

Feature Beacon

Stakeholders

When To Use

When there is a risk of generating multiple features that degrade the user experience

Approach

Construct a guiding light that reminds you of the purpose and intention of the product, which could be a user experience map or feature road map to provide clarity on what is best for the product, and then refine the backlog to correspond with the guiding light.

Beware...

Individuals stakeholders may be upset with general approach rather than a tailored feature set just for them



Minimaliser

Time Bound

When To Use

When there are more items than time to complete them, and a ruthless approach is needed

Approach

Use valuation techniques, and estimation techniques to determine the return on investment of each item, and prioritise. Be ruthless and discard those items that are not going to be done.

Beware...

The end result may not be a viable product



Steel Thread

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When there is integration risk present such as when a number of systems are used together

Approach

Refine the backlog to integrate all of the systems right from the first sprint. The functionality does not have to do anything, only connect the systems together at this point to neutralise the integration risk. Additional sprints should then add value to form an iterative approach.

Beware...

Need access to all of the systems in order to get them connected



Iterator

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When a versioning approach solves the initial problem quickly and then makes it more solid later

Approach

Refine the backlog into a series of iterations with each iteration having a goal or statement of its intent. The goal of the product should be satisfied with a very basic first iteration, and successive iterations adding more and more value.

Beware...

First basic iterations may not be well received



De-Dominator

Dependencies

When To Use

When your team is using agile and a team that you are dependent on is using waterfall

Approach

Refine the backlog to provide regular prototypes that can be modelled as consumers of the other teams' services. These prototypes can then be used to inform the formal specifications that are requested from the waterfall teams.

Beware...

Reconnect regularly especially if the projects have risk of diverging rather than converging



Pivoteer

Experimentation

When To Use

When the end outcome is not known and deeper insights are needed with hi fidelity feedback

Approach

Refine the backlog into multiple Lean Startup cycles with each cycle having 2-4 sprints to build and supply hi fidelity outcomes that can be evaluated at the end of the cycle, and a decision to pivot or persevere can be made. Each Lean Startup cycle will need a hypothesis, goal or statement of intent, and each sprint will need a sprint goal which may be a sub-part of the wider intent.

Beware...

Time taken to create a hi fidelity output that can be validated may be wasted



Conveyor Belt

Default

When To Use

The default action - give up thinking and instead just do the next priority

Approach

Refine the backlog in order of priority based upon valuation techniques and estimation techniques applied.

Beware...

The end product may be an incoherent collection of feaures



Alchemist

Experimentation

When To Use

When there is a need to get grungy broad insights quickly and course correct with small experiments

Approach

Refine the backlog into several sprints with each sprint being an open experiment to answer a question or test an assumption. Each sprint may have a sprint goal which describes the hypothesis, question or assumption to be tested by the sprint.

Beware...

The end destination may arrive at a different place than first anticipated



Renovator

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When there is a significant amount of technical debt that is compromising the team

Approach

Refine the backlog in order of priority with artificially high value purposefully placed upon technical debt items so that they are done ahead of other items

Beware...

New features may be neglected leading to stakeholder tension and conflict



Incrementalist

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When a progressive approach to add feature by feature is needed

Approach

Refine the backlog into successive increments that begin to fit together and can be tested in an ever growing feature set

Beware...

The end product may no be viable until all of the increments are in place



Rumble

Experimentation

When To Use

When it is unclear which solution will work best

Approach

Refine the backlog into several prototypes that can be built and tested in parallel with distinct opportunities when the population of solutions is culled with the fittest ones remaining

Beware...

Time taken to create multiple prototypes is traded for knowledge of which solution is best



Go Between

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When there are strong dependencies between systems, teams or products

Approach

Refine the backlog with mock ups and interfaces to decouple dependencies between the actors. Also allow for regular connection and integration to realise any integration issues.

Beware...

Reconnect regularly especially if the projects have risk of diverging rather than converging



Pick N Mix

Experimentation

When To Use

When it is unclear which items to work on next

Approach

Refine the backlog into several groups of items that can be attempted in each sprint, the initial forecast may be purposefully larger than the exhibited velocity but is then trimmed back with items that can be progressed, and the remainder placed back on the backlog.

Beware...

The purpose of the sprint may not be clearly understood until after the sprint forecast is trimmed back



Diverge Converge

Time Bound

When To Use

When time is short but we need to get the best solution

Approach

Refine the backlog into several sprints that fit within the time constraint with the early sprints trying new ideas and prototypes, and the later sprints refining the final product

Beware...

Need to converge when it is the right time to stop diverging



The Pacifier

Stakeholders

When To Use

When there are multiple competing stakeholders influencing the priorities

Approach

Refine the backlog into small packages of work with each package satisfying one specific need for a stakeholder. The packages can then be arranged by organisational priority in the backlog

Beware...

Individuals stakeholders may be upset with general approach across all stakeholders is present rather than a tailored feature set just for them



Regressionator

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When there is a risk of wide impacts on other systems or actors

Approach

Refine the backlog to implement and develop the automated regression testing capability first and then look to deliver features with complimentary automated regression test suites.

Beware...

The time taken to automate regression testing first may delay new features and raise stakeholder concern, tension and conflict



Stealth Flight

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When a rookie agile team need time to get established but stakeholders might disrupt them

Approach

Refine the backlog to use very short sprints e.g. 1 week for the first 3-5 sprints and then settle into a more appropriate sprint duration. This allows the team to fly under the radar and use the scrum framework 3-5 times before the stakeholders start asking questions about their performance.

Beware...

If the overall project duration is only 5 sprints long, then the team may not have time to settle down properly and be effective



Lightning Strike

Risk Mitigation

When To Use

When there is a need to resolve risk early and then add value later

Approach

Refine the backlog to position the first sprint to provide a very basic implementation that resolves the risk immediately. It might not be pretty but satisfies the need early. Now with each successive sprint you can add value and make it pretty.

Beware...

Avoid getting trapped into a solution that is too big and too high fidelity - go grungy and only put in the most basic solution first

