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Agile Estimating And Planning

Robert C. Martin Series

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Agile Estimating and Planning

Mike Cohn

Forewords by Jim Highsmith, Agile Practice Director, Cutter Consortium, and Gabrielle Benefield, Director, Agile Product Development, Yahoo!
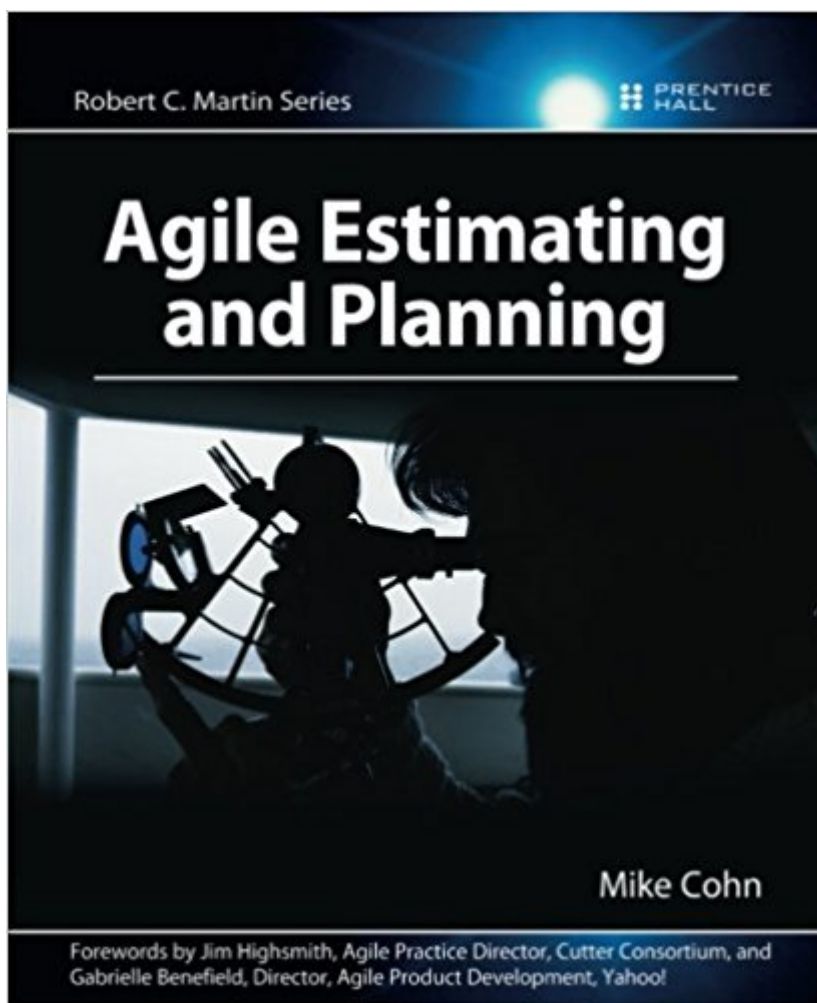
Synopsis

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." Ã¢â ¬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 ExtremeProgramming." Ã¢â ¬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." Ã¢â ¬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." Ã¢â ¬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." Ã¢â ¬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 to increase agility. In this book, Mike provides time-proven and well-tested methods for being successful with the multiple levels of planning and estimating required by Agile. This book is the first to detail the disciplines of Agile estimating and planning, in ways that rival my 1980 civil engineering texts on CPM Planning and Estimating." Ã¢â ¬â •Ryan Martens, President and Founder, Rally Software Development Corporation "With insight and clarity, Mike Cohn shows how to effectively produce software of high business value. With Agile estimation and planning, you focus effort where it really counts, and continue to do so as circumstances change." Ã¢â ¬â •Rick Mugridge, Rimu Research Ltd., and lead author, Fit for Developing Software (Prentice Hall, 2005) "Finally! The groundbreaking book my clients have been clamoring for! Agile Estimating and Planning demystifies the process of defining, driving, and delivering great software that matters to the business. Mike's clarity, insight, and experience leap out through every page of this book, offering an approach that is relevant and immediately useful to all members of an Agile project." Ã¢â ¬â •Kert D. Peterson, President, Enterprise Agile Group, LLC "This isn't yet another generic book on Agile software development. Agile Estimating and Planning fills a gap left by most of the other books and gives you important, practical, down-to-earth techniques needed to be successful on Agile development projects." Ã¢â ¬â •Steve Tockey, Principal Consultant, Construx Software "Estimation, planning, and tracking is a trinity. If you don't do one of them, you don't need the other two. This book provides very practical knowledge for estimation, planning, prioritizing, and tracking. It should be compulsory subject matter for project managers and their teams, even if they hesitate to call themselves Agile." Ã¢â ¬â •Niels Malotaux, Project Coach "Effective planning is an important, but often misunderstood, part of any successful Agile project. With Agile Estimating and Planning , Mike Cohn has given us a definitive guide to a wide range of Agile estimating and planning practices. With his clear and practical style, Mike not only explains how to successfully get started planning an Agile project, but also provides a wealth of tips and advice for improving any team's Agile planning process. This book is a must-read for managers, coaches, and members of Agile teams." Ã¢â ¬â •Paul Hodgetts, Agile coach and CEO, Agile Logic "Mike's writing style captures the essence of agility-just the right amount of information to bring clarity to the reader. This book provides an excellent guide for all Agile practitioners, both seasoned and novice." Ã¢â ¬â •Robert Holler, President and CEO, VersionOne, LLC "It is as if Mike took the distilled knowledge regarding planning and estimation of a great Agile developer (which he is) and laid out all he knows in an easily understandable manner. More importantly, he has a great mix of concepts with real-world examples finished off with a case study so the reader can relate the information to their own situation. Unless you are already an expert

Agile planner and estimator, this book is for you." Ã¢â ¬â •Alan Shalloway, CEO, Senior Consultant, Net Objectives, and coauthor of Design Patterns Explained, Second Edition (Addison-Wesley, 2005) "Although I had plenty of XP experience before trying out Mike Cohn's Agile planning practices, the effectiveness of the practical and proven techniques in this book blew me away! The book recognizes that people, not tools or processes, produce great software, and that teams benefit most by learning about their project and their product as they go. The examples in the book are concrete, easily grasped, and simply reek of common sense. This book will help teams (whether Agile or not) deliver more value, more often, and have fun doing it! Whether you're a manager or a programmer, a tester or a CEO, part of an Agile team, or just looking for a way to stamp out chaos and death marches, this book will guide you." Ã¢â ¬â •Lisa Crispin, coauthor of Testing Extreme Programming (Addison-Wesley, 2003) "Mike Cohn does an excellent job demonstrating how an Agile approach can address issues of risk and uncertainty in order to provide more meaningful estimates and plans for software projects." Ã¢â ¬â •Todd Little, Senior Development Manager, Landmark Graphics "Mike Cohn explains his approach to Agile planning, and shows how 'critical chain' thinking can be used to effectively buffer both schedule and features. As with User Stories Applied, this book is easy to read and grounded in real-world experience." Ã¢â ¬â •Bill Wake, author of Refactoring Workbook (Addison-Wesley, 2003) "Mike brings this book to life with real-world examples that help reveal how and why an Agile approach works for planning software development projects. This book has great breadth, ranging from the fundamentals of release planning to advanced topics such as financial aspects of prioritization. I can see this book becoming an invaluable aid to Agile project managers, as it provides a wealth of practical tips such as how to set iteration length and boot-strap velocity, and communicate progress." Ã¢â ¬â •Rachel Davies, Independent Consultant "There has been a need for a solid, pragmatic book on the long-term vision of an Agile Project for project managers. Agile Estimating and Planning addresses this need. It's not theoryÃ¢â ¬â •this book contains project-tested practices that have been used on Agile projects. As Mike's test subjects, we applied these practices to the development of video games (one of the most unpredictable project environments you can imagine) with success." Ã¢â ¬â •Clinton Keith, Chief Technical Officer, High Moon Studios "When I first heard Mike Cohn speak, I was impressed by a rare combination of qualities: deep experience and understanding in modern iterative and Agile methods; a drive to find and validate easy, high-impact solutions beyond the status quo of traditional (usually ineffective) methods; and the passion and clarity of a natural coach. These qualities are evident in this wonderful, practical guide. I estimate you won't be disappointed in studying and applying his advice." Ã¢â ¬â •Craig Larman, Chief

Scientist, Valtech, and author of Applying UML and Patterns, Third Edition (Prentice Hall, 2005) and Agile and Iterative Development (Addison-Wesley, 2004) " Agile Estimating and Planning is a critical guide on how to successfully provide value to customers of IT services. This book is filled with clear examples that are essentialÃ¢â ¬â •from project team members to the executive level." Ã¢â ¬â •Lou Thomas, Director, Applications Development, Farm Credit Services of America "This work is deeply significant in that it articulates and details structured techniques to realize a simple, but profound insightÃ¢â ¬â •planning is an iterative quest for value, rather than a perfunctory scheduling of activities. Mike presents processes to converge on this value while reducing risk and uncertainty, supporting decision making, establishing trust, and conveying information. Agile methodologies have shifted the emphasis from plans to planning, but have glossed over many of the finer details of Agile planning. Now, very simply and accessibly, Mike demonstrates how it can be done." Ã¢â ¬â •Sanjiv Augustine, Practice Director, Lean-Agile Consulting at CC Pace, and author of Managing Agile Projects (Prentice Hall, 2005) "The techniques described in Agile Estimating and Planning have helped us tremendously with planning and managing our projects. It provides all you have ever wanted to know about Agile project management." Ã¢â ¬â •Roman Pichler, Engineering Manager, Siemens Communications "Mike Cohn presents a highly pragmatic and logical approach to making projects successful in a world beset by uncertainty and change. With his trademark clarity and directness, Mike cuts through the management mumbo jumbo to present practical techniques that can be put into use immediately. Put the odds squarely in your favor by making Mike Cohn the planning guru on your next big project." Ã¢â ¬â •Pete Deemer, Vice President, Product Development, Yahoo! "This book distills the fundamental ideas behind Agile estimating and planning, presenting them in a thoughtful and approachable manner. This is a 'must-have' book that presents clear, unambiguous, and practical advice for anyone who wants to successfully manage modern software development projects." Ã¢â ¬â •Scott W. Ambler, President, Ambysoft Inc. "How do your projects go? Frustrating changes? Uncertainty? Product missing both the mark and the deadline? With insight and clarity, Mike Cohn shows how to effectively produce software that is of high business value. With agile estimation and planning, you focus effort where it really counts, and continue to do so as circumstances change." Ã¢â ¬â •Rick Mugridge, Rimu Research Ltd., and lead author of Fit for Developing Software "We are true believers in the agile methods described in this book, and have experienced a substantially positive impact from their implementation and continued use. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in making their software development more practical and effective." Ã¢â ¬â •Mark M. Gutrich, President and CEO, Fast 401k, Inc. Detailed, Proven Techniques for Estimating and

Planning Any Agile Project   Agile Estimating and Planning is the definitive, practical guide to 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 daysÃ¢â¬â•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.

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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 books 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 Duchshund! 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, may be 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 stake holders 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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