Planning Poker is an interesting estimation tool that I had not heard about previously. Each member of the team has a deck of cards that they use to vote on the estimate of story points for each story presented. The idea is that each team member reveals the same number on their card. If there are wide disparities, the team members discuss their reasoning and hopefully come to an agreement on the actual points by voting in successive rounds. This is a great method to help everyone in the team get on the same level about the difficulty of a particular story. But some people really are averse to confrontation and may not fully speak their mind if they are one of the outlier votes. This may have them sway too easily to the mean, even if they are correct in their estimation.

When I was manager of a machine shop, we had to estimate the time that any project would take to complete. One time, we had a major job building a machine that made pallets, but it was specially designed to be adjustable for custom pallets used for a specific client. We estimated based on a previous project that was much simpler and did not require the machine to change what it was doing. The problem was, there was more R&D than expected and not just design and build. We had to change the overall design twice and extended the delivery by nearly a year. By the end, the customer cancelled, and we had to refund nearly the full payments made to us. We were too cavalier in our approach, underestimating how much upfront work was needed. After reading about agile estimation approaches, I believe we would have been in a better position if we had used story points and a burn down chart. This would have given us an idea of the relative difficulty of each part of the development of the machine. We could have identified where work needed to be directed earlier and maybe found a way to complete the project correctly. I know this is different than a software development project, but the similarities are there.

Hi, Anne!

Your explanation of affinity grouping is well done. I think the visualization aspect really helps some people grasp the size of the tasks being performed. The fact that the tasks are estimated and prioritized by the team brings the empowerment aspect of agile that really improves quality and collaboration throughout the project.

For your python code game, looking back, you could have used a burn-down chart to help identify the work versus the time allowed. This could have allowed you to see where the time needed to be spent getting all of the requirements into your code before the deadline.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Bob

Edgar,

Happy Thanksgiving!

You explain the concept of planning poker well. I would counter the positives of it with the fact that not everyone is willing to argue their point of view to others and may “fall in line” with the rest of the team even if the person believes they are correct and the team is wrong.

Your school project may have benefited from a burn-down chart. If each team member was aware of the tasks that needed to be completed and there was a feedback method so each member could inform the team of the status of their task, adjustments and collaborations could have been made to ensure the project finished on time.

We’re over halfway through! Good luck with the rest of the term.

Bob