Tracking Multiple Scrum Teams Visually

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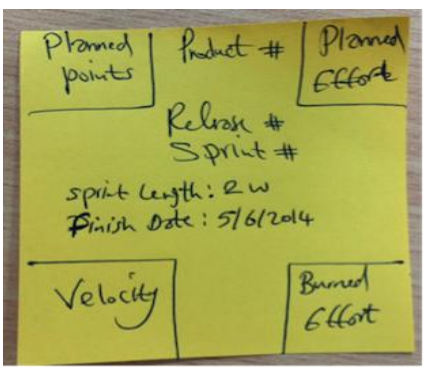
There is a difficulty tracking many Scrum teams in any typical organization. Although each scrum team has it is own work area with boards and charts, it is easier for managers to look at all teams and sprints in one place. In this article I will explain how we modeled and created a board that showed all Scrum teams and their work in one simple place and how this visualization uncovered problems and bottlenecks.

At first, we regrouped the organization software employees as cross-functional Scrum teams based on the current skills and experiences of individual team members. We end up with five Scrum teams, each is working in multiple products. Actually the products are based on the same technologies and business domain. The team focus is on the release level using a round-robin basis. Typically, they work in release 1 for a product 1, then switch to release 1 in product 2, then switch back to work on a release 2 in product 1 and so on.

After this organization restructure, the manager held a meeting with all team members and got feedback and adjusted the organization of the teams.

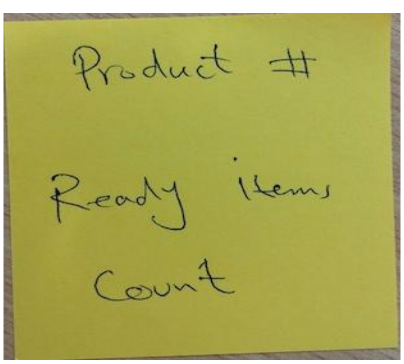
Modeling: The Sticky Notes

We create one sticky note for each sprint regardless of its status.



Sprint sticky note template

The sticky note includes product code, release number, sprint number and finish date. Planned points are written on the top-left side, velocity at the lower left side, planned effort on the top-right corner, and finally burned effort on the bottom-right corner. The management required plotting burned effort to track team effort commitment in the sprint



Ready sticky note

The other sticky note is used to show product backlog readiness. It shows that we have clear vision, needs and amount of work that enables us to start release planning and sprint work. The number of backlog items is used as an indicator to the amount of ready work.

Modeling: The board

First, we prepared a metal board, notecards [not note cards; removed the space], pens and magnetic pins. We divided the board into columns that represent the states as following:

Scrum Teams Board

- Team Name and Members Column: Shows [capitalization issue] each Scrum team name, and its members. (Team names are written in Arabic!)
- Products Column: Lists all products that team could possibly work on. This is mostly based on past experiences of the individual team members.
- Not Ready Column: For each unready product backlog, a sticky note with product name is posted. Not ready sticky note is used to mention if there is no backlog, backlog exists with too few items, or the items are vague or incomplete. Usually the Product Owner (PO) can easily judge the backlog item's readiness for release planning.

Explicit Readiness Definition

For explicit visibility the conditions of readiness is written in blue at the bottom of the chart.

Conclusion

- Visualization is important for management to keep a bird's eye of all scrum teams' work.
- Management can see the sprints flow and can focus to resolve any impediments or bottlenecks.

- All scrum teams get a positive feeling as they can see their work in the context of all the organization work.