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Media informatics

Exposé for a bachelor thesis

Merging Human-computer interaction with agile software development

Contents

Tags

Motivation and problems to solve

The Waterfall process comes with risks for companies. To implement such a process correctly, all requirements for the finished product have to be sorted out at the beginning of the project, therefore requiring a lot of time at the start, leaving little time to react to changes. But it is almost standard for software projects to have changing requirements during the development phase, which results in undesirable products for the end-user or unsatisfied clients [1, p. 14]. The cost of change compounds with time [1, p. 22].

Out of these problems arise a few requirements to the product, that has to be met always. The product has to be desirable to the end-user. It has to be technically feasible. And to project has to deliver business value fast.

To solve these problems, developers and designers came up with solutions, such as working agile or having iterative design phases. Starting with agile, the most frequent problem with agile comes with implementing an agile framework in the company. All members of the project and the client have to commit to the agile manifesto. But most clients cannot leave someone at the agency to stay in contact and collaborate with the teams. Therefore a big share of Web Agencies kept parts of the original waterfall phases in their processes [2]. But because of this management decision, developers and designers cannot fully work agile, and therefore only the negative impacts of working the agile show, such as messy tickets, volatility errors, and opaque workflows. This needs additional tweaking such as the backlog [3].

Improvements to Development or Design phases kept their focus on each separate phase in dictating the other [1, p. 22]. For example, agile frameworks usually need designers to work in smaller increments [4], with not enough time to research, which results in concepts that do not grab the whole aspect of all requirements or rely on their assumptions [5]. This results often in less collaboration between the two teams [1, p. iv][6, p. 115]. Both teams work after one another instead of parallel or intertwined [7, p. 9]. Therefore Designers are driven by the deadlines set by the project manager for their concepts and not collaborating closely with software architects leads to unviable solutions [1, p. 4]. But Developers build working software, which is no longer valuable to the end-user because they put technical feasibility over the set boundaries by the UX team. The lack of focus put on the end-user in agile development is a major concern and the biggest weakness [8, p. 312].

The Human-centered Design approach solves many of the problems above, but also comes with problems. First of all, it is important, that the Design includes all humans in the required research. Concentrating only on the end-user will leave gaps in the requirements that can lead to an undesirable product by the client. More often than not, the Researcher writes User Stories wrong [9]. They already have a solution in mind, leaving out the possibility of a better solution. Usually, the User is kept in mind during the

development of the concept, by Empathy Maps or other Tools. But once the concept is finished and given to the development team, those end-user requirements are forgotten and replaced by technical restraints, leading again to an undesirable product [1, p. 19, p. 33].

Once a product reaches the Quality Assurance Department, other problems show up, like that the final deployed product only receives irregular Updates. Neither agile frameworks nor human-centered design keeps in mind, that requirements after deployment can change, and therefore the view on sustainable products has to change too [1, p. 18, pp. 30-31].

It is needed to differentiate between starting a new project and maintaining a product. When starting a new project, software architects are not included during the concept phases, which leads to no feasible solution. Designers usually waste time fetching out documentation and designs, while Developers have to wait until the design is set. When maintaining a product, Designers and Developers need to collaborate more closely. They also have to be in the meetings as Consultants to discuss feasible solutions with the client to develop a satisfying product. The business also has to listen and measure the success of the product in the live environment.

HCI and Agile share the values of user-focus and iterative cycles, which leads to the conclusion, that combining them and solving the main problems, should lead to a workflow, that solves all key problems [10]. When trying to fix all of the problems stated above, we still need to keep in mind the time, budget, and scope of the projects. Therefore a subgoal should be to reduce waste and unused documentation.

Status Quo

Derived Thesis

Procedure

A new project is started

A product needs an update

A Bug is found in a product

A Client wants a new feature

A product is transferred over to the agency

Project Plan

July 26, 2022	Submit Exposé
August 2, 2022	Register thesis?
October 31, 2022	Thesis submission
November 3, 2022	Colloquium

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