

How the use of Personas in Agile may Allow Game Developers to Construct More Effective User Stories

COMP150 - Agile Essay

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Agile agile agile abstract

1 Introduction

The Agile methodology itself does not directly address usability. The Agile Manifesto [1] is focused on the development process. Despite some conflicts in principles, interest in incorporating user centred design (UCD) methods into Agile is growing [1]. One such UCD tool which has been integrated into some Agile methods is the use of Personas [2]. Personas are a set of fictional characters created to be archetypal of the different groups of intended users. Their primary purpose is to solidify the concept of the end user to help designers and developers more effectively understand the product's intended users. Games are solely about the user's experience of the game, so an understanding of the user is especially important. This essay will explore

how the use of personas and agile in games development could help create a game that provides the user with a better experience, as well as helping user stories be constructed and prioritised more effectively.

2 The Benefits of using Personas

Personas can help designers, developers and testers more effectively capture the needs of their intended product users, as well as being a tool to aid communication. Personas usually contain information about the user such as name, age, occupation, a photo, and the goals of that Persona when using the product. In agile, they are usually placed on the task board or in a notable place in the team's working environment [1]. Personas can help developers and designers more carefully consider how users would use the product and what their goals are, since they are concretely defined rather than abstract sections of the target market. Understanding how the user will experience the product is especially important in a field such as games, which is all about the user's enjoyment. [2].

Personas can also be used as an effective communication tool between team members and departments [3].

3 Integrating Personas into Agile

Some elements of Personas conflict with elements of the Agile manifesto, whilst some parts of their philosophies are similar [1, 3]. The Persona method in UCD usually involves researching the users and creating the personas before any development begins, whereas Agile discourages this practice [3]. In order to make personas compatible with Agile, they could be made to be iterative, as is demonstrated with 'Extreme Personas' [4]. This way,

the persona's profile would be reviewed and developed alongside the project as requirements change and new information about the users surface. The personas could be reviewed at the end of each sprint, alongside user stories.

4 How can personas be used in game development?

It is difficult to focus user stories on users in game development, as all of the users are players. Using personas could provide a way to target the user stories to specific types of user. The priority of user stories could then be determined using the personas' goals and personalities as a guide [?]. Another approach to tying personas to user stories is to create persona driven user stories [5]; that is, user stories that specifically refer to a single persona. For game development, the goals of the Persona will be of particular importance; they can define why the user is playing the game and what they want to achieve in the game. Additionally, a persona for game development could include the player's gamer type according to taxonomies such as Brainhex [], the Bartle test[], or Yee's taxonomy[]. The use of personas in game development, therefore, may help developers focus on who is going to be playing their game and better design for them.

5 Conclusion

Bye.

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