

BA MANAGERS FORUM SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

‘ENSURING THE QUALITY OF AGILE IN AN AGILE ENVIRONMENT’

This document provides an overview of the discussion output captured as part of the special interest group facilitated by Laura Firth, Carline James and Jo Wilson from Allianz Insurance.

The workshop was attended by over 30 representatives from the BA managers forum community and we would like to thank everyone for their thoughts and attention on this topic.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Is it possible to assure the quality of analysis in an agile environment? Assuring the quality of analysis in a waterfall environment is a well-worn path, but it is less clear of how to do this in an agile environment. We would like to share and explore approaches to assuring the analysis output in an agile environment, and continuing to retain that agile environment.

1.2 Workshop Objectives



1.3 Workshop Format

Attendees worked in groups to discuss 3 focus areas from Allianz Insurance including:

- Assurance- considering why quality assurance is important in agile, techniques to support and quality issues experienced.
- Roles- Explored the role of the BA in an agile team, the BA role in quality and the Lead BA responsibilities.
- Management- Understanding how performance management can be facilitated and recruitment of agile BAs.

2 Workshop Output

2.1 Assurance

2.1.1 Agile practices in use

- Retrospectives
- Stand ups
- Prototyping
- Walkthroughs
- Wiki pages/ knowledge sharing

2.1.2 Known quality issues

- Story cards with a few words on them
- Task based (rather than goal based) story card objectives
- A mixture of waterfall to agile delivery has meant a lot of re-work and loss of traceability
- Money wasted without doing thinking at the outset on business architecture and enterprise architecture.
- Understanding how much information is enough to get started.
- Document storage
- Availability of documentation
- Consistency of documents
- PO 'forgets' previous conversations
- Changes mid-sprint
- Decisions not documented
- Misinterpretation
- Supplier management

Observation

- Quality is not inherent to agile ways of working. Agile is a guidelines. Different performance with different teams.
- Needed to stop rework
- Ensure delivery of correct product, fit for purpose

2.1.3 Who else is invested in quality?

- PO should be responsible but everyone should think about it.
- Developers, testers, BAs all invested but 'quality' means different things to different people. Definition of done needs to be agreed by all.
- Testers in particular will be focused on quality using acceptance criteria.
- BAs and business architects should work together up front to develop strategy/ business case.

Observation

- Sometimes we are over invested! A feature might not pass quality test but meets PO's need.
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2.1.4 Quality assurance techniques

- Definition of Ready
- INVEST (to assess the quality of a user story) Independent, Negotiable, Valuable, Estimable, Small, Testable. DEEP (to evaluate the quality of a product backlog) Detailed appropriately; Estimated, Emergent, Prioritised.
- Templates, guidelines and policies
- Quality measures (well defined epics which deliver business value, review analysis at feature level, acceptance criteria, stories- at team level)
- Review features against the epic- is the scope covered? Does it meet what was expected?
- Weekly meetings to discuss what's happening.
- Technical assurance forums e.g. design authorities or architecture.
- Centralised definition of done for NFRs that all user stories must satisfy.
- 'What do you know sessions'
- Skills matrix
- Ensuring good acceptance criteria (GIVEN, THEN, WHEN)
- Support impact assessment of change requests.

Experience

- Business cases for everything to start with but it was not 'agile enough' emphasis on well-formed epics. If a new initiative formed would produce a lean business case.
- Scrum masters who are passionate and talented helps.
- Some companies moving away from scrum masters and moving to delivery managers. Provides stability, run planning.
- Don't get to hung up on specific delivery of benefits but business case/ benefit should be centrally understood.

2.2 Roles

2.2.1 Lead BA role in agile

Activities

- Focus on quality and consistency
 - Representing the BA profession
 - Consideration for the agile approach
 - Clear impediments
 - Identify BA risks
 - Line management/ task management
 - Coaching BAs working in agile
 - Provide the 'big picture' view
 - Management function e.g. approve timesheets
 - Protect junior BAs so they do added-value BA work rather than any old task
 - Supporting the conversation about how to keep improving the agile practice
 - Ensuring templates and content are re-used (e.g. common user stories)
 - Succession planning to prepare for team change
 - Peer review of user stories and other artefacts
 - Provide links into other teams and identify dependencies
 - Share lessons learnt from retros.
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2.2.2 BA role in agile

Observations

- BA does have a quality responsibility but not entirely clear how to assure.
- BA skills needed in the scrum team
- BA skills potentially more valuable within the agile context
- Starting to apply agile to all of business change (helping business think through change in an agile way before it flows in. Consideration for MVP and challenge to the business)
- MVP might be heavy- need to do significant analysis up from to release value early.

Activities

- 'Critical friend' of the PO
- Responsible for the analysis/requirements
- Work with PO to define needs and goals
- Work with Dev to ensure stories are clear
- Testing- mainly UAT but sometimes unit testing.
- Champion the business perspective
- Support prioritisation
- Ensure traceability
- Elicit and create user stories
- Refine backlog and add more detail
- Manage the backlog (already prioritised by the product owner)

Other roles they may take

- Proxy product owner
- Scrum master (rare)

2.3 Management

2.3.1 BA allocations in an agile team

- Buddy up with other BAS so they can rotate round product teams
- Work a sprint ahead of the development team
- Agree roles up front
- Define governance and standards

Observation

- Non BA personal development leaders to do 1-2-1s, management of BA tasks as separate managers.

2.3.2 Agile BA performance management

- Collect feedback on the individual e.g. go an join a daily stand up and observe interactions.
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- Listen to how BA interacts with the tester and developers (3 amigos session)
- Peer review and look at quality of output e.g. user stories, screen specifications
- Define what quality means to the BAs.
- Attend show and tell sessions to gather feedback
- 360 feedback
- Has the BA met their deadlines?
- Evidence frequently through sprint cycle on what they have delivered.
- Define a BA terms of reference as part of planning.
- Retrospective feedback on BA
- Look at their contributions
- Consider their longevity in the team as they may grow or dilute skills.

2.3.3 Recruitment of agile BAs

BA Skillset

- Recruit for 'T-shaped' individuals
- Problem solving skills
- Adaptable and enthusiastic team workers
- Lateral thinking
- Agile mindset
- Collaborative
- Influencing skills
- Focus on value add
- Able to prioritise.

Interview Format

- Use scenario based questions

Development in role

- Allow time for the person to develop agile BA skills and give them support
 - Upskill existing analysts and grow domain knowledge.
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3 BA Comics

The group also produced some visual representations of their agile challenges below.

