



An Agile Panel on Agility

APLN Houston, May 20, 2010

Panel

- **Todd Little** - Sr. Development Manager for Landmark Graphics Corp.
- **Prakash Roopani** - Development Manager at Petris Technology, Inc.
- **Gene Lege** - Senior Program Manager at Landmark Graphics
- **Ahsan Rahi** - Project Management and Quality Advisor

Methodology

Questions for the panel were solicited from the APLNH membership starting at the March meeting and continuing virtually. Proposed topics were posted during the networking session prior to the panel discussion. Participants used Dot Voting to indicate their interest in the proposed topics. The total vote count for each topic was used to prioritize the questions into three groups: high, medium and low.

As with an agile project, the next step was for the panel to assign points to each proposed topic. Planning Poker was used for this process. The top half of the list was estimated. The top question was moved to In Work and the subsequent high priority item to the backlog. The first two items were moved to done during the discussion, with the third in backlog.

Panel Questions

High Priority	Total Votes	Points	Medium Priority	Total Votes	Points	Low Priority	Total Votes
Estimating	20	20	Agile and Fixed Bids	11	8	Tools to Manage the Backlog	2
Selling Agile to the Business	17	10	Failure on Agile Projects	11	10	Distributed Teams	2
Selling Agile to the Team	14	20	Integrating Team Members new to SCRUM	7		Agile Contracts	2
What are the Right Metrics to Track	13	13	Managing Multiple SCRUM Teams	6		Scheduling	1
Integrating Architecture	13	100	Technical Design for Large Projects	5		Planning Poker	1
			Story Boards	4		Version One Software Needed or What's Best/	



Results

Backlog	In Work	Done	Done-Done
Selling Agile to the Team		Selling Agile to the Business	
		Estimation	

Additional Questions

What are you looking for to identify potential failure in an agile project?

How do you get the business to accept the costs of agile (change, giving up current processes)?

When talking about selling agile, is this selling to people who are already aware of agile?

When you are working in sprints, how far is the backlog estimated?

How do you cost the whole?

Does management just give you a budget?

How do you reconcile unitless story points to go back to a business that needs units like \$ or hrs?

Are you starting with the proper context: Why are you estimating and what is your estimate doing?

What about estimating value?

How should an agile project handle uncertainty? (Tradeoff in Scope/Schedule/Resources)

Should you stop spending resources on estimating?



Questions for the customer (audience)

When thinking about estimation, did you concentrate on Value, Cost or Both?

#	Value	Both	Cost
3	++		
1		+	
7		--	
7			+
13			++

Interesting observations

Large customers can't take up the results of fast deployment iterations very quickly due to the rules about security, regression testing and installing new versions on massive networks.

Successful agile implementations need to deal directly with Uncertainty. The business needs to directly address the "iron triangle" uncertainty issue. It is not possible to fix Scope, Schedule and Recourses.

Kanban prioritizes value concentrating on what's needed next.



Dot Voting

Dot voting, or Multi-Voting is a great way for teams to answer the question "*What is the most important thing to do next?*" Frequently used after some type of brainstorming exercise, Dot Voting allows the entire team to make a choice between many options, or set priorities for which ideas to move forward with now. It can also be used for collaborative ranking of alternatives. Dot Voting is quick, generally anonymous, and levels the playing field so that every voice on the team is heard equally.

Tonight you are voting on which questions our panelists for "**An Agile Panel on Agility**" are going to answer, as well as the order in which they will be addressed.

The rules are simple:

- Each proposed question is posted on a post-it note
- Read through all the questions during the networking session prior to the meeting
- You have 4 votes (sticky dots) to cast
- Vote for a question by placing a sticky dot on the question. You may use multiple votes on a single question if you feel strongly about the question:
 - 1 dot on each of 4 questions
 - 4 dots on 1 question
 - 3 dots on 1 question, one dot on another
 - 2 dots on each of 2 questions
- Distribute your 4 votes however you like

For more information about Dot Voting, please see [Collaboration Explained](#), by Jean Tabaka.