



Improving Estimations in Agile Projects: Issues and Avenues

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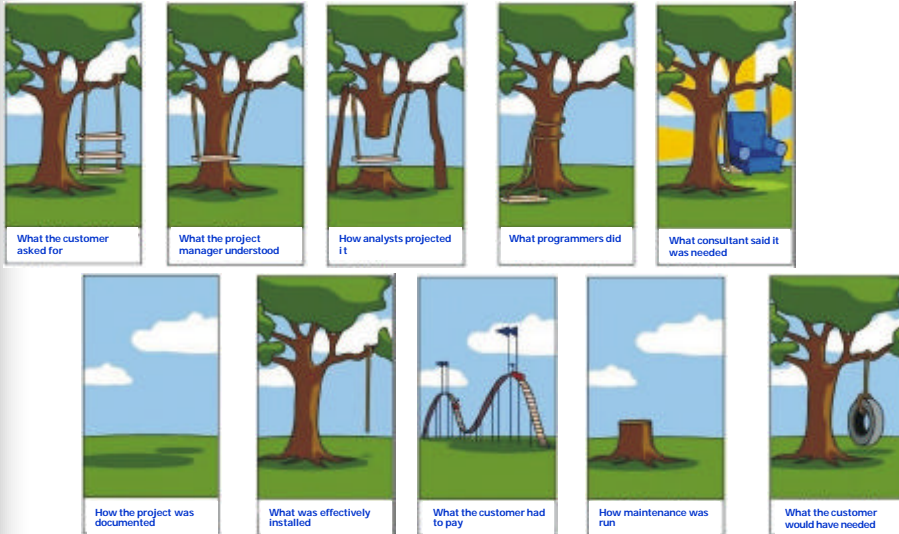
Agenda



- **Introduction**
- **Agile Methodologies (AM)**
 - ✓ A Musical Analogy
 - ✓ The Agile Manifesto
 - ✓ Agile and SLC phase coverage
 - ✓ Agile and SPI Methods
- **Estimation Issues in an Agile Sw Development Project**
 - ✓ XP – Extreme Programming
 - ✓ SCRUM
 - ✓ Crystal Family
 - ✓ FDD – Feature Driven Development
 - ✓ DSDM – Dynamic Systems Development Method
 - ✓ Other studies - proposals
- **Discussion on Estimation practices in AM**
 - ✓ NFR – Non-Functional Requirements
 - ✓ Sizing Units
 - ✓ Historical Data
 - ✓ Standards
- **Conclusions**

Introduction

(Sw) Project Management: Common Problems (Req's)



Introduction

(Sw) Project Management: Common Problems (Staffing)



Introduction

Agility: Background



- “Old” paradigms to be overcome during the ‘90s
 - ✓ Shorter time-to-market
 - ✓ More compressed project schedules
 - ✓ Requirements more and more instable
 - ✓ Heavyweight vs lightweight (or agile) methods/approaches
- “Agile” Methods (AM) as the new paradigm for Sw Development
 - ✓ A more flexible answer to manage projects
 - ✓ Common characteristics and ways to express an iterative-incremental SLC
 - ✓ Plenty of methods between mid ‘90 and the start of Y2K, grouped under the [Agile Alliance](#) umbrella
 - XP, SCRUM, FDD, DSDM, Crystal,

Introduction

Agility: Definition & Research Issue



- Agility does not mean “quicker”, “faster” but...

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

agile

One entry found for agile.

Main Entry: agile

Pronunciation: ˈjɪɡl̩ - ˈjɪl̩-ɪl̩

Function: adjective

Etymology: Middle French, from Latin *agilis*, from *agere* to drive, act -- more at [AGENT](#)

1 : marked by ready ability to move with quick easy grace <an agile dancer>

2 : having a quick resourceful and adaptable character <an agile mind>

- agile-ly

Learn more about "agile" and related topics at [Dictionary.com](#)

Find more about "agile" instantly with [Live Search](#)



Q: ...but what about Estimation practices in Agile Methods?

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Agile Methodologies (AM)

A Musical Analogy

	Symphonic Orchestra	Jazz Group
	Heavyweight	Lightweight-Agile
Project	• Each music session is a replay of a "production series"	• Each music session is a sort of "prototype"
Process	• Structured process in a rigid manner (<i>following the music partition 'as is' in the music book</i>)	• Dynamic and adaptive process (<i>no music book</i>)
Team	• Many people well synchronized with actions	• Tight-knit team with few (<i>and skillful</i>) musicians
Output	• Stable and predictable outcomes	• Improvised and variable, but staying with established beats

Agile Methodologies (AM)

The Agile Manifesto (2001)

"We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.

Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

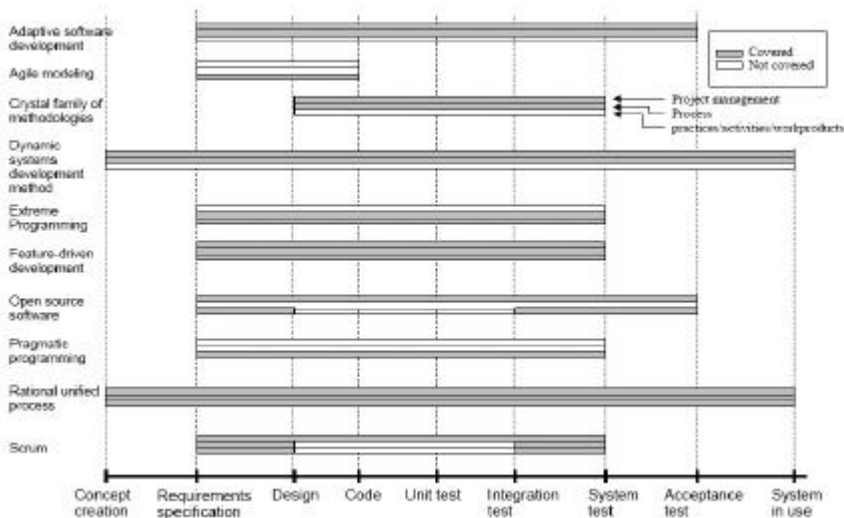
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more "

Source: www.agilemanifesto.org

Agile Methodologies (AM)

Agile and SLC Phases Coverage



Source: Abrahamsson P., Salo O., Ronkainen J. & Warsta J., Agile Software Development Methods, Review and Analysis, VTT Publication # 478, 2002

Agile Methodologies (AM)

Agile and SPI Methods

ML	Sw-CMM KPA	Rating Compliance	
		XP	SCRUM
2	RM - Requirements management	☺	☺
2	SPP - Software project planning	☺	☺
2	SPTO - Software project tracking and oversight	☺	☺
2	SSM - Software subcontract management	☹	☹
2	SQA - Software quality assurance	☹	☺
2	SCM - Software configuration management	☹	☹
3	OPF - Organization process focus	☹	☹
3	OPD - Organization process definition	☹	☹
3	TP - Training Program	☹	☹
3	ISM - Integrated software management	☹	☹
3	SPE - Software product engineering	☺	☺
3	IC - Intergroup co-ordination	☺	☺
3	PR - Peer reviews	☺	☹
4	QPM - Quantitative Project Management	☹	☹
4	SQM - Software Quality Management	☹	☹
5	DP - Defect Prevention	☹	☹
5	TCM - Technology Change Management	☹	☹
5	PCM - Process Change Management	☹	☹

Legend: ☹ Partially addressed; ☺ Largely addressed; ☹ Not addressed

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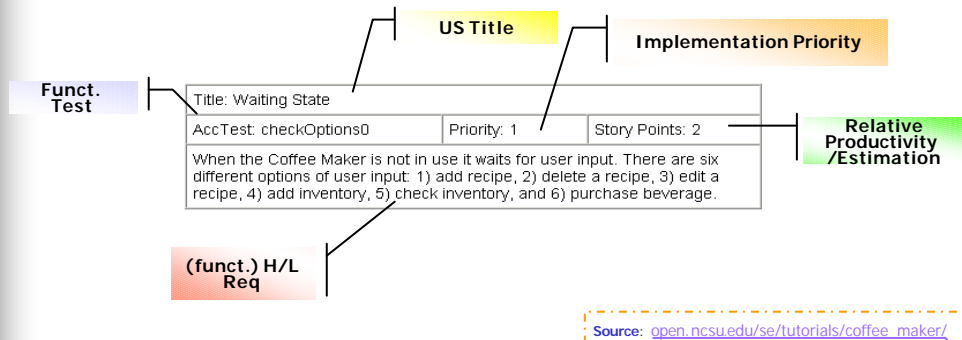
Estimation Issues in AM

XP – eXtreme Programming



- **(Functional) Requirement = User Stories (US)**

- ✓ Non-technical Language
- ✓ Focus only on the Functional Side of Requirements
- ✓ US is not a Use Case (UC)



Estimation Issues in AM

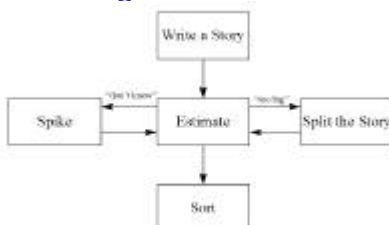
XP – eXtreme Programming



- **Relative Productivity / Estimation concepts:**

- ✓ **Story Point** → a (variable) no. of days needed to realize the US
- ✓ **Ideal Time** → "the time without interruption where you can concentrate on your work and feel fully productive"
- ✓ **Velocity** → "to measure the project velocity you simply count up how many user stories or how many programming tasks were finished during the iteration. Total up the estimates that these stories or tasks receive"
- ✓ **Load Factor** → "The load factor equals actual calendar days to complete a task divided by the developer's estimated "ideal" days to do it"

- **Planning Game**



Summarizing...:

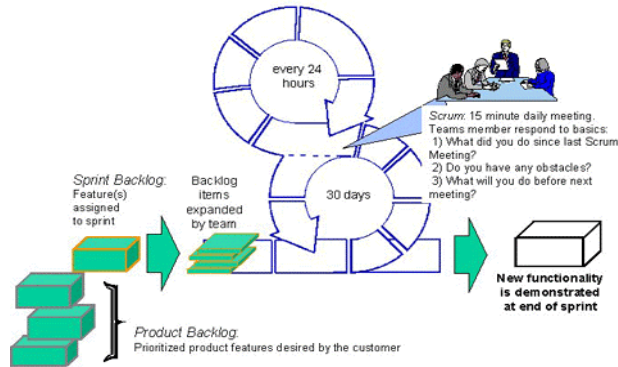
- XP estimates by **experience/analogy**, estimating the effort needed mainly based on the request of series of functionalities.

Estimation Issues in AM

SCRUM



- From ASD to APM
 - ✓ SCRUM is an Agile Project Management (APM) method
 - ✓ SCRUM is a general-purpose APM, not only for software projects!
- The Process



Estimation Issues in AM

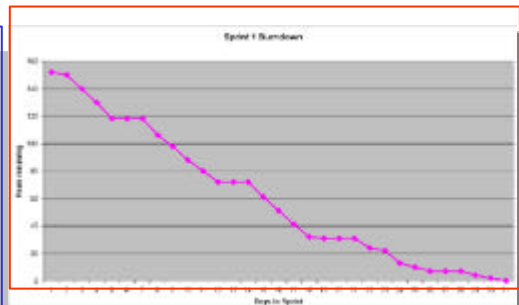
SCRUM



- Planning / Monitoring / Estimation concepts:
 - ✓ Backlog → two levels: product (project) & Sprint (30-days iteration)
 - ✓ Features → User Req's to be allocated and worked
 - ✓ Micro-Planning → within each Sprint, a WBS with detailed task
 - ✓ Daily Meeting → the (daily) progress meeting for the project (risk mgmt)
 - ✓ Burndown chart → a graph "burning" the total hours of a Sprint
 - ✓ NB: no sizing measure!

Product Backlog
Estimating System Upgrade

Sprint ID	Backlog Item	Owner	Estimate (days)	Remaining (days)
1	Minor: Prepare task usage in article	BC	1	1
1	Minor: Prepare oblique/linear/Matrix/Doc from oblique request	BC	1	1
1	Minor: Create "Logic" discipline node with did, d, v, and E-I-I content	BC	10	10
1	Major: Augment archi4l operation to support network operation	BC	3	3
1	Major: E-Sand Engineering Design substate items to include scenarios	BC	3	3
1	Minor: Run-in/Run-out/Run-in	CBH	4	4
7	Minor: Prepare Custodian procedure from AppCont policies in global's pas	BC	1	1
8	Minor: Prepare LOC_constants in global's pas and main pas	BC	1	1
8	Minor: Review GSI section about hardware location list	BC	1	1
11	Minor: Define in each release plan in case it appear to be required	BC	1	1
11	Minor: Update evaluations to Oblique/Doc Equipment in hardware pas	BC	1	1
12	Minor: AJACS form to be combined on the screen	BC	1	1
13	Minor: Define GSI tests to all GSI disciplines	BC	1	1



Estimation Issues in AM

SCRUM



Summarizing...:



- SCRUM estimates by *experience/analogy*, estimating directly the effort (in man-days or man-hours) for tracking both product and Sprints using the *burndown chart* that is, a graph showing how much time remains to complete the feature/tasks planned in such iteration, describing the project "velocity" the team is running.

Estimation Issues in AM

Crystal Family



- Crystal is a family of ASD
 - ✓ *Two criteria*: Size of the Project & Criticality of the System

Criticality of the system	Life (L)	L6	L20	L40	L90
	Essential money (E)	E6	E20	E40	E90
	Discretionary money (D)	D6	D20	D40	D90
	Comfort (C)	C6	C20	C40	C90
	Clear	Yellow	Orange	Red	
		# people involved			Size of the project

Estimation Issues in AM

Crystal Family



- **Planning / Monitoring / Estimation concepts:**

- ✓ **Blitz Planning (technique #3)** → the Crystal equivalent of XP User Stories, called **Blitz Planning Cards**
- ✓ **Delphi Analysis (technique #4)** → asd
- ✓ **Burn Charts (technique #9)** → both *burn-up* (as in EVMS) and *burn-down* (as in Scrum)
- ✓ **Ideal Days** → estimated as in XP

Summarizing...:

- Crystal estimates by **experience/analogy**, estimating directly the effort (in ideal days to be refined into Estimated Elapsed Days) using Delphi analysis by some experts in the domain on the basis of counting content elements of such specific task (i.e. number of screens, business classes, ...).
- The project progress is tracked, as in Scrum, with "Burn" Charts



Estimation Issues in AM

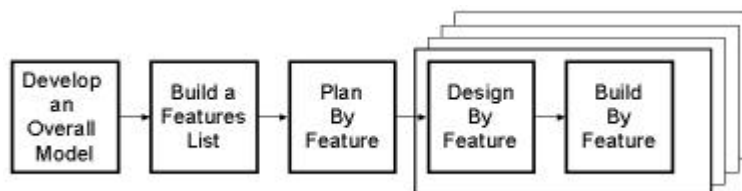
FDD – Feature Driven Development



- **From ASD to APM**

- ✓ Structured into a series of processes (current version: **v1.3**)
- ✓ **Process #2:** Build the (functional-business) features list
- ✓ **Process #3:** Plan by Feature

- **The Overall Process**



Estimation Issues in AM



FDD – Feature Driven Development

- **Planning / Monitoring / Estimation concepts:**
 - ✓ **Feature** → User Requirement
 - ✓ Feature Duration →
 - ✓ no longer than 2 weeks each to be completed
 - ✓ If longer, to be split into more granular ones
 - ✓ **Plan by Feature** → Process #3: it includes completion dates for each planned feature (month/year), properly assigned to team members

Summarizing...:

- FDD estimates by **experience/analogy**, estimating directly the effort (in man-days or man-hours) for tracking planned features

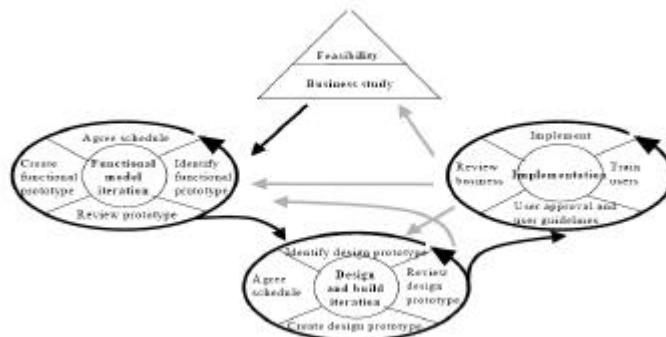


Estimation Issues in AM



DSDM – Dynamic Systems Development Method

- **SLC Characteristics**
 - ✓ Three Main Stages (Pre-Project; Project; Post-Project)
 - ✓ Several Iterations within the project lifecycle
 - ✓ Prototype-based method
- **The Process**



Estimation Issues in AM

DSDM – Dynamic Systems Development Method



- **Planning / Monitoring / Estimation concepts:**
 - ✓ **NFR** → DSDM takes care also of Non-Functional Req's
 - ✓ Four major (estimation) phases (*Pre-Project, Planning at Project Start, (re)Planning during the Project lifetime, Planning at the increment end*)
 - ✓ Usage of **Contingencies**
 - ✓ Two estimation approaches:
 - ✓ **Top-Down:** based on business requirements, an early estimate is derived from high-level requirements, from a very high-level view on the project (i.e. estimation by analogy).
 - ✓ **Bottom-up:** based on tangible systems, figuring out for low-level components, take time to be prepared, need sufficiently detailed information, provide a good basis for planning the project (i.e. Function Point Analysis, Estimating from System Components, Collaborative Estimating).

Summarizing...:

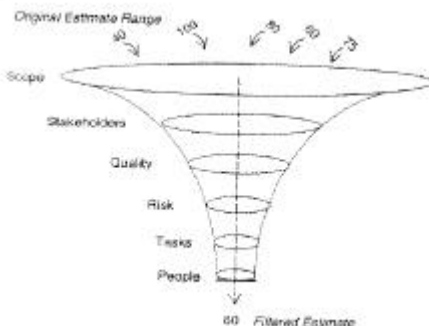
- DSDM estimates by **experience/analogy**, estimating directly the effort (in man-days or man-hours) for tracking planned features **but** taking care of NFR **and** data gathering (*"it is essential to collect metrics from projects so that they can be validated and refined for use in estimating future projects, i.e. to provide continuous improvement of the estimating process"*)

Estimation Issues in AM

Other Studies - Proposals



- **The Funnel of Increasing Accuracy (R.Thomsett)**
 - ✓ "Radical" Project Management approach
 - ✓ WBS-based, through wide-band Delphi estimates and Sensitivity Analysis (best, likely, worst cases)
 - ✓ Estimation "adjusted" according to quality's requirements



Summarizing...:

- Radical PM estimates always by **experience/analogy**, estimating directly the effort (in man-days or man-hours) **but** takes care of quality requirements as further filter towards the final estimated-value

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Discussion Estimation Practices in AM

Main (missing) points identified



1 NFR: Non-Functional Requirements

- ✓ the focus of AM on evaluating features, user stories, or more general high-level user requirements mainly from a functional viewpoint **does not include** the non-functional perspective of the projects.
- ✓ explicitly, only few methods such as **DSDM** propose in their practices to consider them for estimation and planning purposes.

2 Sizing Units

- ✓ general AM approach to estimation experienced-based, **mainly** founded on functional analysis and **not** supported by historical data.
- ✓ **effort** and **schedule** are the time-related expressions corresponding to “how much” work will be performed; they do not mention the functional requirements measurement with a recognized quantitative measurement method. In this AM approach to estimation, **size** is only considered as “implicit” in the estimators’ minds.
- ✓ **Story Points** and **Velocity** concepts represent a “**delivery rate**” based only on the experience and knowledge of such particular team, applicable with success in small and stable teams. But it is much **more challenging in larger organizations** where the composition of a project team is not necessarily as stable over time.

Discussion Estimation Practices in AM

Main (missing) points emerged



3 Historical Data

- ✓ the practice to collect data from projects is not required by most AM (except for DSDM).

4 Standards

- ✓ each methodology and each team applying a certain AM uses its own definitions;
- ✓ adequate measurements require to be based on standards and require inputs with a validated, quality level.

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Conclusions



- Agile Methods (AM) represent interesting solutions for projects with unstable requirements, iterative SLC, short-term milestones and small teams.
- Only in the last five years, attention was shifted from ASD to APM (*Agile Project Management*). Through this interest, planning and scheduling practices have been tailored to agile methodologies, but with much less attention to the estimation process.
- AM still being a young approach to software development, much work remains to be done to improve the way AM manage estimates, including tailoring relevant practices from well-established and proven "heavyweight" methodologies.
- Next steps will include analyses of the impact on size, effort and productivity of non-functional requirements in agile projects to improve estimates right from the Requirement Elicitation phase using, for example, a new User Story structure called US² (2nd generation of User Stories).

Coby's Observation:

Math is a fact, but problem data quite often are not "facts"

Q & A



Grazie! Thank you!



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