A CTO's Perspective on Agile Programming

What it is....
and
What it Ain't...

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Agenda

- **Who am I?**
- **Agile 101**
- **What it is…**
- **What it Ain't…**

Who am I?

- **Bradley D. Brown**

  http://bradleydbrown.blogspot.com

- **Founder**

  - **TUSC in 1988**
    - **Sold to Rolta in 2008**
  - **IntelliReal in 2005**
    - **Sold to Equifax in 2011**
  - **10+ other companies, boards**

- **Professor – DU**

- **Author – 6 technical books**

- **Today**

  - **InteliVideo in April 2012**

  - **Video Monetization Platform**

  - **Built it to sell training online**

  - **Focused on mid and long tail and corporate deals**

  - **ApEx provides a "quick turns" approach to our offerings**

  - **Just me so far…**

Using Agile

- Used it at IntelliReal first

- Rolta bought TUSC

  - I ran iPerspective product development team

  - Brought it to our team

  - International team

- Plenty of consulting, reviewing companies, etc.

- InteliVideo

Agile 101

Education Topics:
- **Scrum Pillars**
- **Product Owner**
- **Product Backlog**
- **Sprint Planning**
- **Delivery Team**
- **Daily Meeting**
- **Sprinting**
- **Reporting**
- **Retrospective**
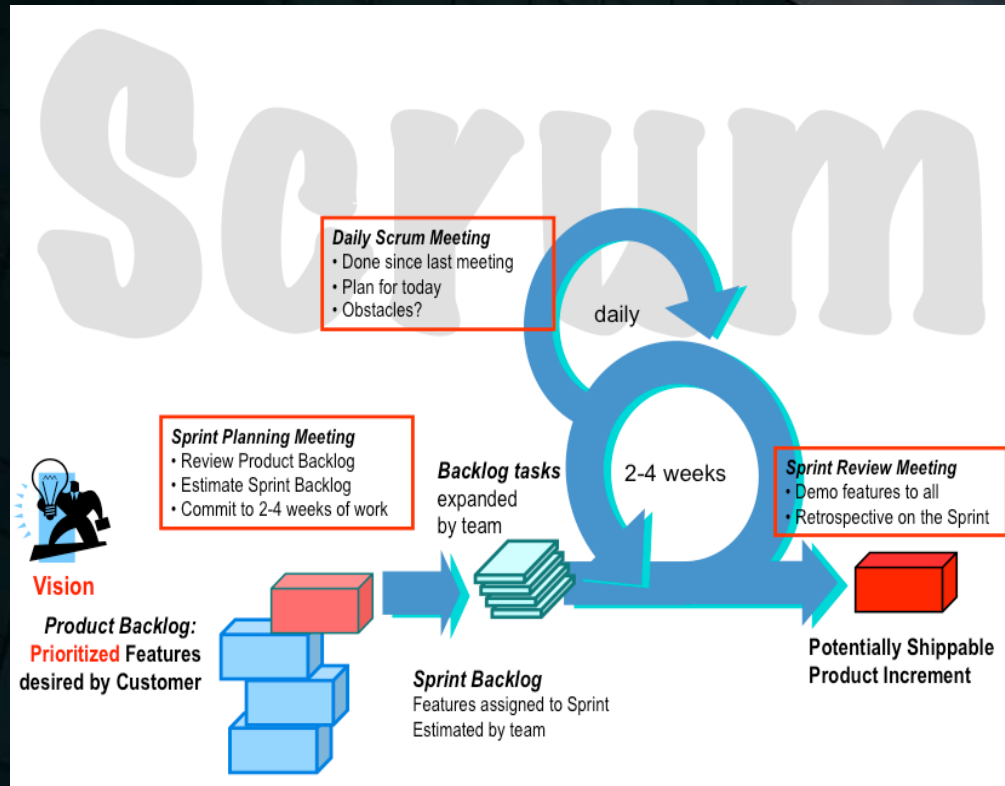
Sprint Planning – Sample Agenda

- Opening, Welcome, Intros, Agenda
- Product Vision & Roadmap
- Development Status, Architecture, Previous Sprint
- Velocity In Previous Sprints
- Team – Availability and Capacity
- "Done" Review Definition
- Product Backlog: Review and Select
- Tasking Out – Estimates – Ownership
- Challenges – Dependencies – Risks
- Review: Capacity Required
- Review: Risks & Mitigations
- COMMIT!
- Parking Lot, Action Items
- Close
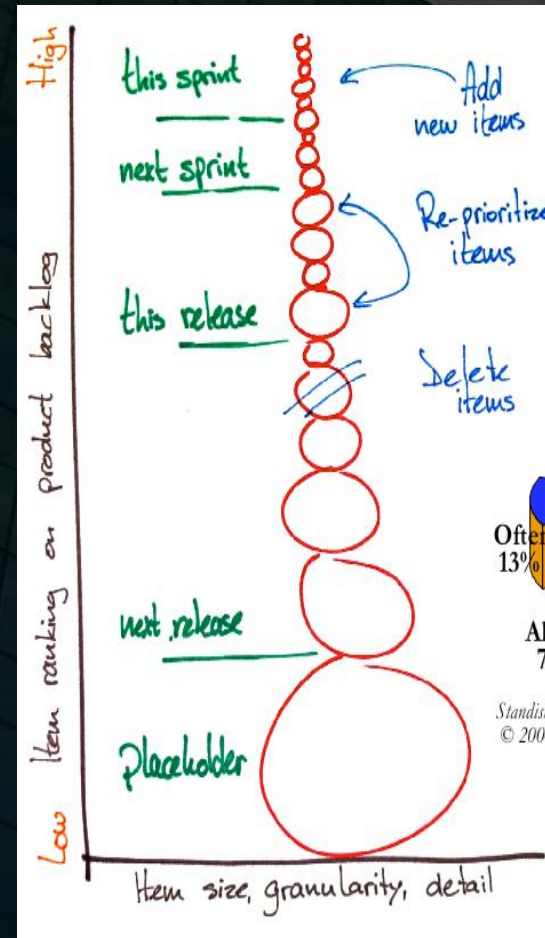
What it is...(good for)...

- Delivering product to customers

- Providing frequent releases (quick turns) to get feedback

- Never long of a wait for highest priority work – provides bite-size chunks for everyone to see progress

- Great visibility to who's doing what on the team

- Nobody escapes delivering and if they can't deliver, they self-select out – nobody can hide

- Backlog is always there – never lacking tasks if you get ahead of schedule or priorities change

- Development teams get into cadence

- Points out that most developers aren't good at estimating time required

- Team output tends to remain consistent vs. death marches of waterfall

More Good

- Cult-like belief that Agile is better than waterfall

    - Better for developers

    - Better for management

- Daily scrums provide

    - Everyone's current on status

    - Good for chickens and pigs

    - Saves additional meetings, writing status reports, etc.

    - Day is focused on development and testing

    - Vacation time is always known

- No Hijacking - Developers are not interrupted by other assignments that weren't agreed to in sprint planning

- Provides for rapidly changing requirements or technology changes (new versions)

- Waterfall assumes requirements are all known up-front, won't change, etc…not always true

- Strong "peer" feeling in teams which creates cohesion – everyone's equal

What Managers (CIOs, CTOs) Like

- Complete transparency into your team

- Ability to measure team velocity

- Iteration retrospectives fine-tune agile process

- Demo to product owners every iteration to get instant feedback

- Reduce project risk by finding issues much sooner

- You end up with the "right" product

- Get to Revenue faster – speed to market is increased

- Higher quality products because testing is integrated throughout lifecycle - Fewer defects since testing is involved immediately

- Flexibility / Agility – no big spec up-front, design and develop as customer requirements demand

- MUCH more enjoyable – high performance, highly motivated team

What it Ain't...

- Often more difficult to implement than people think it will be

- It's tough to nail down a true "delivery" date for a product release – team uses Agile as an excuse – that's not part of the process – we don't know yet...

- Managing the backlog is a full time job – things are in that shouldn't be – and who will do this?

- Tools like Rally can become a burden

- Backlog and other information in the tools can consume you

What it ain't

- It can be hard to prioritize if everything is a high priority in such a small time box

- Developing truly releasable products every iteration is tough

- Providing the correct amount of product requirements for a given development team can be difficult. This is where acceptance tests really prove valuable.

- If not used properly, project management tools are completely useless at one end of the spectrum or become handcuffs at the other end.

Best practices

- Understand the capabilities of the development team down to the individual developer. Some developers require very little detail and thrive on the freedom to create while others need very complete requirements and excel at building them out with speed and efficiency.

- Product management tools are not out-of-the-box solutions. They need to be fine tuned for a process that works with each team.

- Successful agile projects typically need to rely upon adoption of other tools and practices.

- Continuous integration and thorough automated testing practices are needed to build a better safety net under the more frequent releases.

- Other tool options..
  - Jira
  - Basecamp
  - Google Apps
  - Whiteboards

Global Teams and Agile

- Tried to run completely globally – daily scrums to retrospectives

- Someone was always inconvenienced with the time
  - Usually the US team
  - 10pm or 5am

- Lack of face time makes it tough

- Product owners much spend extra time providing details stories and requirements

- Easier when everyone's in the same room for planning and participating in ad-hoc discussions

- Not really an "Agile" issue, it's just tough regardless

- We went to the US doing one set of development and India doing another completely different set of deliverables

- Then we forked the code – this was a mistake!

Questions?

Special Thanks

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