Agile Release Planning

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Presenter Background

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CSP, CSD, CSM, CSPO, SPC, PMI-ACP, IGTF, PMP, 6 Sigma Green Belt

- Agile Trainer and Coach

- Member of the Scrum Alliance, Agile Alliance, Agile Leadership Network

- Hobbies: Mixed Martial Arts, Swimming, Reading

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You're about to discover…

- **THE IMPORTANCE OF RELEASE PLANNING**

- **GUARD RAILS FOR RELEASE PLANNING**

- **RELEASE PLANNING TECHNIQUES**

The Importance of Release Planning

WHAT IT IS

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What is Release Planning ?

"**Plans** are worthless, but **planning** is everything."
- Dwight D. Eisenhower

- The process of using real metrics and negotiation to make hard choices as close to the start of the project as possible.

- In agile, there are many different types of planning at various intervals and levels of detail.

- A release plan represents how much scope that team intends to deliver by a given deadline.

Basically, a release plan is an evolving flowchart that describes which features will be delivered in upcoming releases.

The Importance of Release Planning

WHY WE NEED IT

Why Do I Need a Release Plan ?

- Accelerate Time to Value

- Enhance Agility and flexibility

- Rational Planning is key to Success

- Build Realistic Strategies

Planning helps you decide whether the project will produce enough ROI to at least pay for itself and whether you should proceed.

Guard Rails For Release Planning

TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES

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REMEMBER !

Helpful Tips

- Keep release cycles shorter than a year (eg: 3 to 6 months)

- During release planning, establish the overall release schedule and determine which features can likely be delivered (ie: MVP)

- During planning, content authority resides with the customer and design authority resides with the development team.

- Using the team's estimates and the customer's feature priorities, the team lays out a release plan, mapping features very roughly to the first few sprints.

- Plan to deliver only a small amount of functionality in the first iteration, in order to explicitly allow for working out initial technical and logistical issues.

Activity !

DISCUSS

- How big are your releases?

- How many iterations/sprints are in your release?

- Who participates in your release planning?

- How long do your release planning meetings last?

- How much work is done in preparation for a release planning meeting?

- Does your release plan often change during the release?

Some Potential Pitfalls…

Conducted ad hoc, plans don't create maximum value

non repeatable cadence, time consuming

Insufficient stakeholder involvement

Incomplete and uncertain information

Some Best Practices…

Specific Vision and Objectives

Clear Content Elicitation and Grouping

Fair Consideration of Risks, Constraints

Dependency Mapping and Tracking

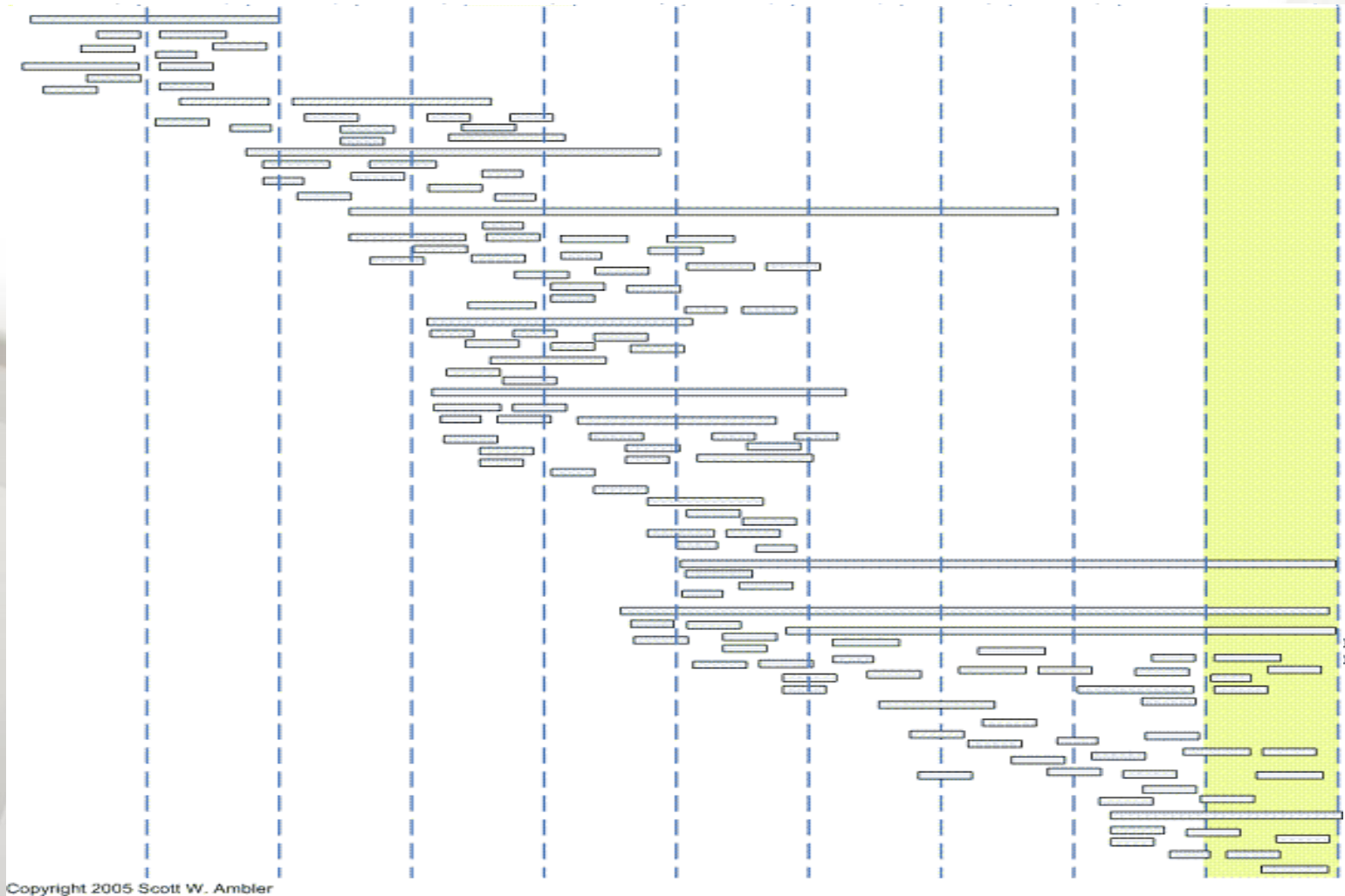Finite Horizon of Planning

De-centralized Planning

Synchronize for Global Alignment

Avoid 'BRUF' planning approach

Projections are not Commitments

Optimize the plan, don't maximize it

Let it Progressively Elaborate..

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Release Planning Techniques

THE FOUNDATIONAL FOUR

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Define Your Universe

- Create Epics as '*Themes*'

- Breakdown Epics into Features

EPICS ⟶

FEATURES ⟶

Coordinate Your Universe

- Categorize the features into four quadrants for *Value* and *Risk*

High Risk Low Value	High Risk High Value
Low Risk Low Value	Low Risk High Value
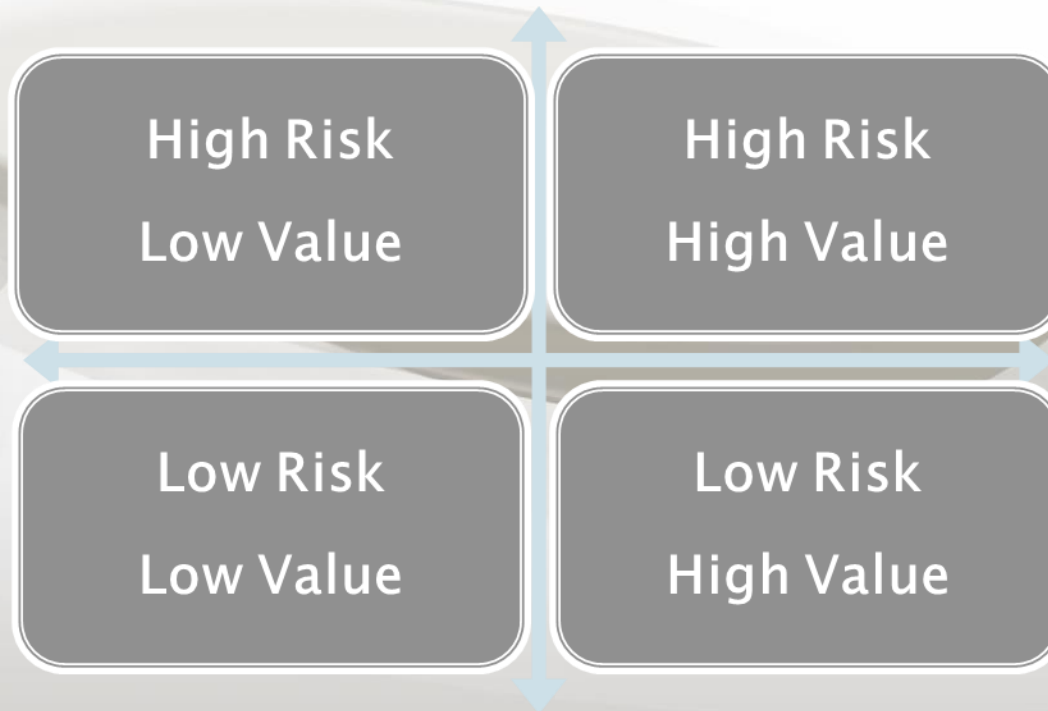
Create the Product Backlog

- Build a consolidated list of prioritized features across all quadrants

- Size features using story points

Item	Size
	2
	3
	2
	5
	13
	13
	20
	20
	40
	L
	XL

Each item has a size estimate

Very large items near the bottom may not have an estimate or may be estimated in T-shirt sizes

Create a Release Plan

- Schedule Features into Sprints

- Break down features for sprints one and two into stories

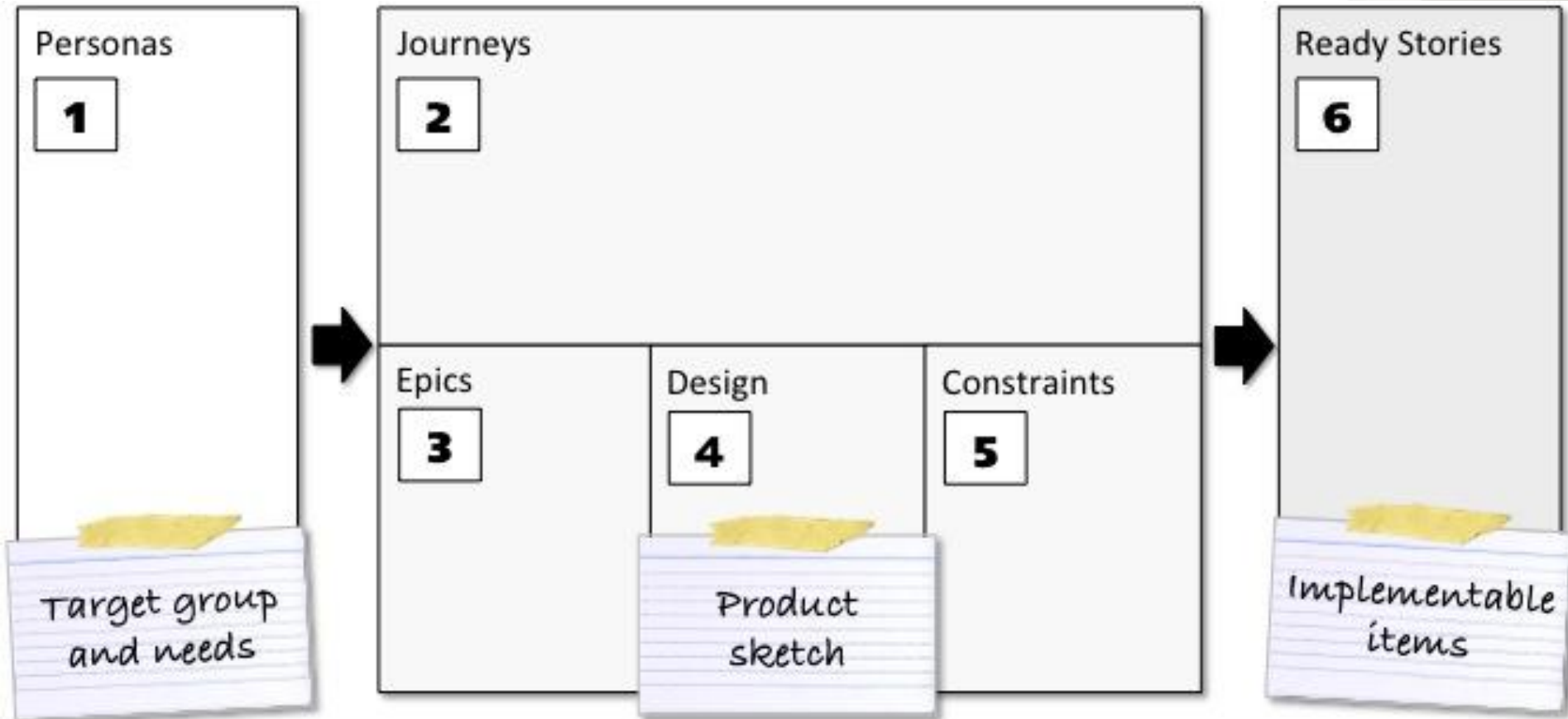- Break down Stories for sprint one into tasks and assign hours

Sprint 1	Sprint 2	Sprint 3	Sprint 4	Sprint 5	Sprint 6	Sprint 7	...	Sprint n
Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	...	Story
Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	...	Story
Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	...	Story

Release Planning Techniques

PRODUCT CANVAS

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Product Canvas – Skeleton

Personas
1

Journeys
2

Epics
3

Design
4

Constraints
5

Ready Stories
6

Target group and needs

Product sketch

Implementable items

Product Canvas - Explained

Vision Your overarching goal or intention.		Name The name of the product.	

Personas

The users and the customers, with the need to be addressed or the problem to be solved; described as personas.

Journeys

The user's interaction with the product captured as one or more scenarios, workflows, or story boards.

Ready Stories

The assumptions to be validated next captured as ready stories: clear, feasible and testable stories prioritised from one to n.

Bound by a sprint goal when Scrum is used.

Epics

The product functionality described as coarse-grained user stories.

Design

The product and user interface design preferably captured in form of paper sketches.

Constraints

The generic operational qualities of the product such as performance, interoperability and robustness described in form of constraint cards.

http://www.romanpichler.com

Product Canvas - Example
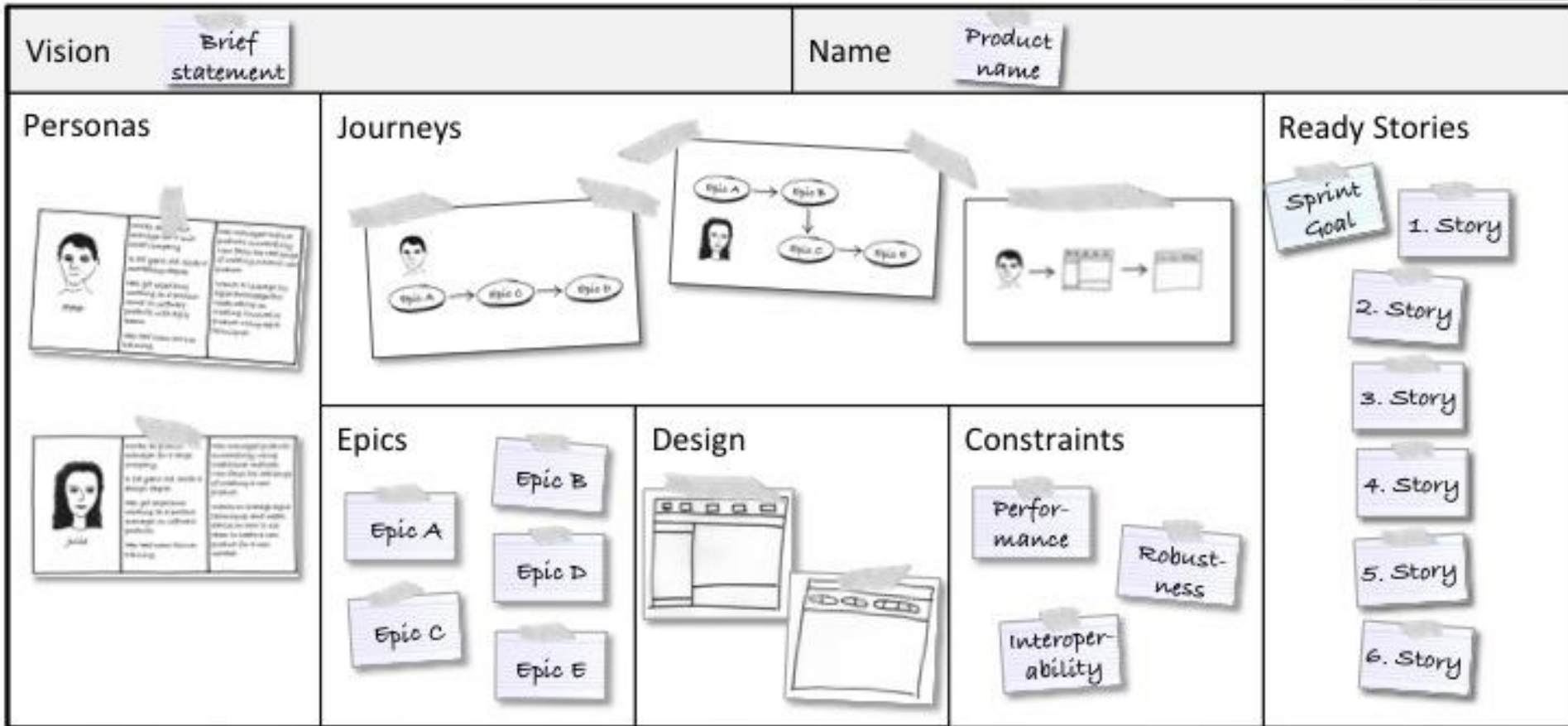
Q's

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Agile Release Planning

Start Time	Duration (Mins)	Topic
TBD	5	Introduction and Overview
TBD	5	The Importance of Release Planning
TBD	10	Guard Rails For Release Planning
TBD	15	Release Planning Techniques
TBD	10	Q&A and Close Out