Requirements and User Stories(IV)

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Gathering Stories

- How do user stories come into existence?

- Traditional approaches to requirements gathering involve asking the users what they want.

- Users are far better critics than they are authors.

- So, if you ask a user, "What do you want?" she may or may not be able to answer.

Gathering Stories(Cnt'd)

- A better approach is to involve the users as part of the team that is determining what to build and is constantly reviewing what is being built.

- To promote this level of participation, many organizations prefer to employ user-story-writing workshops as a principal means of generating at least the initial set of user stories.

- Some also employ story mapping to organize and provide a user-centered context to their stories.

User-Story-Writing Workshop

- The goal is to collectively brainstorm desired business value and create user story placeholders for what the product or service is supposed to do.

- The workshop frequently includes the product owner, ScrumMaster, and development team, in conjunction with internal and external stakeholders.

- Most workshops last anywhere from a few hours to a few days.

- The goal isn't to generate a full and complete set of user stories up front. Instead, the workshop typically has a specific focus.

User-Story-Writing Workshop(Cnt'd)

- If it is the ==first workshop==, prefer to ==start by performing user role analysis==.

- The ==goal== is to ==determine the collection of user roles== that can be used to populate the user role part of our stories.

User-Story-Writing Workshop(Cnt'd)

■ We might also have **personas**, which are prototypical individuals that represent core characteristics of a role.

■ For example, "Lilly," along with her associated description, might be the persona corresponding to the role of the seven- to nine-year-old female player of a young girl's video game. Once Lilly is defined, we would write stories with Lilly in the user role position, instead of a more abstract role such as "Young Female Player."

■ For example, "As Lilly, I want to select from among many different dresses so that I can customize my avatar to my liking."

User-Story-Writing Workshop(Cnt'd)

■ During the workshop there is no standard way of generating user stories.

■ Some teams prefer to work top-down and others prefer to work bottom-up.

■ The top-down approach involves the team starting with a large story (like an epic) and then concentrating its efforts on generating a reasonable collection of smaller stories associated with the epic.

■ An alternative is to work more bottom-up and start immediately brainstorming stories that are associated with the next release of an existing system.

■ There isn't a right or wrong approach; use whatever approach works well, or switch approaches to get the best of both.
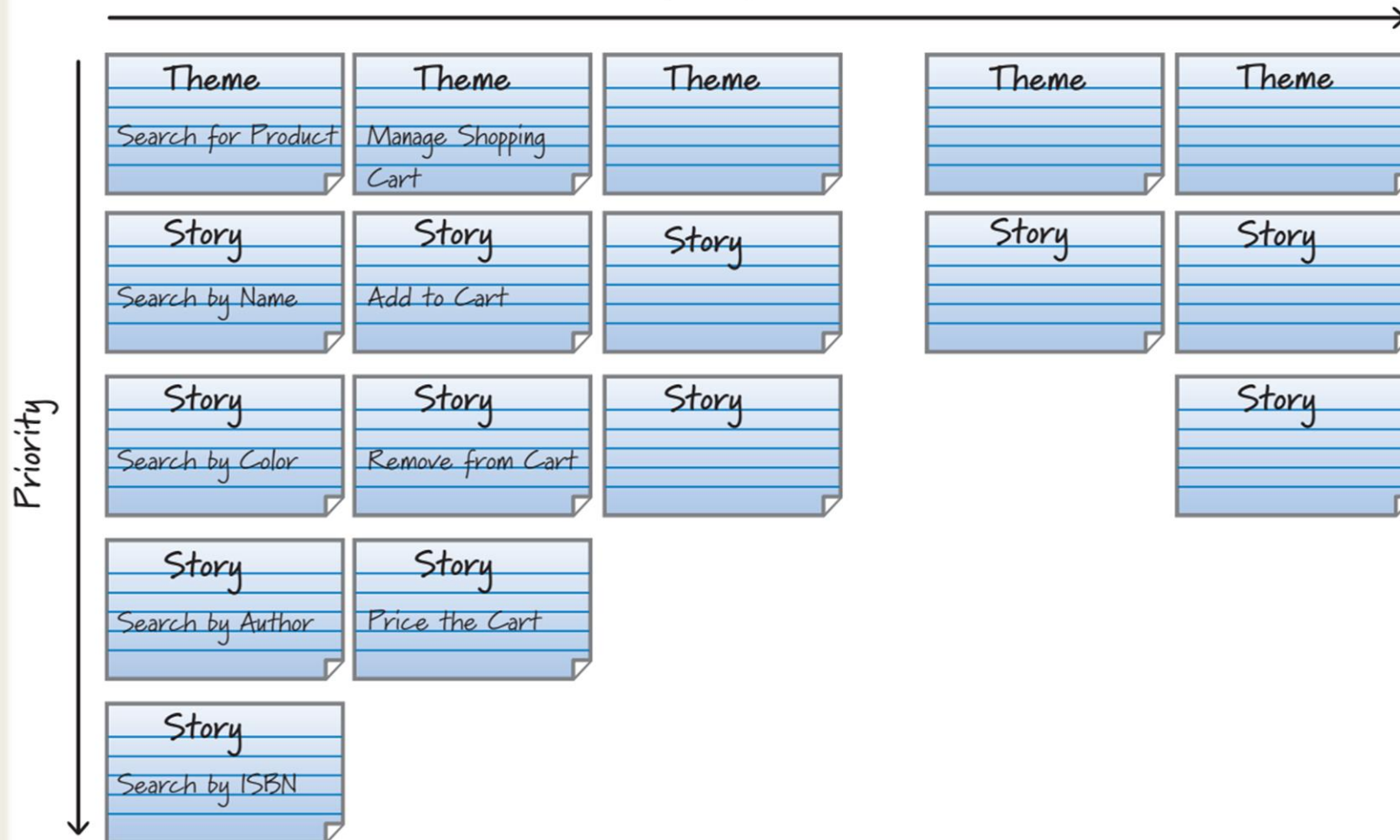
Story Mapping

- Story mapping is a technique that takes a user-centric perspective for generating a set of user stories.

- The basic idea is to decompose high-level user activity into a workflow that can be further decomposed into a set of detailed tasks.

- At the highest level are the epics, representing the large activities of measurable economic value to the user—for example, the "Buy a Product" epic.

Story Mapping(Cnt'd)

- Next we think about the sequence or common workflow of user tasks that make up the epic.

- We lay out the themes along a timeline, where themes in the workflow that would naturally occur sooner are positioned to the left of the ones that would occur later.

- For example, the "Search for product" theme would be to the left of the "Manage Shopping Cart" theme.

Story Mapping(Cnt'd)

- Each theme is then decomposed into a set of implementable stories that are arranged vertically in order of priority.

- Not all stories within a theme need to be included in the same release.

- For example, the "Search by Color" story might not be slated for the first release, whereas the "Search by Name" story probably would be.

Story Mapping(Cnt'd)

- Story mapping combines the concepts of user-centered design with story decomposition.

- Good story maps show a flow of activities from the users' perspective and provide a context for understanding individual stories and their relationship to larger units of customer value.

Story Mapping(Cnt'd)

- Even if you don't do formal story mapping, the idea of using workflows is helpful during story-writing workshops.

- They focus the discussion on writing stories within the context of delivering a complete workflow of value to the user.

- By having the workflow context, it is easier for us to determine if we have missed any important stories associated with the workflow.

Story Mapping(Cnt'd)

■ One difference between traditional story-writing workshops and story mapping is that during the workshop we are primarily focused on generating stories and not so focused on prioritizing them (the vertical position of implementable stories within a story map).

■ Story maps provide a two-dimensional view of a product backlog instead of the traditional linear (one dimensional) product backlog representation.

We can use story mapping as a complement to the workshop,

as a technique for helping

to visualize the prioritization of stories.

Reference

1- K. S. Rubin, "Essential Scrum, A Practical guide to the most popular agile process," 2013.