Agility and the Inconceivably Large

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Overview

Microsoft Visual Studio Tools for Office re-engineers their process
Like many large development teams we wanted to...

Ship more frequently
Have more predictability
“Be more agile”
Feature Crews are a scalable model based on agile principles.

A framework for large scale development which uses small interdisciplinary teams that deliver over multiple iterations. Deliverables must meet a common set of requirements.
Feature Crews decouple teams, features and code

“Feature Crews” are teams that own a feature
Each team works in a separate source tree
There is a tradeoff between crew isolation and visibility.

Teams are isolated but may be unaware of other work that may effect them. Leads and Management were the eyes and ears of individual crews.
“Quality Gates” are a common definition of “done” for the Division

A contract between teams giving and receiving code
Keeps main product tree in shippable state
Prevents deferred work
High cost of passing the gates

Several weeks required to pass the gates and integrate code
Adopt agile practices within each team

Daily standups
Burndowns
Backlogs – iteration and product
Release plan
Retrospectives
End of iteration demo
Customer representative
Continuous integration
Unit testing and some TDD
Resources

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See also:
Our paper in the Agile 2007 proceedings
Further notes on Feature Crews:
http://www.codeplex.com/BranchingGuidance/