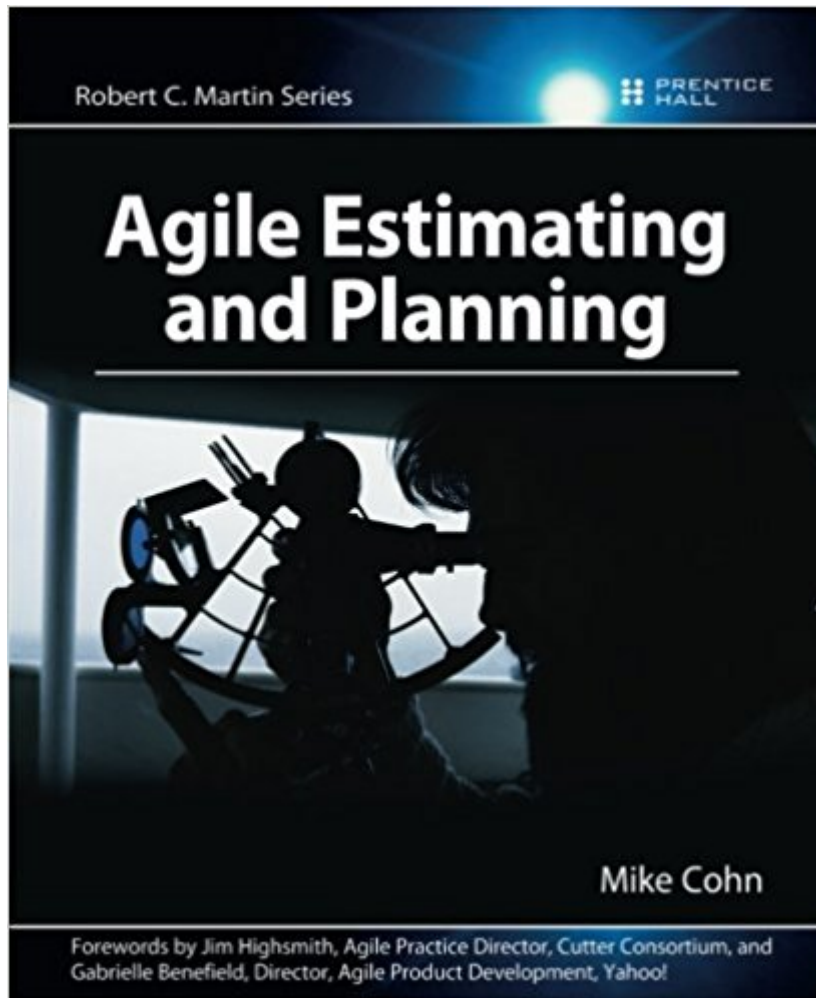




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Agile Estimating And Planning



Synopsis

Praise for Agile Estimating and Planning "Traditional, deterministic approaches to planning and estimating simply don't cut it on the slippery slopes of today's dynamic, change-driven projects. Mike Cohn's breakthrough book gives us not only the philosophy, but also the guidelines and a proven set of tools that we need to succeed in planning, estimating, and scheduling projects with a high uncertainty factor. At the same time, the author never loses sight of the need to deliver business value to the customer each step of the way." â "Doug DeCarlo, author of eXtreme Project Management: Using Leadership, Principles and Tools to Deliver Value in the Face of Volatility (Jossey-Bass, 2004) "We know how to build predictive plans and manage them. But building plans that only estimate the future and then embrace change, challenge most of our training and skills. In Agile Estimating and Planning, Mike Cohn once again fills a hole in the Agile practices, this time by showing us a workable approach to Agile estimating and planning. Mike delves into the nooks and crannies of the subject and anticipates many of the questions and nuances of this topic. Students of Agile processes will recognize that this book is truly about agility, bridging many of the practices between Scrum and Extreme Programming." â "Ken Schwaber, Scrum evangelist, Agile Alliance cofounder, and signatory to the Agile Manifesto "In Agile Estimating and Planning, Mike Cohn has, for the first time, brought together most everything that the Agile community has learned about the subject. The book is clear, well organized, and a pleasant and valuable read. It goes into all the necessary detail, and at the same time keeps the reader's burden low. We can dig in as deeply as we need to, without too much detail before we need it. The book really brings together everything we have learned about Agile estimation and planning over the past decade. It will serve its readers well." â "Ron Jeffries, www.XProgramming.com, author of Extreme Programming Installed (Addison-Wesley, 2001) and Extreme Programming Adventures in C# (Microsoft Press, 2004) "Agile Estimating and Planning provides a view of planning that's balanced between theory and practice, and it is supported by enough concrete experiences to lend it credibility. I particularly like the quote 'planning is a quest for value.' It points to a new, more positive attitude toward planning that goes beyond the 'necessary evil' view that I sometimes hold." â "Kent Beck, author of Extreme Programming Explained, Second Edition (Addison-Wesley, 2005) "Up-front planning is still the most critical part of software development. Agile software development requires Agile planning techniques. This book shows you how to employ Agile planning in a succinct, practical, and easy-to-follow manner." â "Adam Rogers, Ultimate Software "Mike does a great follow-up to User Stories Applied by continuing to provide Agile teams with the practical approaches and techniques

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estimating and planning agile projects. In this book, Agile Alliance cofounder Mike Cohn discusses the philosophy of agile estimating and planning and shows you exactly how to get the job done, with real-world examples and case studies. Concepts are clearly illustrated and readers are guided, step by step, toward how to answer the following questions: What will we build? How big will it be? When must it be done? How much can I really complete by then? You will first learn what makes a good plan-and then what makes it agile. Using the techniques in *Agile Estimating and Planning*, you can stay agile from start to finish, saving time, conserving resources, and accomplishing more.

Highlights include: Why conventional prescriptive planning fails and why agile planning works How to estimate feature size using story points and ideal daysâ and when to use each How and when to re-estimate How to prioritize features using both financial and nonfinancial approaches How to split large features into smaller, more manageable ones How to plan iterations and predict your team's initial rate of progress How to schedule projects that have unusually high uncertainty or schedule-related risk How to estimate projects that will be worked on by multiple teams *Agile Estimating and Planning* supports any agile, semiagile, or iterative process, including Scrum, XP, Feature-Driven Development, Crystal, Adaptive Software Development, DSDM, Unified Process, and many more. It will be an indispensable resource for every development manager, team leader, and team member.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Prentice Hall; 1 edition (November 11, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0131479415

ISBN-13: 978-0131479418

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 105 customer reviews

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Mike Cohn is the founder of Mountain Goat Software, a process and project management consultancy and training firm. With more than twenty years of experience, Mike has been a technology executive in companies ranging from start-ups to Fortune 40s, and is a founding member of the Agile Alliance. He frequently contributes to industry-related magazines and presents regularly at conferences. He is the author of *User Stories Applied* (Addison-Wesley, 2004).

It’s been said before that if you truly understand a subject, you can break it down in a way for anyone to understand. That can easily be said about Mike Cohn. He was able to break down each portion and put it all together. I highly recommend this book for anyone wanting to understand Scrum better

The book is well structured and easy to read. In my humble opinion, it comes with a strong "buy" rating for any Agile practitioner or a current PMI certified person who wants to contribute to the knowledge economy of ever changing requirements. The book is right sized (finish in a coast to coast trip in US). Practical in its content, it provides lots of examples and case studies, from software as well as non software fields to illustrate the concepts. The detailed case study at the end of the book is invaluable.Several chapters were much thought provoking, specially how to handle team dynamics and cross team estimation. The book did not right fully delve into any details of that, it’s a topic for another time.Part I of the books sets up the context.Part II details on estimating the size, and the techniques and tools for doing that; in fact it comes with some simple tools, which can

be really customized and expanded quickly. Part III caters to what I call "value add planning" planning the work by prioritizing by business value. The book touches the concepts of financial project analysis, however there are better books for that, and the author provides the references. Part IV brings in the concept of time, and the handling of "estimating for effort" and "estimating for duration" is simply superb. Also an entire chapter is dedicated to Buffering and its need and for multi-team projects. Part V presents tools and motivations for monitoring and communicating. Part VI presents why Agile Planning works, and honestly I skipped it, expect the guidelines (Page 254) which I read to validate my knowledge. If there is one thing that I would change in the book, it would be the story point example with dogs. It would be a little confusing if you have no idea how a Great Dane would be different from a Doberman! But hey, I think the book gets the message across very well. What I would like to see in the second edition-- softcopy of some tools that goes with the book, maybe some templates that can be customized...but then again, you should not be in this business unless you are able to cook these tools up yourself !!

I read this book as part of a reading circle, so I went in not overly excited about the topic having already read several books that claimed to cover estimation. I didn't expect to learn much, but I wanted to participate in the group discussion. I don't think I could have been more wrong, this book was full of useful information from the trenches and strategies for adapting estimating to your company's process. The book does a great job of breaking down planning into levels, describing how much effort should be put into each level's plan, and then showing how the plan is executed. I especially enjoyed the section on calculating business value, I had never had luck translating the complexities of developing a user story into numbers that could be understood by the business stakeholders in a project. I'm looking forward to implementing some of these strategies in my upcoming projects.

This Robert C. Martin Series text by Mike Cohn has been unfairly criticized by previous reviewers. The content in general is very well written, and the subject matter flows very well from topic to topic. In my opinion, there is some missing detail that could have served well those readers new to the topic of estimation. In light of this observation, I think that "Software Estimation - Demystifying the Black Art" (see my review for that work) can be seen as a companion text to "Agile Estimating and Planning". Mike Cohn simply focuses on agile projects, so if such projects are the primary focus of the reader, they might otherwise get caught up with detail that is not necessarily within their domain. From my experience, however, it will serve the agile practitioner well if they understand some of the

theory behind the practice of general software project estimation. Of course, Mike Cohn also provides a considerable portion of the book to agile planning in general, and this topic is what makes the book unique in 2007. While other books of this genre can be expected in the near future, the seven parts of the discussion cover the subject matter well: "The Problem and the Goal", "Estimating Size", "Planning for Value", "Scheduling", "Tracking and Communicating", "Why Agile Planning Works", and "A Case Study". Each of these parts build upon its predecessors, finally culminating in a case study. I found especially valuable the discussions on agile planning in general, the different methods of agile estimating, how to prioritize deliverables, project schedule iterations, velocity, and tracking. Throughout the text, the author provides dozens of examples with just the right amount of tables and diagrams to aid the discussion. This book is a relatively easy read for a wide audience, and the quotes shared at the beginning of each of the chapters provide a humorous (although usually unintentional), realistic look at the philosophy of estimating and planning by individuals not in the software industry. My favorite quotes of the lot: "Planning is everything. Plans are nothing."

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