Agile First Steps: Building Effective Backlogs

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A quick introduction to scrum
Introducing the product and sprint backlogs

New stories are prioritized, estimated and added to the stack. Stories can be re-prioritized or removed at any time. Items at the top of the list should be well defined.

Most important items form objectives for the Sprint.

Tasks are defined (from the selected product backlog items) and prioritized to be undertaken during the sprint.
When backlogs go bad

- Epic
- Product
- Backlog

Stories and other Requirements
- Change Request
- Defect
- Tasks and other things
When good backlogs go bad
Agenda

Product Backlog

Most important items form objectives for the Sprint.

Sprint Backlog

Tasks are defined (from the selected product backlog items) and prioritized to be undertaken during the sprint.

Daily Scrum Meeting

Potentially Shippable Product Increment

2-4 Weeks

24 Hours

New stories are prioritized, estimated and added to the stack. Stories can be re-prioritized or removed at any time. Items at the top of the list should be well defined.
What is a product backlog?

The Product Backlog is an ordered list of everything that might be needed in the product and is the single source of requirements for any changes to be made to the product.

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What makes a good Product Backlog Item?

The Product Backlog lists all features, functions, requirements, enhancements, and fixes that constitute the changes to be made to the product in future releases.

- **D**etailed Appropriately
- **E**stimated
- **E**mergent
- **P**rioritized

Source: Roman Pichler & Mike Cohn

Product Backlog items have the attributes of a description, order, and estimate.

The Importance of Ordering

Adapted from Mike Cohn’s blog: *Why There Should Not Be a “Release Backlog”*

- **Most Important**
- **Pending (To Be Investigated)**
- **Release Backlog**
- **Least Important**

**What we’ve done:**

- ..at our slowest velocity (5x 28)
- ..at our long-term average (5 x33)
- ..at our best velocity (5 x 37)

**What we’ll do next:**

- ...in another 5 Sprints.

**Where we’ll finish...**

- ...at our slowest velocity (5x 28)
- ...at our long-term average (5 x33)
- ...at our best velocity (5 x 37)
Bringing order from chaos

Define Backlog Items

Agree to Backlog Item Business Value & Priority

Identify & Assess Backlog Item Risk

Establish Ordered Backlog

Product Backlog

+ Priority

+ Effort

+ Risk

+ Order
Where do new items come from?
Prepare the most important items for development

You could keep preparing backlog items until the release backlog is fullé . or you could get started
Remembering to Continuously Work on Your Backlog

Priorities will change.

More will be got ready.

Change Requests will be made

New Stakeholder Requests will be discovered

More work will be done…

…and the possible become clearer.

Re-write or refine.

Is it a new story?

Is it a tweak to an existing story?

Does it change the order?

Is it a new use case, epic or theme?

Does it affect the current work?

Is it just a distraction?

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Don’t Restrict Yourself to One View
Is your product backlog a funnelé or an ice-berg?
What do you need to get started

- The Big Picture
- Change Requests
- S/H Requests
- Stories
- Supporting Definitions
- Operational Defects
- Release Backlog
- Done
Agenda

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Most important items form objectives for the Sprint.

Tasks are defined (from the selected product backlog items) and prioritized to be undertaken during the Sprint.

Sprint Backlogs and Kanban Boards
What is a Sprint Backlog?

Source: Scrum Guide Updates::The New, New Sprint Backlog by David Starr with Ryan Cromwell
http://www.scrum.org/scrum-guide-updates
Where do Sprint Backlog Items come from?

And then return them when they are done?

Don't we just take the top items from the Product Backlog?
Understanding Done, Done Done, and Done Done Done

Release
Backlog

Inc #1
Understanding Done, Done Done, and Done Done Done Done

Release
Backlog

Inc #1

Inc #2
Understanding Done, Done Done, and Done Done Done Done
What happens at the beginning of a Sprint?

WARNING! Sprint Full
What happens during a sprint?

And so oné ..
What happens at the end?

And so oné .. until
What happens at the beginning of the next iteration

WARNING! Sprint Full
How are the Product and Sprint Backlogs related?

Push every sprint.

Pull as needed.
Using Kanban to focus the release backlog

Top 10 Stories from the Product Backlog ready to be developed

One-piece flow to get the work done.
Wrap Up
Some simple do's and don'ts

Don't try to order everything. Always know your top 10. Don't just have a single big list. Have a staging/preparation area. Always know where you're going. Keep the big picture visible at all times. Don't slavishly apply other people's boards. Continuously inspect & adapt your backlogs. Don't put in-flight defects in your product backlog. Don't put change requests in your release backlog. Allow non-PBI sprint objectives.
It's time to go 3D
Questions
Thank You

For questions, feel free to contact me, Ian Spence, at ispence@ivarjacobson.com

White papers and other resources can be downloaded from www.ivarjacobson.com