Storytelling Option #1

FIRST

Write down a user story on a card for a new refrigerator for your home? It's a specification for a refrigerator that better meets the needs you have now and into the immediate (+5-8 year) future.

Exchange the story cards with a neighbor and ask them how long it will take them to (specify, find, research, and negotiate the price) for your refrigerator. They're only allowed to ask 2 questions before estimating.

Also, ask them to delight you with a feature or two. Something that, in 3-4-5 years, you'll really be excited to receive (of course via the story card format). See how hard it is for them to ideate what you'd really like to have with the limited information of the story card.

NEXT

Add 3-4 Acceptance Criteria to the story. How does that help with the level of understanding of your refrigerator and matching it to your needs? Better, worse?

Re-estimate. Are you more/less confident in the estimate? Or the level of understanding?

THEN

Now write a brief storytelling script for your refrigerator story on a sheet of paper…

- Introduction – what are your intentions for getting a new refrigerator? What is the WHY behind it?

- Describe a "Day in the Life" of your current refrigerator. What does it do for you and your family? Where does it fall short?

- Picture your refrigerator supporting your family during a big event like the birthday party for your oldest son or a Super Bowl party. How does that work out?

- Five years from now, what would be your perfect refrigerator? What about new capabilities? Or technologies? For example: Internet connectivity or food life extension technology?

- Now ask your neighbor how long it will take to build a prototype of your refrigerator? What is the MVP for it?

- And ask them what the iterative "phases" would be to build it?

Using your "script" tell them the story. And engage in exploration via dialogue. Is it better or worse than the user story format as a communication mechanism? And does it help with another estimate?

Storytelling Option #2

FIRST

Write a user story on a card for a bucket list vacation that you've been hoping to take. Make it something quite fantastic, long, and relatively complex.

Exchange the story cards with a neighbor and ask them how long it will take them to (specify, find, research, establish an itinerary, investigate price options, and negotiate the price) for your vacation. They're only allowed to ask 2 questions before estimating.

Also, ask them to delight you with a special feature or two; something that will be a "defining memory" for the vacation (of course via the story card format). See how hard it is for them to ideate what you'd really like to have with the limited information of the story card.

NEXT

Add 3-4 Acceptance Criteria to the story. How do they help with the level of understanding of your vacation needs and desires? Better, worse?

Re-estimate. Are you more/less confident in the estimate? And their ability to "delight" you?

LATER

Now write a script for your vacation ideas on a sheet of paper…

- Why is the vacation on your bucket list? What inspired it? What would you like to do? Experience? See?

- Who are you looking to share your vacation with?

- Share your most wonderful vacation experience – what were the aspects that you really enjoyed?

- Conversely, share your worst vacation. What made it terrible?

- Five years after your vacation, what would be experiences that you still might be sharing?

- How frequently do you want to change venues? Or change sites?

- Is there a perfect length to your vacation? And a period of time that would be considered "too long"?

Using your "script" tell them the story. And engage in exploration via dialogue. Is it better or worse than the user story format as a communication mechanism? And does it help with another estimate?

Storytelling Option #3

FIRST

Write user stories for a couple of features (2-3) of a software version of the Mousetrap game. Have the stories dependent in some way, so related features.

Exchange the story cards with a neighbor and ask them how long it will take them to (specify, research, model, design, implement, and test – including usability) the functionality for the game. They are only allowed to ask 2 questions before estimating.

Also, ask them to delight you with a special or new feature; something that will be a "defining memory" for the game (of course via the story card format). See how hard it is for them to ideate what you'd really like to have with the limited information of the story card.

NEXT

Add 3-4 Acceptance Criteria to the stories. How do they help with the level of understanding of your gaming needs and desires? Better, worse?

Re-estimate. Are you more/less confident in the estimate? And their ability to "delight" you?

LATER

Now write a script to describe your game vision on a sheet of paper…

- Explain to them why you're enamored with Mousetrap. Give them some of the history you've had with the game. Tell some stories about your childhood experiences.

- Talk to them about the rules and any exceptions you've added over the years.

- What about game setup. Is it hard or easy? Is it resilient over time? How cool would it be if the software had a "setup" function where you actually / visually configure the game?

- What is the best feature of Mousetrap? Why?

- What is the worst feature of Mousetrap? Why?

- Do you want to "remember" games (setup, decisions, flow, outcome)? Or reproduce them in some way?

- What about multi-play play? In person and over the web?

Using your "script" tell them the story. And engage in exploration via dialogue. Is it better or worse than the user story format as a communication mechanism? And does it help with another estimate?

Keys to User Story – Storytelling

1. Explain the WHY behind the story.
2. Discuss what aspects of the story are not necessary. Where can trade-offs be made? Exactly what is "Good Enough"? Leverage Minimum Viable…language
3. Provide a picture. In UI applications, then get U/X involved with a mockup or a wireframe. If recreating some application, then a screen shot of previous functionality.
4. Explain your vision and/or show your vision. Where might this feature be going in future revisions?
5. The story should be compelling. Explain the customer problem you're trying to solve. The "pain point" we're looking to resolve.
6. Leave "holes" in the story. Leave it incomplete. Allow the team to fill in the narrative, to be pulled into the story. To create shared ownership.
7. The story should target the 80%. So don't look to "please" everyone.
8. If you're "experimenting" then share that. Speak to the learning you're hoping to gain from the story.
9. The story needs to connect to your audience. It helps to tell stories that resonate locally – that perhaps are close to the audience.
10. What risks are you willing to take?
11. Allow time for questions. In fact, questions are your best friend. Explore them and be willing to adjust your story based on feedback.
12. A big part of the story is gaining the trust of your team. Share with them the genesis of the story and why you've selected it. Explain why YOU think it's relevant and of high client value to do?
13. Make the story personal – to you and to the team.
14. How does this story "connect to" other stories in close proximity to it? This would include aligning stories towards a Sprint Goal or a Release Goal.
15. What does "done" look like for this story? How will you demonstrate it in the Sprint Demo?
16. Ultimately you want the story to become OURS!
17. If the team doesn't get excited about the story, find out why. Every story should be compelling and generate excitement and enthusiasm. They should want to build it…now!
18. Reflect on your storytelling. Consider factors that work and those that don't. Build your effectiveness within your business and team context. Adjust.
19. Celebrate the END of the story. Sign-off on it. Embrace it and then – move onto the next story.
20. Explain the WHY behind the story.