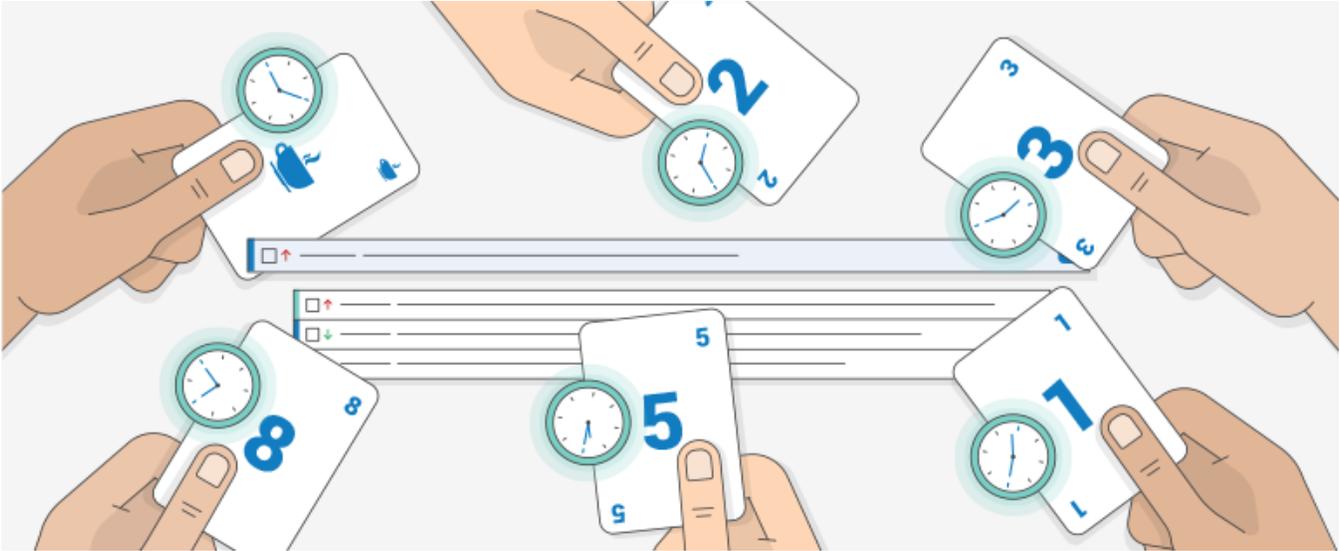


More effective scrum sprint planning meetings



At Spartz Software, we've found that when we're planning the next sprint, going through all the stories in detail during the planning meeting doesn't make sense—it simply leads to an ineffective meeting. This is especially true in Scrum teams of 5 or more people who can complete a significant number of stories in one sprint. The reasons for this differ across teams, but the main one is that with big sprint backlogs, people find it hard to keep the purpose and details of each story fresh in their minds. Another reason is that stories are not usually refined enough to mean the same thing to everyone. Such situations can easily lead to a meeting taken up by explaining basic facts about each story to the team. Nobody wants that.

So, how do you turn a meeting like that into a more effective one? How can you make sure everyone's on the same page? And finally, how do you get agreement on estimates that are sensible?

Encourage preparation

One of the ways to make planning meetings more effective is to encourage people to prepare in advance. Unfortunately, going from desk to desk or sending e-mail reminders with the stories attached is often ineffective because people need a goal, and just reading the list of stories is tedious.

One way to encourage your team to prepare for the planning meeting is to simply create an asynchronous session in Agile Poker Enterprise for Jira. This process is an asynchronous way of implementing the Planning Poker® technique. Select the stories that are likely to hit the next sprint or need refinement and add all your teammates as participants. The add-on will send out an invitation e-mail. The deadline is your next planning meeting. Each person, in their own time, can estimate selected tasks. If anything is unclear or they have something to add, they can comment on their estimation. And they can do it without being biased by others' opinions.

Estimate more effectively

When the planning meeting starts, close the session, share the screen, and start going through the issues. For some of them, the final estimate will be obvious because everyone made the same estimate. For others, there will be comments with questions or extra information. They may need manual re-estimation, but the main benefit still holds—you just saved time by cutting out a discussion of generalities and cutting to the chase. When you have finished saving the estimates for the stories, just leave the page.

Focus on what is important

By implementing this process, you can save a lot of time and focus on what is important when estimating stories and planning your sprints. Get people back to their work faster while facilitating more general awareness within the team.