From: Ellen Gottesdiener
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Subject: [Success with Requirements] Agile Business Analysis Q&A (Part IV); Agile Requirements Public Training; Modernize Your Requirements Practices, and other Resources
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ebg CONSULTING Ellen Gottesdiener, Publisher

Forward to a Colleague

Helping your business and technical teams get product requirements right so your projects start smart and deliver the right product at the right time

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Success with Requirements

Forward to a Colleague

Welcome to our Newsletter!

Hi, ellen -

Welcome to issue #5, Volume 3 of EBG's eNewsletter, *Success with Requirements*.

What size projects are appropriate for agile? How long should an iteration be? Do agile teams mix in waterfall practices? Can agile work in a distributed project? What do you do about convincing management to "go agile"? These are some of the questions I address in this issue on agile analysis and agile requirements.

This is the fourth and last eNewsletter series answering questions from the webinar I conducted for the IIBA on the topic of agile analysis earlier this year.

~ ellen

Ellen Gottesdiener,
President and Principal Consultant
EBG Consulting, Inc.
http://www.ebgconsulting.com
twitter: www.twitter.com/ellengott

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Agile Requirements Public Training in June

I am delighted to offer our 2-day *Agile Requirements: Collaborating to Define and Confirm Needs* training on June 16-17, 2009 in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. These two days cover the essential principles and practices of requirements development and management in an agile context.

This training focuses on the "now view" (iteration-level) of requirements within the context of the overall product ("big view") and product releases ("pre-view").

If you're on an agile team -- whether you're a customer/product owner, business analyst, tester, developer, architect, delivery or architecture manager, team facilitator/ScrumMaster, etc. -- this training will give you practical skills and valuable insights on defining, exploring, and delivering value (requirements) on your agile team.

If you can't attend, I hope you'll kindly forward this announcement to folks who might benefit from this training. I primarily offer this training at clients, so I am pleased to partner with MaxTrain in Cincinnati to offer this class at their Midwest location.

- Course overview, objectives, and outline (IIBA Endorsed, 14 CDUs)
- Registration ($1295) via Maxtrain
- Group discount info and registration questions: contact Patricia Miller, patricia@maxtrain.com or +1.513.322.8888 x105

Agile Business Analysis: Q&A (Part IV)

This is the final set of the questions & answers generated from the "Agile Business Analysis" webinar I presented for International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) members.

For Part I through III of the Q&A (published in February, March, and April) go to our eNewsletter Archives page.

To view the webinar, click here (member login required). Non-IIBA members wishing to view the webinar can email us and we will provide you with access.

Sprint or Iteration Length

Q: Is the analysis considered a part of the sprint (iteration), or the pre-work before a sprint?
A: Both.

Q: What is the recommended agile sprint period?
A: My preference is two weeks. Most agile teams use two or three weeks, some use four weeks, and a minority use one week.

Project Size

Q: Can agile BA practices apply to all sized projects, or are there preferences on the project size?
A: Agile can be applied to large and small projects.

Release Implementation

Q: Where are releases implemented after each iteration in agile methodology - in production, or in a staging environment such as UAT?
A: Releases usually occur less often than iterations, although some teams release at each iteration. Generally, a release time frame is two to six months, incorporating all the integrated, production-ready working software developed within all the completed iterations for that release.

BA Involvement in Product Roadmap

Q: Do business analysts provide inputs to the product roadmap?
A: Yes, they should!

Project Types

Q: It seems to me that agile techniques are more applicable to software development projects. Can agile techniques be used on big-system ERP projects (e.g., SAP, PeopleSoft, etc.)?
A: Agile is being used for ERP projects, which are essentially implementation of COTS (commercial off-the-shelf software) packages. The values and principles apply to those environments as much as to custom development projects. The source of your backlog is the COTS features you need to implement, not items that come from your product owner. In addition, using agile does not mean you skip doing important work you still need to do for a COTS implementation, such as business process modeling.

Agile and Iterative (RUP)

Q: What is the difference between agile and iterative methods like Rational Unified Process if they both believe in iteration and getting feedback?
A: Most agile methods are both iterative and incremental. *Iteration* is about the process of delivering functionality within a timebox. Each timebox is one to four weeks long and incorporates the requirements, design, code, and test activities needed to deliver a chunk of working software. *Incremental* delivery is about the product delivery process: you release portions of the product over time, and each successive release adds functionality. RUP is an iterative process and can be implemented in an incremental fashion.

Mixing Agile and Waterfall

Q: I am part of a project that has a mixture of agile and waterfall approaches. Is this common practice?
A: While transitioning to an agile process, some organizations maintain aspects of the waterfall approach. To gain the benefits of agile, teams ideally would jettison the waterfall activities or processes as soon as possible. By doing so, you accelerate change and increase learning.

However, transitioning to agile is in many ways a major organizational change effort. So making the switch is a process and a journey.

For those not yet officially moving to agile, I encourage you to incorporate agile requirements practices and use agile's build-in feedback loops to help you expose impediments to your effort to deliver value to your customers.

Six Sigma and Lean

Q: How do lean six sigma methodologies fit with agile?
A: Lean in particular has many synergies with agile values, and many "agilists" (agile enthusiasts) have adopted lean thinking, inspired by the thought leadership of Tom and Mary Poppendieck (I highly recommend their two books).

The lean part of "lean six sigma" adds speed to the six sigma part (which focuses on delighting customers by using a variety of analytic and problem-solving tools to reduce variability in processes). The combination of lean and six sigma might be said to "delight customers as quickly as possible." You could use the two approaches to study and improve your software development processes. I prefer to focus on the lean part.

For a specific look at how agile business analysts can act lean, with eyes for waste, read my article in the February issue of Modern Analyst.

SOA

Q: How does agile fit into an SOA implementation?
A: SOA (service-oriented architecture) is an architectural style, or an approach for providing business "services" (which may involve implementing workflow products). SOA is independent of the development method you use. Agile methods can be used as a development approach for SOA implementation.

Distributed Agile

Q: I understand that "co-location" is a key concept of agile. What is the impact to the project if you are unable to co-locate all team members?
Q: Can agile be effective when project teams are geographically dispersed?
Q: Distributed agile teams face challenges in all four values of the Manifesto. What recommendations do you have to overcome these challenges?
A: The data we have so far on distributed agile supports my heuristic conclusion that distributed agile teams can be productive but are less productive than co-located teams. (There are few exceptions to this, as reported by Jeff Sutherland et al.). However, distributed agile teams can be more productive and produce fewer defects than co-located traditional teams.

Your distributed team will require additional infrastructure to handle communications and time zone differences. If you must use distributed teams, strive to have a fully cross-functional team, including a product owner, at each location.

Agile lends itself to using budgeting and financial planning methods such as the incremental funding method (to fund the proper sequence of features) or earned value management (to continually assess the progress of budget expenses against value delivered).

Convincing Management to Go Agile

Q: Traditional approaches to development means that businesses have lost a lot of confidence in the ability of IT departments to successfully develop systems. Why should the business leaders believe that what they see as the "latest fad" is going to make the system development any more successful?
A: Set up an experiment with a business leader who is willing to learn, along with your IT department. Try it for three or four iterations and see. Use evidence.

Retrospectives

Q: Is there a format to follow when doing the retrospective at the end of a sprint?
A: Definitely! The overall pattern is this: get ready, explore the past, understand the present, decide the future, and then retrospect the iteration retrospective. Read a short description I wrote here. For more detail, read my article that describes retrospectives in the context and terminology of a RUP project. To keep the process interesting, lively, and fun, teams should vary the specific activities they use during iteration (or sprint) retrospectives.

Certification Programs

Q: Will IIBA or the presenter be able to talk about agile certification programs? Are there any specific organizations and/or certifications that are valued by the industry?
A: My personal views about agile certification programs are 100 percent aligned with what the Agile Alliance has published on this topic.

Recommended Books

Q: Any books on agile that you recommend?
A: Yes, there are many books I recommend and like! My current bookshelf includes 34 agile and lean books, and counting! Some are general, others address specific aspects of implementing the agile approach (e.g., scrum, RUP, agile testing, user stories, planning, lean).

I put together a *short* list (see page 2) for readers of my newest article in Modern Analyst: "Agile Business Analysis in Flow - The Work of the Agile Analyst (Part 1)." Beyond that short list, if there is a specific topic you want to read about, email me.

Tweets: Suggested Hashtags

As mentioned in last month's eNewsletter, I am "tweet"ing (follow me on Twitter). In addition to "following" people or people representing companies, you can search using hashtags (#) to find tweets of interest. Here are some of the hashtags I check out from time to time using Search on TweetDeck or Twitter's Search option:
#agile
#agileba
#baot (business analysis on twitter)
#busanalysis
#businessanalysis
#oneminuteba
#scrumdev
#prodmgmt

Agile 2009

I'm very pleased to have my tutorial, "Beyond User Stories: Identifying Missing Links in Your Product Backlog" accepted for Agile 2009. This will be my 7th year speaking and attending this conference!
I was a reviewer for the submissions for the Distributed Agile stage, and I can tell you the quality of the submissions was outstanding. As it turns out, there were thousands of submissions, so only 20% could be accepted.

If you plan to attend, register *now*: last year's conference was sold out almost a month in advance. Hope to see you there!

Upcoming Events

April and May have been busy for EBG Consulting, with us speaking in Boston (two separate events), Iowa, and Toronto. (Full list is here). Upcoming events:

1. Ellen Gottesdiener and Mary Gorman will be conducting workshop sessions and symposium talks at Project World & World Congress for Business Analysts in Baltimore, Maryland, June 24-26, 2009. You can get a discount by using priority code SPKRM2110EG when registering.

2. Ellen will be doing a tutorial at Agile 2009 in Chicago the week of August 24th, 2009.

Modernize Your Requirements Practices

In March, Mary Gerush and Dave West of Forrester Research interviewed me (among others) about how agile requirements practices can deliver better solutions. Their final report is entitled: "Just Do It: Modernize Your Requirements Practices - Incorporate Agile Techniques To Better Meet Business Needs In Five Easy Steps."

One of the several quotes they included from me was, "business analysts may be frightened, concerned, worried about how they fit into the Agile world, and they have to learn new behaviors and face new issues, but these new behaviors are actually more fun to do and truly deliver business value sooner."

Their paper does of nice job of describing how applying agile requirements techniques around elicitation, documentation, and requirements change and management -- "modernizing" your requirements practices -- enables you to improve project community relationships and deliver value. It's a good read.

Reader eLearning Discount

For your *Success with Requirements* eNewsletter subscriber discount (10%) on our 8-course self-paced eLearning training curriculum, *Foundation for Requirements Development and Management* use code: **FRSWR04** when you register here. This curriculum is endorsed by the IIBA and earn 24 CDUs.

Archive Issues

Visit our archive to read our prior issues.

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