Faced With The Dilemma Of Selecting A Full Agile Solution Or A Combined Project Management Solution, *Kverneland Group's Mechatronics* Chooses Clarizen And Is Overwhelmed By The Results

Mechatronics is a daughter company of *Kverneland Group*, an international holding company that works in the agricultural manufacturing industry. Kverneland Group was founded in 1879 and in 1983 listed in the Oslo Stock Exchange. The Group develops, produces and distributes agricultural machinery and services for the farming community. Kverneland factories are mostly located in Europe, while the Group manages marketing and sales companies in twenty countries.

Mechatronics develops and produces all the electronic systems that support the Kverneland Group machines produced in Europe. While Kverneland Group is composed of about 2500 employees worldwide, Mechatronics employs 52 people who are divided into three departments: R&D, Production and Technical Support.

Peter van der Vlugt is the R&D Manager at Mechatronics, responsible for R&D.

For years, Mechatronics has been managing its projects with informal communication and scheduling tools: an internal tool was used to manage group efforts; individual work plans were recorded separately by each person; and a separate time-tracking system was put in place for logging hours and invoicing clients. The mix of systems worked to some degree, until a year ago when the R&D department grew to more than twenty engineers making it nearly impossible for Mechatronics to manage all of its projects properly: deadlines started to slip, expenses started to increase and accuracy suffered. As a result, the search for an appropriate project management solution was launched.

Mechatronics created the search criteria of features and capabilities for managing the project's workflow and improving project delivery. Some features included: time-tracking, expense-tracking, billing, and planning. A decision matrix was prepared, listing all the requirements which were scored based on their added value, price to performance ratio, license cost per user, etc.

> *"We created a comprehensive matrix comparing 13 tools. It took us a few months to review everything until finally we narrowed down the options to three viable solutions: EasyProjects.net, Rally Software and Clarizen"*, says Peter.

At this point, Peter reports that Clarizen was in first place with the highest ranking score in the decision matrix. However, the team decided that the matrix was not enough to draw a final conclusion: they decided to conduct trial versions to test out the three solutions with real data.

"We got the trial license from all three solutions and started testing them. A month into testing, we dropped EasyProjects from the list. Their online response rate was too slow for us and we found that to be very undesirable", says Peter.

With EasyProjects out of the running, Peter and his team were left with two viable options: Rally Software, a strictly Agile project management tool, or Clarizen, a project management solution combining both Agile and conventional project management capabilities. At this point, Mechatronics spent some time deliberating: they practice Agile project management methodologies so they wanted to use an Agile solution, however they also desired flexibility and a solution that would not strictly limit them to Agile project management only.

"We were truly faced with a dilemma. We looked again at our project management structure and after much thought and consideration we concluded that although we certainly have Agile projects, we also have some customers who cannot deal with Agile; Clarizen was our best option", says, Peter.

The team presented their findings to management and in the second week of December 2010 Peter got a unanimous green light to purchase licenses for the R&D team, with the ultimate goal of going live the first week in January 2011. With only three weeks to set up the whole project management platform, Peter and his team hit the ground running and despite the tight schedule managed to reach their goal on time thanks to two critical success factors: Clarizen's intuitive interface and the ease-of-use in importing existing data into Clarizen.
Before Clarizen, Peter explains that the average development time for a project spanned between four to seven months, depending on the complexity. Today, Peter reports that Clarizen's time-tracking capabilities and instant feedback mechanisms have led to considerable improvements.

"Seven weeks into the new year and we are well on our way. We have set up about thirty projects in Clarizen in parallel and are already receiving positive feedback from our finance department, senior management team and our clients; I believe that with Clarizen our efficiency has improved by at least 25-30%." says Peter.

Improved project tracking and management has also had a positive impact on the company's finances.

"Now we stick to our plan, we work on time, and we work according to the budget that was agreed upon with the client. This opens up our schedule to take on more work with the same available resources, increasing our billable hours. The 25-30% improvement in efficiency directly translates into financial gains for our business", says Peter.

Currently, Mechatronics' use of Clarizen is limited to the R&D department. But Peter is so pleased with Clarizen's positive outcomes that he is advocating Clarizen to the rest of the company's departments in hopes of wider adoption.

"With Clarizen, we feel that we have taken a major step forward in managing our projects: we're running the projects more efficiently, we gain more time, and we gain more money. Also, our customers see that we are doing a better job than we used to, we

can even share our Roadmap or Gantt Views with them; I attribute all these improvements to Clarizen."