Over two years ago, Cprime acquired DevJam, a group of collaborative agilists based in Minneapolis who teach, coach, and practice a pragmatic blend of processes and technologies to consistently deliver value to customers and clients around the world. With DevJam fully rebranding to Cprime in very near future, I sat with Zubin Irani, CEO at Cprime, and Anne Steiner, now VP of Product Agility at Cprime, to reflect on the impact of the acquisition on both companies and how the transition has evolved other time, bringing its challenges and rewards along the way.

***So, welcome to both of you and thank you for taking the time to chat with me. Let me start with a question that takes us to the heart of the matter: Zubin, why did Cprime acquire DevJam, over two years ago now?***

Zubin: I think the values of DevJam, and their go-to market strategy was very consistent with Cprime's. As thought leaders, both companies believe in Agile, pragmatic thinking and doing what's right and what's practical, but they also understand that technology is a big component for addressing organizational needs. It's bringing the Agile and the technology components together, which is the path Cprime was going down. So, you're looking at DevJam, we saw a great team and culture that was driven around that mission to improve the way organizations build software but do it in a way that's very Agile minded, product focused as well as technology based.

***And when you first started thinking of acquiring DevJam, Zubin, did you think it would fit like peanut butter and grape Jam?***

Zubin: Did I think Cprime would "fit" us? Yes. I thought culturally, a little bit of rebellious, very pragmatic, kind of process-and-tech tied together, but also very much a people first company. The DevJam group was all about high quality and their coaches are thought leaders. So, from that perspective, very much like-minded, and probably a little more so rebellious than we were, which I appreciate and really enjoy. I thought it would be a natural fit. Obviously anytime you integrate two companies, there's always risks and fears involved, but ultimately, we were open to it and we worked through it together to figure it out. And we did.

***And what surprised or excited you most coming out of the acquisition?***

The strong community they had. I didn't realize how strong that really was. It's a powerful brand. It's a powerful business and their clients were extremely loyal to DevJam. A lot of this success comes from the capabilities and problems DevJam was able to solve. Honestly, we got a lot more than we had hoped for. We were very happy and thrilled to merge with DevJam. They exceeded our expectations in terms of what we thought they were bringing to the table.

***Anne, back to you: Can you provide us with a perspective on why DevJam felt it was a good idea to be acquired by Cprime?***

Anne: It's a tough question for me to answer because I wasn't involved in all those conversations, but those that are close to us know that David Hussman sought for our company to be acquired because he was having significant health issues. He was working with several companies at once and from my perspective, I think Cprime was by far the best fit of those because we were very similar in terms of culture standpoint and approach to serving clients. We're not trying to be a bunch of fancy suits, but we do have a lot of credibility, a lot of expertise and a lot of experience in the industry. I think that's been a very natural fit. I was very impressed early on by the culture of Cprime, and by the leadership. I also think that we were a good fit for Cprime because we could fill a gap that Cprime didn’t have in product portfolio and they saw us for that. Some of the other potential companies were really looking to add to a market, we're really looking to integrate with Cprime so that we could be strategic part of the company's future.

***Well, we can see that a lot of positive things came out of the acquisition. But we're now coming from 2 years post-acquisition. Anne and Zubin, would you say that the integration with Cprime has been smooth sailing and a "walk in the park"?***

Anne: No integration is ever easy! I’d be lying if I said it was smooth sailing or it was easy, but it's been far better than I ever would've expected personally. People have been great. We've been welcomed with open arms. We've worked through the mechanics of integrating finance and operations and all these things. We're proud that most of our coaches and our internal team, and our full-time employees are still here in the same group of people and have hung in there over the course of the last two years since the acquisition. Was it easy? Heck no. But was it worth it? Yes!

Zubin: I'll say it's as smooth as it can go with an acquisition. Any kind of acquisition is going to have bumps and I think that's all to be expected. Honestly, I think this went significantly better than I planned it to. So, from my perspective, it was absolutely smooth sailing. There was a lot of flying back and forth between California, Minneapolis, but I think because the culture fit was there, because the leaders were like minded, we were able to kind of work through a good plan to integrate and really take advantage of the product gap that DevJam was filling and join the two together.  
***So, Anne, question for you. With any acquisition often comes fear that the acquired company will lose some of its the original characteristics that made it unique. How have you been able to retain the spark that made DevJam so special?***

Anne: I think we've really been given the space to continue working as we always worked. And you know, today looking back, I think we're stronger with respect to our ethos, our brand promise, all that stuff, than we probably were two years ago. And we also can do a lot more. That's super cool because we all want the same thing. We just want to help clients build awesome products that impact their customers. And now with Cprime we have more capabilities to draw on. So how have we kept it together, and "kept the spark", as you say Myriam? It's the same people doing the same kind of work and working their butts off. Some of us, myself, have a little bit of a chip on our shoulder to say: Hey, we can still do this; we got this. And so, we work hard and that's been the key to it and then also, we've been well supported.

***Anne and Zubin, DevJam has been an active part of the local community for years and people really appreciate all that the company does and does for the community. How do you see the future of those activities and how will you integrate that philosophy from the Cprime perspective?*Anne*:*** It’s just going to be business as usual. We take so much enjoyment and pleasure in having the opportunity to host events in the community like Agile Day Twin Cities, Product Conf, cohost Code Freeze with the University of Minnesota. And you know, all the fun that we all have down in the basement and Jam sessions. So, there's no way we'd want to let go of that connection to the community and we're just privileged to have that opportunity and to keep doing it.

Zubin: If anything, I'd like to borrow what we've done in the Minneapolis community and apply that to some of the other areas where we have a strong presence. Really looking to the DevJam model of how they engage with the community in their local markets and apply that to other markets where we operate. So, I look up to DevJam on how they've been able to engage truly with the community, whether it's a nonprofit part of the universities, or just giving back to the community at large. And we want to expand that across the country in some of our other markets where we have a strong presence and build a strong community.

***Here's a question to both of you. We've been hearing a lot of buzz recently around Product Agility, and that was DevJams's "specialty". How is this practice filling a gap in the agile domain and in what Cprime offers to its customers?***

I think there's two ways I think about it. One is, if you look at the journey of Agile in the market and you look at the adoption of Agile in the market, a lot of folks started with team level, let's get scrum teams going. And then you started seeing from those scrum teams, now you had scrum of scrums and program teams. Organizations have really focused on executing on the work. That's kind of their pipeline, right? And what people are now starting to realize and must address is something we've all known, but now it's very clear. Everyone's backlog is five times bigger than the amount of capacity they have to get work done. And so, then they're asking the tough question. Are we building the right thing? Because we have a finite amount of resources so now it's important that we work on the right thing. And that is what is driving more emphasis on product agility, which is making sure you're building the right things that your customers want, that's going to deliver value for the organization. But of course, DevJam figured this out many years ago and had been talking about this for a while, but the market finally caught up. The way Cprime positions our business is every company is trying to create value for the organization, for shareholders or for whatever the mission is.

So, the Cprime model has three parts: one is focusing on products, are you building the right products to drive value. Second is agile, are you operating in an agile way so that you can quickly implement, iterate and complete those activities that are important to deliver on the product. And the third piece is are you leveraging the latest cloud technologies to build and deliver for your customers. And so, when you take those three pieces together, you really have the ability as an organization to derive value faster. And that's what we do for our clients. Our business strategy is really focused on solving those three pieces wherever customer is in their journey.

Anne: Yes, and as we look to product agility, it's also going to fill a gap in our industry, because now it's something that's taking on the whole business. So, when we look to our business stakeholders, our product managers or product owners, they've been underserved for the last 20 years. And we have this huge opportunity to help them as someone who worked as a product owner in several organizations that were converting to using agile methodologies, we often felt lost because there is no one assisting us in that very critical role. So, a lot of what the product agility practice at Cprime does too is help and speak to those people, guiding them and assisting them in the tough job that they do.

***From the perspective of DevJam customers, Anne, what are some of the value elements that Cprime brings to the table?***

So, if you consider yourself a DevJam client today, you're probably thinking, Hey, you know, what's in it for me with the Cprime stuff? I think the answer is an awful lot. Traditionally DevJam really did about two or three different things. We did coaching services and product and technical agility. We provided members of our team that could go out and work, do real work for you and be technical experts. And we also often brought work inside and completed product development efforts for you. Cprime can do all those things. In addition to bringing a lot of expertise around Scaled Agility, DevOps, Cloud technologies, and tooling, such as Atlassian tools. Cprime represents the opportunity for us to partner with you and provide full service when it comes to consulting around agility, technology and collaboration.

***What's next for Cprime, as a longer-term vision, and how does DevJam fit into that overall strategy, Zubin?***

As the market continues to evolve and with the increasing pace of 24/7 globalization, the competitive pressure is only going to keep growing exponentially and our clients are looking for help. They are looking for help from consulting companies like ours to help react to the needs of their customers, react to the needs of their business, to be successful. And, as we look to the future, as an organization, we have the big pieces that help organizations transform and respond to the market needs. And then as the market evolves, we will continue to evolve, and we'll make sure we are at the cutting edge of solutions that are really going to help our customers thrive and be successful. And that's kind of our big mission.

I think DevJam brings a strong culture to Cprime and it's very much our intent and our mission to continue what David started and build upon that. So, the pragmatist, the rebellious, the thought leaders and doing what's right for our customers in the space of Product Agility. We will also aim to be closer to the community and everything that DevJam has done and done very successfully. Cprime is looking to incorporate it all and continue that journey and vision that David created and built on that strong foundation of what DevJam is and will live on. Live on within Cprime.

***Thank you, Zubin and Anne, for sharing your thoughts on the Cprime acquisition of DevJam, as DevJam moves to finalize its integration.***