

# How Groupe Atlantic's Digital Services embraced Agility



**Please note:** Kerv Consult was recently rebranded from Monochrome Consultancy when it joined the Kerv Group. This project was delivered at a point when the team was known as Monochrome Consultancy.

**Group Atlantic (GA) have ambitions to build on their success and continue to grow. To achieve this, they are embracing modern approaches to deliver digital services and engaged Kerv Consult to develop an agile delivery methodology tailored to their unique organisation.**

## Overview

Group Atlantic (GA) are world leaders in thermal comfort with an ambition to continue to grow internationally. They aim to take thermal comfort into the future and make eco-efficient solutions as widely available and affordable as possible.



## The Challenge

GA had developed a new digital strategy and recognised the value of a modern delivery methodology to underpin this. Their key goal was to allow for projects and strategic platforms to deliver value quickly, reliably and with a customer-first approach.



## Background and Context

Group Atlantic have a great track record of delivery and to keep their edge they identified the ever-increasing importance of Digital and IT to underpin their business ambitions. With this in mind, GA appointed a Chief Digital Officer and have been embracing new ways of working to develop further competitive advantage.

GA have traditionally run projects well, however as part of their digital strategy GA identified an opportunity to embrace agility to respond faster to their customer's needs. This led to a desire to embrace a new delivery approach for both projects and the delivery of their strategic platforms.

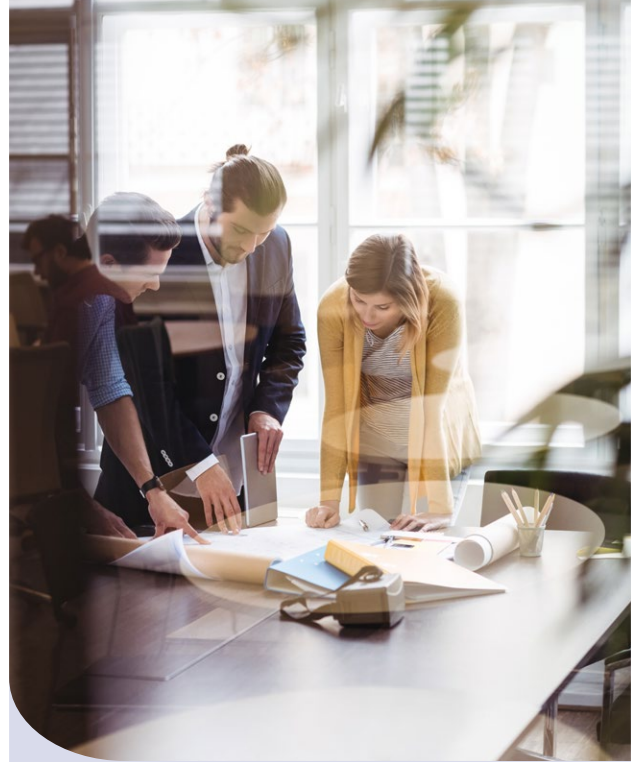
The desire was clear, the organisation had a clear appetite to deliver faster, more regular releases which were focussed on providing value iteratively for their customers.

Kerv Consult were engaged to support GA with this. Initially, before any contracts were discussed or orders were placed, we met with GA a few times to discuss their requirements and to outline an agile roadmap which set out steps to allow them to embrace more agile ways of working.

The approach was proposed as it allowed for the different parts of the organisation to embrace the new ways of working at different paces, depending upon their appetite for change.

This also allowed the organisation to move towards a product delivery model for their strategic platforms at the most appropriate times, either through projects or through logical contract renewal points.

Following definition of the roadmap, GA commissioned a project with us to deliver phase 1 with them. This covered delivery of an agile delivery methodology tailored specifically for their organisation.

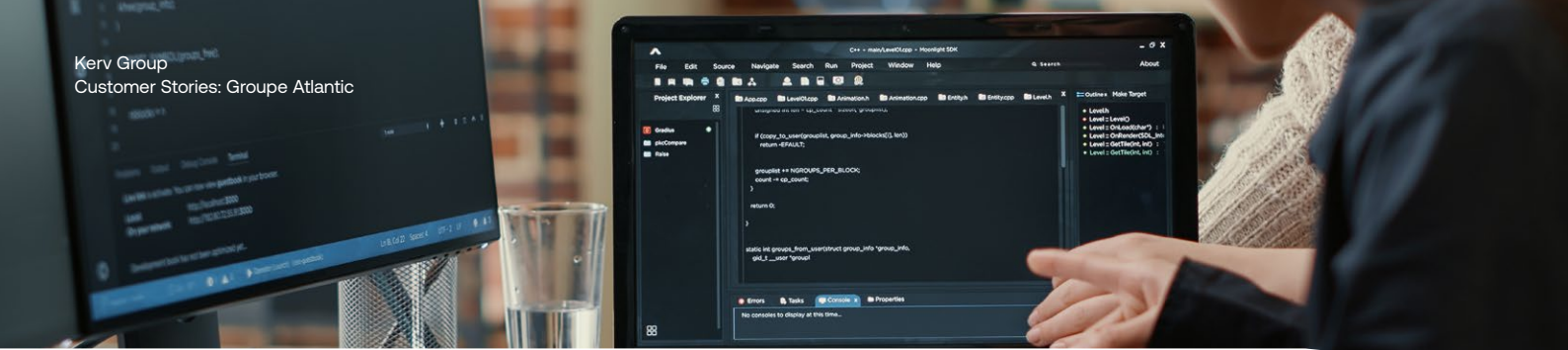


### This roadmap included three key phases:

- 1 Define an agile delivery methodology tailored to the GA business
- 2 Prove the methodology within digital services (and refine it iteratively)
- 3 Deploy the methodology more widely across the organisation

For context, GA is a well-established business with a strong track record of delivery. There were elements of great practice already within the team and so the measure of success was not to just deploy an 'off the shelf' approach from a textbook. Instead, the key aim was to develop a methodology which suited GA's business model, which combined elements of GA good practice, industry best practice, and application of specifically selected elements from a range of published agile methodologies.

**Put simply, goal was to define the approach which would add most value for GA.**



## The Solution

Across both organisations we commit to develop this methodology quickly, to allow it to be applied as soon as possible. To achieve this, we outlined a delivery plan which split the delivery into 6 sprints: one for mobilisation and five delivery sprints.

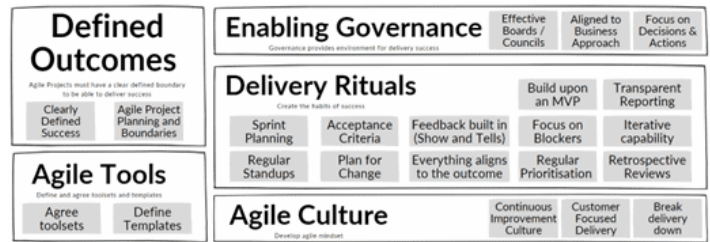


Figure 1 – The areas of focus for the Agile Methodology

### The delivery sprints were designed to cover key areas of an agile delivery methodology:

- Defined Outcomes**  
 Ensuring Agile Projects to have clear, defined boundaries to be able to both respond to change that adds customer value but also keep focus to allow the team to deliver successfully.
- Agile Tools and Templates**  
 We agreed to work with GA to propose options for agile delivery tools. This included defining templates for delivery.
- Enabling Governance**  
 Ensuring GA could plan effective governance boards and councils, which are aligned to the wider business approach with a focus on actions and decisions. This provides the environment for projects to succeed.
- Delivery Rituals**  
 Defining delivery rituals, such as sprint planning, stand ups, retrospectives and transparent reporting which would be adopted as habit by the delivery teams.
- Agile Culture**  
 Promoting an agile mindset and culture where delivery is broken into manageable chunks, there is clear focus on customer values and the teams adopt a continuous improvement culture.

The mobilisation sprint was structured to allow Kerv Consult to learn about the GA business and existing ways of working, whilst in parallel allowing the GA Digital team to mobilise the team they needed to support delivery of the methodology. This also enabled a short period to establish the ways of working for the engagement, an opportunity to demonstrate agile in practice.

The teams from both organisations quickly developed a collaborative relationship and this allowed for progress to begin at pace. In true agile fashion, we all agreed to work flexibly and focus on the most valuable areas at any given time. This collaboration also allowed us to work with the GA team to iterate and plan additional deliverables into these sprints, wherever it was identified it would provide a better outcome for GA.

The team quickly demonstrated flexibility by shifting the focus of the first delivery sprint from an agile mindset to delivery rituals, a decision driven by availability of some key GA resource who needed to be engaged in the mindset elements.



**The second sprint was a success, not only defining a wide range of delivery rituals which would benefit GA but also seeing the Kerv Consult and GA teams aligning on a proposal for the preferred agile toolset.** This put the team ahead of the target velocity and provided a strong position which allowed for additional scope to be accommodated within the engagement.

This sprint also highlighted an opportunity for an additional deliverable to be introduced into this phase of the project. Guides and reference materials which broke down each topic and can be navigable by both usage path (what you are trying to do) or by role (who you are and what is relevant to you).

The reference packs were agreed to be delivered in addition to the formal delivery methodology and would be developed in parallel across the sprints. The key aim of this was to ensure that not only were people told what they should do as part of the methodology, but they could also find relevant guidance on how to do it.

Once the 'What' and 'How' elements associated with the Delivery Rituals had become clear, the following sprint focussed on Agile Mindset. This defined roles and responsibilities tailored to the GA organisation and the digital strategy. This also focussed on some of the mindset elements like leveraging automation, embedding continuous improvement and focussing on value.

During the third sprint we again identified a new area where we could collaborate to help GA embrace agility. This time, the focus was not on the delivery itself, but rather on the wider approach to projects within Digital Services. As the agile delivery approaches became clear, many of the conversations turned towards the wider scope of Portfolio Management and how that leads into Initiation within an agile context.

Sprint four was focussed on Reporting and Governance, with delivery of templates as another focus area for this period. Therefore, the team developed the different approaches for reporting on projects such as burn-up and velocity tracking, defining the governance boards and approach for project and product-based delivery and developed a range of template based on best practice as planned.

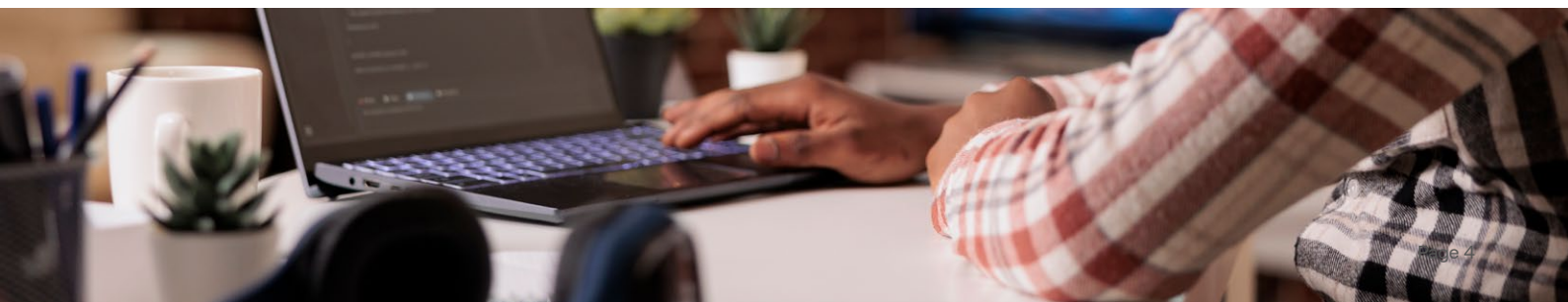
In addition to this, we agreed that as the project was ahead of plan, we would widen the scope of the methodology to cover the full initiation lifecycle, not just the delivery stages. This ranged from a new request or conceptual idea through to a clear project with a defined vision and scoped Epics ready to be delivered against iteratively. To include this, the team also developed an initiation flow which allowed GA to take a request through a triage, assessment of value and a full initiation and decision-making process.

Interestingly, this new addition was one of the more controversial parts of the methodology. The GA team already had a proven approach already defined for project initiation and so finding the balance between the best parts of this with an approach that drove more agility required more iterations. There were mixed feelings on the amount of change needed to drive the desired result. The resulting approach that the team took allowed them to work together to define the right approach for the organisation moving forwards.

To make this real, an additional deliverable above the delivery methodology document set was added. A project initiation guide was developed and documented which walks the team through the new approach and coupled with the delivery methodology meant that the entire lifecycle was covered.

This was a great example of team flexibility. Being able to recognise that something specific would add a lot of value for the organisation allowed the team to focus the right amount of effort in that direction.

**After all, being agile is having the ability to respond to change in the right way!**



One of the other advantages of this is that the defining outcomes focus area had been much more extensively covered than originally planned due to the increased focus on initiation.

At this point the GA team felt confident in the approach and did not need Kerv Consult to support them to mobilise a project with the new methodology. Instead, it was agreed that providing further useful templates and examples would better help the team and so Sprint five was delivered with this in mind.

The final key deliverable for Sprint five was a communication approach to embed the methodology across the organisation. We developed, and jointly agreed, a phased plan that underpinned embedding the methodology across the digital teams, then gained executive buy-in before it is deployed across wider business areas.

## More with less

At this point we had jointly covered everything that was agreed and introduced additional deliverables to help GA best embrace new agile ways of working and had done so with a full sprint to spare.

We agreed that the right approach was to declare the initial phase of the project complete early and stand down the team one sprint ahead of planned, with the GA digital management team ready to apply the methodology for new projects.

The resulting collaboration between the teams, we delivered everything that was agreed and a range of additional elements and finished 17.5% early and 15% under the agreed budget.

The real success of the project was the team collaboration which built on the great experience that GA had whilst introducing new agile ways of working. The core team embraced this sometimes challenging, yet extremely enjoyable, piece of work.



## The Benefits

GA now have a formal delivery methodology. Previously the team had pockets of great practice which allowed for individuals to achieve without always following a standard approach. Now the team will be applying one common method and approach for all projects and the management of their strategic platforms so the leadership can expect more consistency.

The GA team have already recognised how this methodology will drive closer engagement with their customers. The team are passionate about their customers and the success of the business. This methodology sets out roles, responsibilities and techniques which allows them to work even more closely and focus more heavily on driving customer value. It is much easier to have conversations and set expectations with customers when working against a defined methodology than when working in a more free-form way.

It is often difficult to tangibly quantify the benefits of a delivery methodology as every project is different, with different timescales, benefits and costs. However, the team now have the ability to break projects down into smaller delivery activities and start to release capability earlier, to release value to the business at a faster pace and iterate on it. That key outcome, set out from the start is the benefit that GA were driving for.

Truly adopting an agile mindset is a key enabler to realising the benefits of this change as cultural change is a key part for any transformation. We are confident that the combination of the new strategic direction for digital services, the strong and capable leadership within GA and the team's focus on customer value sets the organisation up to drive real value by embracing agility.



## The Future

GA has a solid foundation and have taken a key step into their agile transformation roadmap. Kerv Consult have been requested to remain a part of the GA agile transformation, supporting the next steps by providing input and advice on an ad hoc basis into the future stages.

One of the biggest successes that we recognise as an organisation is that GA are wanting to take the next steps towards agility on their own. That demonstrates that the agile mindset has been embedded within the leadership and transformational change always best sticks when it is driven from within.

We are confident that the team will continue to drive more value from their projects, but we are always willing to help as required. GA and Kerv Consult have developed a strong working relationship over the past few months and we are very much looking forward to helping GA achieve their goals across any other projects as they move into the future.



### Get in touch with us

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