Advanced Agile User Stories

2 Days | Virtual and Face-to-Face

User stories are a common tool used during agile development efforts. Learning to write effective user stories requires practice and a solid understanding of what makes a "good" user story. How do we create lean documentation while still providing enough detail to ensure that our team builds a valuable, effective solution?

This class approaches user stories from the perspective of developing and maintaining a healthy backlog. The six keys to success are to:

- Establish a business value baseline
- Create robust stories that meet the INVEST criteria (Independent, Negotiable, Valuable, Estimable, Small and Testable)
- Include other work items in the backlog
- Create a "big picture" for the project and analyze it for potential gaps
- Keep 3 sprints of "ready" user stories
- Regularly monitor the backlog and the team's progress.

Agile analysis practitioners will further their understanding of approaches to organizing, prioritizing, valuing, splitting, and refining their user stories. This includes development of examples, models, and acceptance criteria to ensure a shared understanding of the story.

Concepts are reinforced throughout class in hands-on workshops. Participants can bring their initiative or epic to break down into user stories or use a provided case study.

Learning Objectives

- Practice writing "good" user stories that clearly identify the Who, What, and Why of the story
- Complete the backlog by including other work items
- Provide practical tools and techniques to ensure your user stories meet the characteristics of INVEST
- Develop a "big picture" view of the stories in your backlog and analyze it for gaps
- Practice progressive elaboration techniques to transform stories from "raw" to "ready"
- Reinforce the use of core components analysis to ensure that stories have "just enough" detail
- Use examples, models, and acceptance criteria to develop a shared understanding of each user story
- Identify ways to split user stories "vertically" instead of "horizontally"
- Use business value as a basis for prioritizing the backlog and defining a Minimum Viable Product (MVP)
- Monitor the team's progress and identify opportunities for incremental improvement

Intended Audience

This course is designed for product owners and management involved with agile teams who need a more in-depth understanding of the process and skill set useful for an agile team.

Prerequisites

We recommend participants have attended our Agile Analysis Boot Camp course or have equivalent agile experience or training.

Learning Topics

Topic
User Story Characteristics
• Review when and how stories are used • Understand the 3 C's of user stories: Card, Conversation and Confirmation • Learn about the User Story Family Tree • Analyze stakeholders by developing Personas • **Workshop: Create a persona for a scenario** • Distinguish between solutions and "what" users need • **Exercise: Eliciting "what" is needed** • Establish the value for a user story • **Workshop: Write user stories for a scenario**
Establish Business Value
• Define "value" from the perspective of the business • Establish decision filters to monitor value throughout the project lifecycle • **Workshop: Establish business drivers and decision filters for a scenario**
Creating Robust Stories
• Understand and apply the INVEST characteristics • **Exercise: Identify and resolve dependencies for a set of user stories** • Practice negotiation skills • Understand the difference between absolute and relative value for user stories • **Exercise: Clarify the value associated with a user story** • Explore the relationship between estimation and progressive elaboration of user stories • Learn techniques for assigning relative sizes to user stories • Practice establishing relative sizes • **Exercise: Establish relative sizing criteria for user stories** • Review the importance of "testable" user stories • **Exercise: Developing testable stories** • Discuss agile testing concepts

Other Backlog Items

- Create other items that are included in a backlog:
  - Spikes
  - Refactoring efforts
  - Defects
  - Infrastructure work
  - Non-functional requirements
  - Transition work items, including data conversion and documentation
- **Workshop: For each backlog item type listed above, develop a sample backlog item**

Establish the "Big Picture"

- Learn to construct a Story Map to place backlog items in context
- Perform gap analysis to ensure that the backlog represents the full "story" of what is needed
- **Workshop: Begin a Story Map for a case study**

Progressive Elaboration of User Stories

- Define the 4 R's of the user story lifecycle: Raw, Rough, Refined, and Ready
- Discuss criteria that can be used to create a "Definition of Ready" (DOR)
- Explore the use of examples and models to elaborate the details of a user story
- Review the four core components of requirements: Data, Processes, Interfaces, and Business Rules
- **Exercise: Identify models that might be used to elaborate a story**
- Develop acceptance criteria using the Gherkin (Given, When, Then) format
- **Workshop: Brainstorm and develop acceptance criteria for a user story**
- Learn 21 ways to split a user story
- **Workshop: Apply multiple story splitting strategies to large user stories**

Monitoring the Backlog and Team Progress

- Learn multiple techniques for prioritizing the backlog
  - Weighted Shortest Job First (WSJF)
  - Cost of Delay Divided by Duration (CD3)
  - Business Value Criteria
- Discuss ways to measure team progress
- **Exercise: Define a measure of team progress for your project**
- Understand the need to measure and track business value
- **Exercise: Associate business value with various scenarios**
- Learn to track value delivery with a Business Value Burn Down chart

Course Summary

- Course retrospective
- Develop a Post Class "Go Do It!" Plan with next steps for the student's current project