



NEW BOOK
Automated Testing

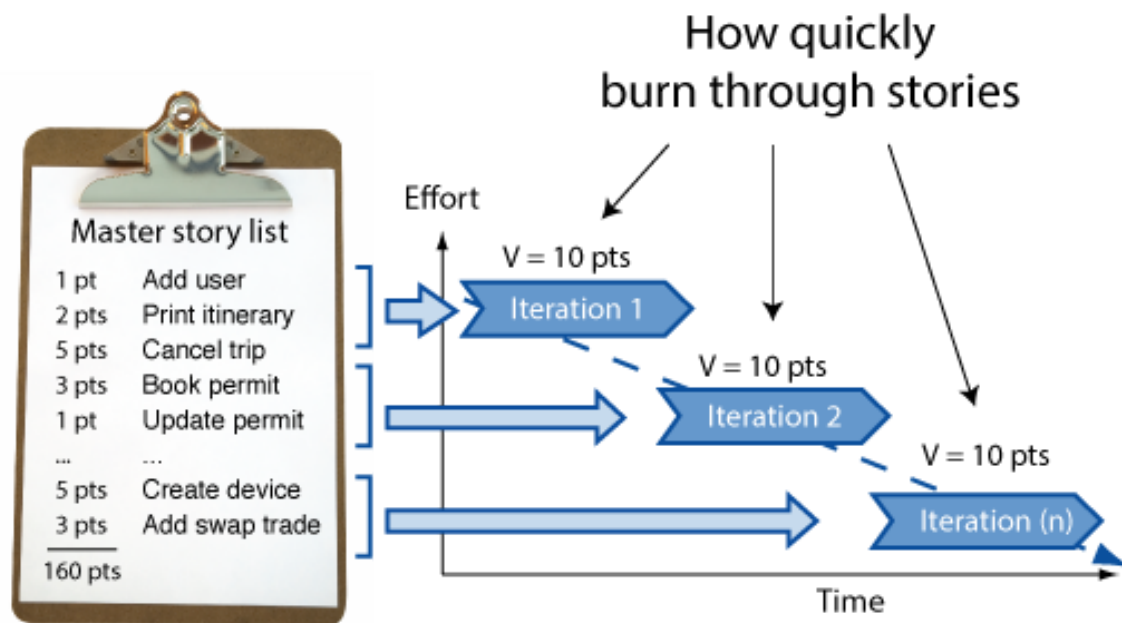
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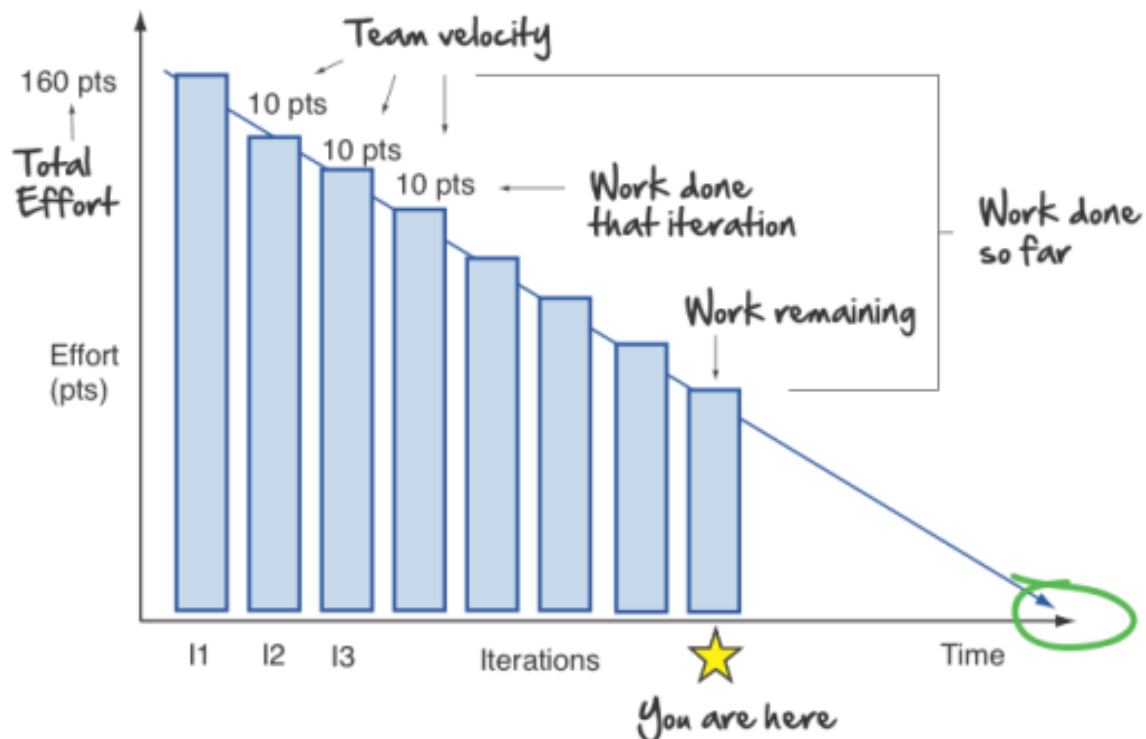
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Burndown Charts



The burndown is a chart that shows how quickly you and your team are burning through your customer's user stories (/user_stories). It shows the total effort against the amount of work we deliver each iteration. Something like this:



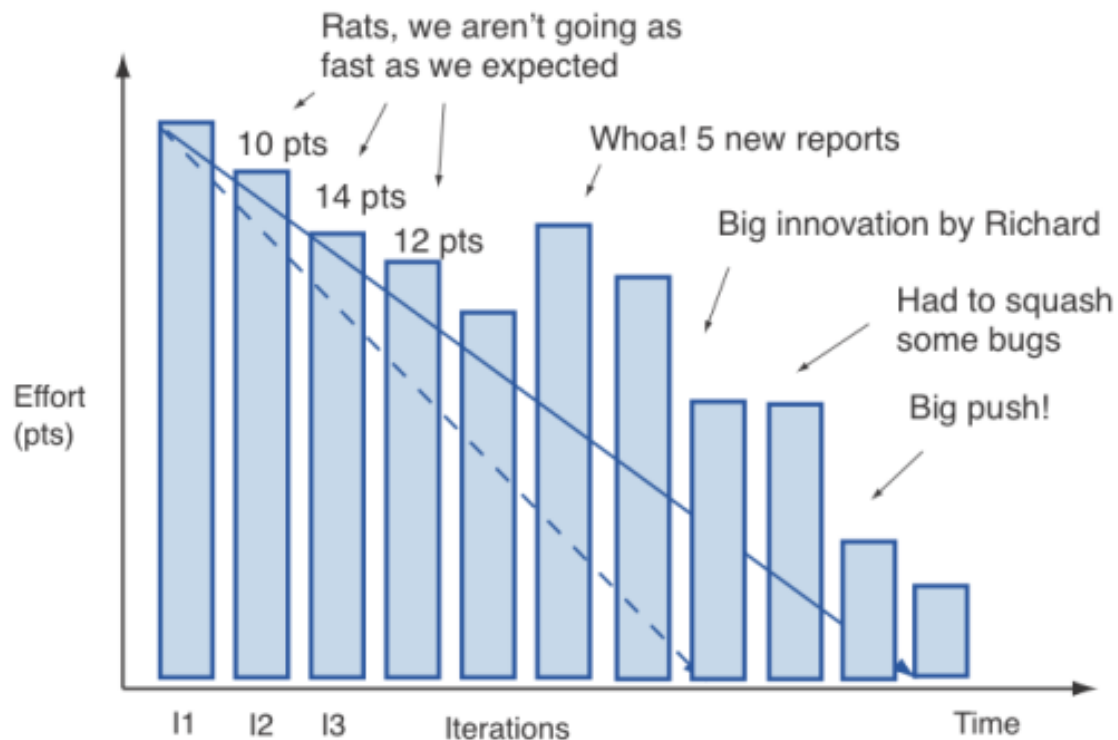
We can see the total effort on the left, our team velocity on the right. But look what else this simple graphs gives us.

- Work done each iteration

- Work remaining
- Work done so far
- When we can expect to be done

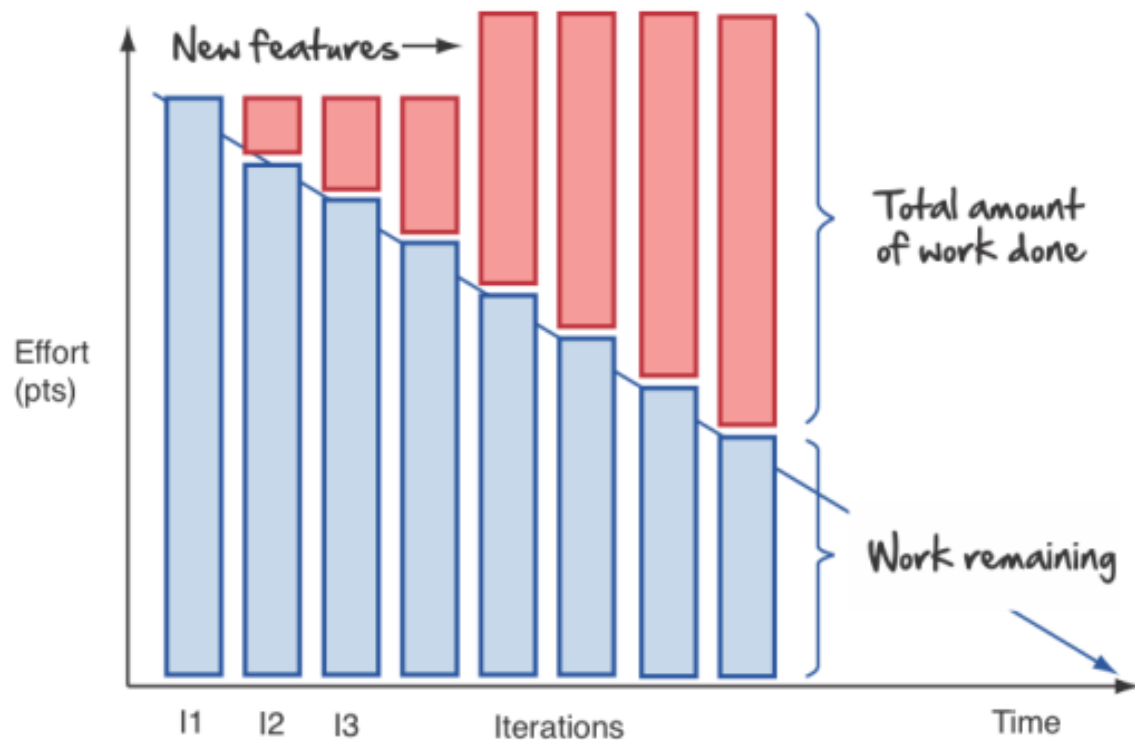
All this from one graph!

Now what you see above is pretty ideal. A more realistic burndown looks something more like this:



It's never a straight line. The team never moves at exactly one fixed velocity. And we discover things along the way (notice how it shows us scope creep in the form of those 5 new reports).

And of course like all things in Agile, you are free to make things your own. One tweak I like making to the burndown is displaying total work done each iteration also. This let's me look at the chart, and immediately get a sense of whether we are a quarter, a third, or $\frac{1}{2}$ way done the project.



Burndowns are great because they:

- Make the reality of the project clear.
- Show the impact of decisions.
- Warn you early if things aren't going according to plan.
- Get rid of all the wishful thinking around dates.

If you are looking for some burndown charts to get you started, here are the ones I use:

- Excel ([/assets/Sample-Burndown.xls](#))
- GoogleDocs (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0Au-Cy1knbSl6dDg3T09EMzIFbXpWSDZxcmdsUnBJZXc&usp=sharing>)

You can also watch a short video on burndowns in our episodes section here
(<http://www.agilenutshell.com/episodes/6-burndown-charts>).

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