

# SASKTEL BOOSTS EFFICIENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS TO CUSTOMERS WITH LEANKIT



LEARN HOW AN IT SERVICES DELIVERY GROUP AT SASKATCHEWAN'S LEADING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER IS USING LEANKIT TO INCREASE AGILITY

## INDUSTRY

Telecommunications

## HEADQUARTERS

Regina, Saskatchewan

## DEPARTMENTS

Professional Services, Sales, Operations Support

## TOPICS

Kanban/Visual Work Management, Enterprise Agility

## LEANKIT CUSTOMER SINCE

2015

A CASE STUDY PRESENTED BY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **BOOSTING EFFICIENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS**

Prior to using LeanKit, the Professional Services department experienced high levels of stress and frustration with their existing work management and communication tools. Using a wide variety of tools required heavy administrative effort that often culminated in miscommunication and delays.

By adopting LeanKit, the department and their stakeholders gained the work visibility and Kanban functionality they needed to foster more accurate, efficient communication. As a result, Professional Services has improved their responsiveness to customers and created a healthier, more connected team culture.

# THE STATE OF TELECOM

## **AN EVOLUTION IS CALLING**

To stay competitive in today's digital age, telecom companies around the world need to modernize and simplify — from the products and services they offer, to their corporate structures and operations.

Companies with roots in the telegraph era are aiming to become more lightweight and agile. Many enterprises are shedding technologies they've picked up after a century's worth of evolving to serve their customers. The boldest organizations are also finding ways to change how they work, so they can deliver value faster.

In many aspects, this is the lean frontier for enterprise telecom. Many of their strongest competitors were founded in the digital age, and, in many ways, are already running lean organizations. Compared to their enterprise counterparts, they offer a smaller menu of digitized services. They also tend toward operating models and processes that enable agility and faster time-to-market. All of that has contributed to growing market share for digital-native companies and has created a challenging landscape for enterprise telecom.

To defuse these competitive threats — and to continue to meet the changing expectations of consumers — traditional telecom companies must evolve once more. Streamlining their products and services is only one part of the evolution. How do enterprise telecom companies break through the complexity and transform how they work? At SaskTel, teams within the Professional Services department found their answer in LeanKit.

# ABOUT SASKTEL

## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THEIR WORLD

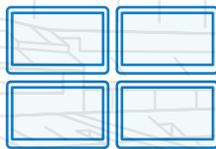
Founded in 1908, SaskTel is the leading Information and Communications Technology (ICT) provider in Saskatchewan (SK), with more than \$1.2 billion in annual revenue and approximately 1.4 million customer connections. SaskTel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries offer a wide range of ICT products and services, including competitive voice, data and internet services, wireless data services, maxTV services, data center services, cloud-based services, security monitoring services, advertising services, and international software and consulting services. SaskTel and its wholly-owned subsidiaries have a workforce of approximately 4,000 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs).

## SASKATCHEWAN'S TECH MARVEL

With a long history of working on high-profile projects, SaskTel added the new Mosaic Stadium to its list in 2017. At 33,000 seats, Mosaic is the fifth-largest stadium in Canada. The multipurpose venue, located in Regina, SK, is the new home for the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Riders. SaskTel installed Mosaic's entire communications network infrastructure, which includes the world's first-ever permanent deployment of MatSing Antennas inside of a stadium.

### MOSAIC STADIUM: POWERED BY SASKTEL

*The technical teams within the Professional Services group used LeanKit to manage their part of this massive project, giving them the visibility they needed to stay on target with their project timelines.*



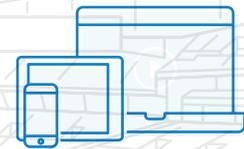
**415**

TV screens



**700+**

SaskTel Select Wi-Fi access points



**16,000**

people can stream HD videos in unison



**400**

simultaneous video broadcasts



**7.5x**

the cell phone capacity of the old stadium



**36 km**

of fiber cables

# CASE STUDY PROFILE

## Professional Services at SaskTel

### ABOUT THE TEAM

The Professional Services department is an IT services delivery group responsible for implementing SaskTel products and services. Simply put, they enable Saskatchewan-area businesses to operate with the latest information and communications technology. Within the Professional Services department are several teams that coordinate customer-facing engagements to install a variety of systems.

### WHO WE INTERVIEWED

We sat down with three representatives from Professional Services to learn how they're using LeanKit to improve the way they work, in order to better serve SaskTel customers.



“Using LeanKit has reduced stress across the team and helped us adopt a mindset of shared accountability.”

**KHURSHID AKBAR**

*Portfolio/Project Manager*  
Professional Services



“The biggest benefit to using LeanKit so far has been being able to see all of the work and get an overview of the entire project.”

**HANNAH KAZYMYRA**

*Program Administrator*  
Professional Services



“My managers are able to focus on the issues, not where the work is at. It's been a godsend.”

**JOEL NARGANG**

*Director*  
Professional Services

## THE CHALLENGE: AN UNSUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

The Professional Services division at SaskTel were using a variety of tools to plan, track, and share information about their projects: a mix of spreadsheets, collaboration software, a master physical wall calendar, and a master online calendar. As capable as these tools were at storing information, maintaining consistent information across multiple tools required significant administrative overhead from team members. Collecting and analyzing the right information from these tools was an equally time-consuming task.

For example, when the team would receive a revised timeline for a customer engagement, one team member would update the online calendar, another would update the wall calendar, and others would copy the same information into spreadsheets and collaboration tools. The system required so much administrative upkeep that the department hired two people for the sole purpose of updating their online and physical wall calendars.

Despite their considerable effort and investment of resources, the team could only communicate as fast as their fragmented toolset would allow.

Managers had to chase team members

down for accurate information, and team members had to chase each other down to get the right information. Because they were relying on spreadsheets, which were often outdated, they had no sense of how much work was going through their group.

According to Khurshid Akbar, Portfolio/Project Manager for Professional Services, the environment was high-stress, and the system was unsustainable: “The managers didn’t know what was happening on a customer engagement unless they were involved every day with each of their reports,” he said. Adding to the tension was the fact that team members had no reliable way of showing that they were constantly overloaded with work.

***“The managers didn’t know what was happening on a customer engagement unless they were involved every day with each of their reports.”***

## A CHAIN REACTION OF DELAYS

The challenges faced by Professional Services caused a chain reaction of frustration and delays beyond the department, extending to the group's internal stakeholders (like Sales and Operations Support) and ultimately, to Sasktel customers.

The impact was most apparent when the team was working on major onsite installations, such as a multi-story hotel. If a customer would ask sales for an update on their project, sales would contact Professional Services, who would then have to wait for a response from an onsite team member.

Meanwhile, the clock kept ticking on the customer's request.

Additionally, if a member of Professional Services was onsite and had completed his or her task, there wasn't a quick way to notify the next person (or team) that they were needed on the job. And although the delays were palpable to the team, there was no way to fully understand the harmful effects the delays and bottlenecks were having on the entire Professional Services system (i.e., their entire value stream). All of that contributed to team that was disconnected, frustrated, and prone to unhealthy conflict.

*Since Professional Services works on billable hours, ultimately, their success hinges upon their ability to quickly respond to all of their customers — both internal and external.*

The delays added up. Projects exceeded their estimated timeframes, causing distrust and impatience between Professional Services and their internal stakeholders, as well as SaskTel customers. The team wanted to improve and frequently identified solutions, but they often scuttled their ideas to the back-burner to fight the day-to-day fires.

Since Professional Services works on billable hours, ultimately, their success hinges upon their ability to quickly respond to all of their customers — both internal and external. The team needed a more agile way of working in order to respond quickly to stakeholders and meet customer expectations.

## THE SOLUTION: KANBAN AND LEANKIT

After joining SaskTel in January 2015, Akbar eagerly stepped into the role of helping Professional Services find a better way of working. Having used LeanKit in a previous position, and knowing the inherent benefits of Kanban for distributed teams, he believed that getting his team on the right path began with the dual adoption of the Kanban framework and LeanKit.

In April 2015, Akbar started a small pilot program of 20 LeanKit licenses. His initial goals were simple: Get all of the information that the team needed from multiple tools into one tool (LeanKit) and start showing the team how powerful it could be to visualize their work (Kanban). “We chose LeanKit for its Kanban functionality,” Akbar recalled.

*“They won’t work on any work item unless it’s in LeanKit.”*

He knew that, in addition to the tool’s enterprise Kanban features like flexible process mapping, WIP limits, and roll-up metrics and reporting, LeanKit’s capability to connect cards on multiple boards would allow his team to show three levels of work (i.e., the portfolio, project, and task levels of work). This would give the team the level of project progress and reporting insight that they needed to be more informed, more accurate, and more agile.

### **RIISING ADOPTION**

Team by team, LeanKit adoption has spread across Professional Services and beyond: About two years after Akbar’s initial pilot program, the company is up to 145 LeanKit licenses, used by the Professional Services teams, as well as members of Sales and Operations support. It’s become so ingrained in the group’s culture and way of working that, as Akbar put it, “They won’t work on any work item unless it’s in LeanKit.”

## THE BENEFITS: A MORE SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

Joel Nargang, Director, Professional Services, shares Akbar's sentiments: "We're hooked on LeanKit," he says.

As a director, one of the biggest benefits seen by Nargang is the workflow consistency that LeanKit provides across teams. Before LeanKit, there was no consistent process for the delivery groups. Now that every team is working on LeanKit boards that show the same workflow, it's much easier for Nargang and other managers or directors to consume high-level project information — like the number of orders and activities, which groups are working on what work, and capacity forecasting for those groups — even when the delivery groups are working on different technologies.

***“Reducing the stress of the folks on my team — that’s the most enjoyable part of my job.”***

When asked about how LeanKit helps the team make more informed decisions, Nargang said this: "The data's there. It's trusted, and you can see what's going on." Nargang says that this has contributed to a rise in accountability among team members since using LeanKit.

One of the things that Akbar enjoys most about his management position is the important role he plays in making work easier for his team. "Reducing the stress of the folks on my team — that's the most enjoyable part of my job," says Akbar. He credits LeanKit with giving him and the rest of the Professional Services team the visibility that they needed to reduce their stress and create a healthier team culture.

For Akbar, the visibility helps him see his team's capacity so they're not assigned too much work and don't become overloaded. It also helps him manage a sustainable flow of work. For the team, the benefits of visibility extend beyond knowing what each other is working on and having a personal impact on the work they do. "How do people get stressed? When they don't know whether the job they have done is complete yet or not," says Akbar. The LeanKit boards give them that information and more.

Nargang sums up the impact that LeanKit has had on Professional Services in this way: "LeanKit has been a godsend. My managers are able to focus on the issues, not where the work is at." All of this allows the department to enjoy their jobs and reliably deliver on customer requests, two critical aspects that enable SaskTel to continue doing what it does best for customers: connecting people to their world.

## THE BENEFITS: HELPING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES THRIVE

Here's a quick overview of how Professional Services is using LeanKit to overcome its previous challenges and help them achieve greater agility, improve responsiveness, and organically create a healthier, more connected team culture.

| Challenge   | How LeanKit Helps the Team  |
|---|---|
| Administrative overhead for managers, caused by the need to manually input similar information in different tools                   | A single, shared tool to store, track, and communicate project information that's quick-to-learn and easy-to-use — by managers and team members alike.  |
| Administrative overhead caused by maintaining a complex physical and online calendaring system                                      | The team replaced their calendaring system with LeanKit, resulting in the successful redistribution of two employees whose roles were to update the calendars. Result: These employees are working elsewhere at SaskTel in roles that are a better fit for their strengths and talents. |
| Delayed handoffs during onsite installations  | Team members working on an onsite implementation (and away from their laptop) make instant updates to their LeanKit cards using LeanKit on their mobile devices.  |
| Multi-layered process for responding to customer inquiries, causing longer wait times for customers who contacted Sales for updates | By looking at the team's LeanKit boards, Sales can see the progress of a customer engagement without having to track down someone in Professional Services. This has helped them handle customer inquiries promptly and with more accurate status information.                          |
| Being in danger of working beyond the customer estimate   | Cards and custom fields help onsite workers keep their estimates in front of them while they're on the job, so they know what's expected and when they're at risk of exceeding an estimate.   |
| Lack of time/bandwidth to implement improvement efforts   | The team visualizes their ideas for improvement as cards on a LeanKit board, which helps the ideas stay top of mind and become implemented more quickly.  |
| Teams consistently working over capacity, without a way to demonstrate it   | Managers know their team's workload. Each technical team has their own board, so they know their own capacity and have a shared understanding of how much capacity other teams have.  |
| A disconnected and frustrated team that was prone to unhealthy conflict   | Visualizing their work, and seeing how their work impacts the entire value stream, has helped the team organically form a new culture — one of shared responsibility and accountability toward each other.  |
| Inability to see big-picture progress or anticipate upcoming work   | Managers and team members can connect cards across different boards, providing roll-up status visibility of projects and a quick view into how much work is done, in progress, and left to do on a project.   |

## A LOOK AHEAD

### **WHAT'S NEXT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES?**

As much sustained success that Professional Services has had with LeanKit, they still consider themselves as an organization in transition: There are still more capabilities and features to explore in LeanKit, and they would like to gain a greater maturity in their Kanban adoption. In particular, Akbar and Nargang are looking to:

- » use work-in-process (WIP) limits within LeanKit to prevent a flood of work from hitting their teams and stalling productivity,
- » calculate cycle time with LeanKit's Speed Report so the teams can set reasonable expectations about how long it takes them to complete jobs like installations,
- » leverage LeanKit's Advanced Reporting to improve their process of estimating for and improving on their billable hours, as it relates to utilization of resources and profitability.

**THANK YOU, HANNAH, JOEL,  
AND KHURSHID, FOR SHARING YOUR  
STORY WITH US!**



## Learn More About LeanKit

At LeanKit, we make enterprise-wide work collaboration software that's purpose-built for Lean and designed for Kanban. Our products and services help enterprises visualize work, optimize processes, and deliver faster. Since our founding in 2009, we've grown to serve more than 50,000 teams around the world. Teams of all types — including IT, Software Development, Operations, Sales, Marketing, HR, Legal, and Finance — rely on LeanKit every day.

**SEE LEANKIT IN ACTION.  
START A FREE TRIAL TODAY.**

[info.leankit.com/get-started](http://info.leankit.com/get-started)



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