and do everything to make them stronger as individuals and as team members. In the agile process, I coach the team and the product owner and focus on removing

obstacles. Motivated teams with a clear goal and a sense of impact make all the difference in an organisation.

### **Agile expert**

At an energy company, two different teams worked on the design and development of two interlinked apps. The apps had to provide insight into energy consumption and possible savings. Martijn was asked to make the



agile teams work together effectively again. The trust between client and consultants and between the consultants themselves was at a low level. The teams were supplemented with a group of specialists from India, who were temporarily stationed in the Netherlands to test the apps. The entire project threatened to get bogged down and there was a great need for an experienced, independent, external agile expert to ensure that the teams could work flexibly in short sprints towards the two end products.

"The trust that we gained enabled the teams to commit themselves to the project again and to achieve the goals they had set themselves."



**Martijn van de Haterd**  
Agile consultant at Improve Quality Services

### Trust

Martijn's first task was to restore trust within the stalled teams. 'I went and talked to the consultants, had lunch with them, in an informal setting,' says Martijn. I talked to them about all the predictions they weren't going to make and all the rules and agreements made by my predecessor. We decided to let them go and work on the basis of trust. We returned to the core question of how they could deliver what they had promised in manageable chunks.' Martijn adopted an independent attitude and listened carefully to consultants and client. 'This restored the peace in the team and everyone's specific expertise was used,' he explains. 'I made sure that nothing happened behind colleagues' backs, and we communicated very transparently.' In

this way Martijn got the commitment of each of the consultants. 'The trust that we gained enabled the teams to commit themselves to the project again and to achieve the goals they had set themselves.'

### One team

Once the psychological safety had been restored, the next step was to make the two development teams into one, single team, with a shared code-base. In addition, we immediately embarked on a SAFe transition. SAFe is a good method for scaling up agile, in his experience. It guarantees flexibility at all levels in the organisation, because there are still autonomous, self-managing development teams. At the same time, it puts the focus on the organisation's objectives and the cooperation within and between the development teams. 'I saw that the consultants started feeling more and more comfortable. They had their ownership back,' says Martijn.

### Completion phase

The moment when there was a great deal of improvement in the way in which the consultants were working together, the client chose to transfer the further development of the apps to a nearshore partner in Serbia. The development and test teams had to be phased out. Martijn: 'A new period started. The team had grown really close, we had been through a lot together and now it was disbanded. That introduced a new set of dynamics, which demanded a great deal of personal motivation: what can you still get out of it, how do you stay motivated and professional when 'your baby' is being outsourced and your colleagues are sent away one by one? My job was to keep a high morale among all the people who remained'. Particularly through individual coaching talks, Martijn managed to keep everyone motivated and professional until the end. 'Openness and transparency about the process and everyone's role in it is the key to success,' says Martijn.' In this way we were able to hand over the project to the nearshore partner and to guide the customer in the new form of cooperation.'



"Being part of ICT Group provides economies of scale', says Martijn. It also means broadening the potential clients that Improve focuses on. And the benefits are mutual. Improve offers its expertise to all parts of ICT Group."



**Martijn van de Haterd**  
Agile consultant at Improve Quality Services

#### Agile expertise group

'As an external consultant, it is normal not to be asked to carry out the easiest of assignments,' Martijn laughs, 'otherwise an organisation would not hire an external specialist. The assignment at the energy company revolved around the diversity of assignments in a relatively short period of ten months. I had to get a toxic team to work together, and we worked with different cultures - Dutch, Indian and Serbian - I had to on-board

the team in SAFe. In the next phase, we had to hand over the work to the next team, while keeping morale high and continuing to work professionally until the last person left.

After I spent a week in Serbia to hand over the work, my job was also done.'

Martijn sparred a lot with his colleagues at Improve to solve challenges in his assignments. 'We now have an agile expert group within Improve', he explains. 'During informal meetings we share our expertise, exchange experiences and think along with each other. That is how each of us keeps his 'agile knife' sharp. We do a lot of product development, are on top of innovations, provide training and guest lectures, and write blogs about our experiences and insights.'

Improve is a relatively small organisation with short lines of communication, also with its parent company, ICT Group.

'Being part of ICT Group provides economies of scale', says Martijn. 'It also means broadening the potential clients that Improve focuses on. And the benefits are mutual. Improve offers its expertise to all parts of ICT Group.'

Would you like to help a variety of companies translate technology into practice, just like Martijn? Check out our vacancies and internships: [vacancies and internships](#).

Would you like to know more about the latest developments within ICT Group? [Subscribe](#) to our newsletter.