AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

AGILE ESTIMATION

Estimations are hardest and most difficult parts of the work
But bear in mind that:

Each agile estimation is just an estimate

If the estimation of a requirement results to be not very precise it is not an error or a deviation
Good estimations can give enough information about the amount requested for each piece of work or work package

THE AGILE ESTIMATION PROCESS

1. Ask Questions

The development team start asking questions to the stakeholders regarding the requirements and the user stories

2. Work Breakdown

Product owners break down work items into granular pieces and estimates via story points

3. Work Prioritization

The break down of work helps product owners prioritize the areas of work

4. Estimation

The development team performs the estimations

5. Work Re-Prioritization

Once estimates from the dev team are available, it's not uncommon for a product owner to reorder items on the backlog

STORY POINTS

In traditional software project the work estimation is done in a time format: days, weeks, months
In agile projects estimations are done with story points
Story points rate the relative effort of work
They are expressed by numbers in a Fibonacci-like format: 0, 0.5, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 20, 40, 100
It is an abstraction which pushes the team to make tougher decisions around the difficulty of work

REASONS TO USE STORY POINTS

- Dates can be used only for project activities. Daily tasks e.g. email checking, meetings, interviews, reporting are not time measurable

- Dates have an emotional attachment to them. Relative estimation removes the emotional attachment

- Estimations differ from team to team. In fact each team has their own velocity in accomplishing their. Removing velocity as the measurement means will remove any discussion and speculation

REASONS TO USE STORY POINTS

- Once you agree on the relative effort of each story point value, you can assign points quickly without much debate
- Story points represent the difficulty, not time spent. This keeps team members focused on delivering, not spending time

COMMON RULES FOR AGILE ESTIMATIONS

- No individual task should be more than 16 hours of work
- If you're using story points you will define a range from 0 to a upper limit (e.g. 10, 20, 100,…)
- Items at the top of the backlog should be fine estimated
- The common rule is to use 20 as the upper limit and 16 hours the max duration for a task
- When something is estimated above your team's 16-hour (or 20-point) threshold, that's a signal to break it down into more granular pieces and re-estimate

COMMON RULES FOR AGILE ESTIMATIONS

- For items deeper in the backlog, give a rough estimate
- By the time the team actually begins to work on those items, the requirements may change, and your application certainly will have changed
- When you start off the estimates will not be very accurate
- Don't waste time estimating work that is likely to shift
- The estimations will support the product owner to prioritize the product roadmap appropriately

COMMON RULES FOR AGILE ESTIMATIONS

- Retrospective Meetings are moments when the team will refine their estimations based on lessons learned and acquired experience
- The accuracy of the estimations will increase
- Many agile tools track story points, which makes reflecting on and re-calibrating estimates a lot easier

COMMON RULES FOR AGILE ESTIMATIONS

- Try, for example, pulling up the last 5 user stories the team delivered with the story point value 8
- Discuss whether each of those work items had a similar level of effort
- If not, discuss why
- Use that insight in future estimation discussions