

Write Right Agile User Stories and Acceptance Tests Right

2-Day Intensive Seminar Workshop

Everyone complains that poor requirements are the major cause of project problems. Yet, like the weather, nobody does much about it, at least not effectively. Traditional approaches advocate writing voluminous requirements documents that too often don't seem to help much and may even contribute to difficulties. Agile goes to the opposite extreme, relying on brief requirements in the form of three-line user stories that fit on the front an index card and a few user story acceptance criteria that fit on the card's back. Surprise, as Mark Twain noted, in some ways it's even harder to write Agile's brief requirements effectively. This interactive workshop reveals reasons user stories and their acceptance tests can fall short of their hype, explains critical concepts needed for effectiveness, and uses a real case to provide participants guided practice writing and evaluating user stories and their acceptance criteria/tests.

Participants will learn:

- Major sources of poor requirements that cause defects, rework, and cost/time overruns.
- How Agile user stories and their acceptance criteria/tests address these issues.
- Difficulties that still afflict requirements in Agile projects and why they persist.
- Writing more effective user stories and acceptance criteria/tests.
- What else is necessary to produce working software that provides real value.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: This course has been designed for product owners, analysts, developers, and other Agile (and other) project team members who are or should be involved in defining requirements.

AGILE, USER STORY FUNDAMENTALS

Agile Manifesto's relevant points
Characterization of traditional approaches
Waterfall and big up-front requirements
Agile's sprints and backlogs alternative
Agile project team roles
User story "As a <role>..." (Card)
User story acceptance criteria (Confirmation)
Estimating user story size
Splitting and refining
Prioritizing and allocating to backlogs/sprint
Constructing/implementing (Conversations)
Reviewing, retrospectives
Grooming backlog and reprioritizing
Exercise: Write Needed User Stories
Exercise: Define their Acceptance Criteria
Exercise: Review Your User Stories/Criteria

Exercise: Re-review their Acceptance Criteria

Exercise: Write another User Story

Exercise: Review Your New User Story

WRITING MORE SUITABLE USER STORIES

Focus on what provides value
Users, customers, and stakeholders
Exercise: Identify Overlooked Stakeholders
Problem Pyramid™ tool to get on track
Exercise: Find Value
Exercise: Using the Problem Pyramid™
Exercise: Business Requirement User Stories
Issues identifying requirements
Exercise: Size a User Story
Strategies for splitting user stories
Exercise: Split a User Story

REQUIREMENTS ARE REQUIREMENTS— OR MAYBE NOT

User stories are backlog items, features
Chicken and egg relation to use cases
Issues and inconsistencies
Business vs. product/system requirements
"Levels Model" of requirements
Other mistaken presumptions
Requirements overview
Where user stories should fit, do fit instead
Conversation conundrum
Exercise: Re-review Your User Stories

AND USER STORY ACCEPTANCE TESTS

Confirming vs. defining requirements
Suitability of using for quality factors
Differences from test-first unit tests
Missed and unclear criteria
Turning criteria into tests, issues
How many tests are really needed
Given, when, then format
*Exercise: Write User Story Acceptance
Criteria*
Exercise: Design their Tests
Exercise: Review Your User Stories/Tests
TESTING CONCEPTS

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Write Right Agile User Stories and Acceptance Tests Right

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- Should tests equal requirements
- How testing actually works
- Defining correctness independently
- Test-first illusion
- UAT vs. User Story Acceptance Test
- Demo illusory UAT
- Test design techniques
- Checklists and guidelines
- Decision trees, decision tables
- Boundary testing
- Testing is main means to control risk
- Reactive vs. proactive risk analysis
- Putting Agile TDD on steroids
- Exercise: Applying Proactive Risk Analysis*

PRODUCT OWNER VS. BUSINESS ANALYST

- Business analysis discovers requirements
- Product owner (PO) role created by Agile
- Essential PO characteristics
- Skills/knowledge for authority
- Product owner viewed as the analyst
- Should a business analyst (BA) be the PO
- Rethinking the PO role
- Exercise: Designing a Better PO Role*

(HIDDEN) BACKLOG ISSUES

- What is a backlog item
- What else often also are backlog items
- Apples, oranges, and fruitcakes impacts
- Different needs and purposes
- Different appropriate artifacts
- User stories for prioritization on value
- Features for product delivery
- Tasks for estimating, performing work
- Addressing quality factors
- Dealing with defects
- Agile's difficulty scaling and integrating
- Sprint 0
- Spikes
- Exercise: Design a Better Backlog*

CONVERSATION CONUNDRUM

- Placeholder metaphor
- Developer as BA, pros and cons
- Data gathering and analysis
- Planning an effective interview
- Controlling with suitable questions
- Then a miracle occurs...
- Exercise: Design a Better Conversation*

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