

CASE STUDY

A Mission Impossible Made Possible



Who?

Danish publishing house, since 1770. Based in Copenhagen. Fiction, nonfiction, traditional and digital formats. Net turnover (2013) DKK 858 million. 500 employees.

The Background

The publishing house operates the country's largest department for educational books, selling to every school and academic institution in Denmark. The Educational Books division needed a new and fully functional e-commerce portal on short notice. As we were already an integrated partner of the company, the internal IT department turned to us for help.

The Challenge

Given that the project had yet to be specified in every detail and we were presented with a more than tight, fixed deadline of 3 months to deliver a total of 5000+ hours, we jointly needed to muster

all our adaptability, creativity, and solution orientation to tackle what initially seemed like 'mission impossible.'

The Solution

In a matter of hours, a dedicated group of people were communicating across borders to figure out how to make the impossible possible. In a matter of days, we were hard at work. The team decided to put in an extra day a week for a period of two months while activity levels peaked. In addition to that, we were able to pull in extra manpower from our PK team's resource pool. And we made sure to assign isolated tasks and modules with little demand of domain knowledge to the new developers added from the resource pool, to save time we would otherwise spend getting them up to speed.

The project was planned in such a way that the lack of available requirements could be addressed during the development. The rather large devel-

opment team was broken in to groups, to allow us to develop modules in parallel. This posed an extra risk, but provided us with the flexibility to engage more developers and plan testing and deployment phases alongside the specification of the as-yet-undefined modules.

We adopted methods of extreme programming to ensure quality despite the ambitious goals. Our methods included programming in pairs, unit and peer testing, and frequent releases. We performed unit tests at the earliest stages and integration tests in multiple stages of merging components. This meant that the majori-

ty of the issues we faced along the way could be tracked and rectified before we reached the integration phase.

The Result

This project is a brilliant example of what can actually be achieved when clients and service providers join forces and create a truly collaborative environment. We met the deadline and got glowing remarks from our customer. They had a bumper season with the new portal and it is still going strong. ■