Interview transcription - 2021-04-21- 14:00 over Zoom (remote)
Speaker 0 = Interviewee
Speaker 1 = interviewer

- Speaker 0   00:00:01   There we go. Okay. First of all, your, our thank you for participating in our study. Um, as I said before, uh, this, uh, conversation will be recorded and they, the audio will live to be transcribed. After we have removed any names that are mentioned you to confidentially, we will send you a transcription. So you're able to revise anything if you need to, but that's up to you. So our, our research is to see how user story splitting is conducted and why it is being conducted in the industry in general. So the goal of this interview is to get insight into how you and your team work with this process. And the interview will take maximum an hour, but we usually finish around 30 to 40 minutes or so. Um, and we will ask a little general things about you and what you have done and what you're currently doing. And then we will introduce the topic and some definitions, and then we will move on to the questions regarding how you and your team work with your system. So if we begin with that, um, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your previous work experience and then move on to what you're currently doing in your current role?

- Speaker 1   00:01:32   Uh, yes. Uh, thanks for asking. I don't know actually how specific I need to go, but, uh, um, yes, so, um, I'm in it kind of field or IT already kind of 10 years. And I started, uh, yes, I started at like a trainee was, um, some kind of small things. And then from, I don't know if I need to mention the years, but yeah, I started, there was a testing, uh, already since 2013 and, uh, yes, I started actually, uh, was, uh, it was more like it was related to web technologies, like smaller company and so on. And then I turn it to, uh, one company, uh, which was working with kind of very heavy systems, like was a banking field and it was kind of waterfall methodology and the, all the style was kind of very heavy. And as the testers, we were kind of separate unit and, uh, yes, I, I would say that also all the testing area was working and not the heavy, but I felt that we far away from the business.

- Speaker 1   00:03:02   I felt that. Right. Yeah. And, and, and, and, and, uh, yeah, and, uh, when I ended up here in [NAME OF COMPANY], uh, it was clear for me that it's not just called like agile, but it was like real, real larger team. And, uh, yes, and I was kind of, uh, in the team kind of one responsible role for the testing. And each of us has kinda same, not same, but, uh, uh, each of us has their own role. And then it's kind of, and the other thing that we were very close to the business and, uh, yes. Uh, and then I understand like the difference, uh, what we are kind of learning because I also like study it. And then, you know, when you don't have experience, there is nothing. It just didn't make sense that, uh, I don't know what, or for agile or something, it's kinda, it's hard to understand, but yeah.

- Speaker 1   00:04:05   Then I actually got a good point what it, what it is and how it works. And yes, and yes, yes, yes. And since then I'm in this agile or a worry kind of deeply. And at first it felt for me kind of bit, uh, how to say not, I was not sure if that is kind of hard to say trustful way, how we are doing, because it felt big task or it felt that,

uh, I dunno, uh, I don't know, I needed some kind of strategy or something. We're just going to going with the flow and doing things. So without the kind of plans and strategies and so on and so on, but yes, then I actually understood that, uh, we're going together with business, we're doing the main thing, and we are asking the questions, what we need to do, like, uh, particular in testing.

- Speaker 1   00:05:08   So yes, then I got the idea that this such a thing actually works because, uh, yeah, how I said, uh, we're close to business and then we can actually, uh, pretty well understand what's needed. And, uh, and we can also like, um, get feedback pretty fast. Yes. Because otherwise how I mentioned in that previous experience, we were so far away that I remember that I was asking around what are kind of not, we had clear requirements, but I asked, uh, what is kind of while you are, what is goal for that kind of thing, what we are doing and, you know, nobody can answer. And then I said, but maybe we can, uh, ask to PO, I don't know, business representatives and so on. And, uh, the answer was, but, uh, can, uh, we are not sure that they know, um, and my question was, come on, why we aren't even doing that job if nobody knows. So yes. Yes. That's, that's the intro about that specifically?

- Speaker 0   00:06:27   W what do you, uh, what's, what's the title of your current role?

- Speaker 1   00:06:33   I am, uh, right now I am, uh, uh, quality assurance, uh, specialist, I guess, but yeah, the it's, uh, I'm calling it just testing, but, uh, yes. It's quality assurance. Yep.

- Speaker 0   00:06:51   Okay, great. Um, so, uh, introduction to the topic, um, uh, during this interview, we will speak about user stories a lot. Um, what we mean, we user stories in this context is, and any kind of a work item, so that could be an Epic or a feature or a user story, or a task that, uh, that require often some type of splitting or slicing. So user story splitting in this, um, in this context is also for perhaps breaking down epics into features, features into user stories, for example. So you don't have the thing specifically about user stories with this specific format, you know, as a user, I would like to, for some reason, so it relates to any kind of Epic or a story, uh, on that level, so to speak. So coming over to the interview questions, uh, and in terms of these with epics features and user stories, um, how would you say that this hierarchy looks for you in your current team?

- Speaker 1   00:08:23   Um, good question. I don't know, actually I have no idea. I mean, uh, I mean, uh, how it looks for me, it looks kind of fine, but, uh, I, if, uh, if you're like asking how it's, I dunno how it's gonna build our habits become that way. I actually really have no idea. I mean that, uh, I know that we have, um, um, like plannings or groomings and we are setting these things up, but I guess I'm not that involved. And I, from my point of view, I see, uh, just, uh, those kinds of stories, uh, epics or whatever. I see them just when they come to the testing part and just then I can, I started to, I don't know, not to read it, but to understand what's that are, or yeah. What, what is all about, something like that? Yes.

- Speaker 0   00:09:31   At the, at the point of when you receive something at the testing stage, uh, do you receive an Epic or a feature or user story? What, what level do you interact with there?

- Speaker 1   00:09:44   I would say the user story and the bugs was the smallest kind of unit. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then sometimes I'm missing that full picture, and then I'm like, like going backwards, I'm trying to understand in which area, this story, for example are on, uh, trying to understand, uh, if there are, or there will be kind of similar, uh, stories, uh, like, uh, very nearly the coming or maybe this story is dependent from something else. Yeah.
- Speaker 0   00:10:26   Um, with, with that example that you're speaking of, uh, w why do you feel, why do you feel that you have to go back sometime? What is the,
- Speaker 1   00:10:40   Uh, I think I said that I'm not sometimes I'm kinda missing, uh, the full picture. Like, I mean, uh, for example, if I can say, I know we are like creating some kind of search component, but maybe it goes together with something else. And, uh, for example, I received just that search component, but I'm pretty sure that in development, there are some other items which are kind of related. And for me, it's easier like to test it, to check them all together. Um, because maybe even a, the result will not be that, uh, kind of, uh, useful for me now, but I need to wait for something, but sometimes I am just not seeing that, just because I know, but maybe these are things which could be discussed in the team, how, when we are putting the things or moving forward to the testing, because yeah. Sometimes it just comes to testing and maybe it's not that even testable, uh, at that moment.
- Speaker 0   00:11:41   Oh, okay. So does that mean that, for example, when someone is splitting, let's say an Epic down to features or user stories, uh, are you, are you involved in that process?
- Speaker 1   00:12:07   Yes, I guess sometimes yes. We held the grooming's or some kind of those preparing, uh, meetings. Um, but yes, I guess we don't have that strong, strong, um, kind of culture that we are going through all of them, I guess. Maybe I'm not that kinda, I don't know. Maybe I'm just somehow miss that part, but, uh, but sometimes yeah, sometimes it's that we have kind of grooming meeting. We kinda, uh, see what's needed from our team. And then it's kind of on pause for, I don't know, months, something like that. And then it's a, of course you forgot, well forgot. What was it was about and so on. Yeah. Something, something like that. Or for example, uh, we have, uh, we had, uh, very recently example when, uh, we have a couple of user stories that they kind of were ready with. I don't know how to say it requirements or, uh, yeah, I don't know, five or six of them in one area, but, uh, after that kind of grooming and discussion part, it ended up that we, uh, development can work just with the one item, because for the others, there were kind of like, uh, dependencies or unclear questions or something.
- Speaker 1   00:13:44   And then we were, come on, we are ready with area. Uh, but yeah, it ended up that there is just one development kind of task. So, yes. Uh, that's why, I guess sometimes I'm missing that full picture because I can't remember what was, uh, months ago discussed.
- Speaker 0   00:14:05   Yeah. Okay. So, um, in terms of when, when, uh, when you, as a team do, for example, a user story splitting in this matter or Epic splitting or something, um, is there anything specific that you try to bring to that discussion has to say QA person?

- Speaker 1   00:14:36   Uh, for me I'm usually interested, uh, uh, who will be, can, uh, uh, uh, uh, I forgot the word, um, responsible person for, I don't know, in, in, in, or, uh, the area it's, I mean, that, uh, who we'll be working with, I dunno, it was new area or yeah. From kind of business side. That's what I'm interested in usually. And then of course that's a test, a data things, or a test scenarios, or what are the dependencies with other systems? I mean, uh, integrations or just registration or something, some kind of a level where we will be involved. That is one thing. And, and yeah, and actually it does that. I started, uh, I wasn't doing that previously, but right now I'm in very early stage already asked for the, for the, uh, useful data, because sometimes we are missing that out. But yeah, when, when you can ask in advance than, uh, someone knows that it needs to be prepared, so yeah, that's, that's what I'm focused on.
- Speaker 0   00:16:00   All right. All right. In terms of, um, which is just a thought that I have right now, you start, let's say a, a task or a story, um, that needs to be tested. Um, do, do you ever try to like, do a, um, a list of tests, for example, that should be performed for this story to be, uh, accepted in terms of testing?
- Speaker 1   00:16:41   Yes. We have acceptance criteria, criteria, criteria. Uh, so yes, basically sometimes together with developers sometimes. So I'm doing that part, but yeah, we are creating, uh, yeah. Acceptance criteria is based in that what's kind of done, uh, based on that story. And then it's also based on what's needed to be checked. Uh, and, uh, yes, yes. Sometimes that list is not that huge, but sometimes it's actually a lot of, a lot of points and then I'm basically, uh, sometimes it's that I don't need to go through all of them, but, uh, uh, by that, I mean, I'm not going to each of them, but, uh, I don't know with one action. I, co-work more things, but I I'm gonna reach a kink if I, if I'm covering all those. Uh, but yes. Yeah, that is the least thing. Okay. So in
- Speaker 0   00:17:50   Terms of, like, if we imagine the, um, the work board where you keep all the backdrop tasks and stuff like that, so, uh, do you ever, um, physically sort to speak, divide a story into different tests that you should perform?
- Speaker 1   00:18:16   Uh, it's more likely not to the different tests, but it's more likely we have different uh, because separate section, uh, where it size of that way, uh, acceptance for terrorists and, uh, yes. It's, uh, yeah, it's, uh, it's yeah, separate section. And then when I'm like, um, in the testing, like when I'm testing that one, I'm, I'm going through all of them and then I'm going to make making the comment or kind of resume. Uh what's uh, what's done with that one, for example, or, uh, or sometimes when the list or those acceptance criteria research of a lot of them, then I'm kind of making marks that they are kind of past.
- Speaker 0   00:19:05   Okay, great. So, uh, you mentioned like, uh, pre-planning or, or backlog refinement meeting or something. Um, is there, is there any other time that you can think about when you, as a team or as yourself do, um, meet work items, seem to smaller ones?
- Speaker 1   00:19:31   It's actually, for our team, it's very flexible. There's sometimes that there are some basic stories are made, but we can kind of divide them, but, but it's more like that. Uh, it's, it's more that way the developers are doing that because sometimes it's kind of one story, but, uh, when you are not like doing that, you don't

know like that all the circumstances. So when you start to work for the developers are starting to work with something and they say that, okay, this is too much. Or maybe it's a lot of, kind of, the outcome will be kind of different than they are kind of splitting, uh, those, uh, stories, uh, or, or items. Uh, but yeah, it's, it's actually happening more in a development kind of phase. Uh, but, uh, yes, we are not like calling some kind of special meeting or something. We are just maybe sometimes communicating with scrum or a product owner and saying that, uh, uh, that, that will be kind of splitted out, for example, or even our product owner is actually very, uh, often asking, uh, these are the things, but please check them out. Maybe something needed to be, I dunno, kind of added or, or split up, or, yeah.

- Speaker 0   00:20:59   Yeah. Um, so you mentioned scrum master product owner developer. You, you asked yourself or you as a quality assurance role. Um, is there any other role involved in a story splitting at any point in time?
- Speaker 1   00:21:25   Yeah. User experience. Yeah. Developer, UX, scrum product owner. Yes.
- Speaker 0   00:21:33   Yes. And, um, I know you have answered it, uh, in part already, but let's say UX person or, or a scrum master that we haven't spoken about so much. Why are these roles involved in this, would you say?
- Speaker 1   00:21:58   Yeah, actually in like in our team, you know, that there are kind of, uh, ongoing kind of transformation. We are splitting as a team, first of all. Uh, but, uh, and that's why, uh, the scrum role or position is kind of new, uh, in, in, in our team. But we see a need for that just because, uh, yes, sometimes we feel that way that, uh, uh, I'll just say that, um, um, I don't know what requirements or, or the, yeah, those needs are kind of noted down, but then time goes and, uh, yeah, kind of updates need to be, uh, as well, or actually, uh, when the time comes, uh, for development, uh, in that particular area, uh, there are, uh, ongoing other things and we need to kind of synchronize the status and the, yeah. Then we see we see the need for the scrum master who can kind of follow up, uh, in, um, kind of, uh, different areas and understand that kind of team capacity and so on, uh, that Y uh, yes, the scrum master actually, um, for those plannings and groomings, I, in my eyes are kind of more, most important person.
- Speaker 1   00:23:25   Uh, so, and we basically probably missed that out. Uh that's why, uh, yeah. Uh, some un-clarity sometimes, uh, your is also worried, uh, well, well, well, well, first of all you can say before, sorry. Uh, just because, uh, uh, uh, UX is seeing a bit wider picture and they are more also focused on customer experience and, uh, yeah, just, uh, sometimes making, uh, you see, sometimes we get kind of requirements that, yeah, there are, I dunno, at least should be implemented. And the lists are very long lists and actually we are not taking that much care. We are. We see, okay, we need to implement that service, that service returns, I don't know, 20 items. And for us, it's kind of, okay. Maybe we can ask if really those 20 questions are okay, not questions, but that I dunno, uh, options are okay, but for us, it's going okay, we will do it if that isn't going to need it. Um, but UX is more strongly actually asking, um, uh, if that's really the best frame for the customer. And if there is, uh, any other ways how we can ask that question or maybe split that out or something like that. So, yes. So I see, uh, because, uh, I also

worked previously in this team when we didn't have that kind of role at all. And then now I see, uh, the re real volume from that actually.

- Speaker 0   00:25:19   Okay, great. Um, so what you mentioned that the current process, perhaps, uh, for you and your role and doesn't perhaps give as much, uh, overview of the complete, uh, uh, process sometime, um, for what you're implementing, uh, what, what would you say, for example, if you think about the, a developer, uh, what do you think? Uh,

- Speaker 1   00:26:15   Yeah, sir, quite okay. But then we have, I, I think I already said that, but we have a, um, some areas where we are dependent from th, like, I mean, we need to, um, I don't know, build, um, we need to build a result, uh, and we need to use for example services. And, um, in that case, we just, we are just taking the service and using it kind of re using it. But for us, it's kind of quick thing that we're taking the service, implementing it and that's it. But we often that service is not ready or it's even kinda not, uh, discussed yet how it will be built and so on and so on. And then it means that, or developers are kind of asking, starting to ask around. Um, yes, but I mean, here is more, here is more the thing about synchronizing between teams and priorities between teams and something like that.

- Speaker 1   00:27:31   I see. See that, that, uh, because, uh, yes, we can do, uh, right now, actually, we also how the, the, the, the today's show, but the, I think was that, that we are doing kind of, or part what we can do, and then we will kind of, uh, we'll be done and, uh, we'll move, pause this area again. And we will come back when the service will be ready. Yeah. Something, something like that. That's why, I guess, for the developers, I'm quite not sure how they see the stories like stories sometimes, I guess they are good enough, but yeah, sometimes we just don't say, yeah, we need to ask around a lot, actually. And then that's where we have those common chats. Then we start to ask, and then the great thing is that at least we are all aware why we can't kind of proceed or why we can to just kind of do it.

- Speaker 1   00:28:34   Yes, yes. Yes. Because here I also mentioned for you that I personally liked that the story comes to ready for testing. And in my mind, it's kind of, that should be ready for testing. I mean, I can take it and test it, uh, because yeah, it's, it's also making the queue in my column and as I see that it's ready, so I just want to take it, do it, and that's it. And the same I see for the development, if they see that, okay, it's ready for development call, they just take it, uh, kind of, uh, use their time, uh, like, uh, do the development and it's done, but yeah, they, they actually need to ask around. Yes.

- Speaker 0   00:29:24   Great. Uh, so, um, let's see here. Um, do, do you know if, uh, you and your team is working with any specific guideline or technique for, uh, splitting your stories,

- Speaker 1   00:29:43   Splitting stories? I'm quite not sure. Um, what are the techniques, but, uh, we are more likely working with the combine style, if that makes sense, because yeah, we are like, we are doing the release is on kind of demand. We don't have like, like the, the scrum usually has those sprints and yeah, the sprint is, I don't know, four to three weeks and then release comes and so on. And I guess the, the same way goes with that item. I don't know, planning or grooming or meeting for us, it's

more likely that we are doing the releases on demand and yeah, that means that yes, also the story, um, uh, things, things go. So with the same way, uh, if we, for example, yeah, we have, uh, I don't know that area have I said kind of prioritized, but then we see that then there is just one, uh, story, uh, then a product owner is kind of preparing, uh, other, or say that maybe there are maintenance things or something, uh, which is what we can work. So like giving something instead of that. So, yes.

- Speaker 0   00:31:04   Right. Um, do you know if there's any definition of when splitting and your story or a work item or an Epic is done correctly?
- Speaker 1   00:31:20   Sorry, what do I know the definition?
- Speaker 0   00:31:23   Yeah. If there is a definition within your team for when something, okay. We have this Epic, and then we have split it into these, uh, stories or features, then we know that this is correct., if there's any,
- Speaker 1   00:31:42   I, I personally, no, no, I don't know that if there is, or yeah. If, if something like that is existing, then, then that, then it sounds cool actually to know, to know, um, why it is, uh, that way kind of, but no, I don't know if that is Kanban.
- Speaker 0   00:32:05   So, um, in terms of, um, you mentioned that you work, uh, Kanban style, um, but do you, do you ever evaluate the process of user story splitting?
- Speaker 1   00:32:25   Um, I guess that our team has experienced with that, that, uh, uh, it ended up, uh, like a bit of a waste of time. Yeah. If, if, if that is going to answer, I guess we have tried something, uh, like was, um, was that, but, uh, yeah, we just solved that as kind of a bit overwork and it it's it, but, uh, this is actually good because we get, we raised this question in one retro. We are having those retro, uh, actually very, very useful. And, uh, yes, I guess there were raised this question at least, uh, uh, about that evolution thing in that part that, I dunno, for example, in that level that someone can say, uh, in, in his or her house, how it's, I dunno, five or one point, at least in that kind of level, not in a worry like details, but yeah. To know that, uh, wait for that, uh, story or, but yeah, we are not doing that.
- Speaker 0   00:33:43   Okay. Um, what, what would you say in terms of dividing a small, uh, bigger task into smaller tasks? Uh, what would you say the main benefits of this, uh, process is
- Speaker 1   00:34:05   Main benefits of dividing?
- Speaker 1   00:34:10   Um, in my eyes, uh, it's that, uh, I could say, uh, we can more easily follow tool or outcome or result that one, it's going a bit smaller, more specific, you know, the result will be that or outcome move with that. And then if something isn't that way, or isn't working that way, then it's easier to follow that. Uh, uh, because yeah, if that is one specific case, uh, and the outcome is not like as expected, uh, then you can see that, okay, this is kind of, uh, that specific case. But for example, if, uh, the, the story is bit wider and a it's covering, I don't know, five cases. I mean, I'm thinking of the cases, but yeah. I dunno, five results or something then yes. It's a bit hard with that. Um, how to work with that. Uh, yeah, you use the study because of course you have options that you can add and, or create the bag that okay.
- Speaker 1   00:35:19   This case isn't working. Uh, but all the other five outcomes for example are okay for, uh, are okay. And yeah, then it's a bit harder to maintain all this

because you're creating value, you're giving back, but you're keeping the, for example, the story, or you're even like giving back out the story, but at the same time, just the one thing isn't working, all the others are good. And yeah, it's a bit harder, like with all the commenting and all that. Yeah. The specific comments. So you need to be very specific and, uh, and when you are turning also that I think that it's an, you need to, I think that, okay. I just need maybe to test or check that one thing was okay. Like previously, so yeah, that's, that's in my eyes. That's, uh, it's also the same with the bugs, like the bug story, one item. And it's great that, uh, you know, what is happening with bugs, one bug is fixed, but maybe some, some, something other folks up, but, uh, here, the best thing is that we are closing that or internal kind of bug and creating a new one because otherwise it's kind of never ending story. Yeah. It should be very focused.

- Speaker 0   00:36:46   Okay. And you mentioned a little bit from your side, uh, a, perhaps a negative effect of breaking down, uh, larger tasks into smaller ones is that you might have missed some oversight or overview. Um, is there any, is there any other drawbacks or negative aspects that you can think about, uh, for splitting up work items?

- Speaker 1   00:37:16   Ooh, Hmm. Maybe I need to think about it more, but actually, no, I don't see either it's, but, uh, here again, it's I even don't think that it's that negative thing it's, uh, of course in, I, in our environments, I am able to, uh, based on that tag thing or how we are creating there is, of course I'm able to see that, uh, uh, overview, but yeah, just sometimes. So it's, for me, it's, especially when you have like items in a board, then maybe you just, uh, yeah. You're not going through there as you're just taking the testing thing and then that's where I'm missing that out. But no, actually it's not, I don't have in my mind other kind of negative aspects for me, I see those more, like, just benefits, like splitting things in smaller pieces. It's even, even if you are working at a, in like it's maybe more double personal related, even if you are working with touch, say if that one thing affects more areas or things or units, then I guess you can easily take all those three. I don't know stories. Uh, yeah. Yes.

- Speaker 0   00:38:43   Yeah. Okay, great. Um, so I think we're pretty much done at that point, uh, with the questions, uh, [NAME OF INTERVIEWEE] doesn't have any other things. So, uh, basically, uh, is there, is there any other things that you have thought about during the interview related to this topic that you would like to add?

- Speaker 1   00:39:12   Um, it's four or later, I guess I have, uh, one material about slicing. I don't know. Maybe you have a tell already, but, uh, it recently came in my, uh, readings. So I can share that with you. Uh, but, uh, yes, overall, um, yeah, I hope that, uh, the information will be useful for you.

- Speaker 0   00:39:43   Yeah. Uh, so this, this material that you saw, is that something from within [NAME OF COMPANY], or where is it from?

- Speaker 1   00:39:52   No, it's, uh, I don't know. It's from somewhere, uh, yeah. Manage people and projects. It's all in how you slice design your project and working wires to avoid health, like incremental releases. Something just came in my eyes.

- Speaker 0   00:40:15   Oh, okay. So it's a, some internet article or something. Yeah. But of course, please feel free to forward that to us.

- Speaker 1   00:40:27   Maybe it's related to yeah,

- Speaker 0   00:40:29   Yeah. Yeah. Most definitely. That's great. Um, but I guess that's pretty much it, so thank you again for participating.
- Speaker 1   00:40:40   Yes. Thank you. Thank you for, uh, inviting and asking.