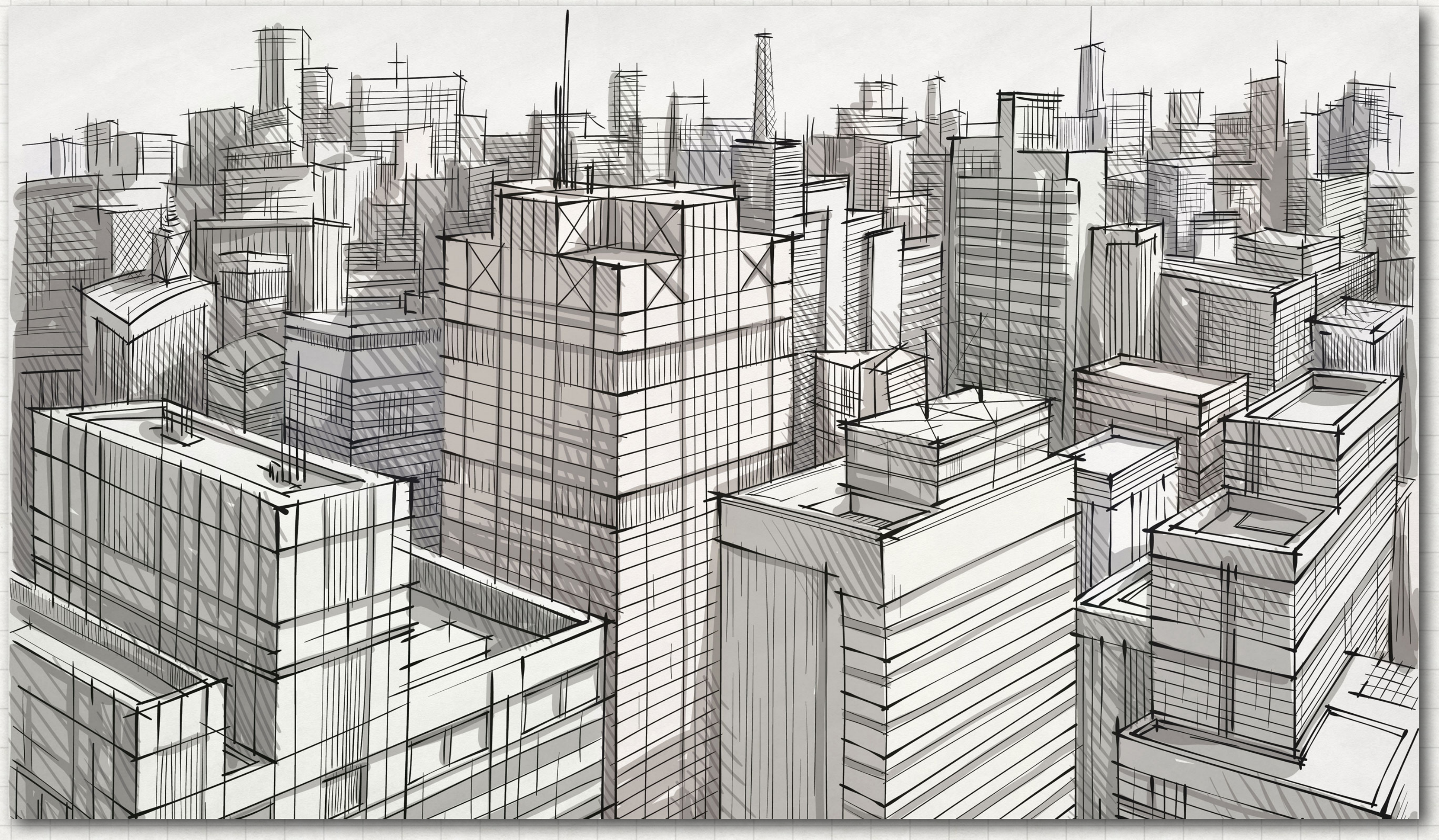
AGILE ESTIMATING AND PLANNING - SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

THE FUTURE IS MISTY



YOGI BERRA

- “To predict is difficult, particularly of the future.”

- “The future ain’t what it used to be.”

CAN WE AGREE?

- No plan or estimate can ever be perfect, or even very good.
- If you live in Florida, Hurricane Michael could always come. And arrive quickly.
- Customers want to know when it will be delivered. ***
- The way some managers handled “the plan” was evil. People have committed suicide, had heart attacks, got sick from stress, got divorced. Not good; evil.

CAN WE AGREE? - 2

- There is some land between....

- No estimates
- AND
- You suck if you can’t deliver the original (crappy) plan.

HOW COULD PLANNING BE GOOD?

- Let’s do the stickies…

WHY IS PLANNING GOOD?

- It's fun. Or can be.
- We learn. This is big!!!
- Planning forces trade-offs sooner and better.
- Planning enables us to see trade-offs, learn more, and then make better trade-offs.

SOME KEY IDEAS

- The 6 Blind Men and the Elephant.
- Everyone has something to add.
- We want buy-in. We need to improve the motivation of the team.
- You don’t have a game without scoring. (Adults do not have to win every Sprint.)
- We have to have a bunch of stupidity before we can prioritize it.
- On day 0, we have between 300 and 700 of the needed 1000 pieces to this puzzle.

PLANNING THE 6 MONTHS

- From their “project portfolio Backlog” the upper level people (a manager) gives us one product or project, 6+ months for 1 team of 7.

- We take 1 day to do the initial agile release planning.

- Then we re-plan continuously, as we learn and get smarter about the future. We prioritize our learning.

- Our values: “let’s release something fairly quickly, and learn from that.” In less than 6 months, maybe in 1 month.

- We never take a plan very seriously. We use planning to achieve more success.

SOME KEY ISSUES

- We prioritize.
- We simplify, in part to gain clarity, focus, motivation, quicker results. One project at a time per team….one release.
- We are reasonable. We understand it is always a guess about the future.
- We expect things to change. And some change is good.
- We expect to learn and re-plan.
- We enable the plan to be quickly modified.

AGILE RELEASE PLANNING DAY

- Let’s draw it…

KEY ELEMENTS

- We have 50 stories for 6 months (roughly)
- All stories have BVPs
- All stories have SPs
- Each story has an R — BVP/SP.
- As we get smarter, we can re-estimate at any time. ***

A SAMPLE PLAN (SIMPLIFIED)

- For one release
- 30 Stories, 4 SPs each
- Expected Velocity = 20 SP
- Identified Sprints = 6
- Contingency = 2 Sprints
- Landing Strip = 2 Sprints (for final testing, etc).
- TOTAL: 10 Sprints

HOW GOOD IS THIS PLAN?

- About as good as a waterfall plan that took 3 weeks elapsed time to create. That is, it is crappy.

- BTW, in the Agile Version, the Sprints in the 1st Release are “laid out” — we see the identified stories allocated to one of those sprints.

WHAT WERE THE KEY **OUTCOMES**?

- We all see the same elephant
- We all are more motivated. Everyone contributed. Everyone has skin in the game.
- We have shared the tacit knowledge. Everyone now knows what everyone knows.
- These 3 are big!!! Really big!!

PRIORITIZE OUR STUPIDITY

- We see how strong or weak our information is.
- In general, we actively try to get smarter where we are dumbest.

BEFORE THE FIRST SPRINT

- We improve the plan.

EVERY SPRINT

- We do product Backlog refinement….
- That includes providing all the details just-in-time, for the next 8 stories. AND
- Revising the plan as “you live, you learn”
- One reasonable scenario: we are continuously revising the next 6 months, with a stronger focus on the next 3-6 sprints.
- I recommend 2 refinement meetings in each 2 week sprint.

LET’S DRAW THE PICTURE OF REFINEMENT

WHY STORY POINTS? - 1

- Because they are relative, they are less biased AKA more accurate
- Because relative, the outcomes come out as a bell curve, normal curve, Gaussian distribution. Thus: Sigma (variation).
- Because normal, if 10 stories equal stories (2 SP each) comprise the commitment, then the sigma on the Total (20) is very much tighter. This is GOOD!!!
- The fibonacci cards that we use for estimating lead to a better discussion with the 5 Implementers (voters). Focus on the most useful information.
- Relatively fast AND relatively accurate (per story).

WHY STORY POINTS? - 2

- Take this case:
  - Implementers 5, total scrum team 7
  - Velocity = 20SP
  - 2 week sprint - 10 business days.
  - $40K per sprint

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What is meaning of new 2 SP story. (10%)

Effort? 1 team day, real day (on average)

Cost? $4,000

Delay? 1 day for everything built so far and everything to be built for this release.

WE EXECUTE ON THE RELEASE BETTER

- Use as needed::::

1. We try to improve our Velocity, by fixing impediments
2. We can reduce “scope” (take out stories)
3. We can add scope (with higher ROI)
4. We can add people - by adding a parallel Team
5. We can add people - by giving work to experts
6. We *might* delay the date.

WHAT’S KEY?

- Do the most valuable work! (ROI)
- Improve the velocity (by removing impediments)
- Eliminate stories that is not essential for this release
- Identify key stories necessity but previously not identified

AT THE SPRINT LEVEL

- Identify your velocity. Use the velocity to shape the commitment.
- Learn to commit and be fairly reliable (70-80%)
- Gain traction and trust and confidence
- Check (revise for) final estimates of the sprint's stories after all details are in. Learn what "all details" means.

AT THE DAILY LEVEL

- Estimate small tasks, roughly 2 hours each. Magic: Discuss 3 tasks each day of 2 hours each.
- Build traction and trust and confidence as the tasks are done.
- Help each other. The whole team is responsible for all that work that day. Everyone chips in / helps each other.
- Identify the biggest impediment each day. Work it.

KEY IDEAS

- Fun!!!
- Learning
- Planning (not the Plan)
- The 3 Outcomes of ARP

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