Product Offering: Implement an Agile Requirements Definition Management Capability

DMARKHAYNES Consulting

Implementing User Stories within a two week Sprint doesn't mean they have to be badly written.

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Overview:

Has Requirements Management become a forbidden topic?

Has agile gone retro? "Just start coding and I'll get you the requirements latter". Are you delivering product only to find out later what the Users really want? Viewing a User Story as a conversation starter is fine but that assumes a conversation actually occurs. Writing User Stories with precision, clarity and brevity requires well honed skills. Understanding what a diverse, contentious or poorly articulated User community wants vs. what their actual needs are requires a committed effort. Just getting quality time from Stakeholders can be a challenge. How much time are your developers spending as BA's?

Pain Points:

A Tradition of Pain

The Waterfall methodology is often characterized as a rigid tradition of pain, but hard won lessons learned about Requirements Management seem to have fallen by the wayside with Agile implementation. Let's consider a few pain points:

- **Pain Point:** Our Product Backlog is obsolete and growing to an unmanageable size.
  Question: Do your Product Owner, and Stakeholders periodically cull and prioritize User Stories?
- **Pain Point:** Our new Business Analyst is really struggling with writing User Stories.

  Question: Are you holding white boarding sessions with Stakeholders and producing workflows?
- **Pain Point:** We are always delivering the wrong functionality.
  Question: Are your Stakeholders helping you prioritize? Are you holding frequent walk-throughs?
- **Pain Point:** One User Story took up the entire sprint and most of the next one.

  Question: Are you writing Monster User Stories? Do you run Deconstruction work shops?

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- Agile/Scrum, Rational Unified Process (RUP), & Waterfall methodologies
- Logistics, Healthcare, Insurance, Automotive, Telecommunications, Marketing & Financial applications

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What's Next?

There is a hard truth here. Software development is a complex business and it's made up of specialists. Generalization vs Specialization are very different strategies, each with distinct trade-offs. Cross-training as a principle is a good practice but developers typically want to develop code, not write requirements. A Business Analyst acquires specific analytical and writing skills. A good BA is not just a technical writer, they need the interview and writing skills of a journalist, the Business Acumen of a visionary, the negotiating and political skills of a diplomat and solid set of analytical skills. User Stories need to be written clearly, quickly and in a timely manor. Agile requires a team of highly integrated professionals, each blending their efforts within the cadence of a Sprint.
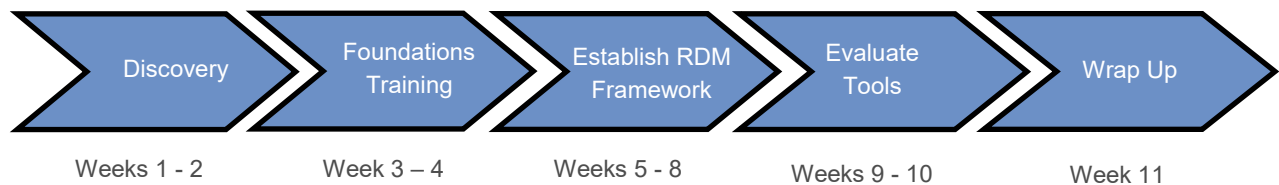
Offering:

DMARKHAYNES Consulting will provide expertise for assisting the client with building a Requirements Definition Management process within their Agile/Scrum framework. Or enhance your existing team with additional capabilities. We will identify your quality pain points and provide:

• Formal training,

• Personalized workshops,

• Mentoring services, and

• Daily interaction with your development and Quality Assurance teams.

This product offering provides all the knowledge base transfer from a Scrum Boot camp but with the advantage of having an on-site Project Manager, Scrum Manager, and Agile Coach all in one package.

Approach:

DMARKHAYNES Consulting proposes a multi-step approach for building an RDM capability:

Discovery	Foundations Training	Establish RDM Framework	Evaluate Tools	Wrap Up
Weeks 1 - 2	Week 3 – 4	Weeks 5 - 8	Weeks 9 - 10	Week 11

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Approach:

Each distinct phase will be characterized with specific goals.

Discovery - Understand the current process. This includes:
- Project Kick-off & presentation to management,
- Obtain overview of the application & projects, and
- Review current requirements gathering practices

Agile/Scrum Foundations Training – Establish a common language & knowledge base. This includes:
- Provide core Agile/Scrum foundations seminar, and
- Provide introduction to the Rational Unified Process

Establish a Requirements Definition Management Framework – This includes:
- Conduct seminars & workshops on creating: User Stories, & Acceptance Criteria,
- Provide individual mentoring, reinforced with workshops using actual project work
- Provide Use Case Deconstruction workshops, and
- Mentor Business Analysts & Product Owner in writing User Stories and Acceptance Criteria

Evaluate Requirements Documentation Tools – This includes:
- Create a Tool Automation Plan,
- Conduct Tool evaluation, and
- Assist Scrum team with tool implementation

Wrap-up – Provide an assessment to management.

Takeaways:

A few core Agile/Scrum practices you'll know well by the end of this offering:

- Overview of Agile/Scrum practices and terminology
- Key concepts of Requirements Definition Management
- How to organize your Requirements & Product Backlog
- Identify the criteria for a good User Story & Acceptance Criteria
- How to write good User Stories & Acceptance Criteria
- Learn techniques for gathering, documenting and converting Use Cases into User Stories
- Learn how to interrogate and deconstruct User Stories into manageable requirements

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