

Case Study

Avanade uses agile to accelerate its digital and business transformation

Scrum and Nexus+ drive faster progress toward becoming an agile enterprise



Challenge: When traditional methods for implementing change aren't enough

It's never easy to implement major changes in a large organization. It takes a clear strategy and hard work on the part of many committed people. It also requires an approach that ensures the work gets done – not just talked about.

Avanade faced this challenge a couple of years ago with a companywide initiative focused on the vision and strategy for its business going forward into 2020. As part of this initiative, there was a significant push to shift to the “new” (new technologies, new approaches, digital transformation).

In the past, when embarking on a substantial change program, the company would typically take a traditional approach using steering committees who would meet monthly. These meetings tended to be high level and were not generally focused on execution. Given the scope and speed of the change that would be required for the new initiative to succeed, Avanade needed a different approach – one that could help its teams better collaborate in order to drive this shift. It needed a way to organize the teams working on the initiative (consisting of over 200 people from around the world, including business leadership) that would be flexible, ensure cross-functional participation and produce tangible results, adding value to the organization in a short amount of time.



Taking an agile approach was the logical choice. Not only did it meet the necessary criteria, but Avanade already had strong agile capabilities, which it was using with clients. So it made sense to apply that same approach internally. It also aligned with the company's strategic objective of delivering greater value to its clients by becoming a more agile enterprise overall.

Solution: Scrum framework focuses on delivering real work

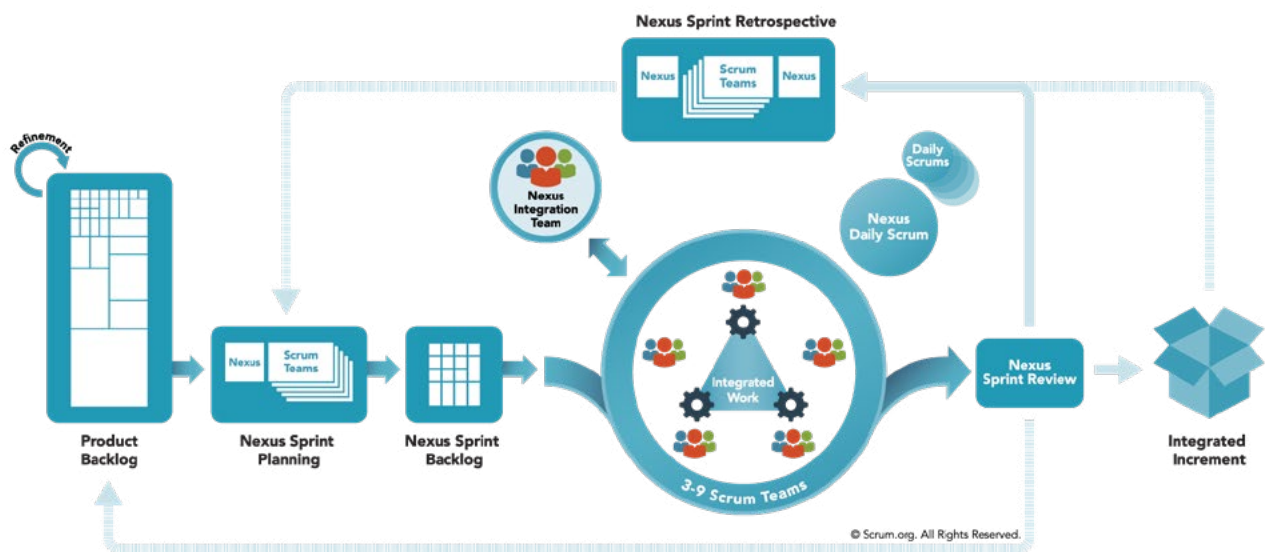
Agile is an umbrella term for delivery approaches that are highly collaborative, team based and iterative – meaning that you add value regularly, over short periods of time. Because of the flexibility needed for a complex project with many moving parts and people, Avanade decided that Scrum would be the best agile framework to use. Avanade is fortunate to have one of the world's largest contingents of Scrum.org licensed Professional Scrum Trainers™, so it was relatively straightforward to tap into the power of its in-house agile practice.

Due to the size of the organization, Avanade evolved to use the Nexus framework (see diagram). [Nexus](#) extends Scrum to guide multiple Scrum Teams on how they work together to deliver integrated work in regular cycles, referred to as Sprints. The Nexus framework allows the teams to come together, share work between teams, and manage and minimize dependencies. The Nexus at Avanade evolved into what is known as a Nexus+ because there were multiple autonomous Nexuses working together. Within the Nexus+ there were four Nexuses, each containing three or more Scrum Teams.

The Nexuses represented four key focus areas for Avanade:

- Markets and Clients
- People Ecosystem
- Platforms and Services
- Operating System

Nexus™ Framework



Nexus+ by the numbers

Avanade's Nexus+ implementation included the following elements:

- 1 Nexus+
- 4 Nexuses
- 13 Scrum Teams
- 130+ Development Team members
- 30+ stakeholders
- 5 agile coaches
- 6 Scrum Masters
- 1 Nexus+ Product Owner

Nexus+ uses the same events as Scrum, including Sprint Planning meetings, Sprint Reviews and Sprint Retrospectives. The Avanade teams started to use those events to move their work forward. There was also a Nexus Integration Team (NIT), which consisted of delegates from each Scrum Team and Nexus as well as all the agile coaches involved in this initiative. Additionally, the Product Owner, who was accountable for the initiative, and CEO met quarterly to review initiatives and make refinements in order to ensure alignment with the company's strategy.

"The NIT was mostly active in relation to training, providing tooling guidance and helping teams perform better," said Mica Syjuco, Professional

"The Nexus framework that Avanade adopted enabled us to execute our strategy faster and more effectively than if we had followed a more traditional implementation methodology."

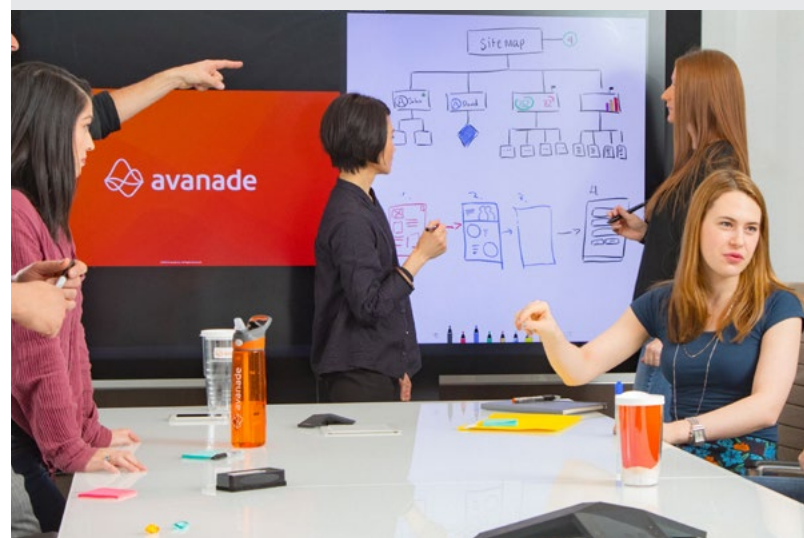
– Bernie Neville,
Global Business Management Lead, Avanade

Scrum Trainer and interim Global DevOps and Agile Coaching Talent Community Lead for Avanade. "Prior to kicking off our Nexus+ for the initiative, the NIT conducted Scaled Professional Scrum with Nexus and Professional Scrum Foundations training, as well as tooling trainings, for the different Nexuses and Scrum Teams. That included our CEO and other executives. We found the NIT very important to the success of this implementation.

"The Nexuses also held Call and Learns with the entire Avanade Global Executive Leadership team [about 250 executives] to gather their input and feedback to the proposed Scrum Team solutions, which was very helpful in terms of transparency and promoting adoption."

The language of Scrum

You may know that Scrum is a framework to support teams in complex product development. But did you know that a Product Owner is the role in Scrum accountable for maximizing the value of a product? Or that the Product Backlog is an ordered list of the work to be done to create, maintain and sustain a product. To get fluent in Scrum, check out the [Scrum.org](https://www.scrum.org) [Scrum Glossary](https://www.scrum.org/glossary).



Results: More people, more work, more speed

Since implementing the Nexus+, the teams have developed over 130 features, delivered nearly 1,000 work items and completed 16 Sprints.

“The Nexus framework that Avanade adopted enabled us to execute our strategy faster and more effectively than if we had followed a more traditional implementation methodology,” said Bernie Neville, global business management lead, Avanade.

“Through the Nexus framework and approach, we were able to design and implement changes to our business model involving a broad range of people from across our organization. With these changes we are better equipped to help our clients transform their businesses for the digital world, creating great experiences for their customers and employees. We’ve reduced costs, increased productivity, enabled collaboration and enhanced agility – and ultimately improved performance.”

The results of the Nexus+ approach spanned the business, including creating enhanced guidance for solutioning deals with clients and building a more client-centric culture by introducing more responsive tools for capturing client feedback.

In addition, Avanade realized the following results, which are helping the company achieve a “workplace experience transformation.”

- Implemented a modern, intelligent, employee-centric intranet site, creating a more personalized employee experience
- Released a new internal career portal, “Making Waves at Avanade,” to help empower employees to grow their careers at Avanade

- Created a new annual Innovation Summit, bringing together employees with clients and external thought leaders to showcase and grow their talents, skills and creativity to solve real-world problems
- Created a simplified workplace experience for business leaders by providing access to improved self-service tools and insights to drive operating and financial performance for their area of accountability

The Nexus+ approach has also helped Avanade become a more agile enterprise, which is now better positioned to help its clients deliver products to market more quickly, gaining greater value and improved customer satisfaction. Now that this initiative is complete, Avanade continues to practice Scrum, using the Nexus framework and sustaining its agile initiatives, including extending agile to other parts of its business such as its Marketing organization.

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. We are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Avanade has 36,000 professionals in 24 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com.

About Scrum.org

Based on the values and principles of Scrum and the Agile Manifesto, Scrum.org provides comprehensive training, assessments and certifications. Throughout the world, our solutions and community of Professional Scrum Trainers empower people and organizations to achieve agility through Scrum. Ken Schwaber, the co-creator of Scrum, founded Scrum.org in 2009 as a global organization, dedicating himself to improving the professionalism when solving complex problems by reducing the gaps so the work and work products are dependable.

