Agile Methodologies

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• Individual modules may be cited as Speaker, Module Title, in Better Scientific Software tutorial...

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Outline

• Small Team Models, Challenges
• Agile workflow management for small teams.
  – Intro to terminology and approaches
  – Overview of Kanban
  – Building on Kanban
  – Free tools: Trello, GitHub
Small Teams

Ideas for managing transitions and steady work.
Small team interaction model

• Team composition:
  – Senior staff, faculty:
    • Stable presence, in charge of science questions, experiments.
    • Know the conceptual models well.
    • Spend less time writing code, fuzzy on details.
  – Junior staff, students:
    • Transient, dual focus (science results, next position).
    • Staged experience: New, experienced, departing.
    • Learning conceptual models.
    • Write most code, know details.

Large teams have additional interaction challenges, and are often composed of smaller sub-teams.
Small team challenges

• Heavy processes are often neither necessary nor appropriate
  – Adopt only those processes that add value

• Ramping up new junior members:
  – Background.
  – Conceptual models.
  – Software practices, processes, tools.

• Preparing for departure of experienced juniors.
  – Doing today those things needed for retaining work value.
  – Managing dual focus.
Research Team Member Lifecycle

Start

Initiation Setup
- Identify project activities
- Create initiation checklist

Ramp Up
- Work initiation checklist
- Initiate project activities

Ongoing Planning
- Kanban workflow
- Observe policies

Team Member Lifecycle
- Quick ramp up
- Disciplined activities
- Sustained contributions

Repeat
- Start process again

Ongoing Work
- Conduct activities
- Observe policies

Depart
- Work complete
- Work transferred
- Contribution sustained

Ramp Down
- Work exit checklist
- Leave project activities

Exit Setup
- Identify final deliverables
- Create exit checklist

Start
Checklists & Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Member Phase</th>
<th>New Team Member</th>
<th>Steady Contributor</th>
<th>Departing Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>Checklist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- New, departing team member checklists:
  - Example: Trilinos New Developer Checklist.
  - Simple – prevents omissions

- Steady state: Policy-driven.
  - Example: xSDK Community policies.
  - [https://xsdk.info/policies/](https://xsdk.info/policies/)

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New developer checklist snippet

_x_ Verify familiarity with and configure git. Each machine requires base configuration:
[https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-Initial-Git-Setup](https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-Initial-Git-Setup)
Introductory material available at:
[https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/Tools-%7C-Git](https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/Tools-%7C-Git)
Date completed:

_x_ Learn about the Trilinos develop / master branch workflow:
[https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-VERSION-CONTROL](https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-VERSION-CONTROL)
[https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-develop-%7C-master-workflow](https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/VC-%7C-develop-%7C-master-workflow)
Date completed:

_x_ Become familiar with the Trilinos Policies page and review relevant policies:
[https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/POLICIES](https://github.com/trilinos/Trilinos/wiki/POLICIES)
Date completed:

_x_ Complete a GitHub pull request with a mentor:
+ Fork Trilinos and issue a pull request from a branch on your fork.
+ Remember that all pushes to the Trilinos repository and modifications to Trilinos webpages are world-wide releases of information, so institution-specific copyright, review, approval and other appropriate policies must be followed.
+ Make any necessary changes to GitHub Issues (also after the next day’s test harness results, if appropriate).
Date completed:
Agile Methodologies
Why Agile?

• Fits the research experience better than heavier-weight approaches
  – Aligns more naturally with how scientific progress is made

• Well-suited for scientific software efforts (when tailored correctly)
  – Works well for small teams
  – Provides meaningful, beneficial structure that promotes
    • Productivity
    • Productization
    • Sustainability
    • Flexibility in requirements
    • Communication
What is Agile?

• Agile is not a software development lifecycle model

• I’ve seen Agile informally defined as
  – I don’t write documentation
  – I don’t do formal requirements, design, or really test…
  – Agile is not an excuse to do sloppy work

• Some people consider agile to be synonymous with Scrum
  – From Atlassian: Scrum is a framework that helps teams work together
  – Scrum is Agile, Agile is not (only) Scrum
  – A square is a rectangle, not all rectangles are squares
  – Agile is not Kanban either
What is Agile?

http://agilemanifesto.org/

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Working software over comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on
the right, we value the items on the left more.

Kent Beck  James Grenning  Robert C. Martin
Mike Beedle  Jim Highsmith  Steve Mellor
Arie van Bennekum  Andrew Hunt  Ken Schwaber
Alistair Cockburn  Ron Jeffries  Jeff Sutherland
Ward Cunningham  Jon Kern  Dave Thomas
Martin Fowler  Brian Marick
Principles behind the Agile Manifesto

- Our highest priority is to **satisfy the customer** through **early and continuous delivery** of valuable software.

- **Welcome changing requirements**, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.

- Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.

- Business people and developers must **work together daily throughout the project**.

- **Build projects around motivated individuals**. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.

- The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
Principles behind the Agile Manifesto

• Working software is the primary measure of progress.

• Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.

• Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.

• Simplicity--the art of maximizing the amount of work not done- is essential.

• The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.

• At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.
Getting Started with Agile

- Agile principles are not hard and fast rules
- Try adopting a few Agile practices
  - Following a rigid, ill-fit framework usually leads to failure
- Kanban is a good starting framework
  - Follow basic principles, add practices when advantageous
  - Better than removing elements from Scrum

Task: Have Eureka moment by Tuesday.
# Basic Kanban

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backlog</th>
<th>Ready</th>
<th>In Progress</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Any task idea</td>
<td>• Task + description of how to do it.</td>
<td>• Task you are working on right now.</td>
<td>• Completed tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trim occasionally</td>
<td>• Could be pulled when slot opens.</td>
<td>• The only Kanban rule: Can have only so many “In Progress” tasks.</td>
<td>• Record of your life activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Source for other columns</td>
<td>• Typically comes from backlog.</td>
<td>• Limit is based on experience, calibration.</td>
<td>• Rate of completion is your “velocity”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Ready column is not strictly required, sometimes called “Selected for development”.
- Other common column: In Review
- Can be creative with columns:
  - Waiting on Advisor Confirmation.
  - Blocked
Kanban principles

• Limit number of “In Progress” tasks
  – Must be tuned by each team
  – Common convention: 2n-1 tasks where n = # team members

• Productivity improvement:
  – Optimize “flexibility vs swap overhead” balance. No overcommitting.
  – Productivity weakness exposed as bottleneck. Team must identify and fix the bottleneck.
  – Effective in R&D setting. Avoids a deadline-based approach. Deadlines are dealt with in a different way.

• Provides a board for viewing and managing issues
Personal Kanban

• Personal Kanban: Kanban applied to one person.
  – Apply Kanban principles to your life.
  – Fully adaptable.

• Personal Kanban: Commercial book/website.
  – Useful, but not necessary.

http://www.personalkanban.com
https://bssw.io/items/using-personal-kanban-for-productivity
Kanban tools

• Wall, whiteboard, blackboard: Basic approach.

• Software, cloud-based:
  – Trello, JIRA, GitHub Issues & Project Board.
  – Many more.

• I use Trello (browser, Android, iPhone, iPad).
  – Can add, view, update, anytime, anywhere.
  – Different boards for different contexts
    • Effective when people are split on multiple projects
Big question: How many tasks?

• No single answer. Choose something and adjust from there.
• Personal Kanban approach: Start with 2 or 3.
• Use a freeway traffic analogy:
  – Same thing with your effectiveness.
• Spend time consulting board regularly.
  – Brings focus.
  – Enables reflection, retrospection.
  – Use slack time effectively.
  – When you get out of the habit, start up again.
  – Steers towards previously started tasks
Importance of “In Progress” concept for you

• Junior community members:
  – Less control over tasks.
  – Given by supervisor.

• In Progress column: Protects you.
  – If asked to take on another task, respond:
    • Is this important enough to
      – back-burner a, b, and c?
      – become less efficient?
    • Sometimes it is.
Building on Kanban

• Focus: Solve issues!
  – (not add process)

• 15 minute stand-ups
  – Maybe not daily

• Planning meetings

• Retrospectives

• Scrum Master

• Product Owner

• Epic, story, task

• Definition of Done
Building on Kanban

• Epic, Story, Task
  – Formal or informal
  – Start with high-level requirements
  – Break down and refine when and as needed
    • Close to when the work will be done
    • Only for work that will take place
    • Can be valuable for estimating
    • There is no “correct” level of granularity
  – Epics are very high level objectives
  – Stories should represent an increment of value to the customer
    • "Done" criteria – understandable to user
  – Tasks are the steps necessary to complete a story
    • May not individually provide value to the customer
Building on Kanban

• User stories (optional)
  – Form: As a <stakeholder>, I want <describe what is needed> so that <why do you want this?>
  – Can be useful to improve communication and requirements elicitation

• In heat example:
  – User stories collected
    • As a developer, I want to modularize the heat equation utilities so that I can more easily make use of the utilities for other projects.
    • As a developer, I want to be able to use multiple integration functions easily so that I can utilize the function best suited for the problem I am solving.
Building on Kanban

• Epic (derived from user stories): Refactor code for enhanced modularity
  – Description: The heat equation code needs refactoring to improve modularity. Specifically, there are utilities that could be generalized and used with for other applications. Also, the integration function is currently hard-coded. In the future, we want to use alternative integration functions, so we should generalize the interface for this function.
    • Story 1: Separate out utilities
    • Story 2: Separate out integration function

• This idea needs to be socialized with stakeholders
• No staffing/funding currently available
Samples from Collegeville Org: Kanban Board
Kanban in GitHub

- GitHub supports **basic** Agile development workflows
  - Filing issues
    - @mention
  - Kanban board
  - Projects

- GitHub lacks more advanced features
  - Dependencies between issues
    - You can reference one issue in another
  - Advanced notification schemes
  - Custom fields
    - You can create custom labels
Building on Kanban

- **A-Team Tools**: A collection of resources for understanding and applying lightweight agile practices to your scientific SW project
  - Especially useful for
    - Small teams
    - Teams of teams
    - Teams that frequently have members come and go
  - [https://betterscientificsoftware.github.io/A-Team-Tools/](https://betterscientificsoftware.github.io/A-Team-Tools/)
Other Resources

  - [http://a.co/eUGle95](http://a.co/eUGle95)
  - Excellent, readable book on Agile methodologies.
  - *Also available on Audible.*

  - [http://a.co/eEgWvKj](http://a.co/eEgWvKj)
  - Great text on software.
  - *Construx website has large collection of content.*

  - New: A realistic view of Agile effectiveness with great advice for project leaders.
# A Bit about Scrum: Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scrum team</th>
<th>Product Owner</th>
<th>Scrum Master</th>
<th>Development Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interface between development team and stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Leads and coaches development team.</td>
<td>• Cross-functional group of 3 – 9 that develops product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responsible for defining and managing work backlog.</td>
<td>• Assures scrum processes followed.</td>
<td>• Completes all work necessary to be done-done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Needs good domain knowledge.</td>
<td>• Needs good Scrum knowledge and discipline.</td>
<td>• Collectively need design, development, testing, documentation skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Needs adequate time to do job well.</td>
<td>• Can be a developer if sufficient time.</td>
<td>• Works in collaboration with product owner, scrum master.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Bit about Scrum: Process

Product Backlog
Prioritized requirements, features of the product
*Sprint Planning

Sprint Backlog
Enough work for sprint; integral capabilities

Sprint: 1 – 3 weeks

Sprint Review

Increment
Product with new working features.

Retrospective

Daily Scrum
What did you do yesterday?
What will you do today?
What is blocking progress?

15-min standup

Repeat

* Sprint planning happens during previous sprint