More engaging estimations for distributed scrum teams

To make your team's work output predictable, you must be able to estimate team's velocity and the effort needed to complete your user stories. The Planning Poker® methodology lets you not only estimate your stories but also clarify them at the same time. Unfortunately, during planning meetings conducted via video conferencing software, participants can easily lose interest and get distracted when looking at the screen shared by the other side.

Focus on your stories

To successfully play Planning Poker, you only need physical cards. This is easy with co-located teams, but it can be hard to implement in distributed teams. During planning meetings conducted via video conference, it's hard to achieve an equal balance between multiple locations. Showing cards to the camera is not perfect, and the harder it is to read the estimates, the more detached participants become. Thanks to Agile Poker Enterprise for Jira, everyone can see all the estimates inside Jira, and they're all equally important and visible. Every time the scrum master selects a story, it's easily visible on top of the backlog so everyone can read it at their own pace. Situations in which extreme views are overlooked are no longer possible.

Reach a consensus

Now that your entire team is engaged and the quality of their input is high, you can discuss the issues. The scrum master selects stories one-by-one and asks the team to estimate the effort. For each issue, the team should reach consensus. If the first round of estimation reveals significant differences, participants with extreme views explain their estimates. Regardless of the location, they present their assumptions or predicted consequences that produced their estimate values. The scrum master starts the built-in timer to limit the discussion time, making the process more effective and saving time for other issues. After making sure the team is on the same page, either the estimation value becomes obvious or the estimating round needs to be repeated.

Plan effectively and accurately

After estimating all the stories that are likely to fit into the next sprint, the team can make a final commitment and start the sprint. Thanks to deep integration with Jira Software, it's very easy to conduct estimating sessions at the beginning of sprint planning meetings so no additional meetings are required. For small teams, this process doesn't require preparation, and it fits into a reasonable amount of time. For distributed teams, you ensure that all team members participate equally, making the estimates as accurate as possible.