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Agile Product Management

Making Things Happen

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What Is Agile?

- Agile is a group of software development methodologies
  - Scrum
  - Extreme Programming (XP)
  - Lean
  - Etc.
- Key Characteristics:
  - Small increments
  - Adaptive to change
  - Collaborative

Why Do It?

- It results in better software
  - Higher productivity
  - Higher quality
  - More customer satisfaction
  - More visibility
  - Better morale

How Does Agile Affect Product Managers?

Before

- You provide a detailed list of requirements (most of which won't get done)
- You put out roadmaps saying what features will be in upcoming releases

Now

- You provide a list of priorities
- When each is taken on, you collaborate with the team to elaborate on details
- You change priorities as you learn more
- You specify themes in roadmaps, not features
- You talk about relative priorities with customers

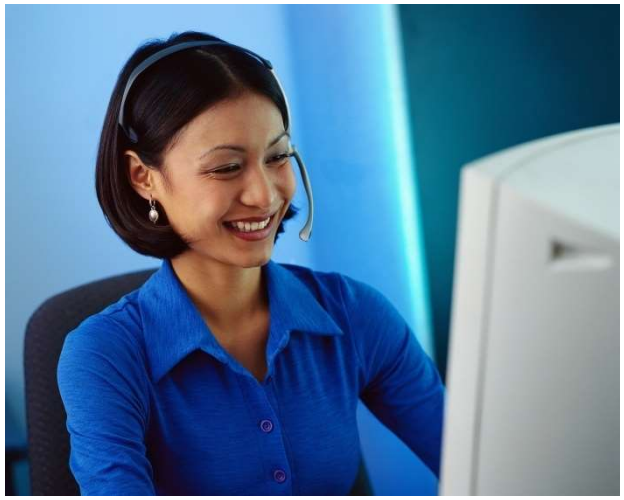
The Backlog

- A ranked list of stories
- What is a story?
  - A scenario that we must do work to implement which results in business value
  - Typically in the form of: “As a <type of user>, I want <feature> so that <business value>”
  - Good stories meet the INVEST criteria

Example

Post a Job

- As a recruiter I want to be able to post a job to the web site so that I can generate interest in the position.



Acceptance Criteria

- What is required for the success of this story?
- Typically determined at iteration planning jointly between product owner, dev, QA, writers, etc.

Constraints

- There is not a one to one mapping between requirements and stories
- If you already support a platform, for example, then continuing to support it doesn't require new development work, rather it is a constraint that needs to be tested for

Product Owner

- Prioritizes the backlog
- Communicates what is important … and what is not
- Is a proxy for the customer

Who is the Product Owner?

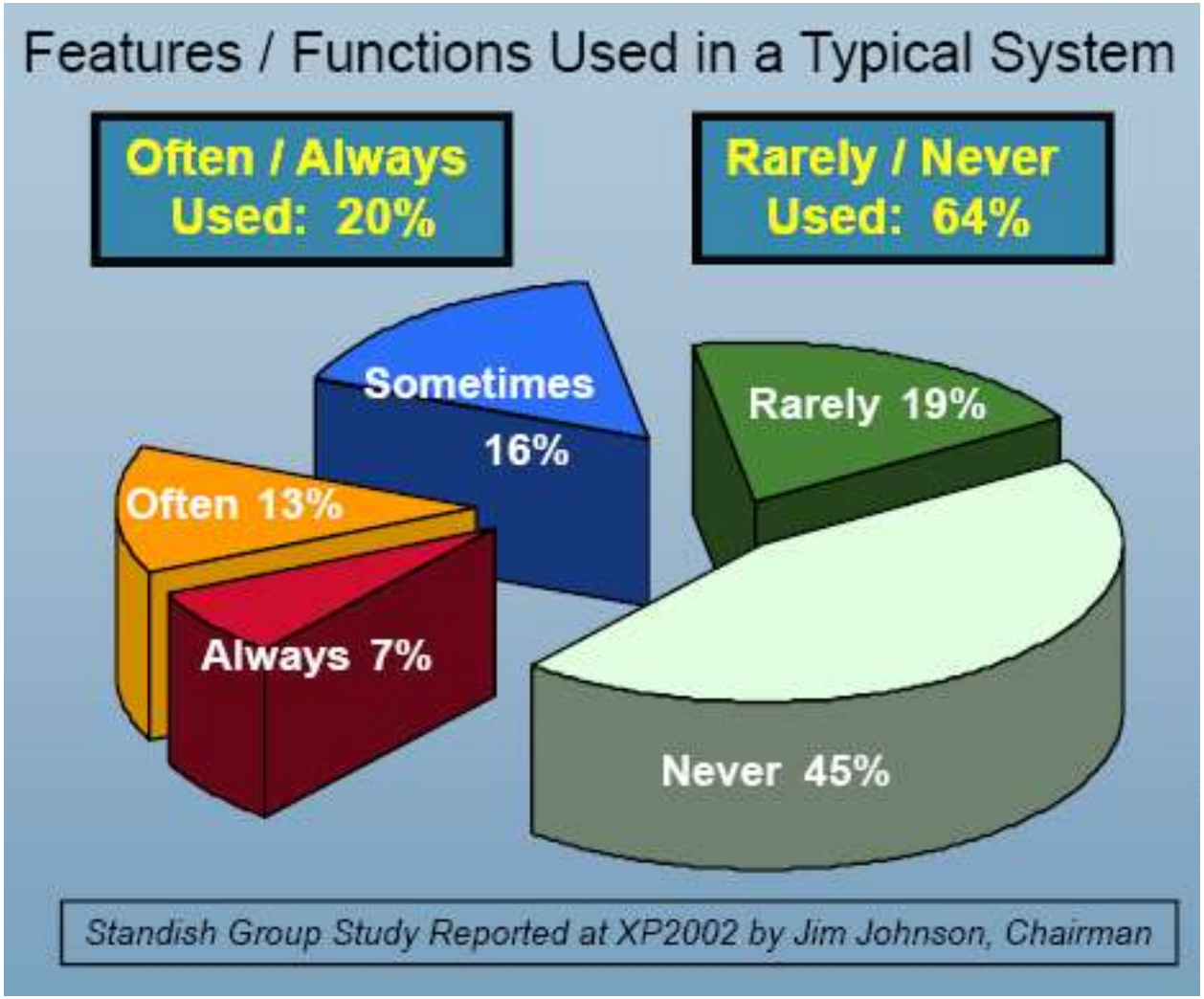
Product Manager

- Pros:
  - Most familiar with customers' priorities
  - More in tune with the goals
  - Provides balance against the technical folks
- Cons:
  - Busy: hard to give the team the time they need
  - Not always willing to understand the technical issues

A Proxy (architect, lead, etc.)

- Pros:
  - More available
  - Understands the technical details
- Cons:
  - Another level away from the customer
  - Biased towards the technical organization's needs
  - Good to have interplay between needs and execution

Why Prioritize?



Prioritization Doesn't Stop

- The product owner re-prioritizes after each iteration
  - We've learned more about the business
  - Let's take advantage of that
- The further down the list something is, the less defined it will be and the less important it is to prioritize precisely

Splitting a Story

- The closer to the present a story is, the smaller it will become
- Those for this iteration need to fit within the iteration
- When splitting a story, each “slice” should add incremental user value

Communicating the Future

- Themes give you room to be flexible
  - We know we're going to do something in this area
  - We'll decide as we go how much
- If a customer is asking about a particular feature, you can get into a discussion of priorities
  - Well, that's important, but we think this and this are more important, what do you think?
- Demos are a potential opportunity to get a customer involved
- Smaller, incremental releases generate feedback on what to dig into in more detail

Summary

- Don’t fear agile; it gives you more control
- Prioritization enables the team to focus on that which is going to make the biggest difference
- Collaboration is better than handoffs
- Small chunks enable more attention to detail and allow you to change direction earlier / with less cost

Questions?

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