Condor Airlines

Agile Release Train Transformation

THE SITUATION

Fragmented Teams, No Shared Cadence

Condor Airlines launched a major digital transformation to modernise its customer-facing ecosystem, redeveloping its website and mobile app, integrating Salesforce and Optimizely, and migrating toward a modern technology stack.

Multiple delivery teams were already in place, but they operated independently, without a shared planning cadence, governance structure, or program-level coordination. Roles such as Product Owner and Scrum Master were either missing or inconsistently applied, and Jira usage varied significantly from team to team. Planning happened at team level only, with no framework connecting strategic priorities to execution.

As a result:

- Strategic initiatives and operational requests competed for the same resources
- Priorities were unclear and dependencies were managed informally
- Leadership lacked a consistent view of progress, risk, and capacity
- Scaled Agile delivery was new to the organisation, and governance models, planning mechanisms, and collaboration structures had to be built from the ground up

THE APPROACH

A Phased, Maturity-Based Implementation

I joined Condor as Release Train Engineer and Agile Transformation Coach to design and operationalise a SAFe-based Agile Release Train, adapting the framework to Condor's organisational maturity, business priorities, and technical environment rather than implementing it as a textbook exercise.

The transformation moved through three phases. The first phase established the ART foundation, structuring five teams into a coordinated delivery organisation, introducing a synchronised two-week sprint cadence, implementing quarterly Program Increment cycles, standardising Jira usage, and delivering Agile and SAFe onboarding.

The second phase introduced PI Planning, replacing fragmented planning with a structured program-level process. PI Planning created shared business priorities, aligned teams around common objectives, surfaced dependencies early, and produced coordinated delivery commitments across the organisation.

The third phase shifted focus from structural implementation to behavioural adoption. Ownership became clearer across all roles, and the ART expanded from five to nine teams, integrating UX/UI and Analytics into the delivery model.

IMPLEMENTATION & GOVERNANCE

Establishing a Connected Delivery Model

PI Planning as the Central Planning Event

PI Planning became the central planning event for the Release Train, bringing together Product Management, Architecture, UX/UI, Analytics, delivery teams, and business stakeholders to align on priorities, objectives, dependencies, and delivery commitments for each Program Increment.

Preparation for each PI included a dedicated Pre-PI Planning session, allowing priorities, scope, and upcoming initiatives to be refined before the wider organisation came together.

Coordination Between PI Planning Events

Between PI Planning events, the Agile Release Train was supported through regular ART Syncs and cross-team coordination meetings. These forums brought together Product Management, Agile Teams, Architecture, and key stakeholders to review delivery progress, manage dependencies, address risks, and coordinate activities across both the Agile Release Train and other relevant departments.

Each Program Increment concluded with an integrated System Demo, showcasing the combined outcome of the Agile Release Train and providing a programme-level view of delivery progress and business value.

Throughout the Program Increment, stakeholders were also invited to participate in the individual Sprint Reviews of each team, creating continuous visibility into delivery without waiting until the end of the Program Increment.

Portfolio-to-Team Traceability

Portfolio management practices were introduced to create greater alignment between strategic initiatives and delivery execution. Strategic objectives were translated into Portfolio Epics and Portfolio Enablers, which were subsequently decomposed into Features, ART Enablers, Stories, and Team Enablers. This established end-to-end traceability from strategic priorities through programme planning to team-level delivery, and, together with standardised Jira structures, enabled consistent planning, reporting, and visibility across all levels of delivery.

One Program Increment cycle, from planning through execution to the next PI

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Building a Sustainable Operating Model

Iterating the PI Planning Format

The operating model was continuously refined throughout the transformation based on practical experience and regular feedback from Agile teams. Rather than treating the initial implementation as a fixed framework, planning events, governance routines, and collaboration practices were continuously adapted to reflect both the increasing maturity of the Agile Release Train and the organisation's evolving needs.

Program Increment Planning itself underwent several iterations. Different planning formats, including one-day, one-and-a-half-day, two-day, remote, hybrid, and on-site events, were evaluated and refined to identify the approach that best balanced collaboration, planning quality, and organisational constraints. Supporting practices, including feature refinement sessions, resource planning, and preparation activities before PI Planning, were also introduced and refined as the operating model matured.

Feedback-Driven Adjustments

Feedback played an important role in this evolution. Dedicated feedback sessions following Program Increment Planning, together with ongoing input from Product Owners, Scrum Masters, delivery teams, and business stakeholders, helped identify opportunities to improve planning, collaboration, and governance. While not every suggestion resulted in a change, the operating model evolved incrementally based on practical experience and organisational priorities rather than remaining static.

Coaching and Leadership Engagement

The long-term sustainability of the operating model was further supported through continuous coaching and enablement. Product Owners, Product Management, Scrum Masters, Architects, and delivery teams received ongoing guidance to establish consistent Agile practices and strengthen collaboration across the Release Train. Business Owners and senior leadership remained actively engaged through planning and governance events, helping maintain alignment between business priorities and delivery execution while supporting timely decision-making throughout each Program Increment.

RESULTS OVERVIEW

Two Years of Transformation

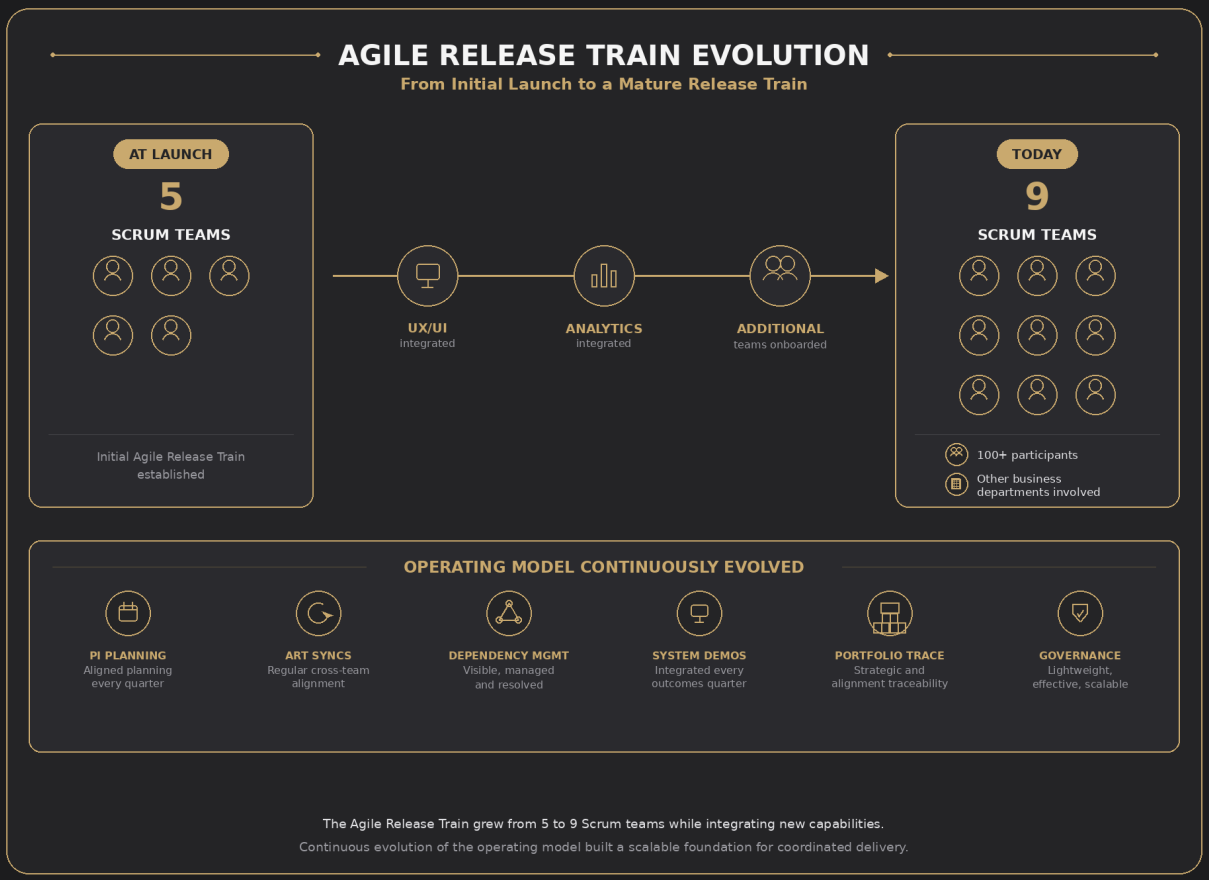
The table below compares the starting conditions with the outcomes achieved after two years of transformation.

BEFORE	AFTER
Teams planned independently	ART-wide planning aligned teams around shared objectives
Priorities came from multiple directions	Shared prioritisation through Product Management and Business Owners
Dependencies managed informally	Dependencies managed through structured governance and regular ART Syncs
Limited stakeholder visibility	Regular Sprint Reviews and integrated System Demos created continuous delivery visibility
Jira used differently by each team	Standardised Jira structures enabled consistent planning, reporting, and transparency
Limited visibility between strategy and execution	Strategic initiatives became traceable from Portfolio Epics through Features to team delivery

CONCLUSION

A Delivery Model That Outlasted the Program

Within two years, Condor moved from a collection of independently operating delivery teams to a coordinated Agile Release Train supported by a scalable governance model, synchronised planning cadence, and transparent delivery structures.

The impact of the operating model extended beyond the original programme. Other departments within Condor began exploring how elements of the approach could be adapted to support their own delivery organisations. I was later invited to deliver Agile training to several of these departments. Condor's IT department subsequently built upon the ART operating model by introducing Lean Portfolio Management, extending the transformation from programme-level coordination to portfolio-level governance. This engagement is presented in a separate case study.

> **KEY TAKEAWAY**
>
> Successful Agile transformations are sustained not by frameworks alone, but by establishing an operating model that combines shared planning, transparent governance, continuous improvement, and active leadership engagement.