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Meidensha Corporation

Meiden opens Digital Lab, a co-creation hub that employs Agile approach

Meidensha Corporation (Meiden) has launched the Digital Lab, a new co-creation hub at its Numazu Works in Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture. The new lab makes latent demand hypotheses and adopts the Agile approach[1] to develop products that meet such demand.

The lab is designed to spark co-creation by not only Meiden Group employees, but also clients and partner companies, and give birth to new products and services based on value creation.

Background

The conventional product development process uses the Waterfall product development method. Each stage－planning, design, implementation and testing－ shifts to the next one after meeting necessary requirements. But in a world where it is becoming more difficult to make future projections, companies are increasingly required to provide products and services that can respond to rapid changes in clients' needs and the market environment.

To deal with this situation, Meiden has introduced the Agile approach for product development. This involves members who play different roles teaming up and carrying out tasks ranging from planning to testing in a short period of time, and repeating the process over and over.

The Agile approach is used at the Digital Lab. In general, "agile" refers to the concept of swift software development. Meiden has combined different concepts, such as design thinking, with the Agile approach. Meiden will repeat search and adaptation, and thus provide products and services to meet clients' needs in the changing business environment.

Meiden,under its current Mid-term Management Plan 2024, is pushing ahead with sustainability management based on environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, in addition to deepening ambidexterity management. At the Digital Lab, the

company will implement the Agile approach in creating value, while proactively developing digital human assets who can adapt to this approach. By doing so, Meiden aims to supply products and services that can help decarbonize society and strengthen its resilience.

Outline of Digital Lab
Digital Lab is the first hub set up by Meiden to help realize a new workstyle aimed at producing tangible results through teamwork. The lab has several areas with different purposes that can help create new value.

- Design thinking area
  Design thinking, which helps identify issues and their solutions, is the first step toward value creation. The area has equipment that support this process.

- Scrum development area
  The area is situated at the center of the lab. Meiden's Agile approach adopts "scrum," a method that help teams deliver value incrementally in a collaborative way. Three rooms are allocated to put this development method into practice. The participants repeatedly develop a minimum viable prototype in a short period of time.

- Open area
  An open area is located adjacent to the Scrum development area. It can be flexibly used for diverse communication purposes, including group activities and casual, unscheduled exchanges. To help people relax, the area has potted "symbol trees," as well as a projector with a large screen that can be used for events, including small seminars and lecture meetings.

We also have an area where individual staff members can concentrate on their own share of work as part of team activities. Digital Lab takes into account the fact that many people now work both at home and at the office, and provides a space that allows them to have diverse workstyles and options.

Photo 1: Employees gather in the open area
Photo 2: Open areas with potted trees, desks and chairs

Future prospects

Meiden will do its best to create new value through co-creation by working together with clients, partner corporations, local communities and governments, using the Digital Lab as a hub for implementing the Agile approach. The lab will be used to help the Agile approach to take root in the Meiden Group in addition to the existing Waterfall development process, as well as a hub to enhance the digital literacy of all employees, including rookies, and thus accelerate the development of digital human assets.

Under the corporate philosophies of "illuminating a more affluent tomorrow" and "for customer peace of mind and satisfaction," the Meiden Group aims to grow with society, become a company that is needed by society and that can meet the challenge of creating new technologies and value.

*1: One of methodologies to develop software. It involves considerable repetitions of a limited development cycle.