2021

Case Study: Echometer at Diamant Software

Diamant Software

About Diamant Software

Diamant Software is a **hidden champion** with over 200 employees from Bielefeld and has been **developing software for accounting and controlling** for 40 years.

In the commercial departments of medium-sized companies, Diamant Software has made a name for its **quality and innovation**.

Diamant Software

Initial situation

Start of cooperation with Echometer

When all Diamant Software employees started working from their home offices due to Corona in mid-March 2020, a **digital way to run retrospectives in agile teams remotely** had to be found. Until then, the teams met in person and gathered their feedbacks and ideas on a physical whiteboard.

When switching to remote working, it is particularly important to keep an eye on the **team health and mood** over weeks and months. The team health data should be used to derive necessary action items or to discard those that do not bring any improvement. Team development decisions tended to be made on the basis of gut instinct.

That was about to change: The collaboration with Echometer began at the end of May 2020 and continues to this day.

Goals & Challenges

Starting to work with Echometer

Diamant Software has set itself the task of creating the **most intelligent accounting software in the world**. In order to achieve this goal, the following guiding principles of the company should be strengthened:

1. **Flat hierarchies:** Everyone contributes to the satisfaction of the customer and everyone is equally important
2. Building a healthy **error and innovation culture**
3. Support of **motivation and health** of the employees

In this process, the developments in the teams and the perception of the employees should be included and made measurable. In this way, development measures can be tailored to the needs of employees and teams, resulting in continuous improvement.

The challenges

- Make developments and needs in teams measurable
- Using **resources** for development measures in a **targeted** manner according to the needs of the teams
- **Involving the teams** in improvement processes

The solution with Echometer

Quarterly planning with Echometer

Bottom-up Change

In line with its objectives, Diamant Software is committed to agile working methods. This includes regular retrospectives (**"retros"** for short).

Supported by Echometer, the **teams collect feedback** on various aspects of collaboration every two to four weeks. Echometer provides food for thought in the form of questions and thus simplifies the process of identifying topics.

The survey results which are collected anonymously in advance, are then reflected on together in a one-hour team retrospective. Echometer's software accompanies the team through the retro and helps with both team attunement and moderation.

Measurability via the culture barometer

At Diamant Software, Release Train Engineers take on the task of **coordinating and supporting the development of the teams**.

With Echometer, internal and cross-team developments are available "in black and white". They are documented in the long term, so that **changes are also visible over a longer period of time**.

During quarterly planning, they can immediately **see where action items are necessary**.
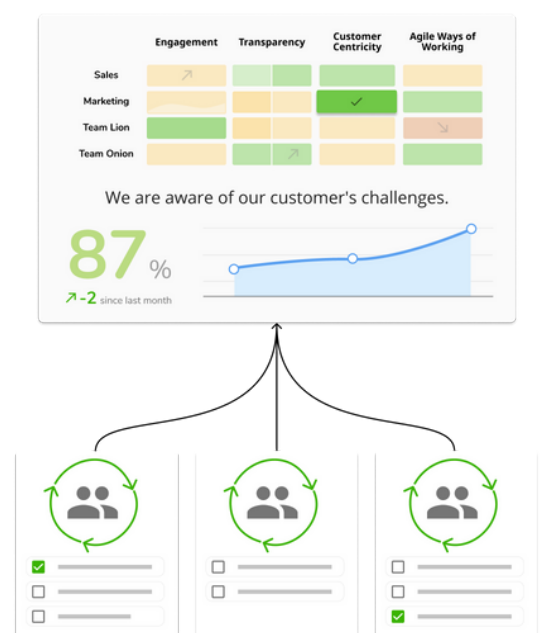
Results & Measures

Practical examples

Preparing meetings

A question from Echometer led to the topic of "breaks and preparation for appointments".
Based on this nudge we derived the action item to deliberately **end meetings ten minutes earlier** in the future. This gives employees the opportunity to mentally prepare for the next appointment.
As part of the measure, it was also discovered that Outlook offers a corresponding function for this, which automatically shortens appointments of one hour by ten minutes.

Better planning

In order to be able to better plan the work of the teams, the teams work continuously to improve the transparency of what happens in an iteration (two-week cycles). However, apart from the normal project activities, there were other **"secondary jobs"** that were also value-adding, but not part of the planned projects. These took up unplanned time, stealing part of the capacity from each iteration and causing planning errors. As a result of the reflection on this in the retrospective, inquiries that were dealt with directly for colleagues are now moved more consistently into the internal task management system.

More time for workflow

On another occasion, a team thought about how the workflow, i.e. the **uninterrupted concentrated work time**, could be improved.
This was based on what already existed in terms of ideas for this topic: There was a sequenced appointment that kept an afternoon free of meetings and thus enabled the workflow. In the team, this idea has been expanded so that in the future, they will keep the **whole Tuesday completely free** and thus achieve better results through longer focus.

Change of organization

A planned **change in the organization was communicated** in September 2020 – unfortunately a few questions remained unanswered. This initially led to uncertainty among employees and the feeling arose that managers trusted the work of the teams less. This problem became visible at an early stage using Echometer:

Our direct managers trust us as a team to solve problems independently.

They started workshops to respond to open questions. The action items took place at the beginning of November and led to a visible **increase in satisfaction of around 20 percent**. Appropriate framework conditions were created for the action items developed from the workshops, enabling the teams to implement them independently. This development can also be seen in a further increase in the satisfaction curve:

Our direct managers trust us as a team to solve problems independently.

The core of Echometer

👉 Use regular feedback to discover your teams most pressing needs and steer change processes together with your teams

"

Echometer allows us to plan action items based on the actual needs of colleagues and which I can be sure will support them in their work and development.
I can also clearly see whether we will achieve our common goal. With Echometer, team-internal as well as cross-team developments are available "on black and white". They are documented so that changes are visible over a longer period of time.

Sabine Klein, Release Train Engineer @ Diamant Software

Added Value

Rely on facts instead of gut feeling

- **Transparency** over general team development
- Early derivation of **targeted measures with success monitoring**
- **Active involvement** of teams in the ideation and implementation of action items
- Support of Scrum Masters, Agile Coaches & Executives

Before Echometer was used, many decisions about team development were made on the basis of instinct.

With Echometer, employees are now regularly and specifically asked about specific topics. On the basis of the results they analyze together, teams derive solutions that precisely meet their needs.

> We are very proud that we effectively support team development at Diamant Software and are pleased that our vision of increasing the satisfaction and design options of employees in companies is coming true.

Christian Heidemeyer, Echometer Co-founder
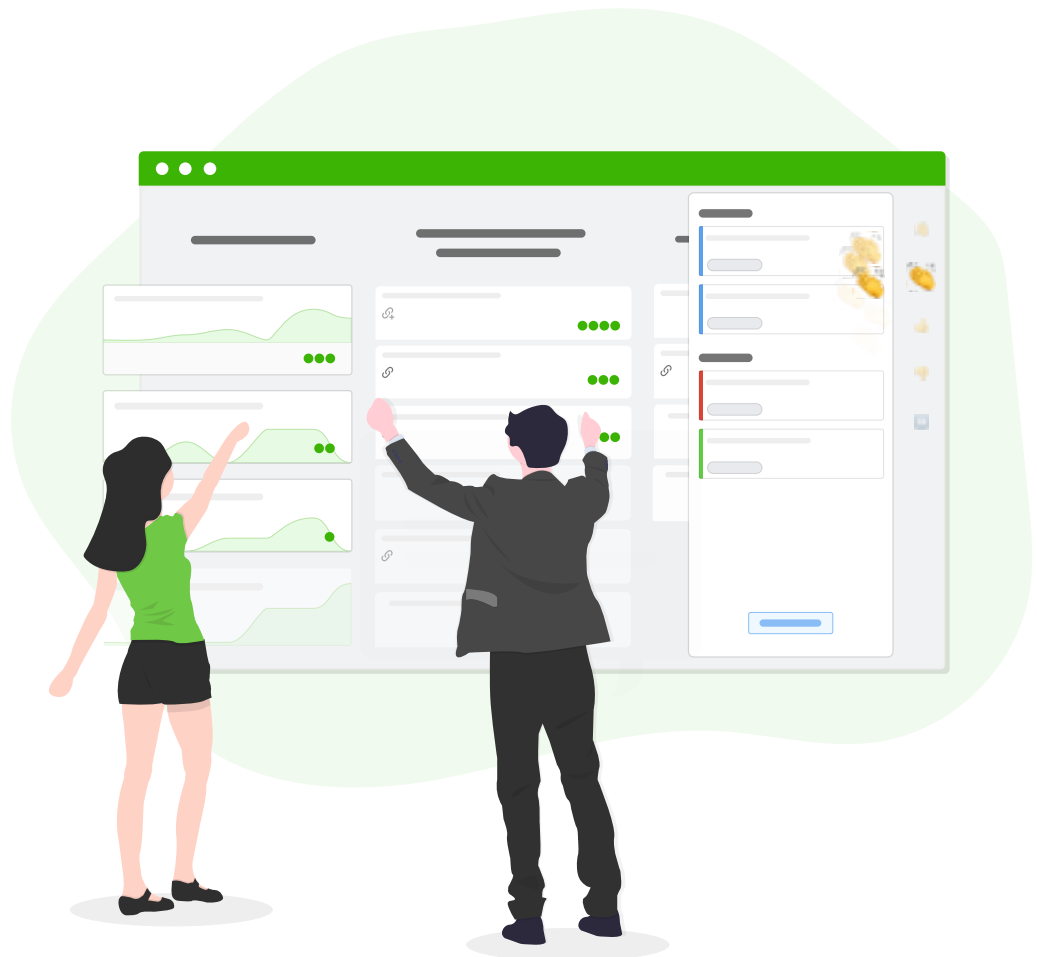
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Visit our website and find out your individual price and the „Return on Investment" of Echometer for you and your company!

To ROI calculator

The complete interview with Sabine Klein

Introduction Sabine

Echometer: Would you like to introduce yourself at the beginning?

Sabine: I came to Diamant Software 5 ½ years ago and initially worked as a developer. When we started with agility, however, I got the opportunity to take on the role of a Scrum Master. At that time, I was completely enthusiastic about the agile principles and I didn't want to do anything else.

I myself have now moved on to the role of Release Train Engineer. It is no longer my job to just support individual teams to make the most of their potential, but to also optimize and promote the entire area. So it is fundamental for me to always keep an overview, to recognize obstacles and to see how we can use our strengths even better together.

Culture at Diamant Software

Echometer: In your opinion, what defines the corporate culture at Diamant Software?

Sabine: A colleague once put it appropriately: "We don't just want to exchange time for money". From my point of view, Diamant Software is about all of us working together to generate the best possible result for our customers and no one is more important or better than the other. From my point of view, this shows in many different, sometimes small, aspects. For example, there is a you culture.

We also consciously focus on mixing and exchanging ideas. It is also normal for the CEO to have the same workplace as all of us or to sit down with the intern over lunch (i.e. before Corona).

We support each other as best as we can. If a colleague gets stuck, they can communicate this at any time (this is not a taboo subject) and together we will find a way to reach the goal.

And last but not least, a lot is being done to keep employees healthy and healthy in the long term. That is why every workstation in the building has height-adjustable tables. We have healthy food in the in-house bistro. There are (or were before Corona) sports courses for employees.

> " " Everyone has been impressed since the first tests. "
>
> **Sabine Klein**

Echometer: Many companies develop an official corporate vision, corporate values or a model for managers for employees. Do you also use such elements?

Sabine: It is no different with Diamant Software.

And recently we have all embraced the pioneering spirit. The basic idea is simple: We want to move forward together and be open to changes and opportunities. That also means allowing mistakes and not cultivating perfectionism. And not always looking for the solution to which everyone calls yes, but sometimes the one to which nobody says no. It's amazing, but it's actually a lot easier to achieve.

And that's how we manage to achieve our vision: "We are developing the most intelligent accounting in the world!"

Use of Echometer

Echometer: When we got in contact with you, agile work was already a topic for you. What was your goal back then and what made you decide to deal with Echometer initially?

Sabine: I mentioned the pioneering spirit. This also includes being open to new ideas and trying things out from time to time. In the case of Echometer, the tool was recommended to us and we decided to simply try it out on a small scale. Our pilot group was also ideally suited to assess the usability for the processes: We piloted the whole thing with the Scrum Masters. They are also the ones who are actively using it with their teams today. And everyone has been impressed since the first tests. So after a few retrospectives, we decided to roll out the whole thing.

Echometer: In the meantime, Echometer is not only used in your production. Who else uses it and how did it come about?

Sabine: That it came about was a kind of silent mail principle: Our people manager was part of the group of people who initially piloted Echometers. I mentioned that we were enthusiastic and so he passed his euphoria on to his colleagues in the HR department. From there it made its way to our internal IT department in a friendly exchange. And as is the case with good news, there was also great interest in trying something new.

Echometer: How does Echometer contribute to the further development of the teams?

Sabine: It supports us in analyzing various topics in a very targeted manner and also pushing certain topics in the retrospective. If I notice possible problems or very positive things in everyday life, I am able to address them from the participants and get their impressions. In this way I can evaluate my impression and also observe how it changes over time. In addition, the open questions stimulate the creativity of the participants.I had a lot of fun with questions like "What would be the headline of our team magazine". It's wonderful to see the different things my colleagues come up with here and it's always exciting to see what topics are hidden behind them.
And for me as a Release Train Engineer, the overarching dashboard is what I immediately fell in love with. This means that I always have an eye on where overarching measures are worthwhile and also whether they are having the effect we were hoping for. At the moment I am adapting the overarching questions so that we always have an eye on the problems that we have set ourselves in focus and I can wonderfully observe how the assessment of our employees changes in this regard, whether it is positive or negative . That makes this part of my job a lot easier for me.
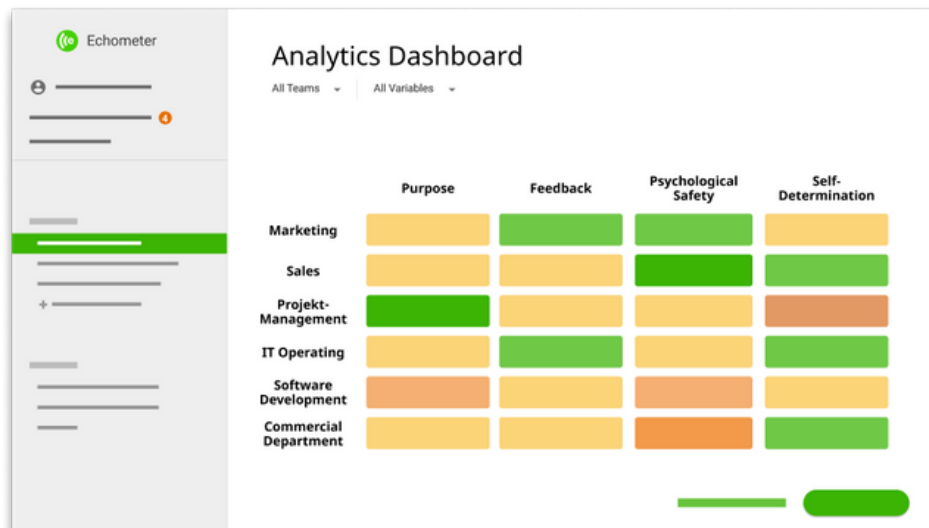
Echometer: Do you have a concrete example of a situation in which Echometer has brought you added value?

Sabine: I even have a very up-to-date one: We do the big quarterly planning once every 3 months. And in addition to the content-related topics, it is important for us to also make process improvements. In the past, we always trusted our gut instinct for this. We "felt" where something was in the air. This time I used my comprehensive dashboard and took a close look at the category in which the assessments of my colleagues go down or are still rather low on the rating scale. So I now have ideas and measures that are based on the actual impressions of my colleagues and that I can be sure that it will support them in their work if we develop further there. And: I can also clearly see whether we are achieving our goal. We also "felt" that earlier and I'm already looking forward to having it in front of me as a graphic.

What Echometer does differently

Echometer: From your perspective, what does Echometer do differently compared to classic employee appraisals or employee surveys?

Sabine: Echometer strongly leads the group and gives the moderator a framework on which they can depend on. In this way, they save a lot of time in preparing the appointment and at the same time can concentrate on what is important, namely finding the right questions about the right team at the right time. It is also nice that the important principles of a productive exchange are taken into account. Check-in and check-out prepare the group for an open conversation and get to know each other a little better. The combination of free exchange and specific questions is also important to me. In spite of everything, however, the focus is never lost since the standard process makes it a priority to set a priority first before resolving.

And the measures! We have tried different types of retrospectives in the past and always identified measures for improvement. Our greatest weakness, however, was remembering them and actively implementing them. We have tried everything here: Notes on the wall, tasks in our task system: Somehow the question "What were we actually going to do?" kept coming up anyway.

With Echometer, the whole thing is much more transparent and what we are currently working on can be identified on the homepage at any time. And there are also the e-mails which inform you about what you have planned and which measure you have been assigned to.

In the meantime I have even set up a little automatism: When a measure is assigned to me and I receive the e-mail, I automatically receive an entry in my to-do list. Nothing has gone under since then.

The right time

Echometer: What advise would you give other companies: When is the right time to deal with Echometer?

Sabine: I think there has hardly been a better time than now. The general trend is towards digital, distributed work. That was the case before Corona, but of course it has now been accelerated enormously. I can only recommend the use of Echometer, especially if a company strives to enable its employees to work in a distributed manner. The changeover is easily possible and also, or especially if agility has not been practiced in the company for a long time, the tool takes you by hand and also provides digital support in the implementation of agile principles.

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> When we introduced Echometer, it triggered a
> wave of creativity among our colleagues.
> "
>
> **Sabine Klein**

Conclusion

Echometer: If you take a look at the dashboard – how many measures have the teams currently initiated as a result of the workshops with Echometer?

Sabine: In the beginning the increase here was very big. We had more new actions every month and up to 81 active actions at the most. In some cases we had 39 new measures in one month. In the meantime, the trend has decreased somewhat. We are still planning a lot, but with 20 new measures we are on a more feasible level.
What I take away from it: When we introduced Echometer, it first triggered a wave of creativity among colleagues. Topics were discussed that might not have been addressed without the closed questions. And so the colleagues tried to address the problems they found directly. In the meantime, however, we have reached a level where we can always focus on the most important things and develop from topic to topic.
For me that only shows: Echometer has become part of our everyday life and we know that it will be there for us for a long time to come. We do not need to overdo ourselves and do not have to worry that the topics will go under, because Echometer reminds us again and again and supports us in the future in developing ourselves further and doing our best together.

Echometer: Thank you for taking the time to share your experience with Echometer!

About Echometer

The start-up Echometer (https://echometerapp.com/), founded in Münster in 2019, is the **digital coach for agile companies**. The heart of the software is the **team workshop tool**, which is used to carry out so-called **retrospectives**. It enables the participants to look back on their successes and challenges of the last few weeks in a playful way, to exchange ideas about communication, feedback culture and well-being and to measurably develop as a team.

The idea behind Echometer arose at the end of 2016 as part of the start-up school of the Founders Foundation in Bielefeld. This is where the versatile founding trio – Christian Heidemeyer (psychologist), Jean Michel Diaz (business administration) and Robin Roschlau (IT) – came together. It continued with a start-up scholarship through the psychological faculty of the University of Münster. Echometer now has over 2,500 active users and is used by companies such as Miele, T-Systems, Toyota and Westlotto.

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