


Microsoft Word - PlanningPoker-v1.1.doc


1 / 3 | 100% | [Icons]

[Icons]


1



2



3



Planning Poker

or

How to avoid analysis paralysis while release planning

By James Grenning

The customer reads a story to the team. Two guys are involved in discussing the impact of the story on the system. Reluctantly, an estimate is tossed out on the table. They go back and forth for quite a while. Everyone else in the room is drifting off, definitely not engaged. The discussion oscillates from one potential solution to another, avoiding putting a number on the card. When the discussion finally ends, you discover that the estimate did not really change over all that discussion. You just wasted 20 minutes of valuable time. You have 25 more stories to estimate, you don't want to make a career of release planning.

Extreme programming employs two levels of planning, iteration planning and release planning. Iteration planning is short term and very detailed. Iteration planning is a good time to get into the details of how to implement the story. Release planning is a higher-level plan with a long-range time horizon. During release planning, the team is taking a less precise and longer-term view of the project. There is usually a long backlog of stories. The release-planning objective is to get a ballpark estimate of the effort to build the product, and to split the product into interesting release. Precision of individual estimates is not the goal. Determining the project scope is.

Story estimates are just what their name implies. They are estimates. Some estimates are over-estimates. Some are under-estimates. Every now and then, the estimates turn out to be just right. The team is looking out far, at many stories, including ones that will never be implemented. It is OK to be less precise. Why invest in precision before it is needed? A deck of fairly accurate estimates are better than a pair of very precise estimates (and these probably are not that precise anyway). The team should be trying to get good at using the intuition, their gut. Don't be cavalier about the estimates, but speed is important if the team wants to finish the meeting and get back to building the product.