

# Digitalize processes and speed up development projects



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on part of the employees be overcome?

## Collaboration Tool Facilitates Communication

In an expert talk, Dr. Torsten Eckardt, Senior Manager PMO and Innovation at Hermes Arzneimittel GmbH, tells the DIGITAL PROCESS INDUSTRY editors how the planning of development projects can benefit from the use of agile planning and collaboration software and how it can contribute to the optimization of decision-making processes in the current pandemic situation when project team members are working from different locations.

You already plan your development and organizational projects with a traditional project management software. Now you have implemented an agile planning tool which serves to optimize processes during the pandemic situation. What

**A**midst the market entry of technology groups like Google, Amazon, Facebook, IBM, and Apple, which want to change the business model of the pharmaceutical and health sector, the traditional pharmaceutical sector has come under pressure for change. Innovation processes must be optimized and flexible structures must be established. The digitalization of production processes, and also that of information and decision-making processes in particular, are important milestones on the way to a strong market position.

Numerous companies in the pharmaceutical sector are still at an early stage of their digitalization process. Others rely on agile tools on the path they pursue, as the following example will show. The present corona pandemic has shown that coordination and decision processes which are not digitally assisted confront companies with huge problems. Instead of making coordination in person, teams now increasingly have to coordinate their work in virtual meetings. Instead of being set out in phone calls, on paper, or in a local file, information must be manageable in a flexible way and it must be made available in a

central board which is easily accessible for all persons involved. But even after having overcome this pandemic situation, the digitalization of information and decision-making processes will continue to gain in importance since team members or decision makers who are to be included in the information process are often geographically dispersed or work from home.

**„Writing in a Kanban board is no substitution for personal communication.“**

DR. TORSTEN ECKARDT,  
HERMES ARZNEIMITTEL

In such times, the management of virtual teams and the briefing of stakeholders pose a huge challenge. How does communication work among people who are spatially and chronologically separated? How can managers make sure that employees who work at home are up to date in terms of their projects, tasks, and communication with colleagues and customers? How can digital change be successful and how can internal resistance



DR. TORSTEN ECKARDT, Senior Manager PMO and Innovation at Hermes Arzneimittel  
Bildquelle: alle Planta

could be a possible benefit of these tools after the pandemic situation has come to an end?

**Torsten Eckardt:** We have implemented PLANTA project in 2014, ahead of the pandemic situation, to be able to better manage and prioritize our development projects, basic load projects, and organizational projects in a software-aided manner. This way, both the detailed planning of projects and the overview of available resources could be optimized. We are now able to develop new products faster and with greater cost efficiency. We plan 75 percent of our projects using PLANTA *project* and have now implemented the agile planning tool PLANTA pulse by the same manufacturer. We increasingly employ it in project management to enhance collaboration in our strategy and development projects. In the current pandemic situation, this tool is particularly suited for web-based (mobile)

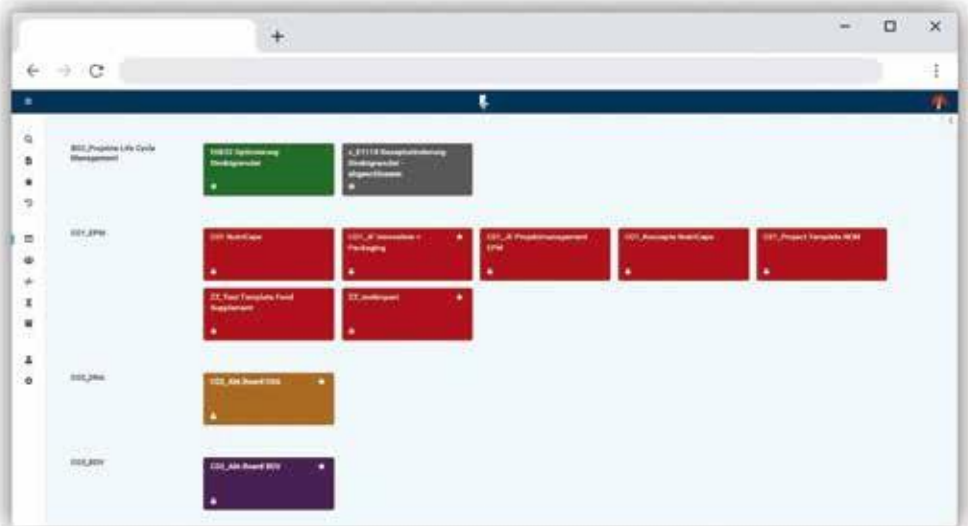
**“Everyone wants to work agilely. However, it is difficult to change established rigid ways of communication and the communication culture that goes along with it.”**

monitoring of strategic projects in which the substantial team members work from different locations. We plan 25 percent of our projects using PLANTA pulse.

Both tools offer major benefits - also beyond the crisis: more transparency and greater speed in project planning as well as better informational content, the currentness of information is the same for all project team members.

**What problems go along with the integration of an agile planning tool if planning was merely done in a traditional way before and how did you solve these problems?**

**Torsten Eckardt:** The new planning method comes with greater speed and increased currentness of information for all project team members. One cannot rely on everybody



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to have received the current information - the human factor: Writing in a Kanban board does not substitute personal communication. Some people must still get used to the fact that they can keep themselves up to date via the board. All persons involved in the project benefit from frequent update meetings via PLANTA pulse. For people who have never worked in an agile manner before, the new planning method will not be easy. However, one quickly gets used to it in practice.

**Which knowledge/skills are required for the implementation of an agile planning method?**

**What requirements must be met by employees and colleagues who are to work with this method?**

**Torsten Eckardt:** As a PLANTA pulse system owner and administrator, I am the head of the project management office. The advantage here is that everything remains in one hand and new boards are created in line with a clear structure. What I brought in was a basic training in project management. The new tool demands more individual flexibility as well as responsibility from team members who work with it. The commitment is good. Everybody wants to work agilely but it remains difficult to change previously established rigid communication paths.

**What role does the company management play in your success with the new planning tool?**

**Torsten Eckardt:** It plays a particularly central and supporting role. By promoting the new planning concept, the management contributes to the success of its implementation. The company management is highly motivated since it can now get an overview of the status of projects much quicker. All persons involved are seamlessly provided with the required information and thus decision-making processes are accelerated.

#### Further questions .....

### What are collaboration tools?

Collaboration tools facilitate agile task planning by means of so-called Kanban boards and contribute significantly to the improvement of communication and of coordination processes, especially in dispersed project teams. If the company already uses traditional project management software, some of these tools can be reintegrated in the existing project planning environment in the form of a hybrid solution. Used agilely only, a collaboration tool facilitates communication among team members and enables them to record virtual coordination results and tasks centrally and make them available to all team members. Changes made to tasks and task progress are immediately visible. The team members are perfectly connected and everyone is up-to-date, even if they get online at different times and from different locations.