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Big Room Planning at Icebreaker

Accelerating agile strategy execution



// Context

In mid-2020, iconic New Zealand company Icebreaker decided it needed to take a different approach to strategic planning. To better deliver its purpose, Icebreaker not only needed to accelerate strategy execution, but it also needed to include the ability to change course.

To achieve this, Icebreaker decided they needed a different approach – one that empowered its people to step up and make decisions.

// Challenge

Icebreaker reached out to Radically for help. In a short space of time, Radically designed and ran Icebreaker's first Big Room Planning (BRP) event.

How do we align our people around a common plan in a matter of days, not months?

BRPs are strategic planning days that are increasingly popular with organisations wanting to align their people around a common plan in a matter of days, not months.

In BRP, teams from across the company get together to develop a plan, usually for the quarter. It differs from traditional strategic planning in that the plan is created collaboratively by those accountable for delivering the plan.

"Before we met Radically we hadn't heard of Big Room Planning. It was a great approach to get us started with clarity, alignment and momentum."

- Denise Walker, Pillar Lead

// How does Big Room Planning work?

Why BRP?

By establishing context around business goals and strategic objectives, people know what we are trying to achieve and why.

BRP allows us to connect the dots, connect the people, connect the teams, and connect the work with the goals so that everyone knows what we are trying to achieve in the next quarter.

Before the event

Radically ran a series of workshops with Product Owner and Scrum Masters to ensure they understood what would be expected of them and were equipped with the right knowledge. They were given templates that helped clarify what they wanted to achieve, the targets they needed to hit, and how they would know that they have achieved them.

“The Radically team showed us that we didn't need to follow a cookie cutter approach to agile - our team could forge our own ways of working that made sense to us, and that was both inspiring and empowering for us.”

- Greg Smith, Chief Executive Officer

“I loved seeing people who wouldn't normally have had a voice work together to collectively deliver our strategy.”

- Nicola Spurdle, Pillar Lead

How the day runs

The day began with inspiring opening words from the Icebreaker CEO, Greg Smith, to set the mood and tone.

Starting with the highest priority objectives, each team then starts breaking the objectives down into smaller chunks. Work is then approximately allocated into a series of two-week Sprints across the quarter. The understanding is that this might change, but it is the backbone for the quarter. At this stage, the plan doesn't include the detail of how these objectives will be delivered - this is done through sprint planning. Radically played a key role in helping teams break down work into chunks that would each deliver value and could be specified, implemented, and tested within two weeks.

Immediate results

Icebreaker are already seeing the value being delivered, with alignment and strong governance around projects. When asked whether Icebreaker would do another BRP, Pillar Lead Denise Walker shared:

‘Yes, totally. We wouldn't go backwards. We're going to make lots of tweaks in the next fiscal year because we're really positive about the new mindset and Agile way of working.’

KEY OUTCOMES



Higher levels of employee engagement with increased satisfaction due to staff collaborating cross-functionally. Individuals involved in delivery valued being involved in the strategic planning.



Capability uplift through learning new facilitation skills and agile ceremonies.



Improved levels of enterprise knowledge through clear strategic objectives and alignment between projects selected and organisational resources.

// Find out more



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