



# Profiles in Appian Excellence: ThetaBank's Rapid Delivery Teams and Empowered Product Owners

To meet corporate strategic goals for enabling innovative digital channels to customers and employees, ThetaBank\* needed to support high velocity development and delivery- releasing as frequently as once per week. They drove decision making capabilities into squads, delivery teams consisting of IT and business product and process owners. This enables agile teams to make decisions quickly and iterate frequently without burdening business partners.

"We deploy on a weekly basis to multiple business lines and strive to track this velocity as best we can. We believe in very small, incremental improvements. We'd rather fail 'small' in a weekly release that can be easily fixed than fail 'big' with one that could significantly impact business operations", says the VP of Digital Transformation.

### ThetaBank's Appian journey.

ThetaBank began their Appian Journey in the mid-2010's with a single business line and focused on technical debt reduction. Since then, they have gradually grown their portfolio of applications and expanded into other lines of business. Today, Appian is used for the most mission critical applications in every area of their business with more than 75% of employees managing at least some of their workflow through Appian.

### Agile teams overview.

ThetaBank has 7 agile teams that support nearly 50 applications across all lines of business. These teams are purposely small (3-4 individuals in size) and heavily rely on agile delivery practices. For example, they emphasize delivering small chunks of work quickly, which reduces risk and delivers value more quickly.








**Industry:**  
Financial Services

**Number of employees:**  
5,000-10,000

**Number of branches:**  
+500

\* ThetaBank is a pseudonym case profile.

				
<b>Product Owner</b>	<b>Architect</b>	<b>Team Lead</b>	<b>Developer</b>	<b>Test Manager</b>
<b>Description</b>				
Represents the business and owns business requirements	Guides the design of the application	Guards agile practices of the application	Configures application features	Defines the test specifications and leads acceptance testing
<b>Purpose</b>				
"Build it the right way"	"Build it the right way"	"Build it fast"	"Build it"	"Validate it"

These teams seek to get business leaders minimum viable product capabilities really quickly and then iterate from there. It's better to fail or make changes in this early stage than after an application has been created. "Our delivery teams are structured like a special forces team: they're small, self-contained and cross-trained. They're built for speed and are also non-hierarchical: the most junior member of the team will review the programming of the most senior. This enables teams to learn, continually improve and deploy quickly".

### Product owner role and responsibilities.

ThetaBank uses product owners to help provide an end-to-end perspective on capabilities. While they ultimately report into business groups, they work closely with development and delivery teams.

The product owner is the subject matter expert (SME) on existing systems that support a business unit. They are responsible for maximizing the value of the product resulting from the development team's work. They are also responsible for understanding the business' strategy and associated capabilities needed to deliver on that strategy.

"This context helps our teams proactively identify new capabilities for our business partners. Because the product owner understands the connection between systems, strategy and capabilities, they're able to rapidly identify interdependencies between systems and mitigate potential development roadblocks before they impact outcomes."



#### Select the right product owner.

##### Responsibilities:

- Clearly expressing what the business needs.
- Prioritizing requirements to best achieve goals and missions.
- Ensuring that the requirements are visible, transparent, and clear to all, and shows what the team will work on next.
- Ensuring the team will understand requirements to the level needed.

##### Characteristics:

- Authority to make prioritization decisions.
- Availability to work with the development team on a regular basis.
- Deep understanding of the business domain (ideally a member of the business team).
- The product owner is one person. They may represent the desires of a committee, but the development team needs a single person to make fast decisions throughout the process.



We drive accountability through a Product Owner who is ultimately responsible for making sure their line of business' needs are addressed quickly and effectively.

VP, Digital Transformation



A critical responsibility of the Product Owner is maintaining delivery momentum by focusing clearly on MVP objectives and keeping each deliverable small and focused.

VP, Digital Transformation

## Lessons learned.



**Adapt quickly to changing dynamics.** “The productivity of our low-code delivery teams came into sharp focus during the early stages of the pandemic, when both our low-code delivery teams and traditional delivery teams worked on similar projects under significant time pressure. In the end, our low-code delivery teams were able to deliver twice the functionality with half the total bodies”.



**Product owners enable proactivity.** “Our delivery teams partner with product owners, who report within business groups. They not only understand existing systems within a group, but also the capabilities needed to drive their strategy. This enables our delivery teams to proactively identify and create new capabilities.”



**Small agile teams increase speed.** “Our delivery teams are structured like a special forces team: they’re small (3-4 on average), self-contained and cross-trained. They are built for speed and are non-hierarchical: the most junior team member will review the programming of the most senior. This allows the team to learn and deploy quickly.”



Working with my development leads, the Product Owner plots the development course of the project, frequently having to navigate around technical challenges or contractions, but delivering incremental capabilities at each release and not letting the backlog accumulate. Otherwise, the bigger the release, the bigger the risk.

VP, Digital Transformation

**Think you have an Appian best practice? Interested in sharing it with the Appian Community? Email us at [bestpractices@appian.com](mailto:bestpractices@appian.com) to schedule a research call with our team.**