Schedule Games: Recognizing and Avoiding the Games We Play
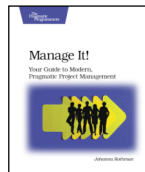
Johanna Rothman

Author of *Manage It!: Your Guide to Modern, Pragmatic Project Management*
Coauthor of *Behind Closed Doors: Secrets of Great Management*
Author of *Hiring the Best Knowledge Workers, Techies & Nerds: The Secrets and Science of Hiring Technical People*

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Projects and Schedules

- They all start with a schedule
- Sometimes the project team meets the schedule
- Too often, the project team doesn't meet the schedule
- But that's not always because the project team doesn't try to create a reasonable schedule or meet one…
- Sometimes management "decides" something about your schedule

Bring Me a Rock

- Make sure you've been clear about what you're providing
- Elicit success criteria
- Define release criteria
- Negotiate for time, feature set, defects

- Develop a ranked product backlog
- Implement by feature in timeboxes

Hope is Our Most Important Strategy

- Articulate the risks
- Choose any lifecycle other than a serial lifecycle
- Hudson Bay Start
- Milestone criteria
- Plan to iterate

- Use timeboxed iterations
- Gather data (velocity chart) as you proceed to see where you are making progress

Queen of Denial

- Articulate the risks using High, Medium, Low
  - Numbers will start the risk promotion/demotion game
- Choose any lifecycle other than a serial lifecycle
- Measure velocity
- Plan to iterate
- Ask context free questions
- Ask how little can you do

- Use timeboxed iterations
- Define a product backlog so you can implement by feature in order of value

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Sweep Under the Rug

- Rank the requirements
- Choose any lifecycle other than a serial lifecycle so you can obtain feedback as you proceed
- Develop release criteria

- Use timeboxed iterations
- Develop a ranked product backlog
- Implement by feature in order of value

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Happy Date

- If you must use a serial lifecycle, use schedule ranges, not a single-point date
- For other lifecycles, use a three-date range (possible, likely, Murphy)
- Use multi-dimension measurements, not just the schedule milestones

- Use timeboxed iterations
- Chart velocity

Pants on Fire

- Use an incremental or iterative/incremental lifecycle
- Implement by feature
- Develop a product strategy
- Rethink how you estimate

- Use timeboxed iterations
- Use a velocity chart to see progress

Split Focus

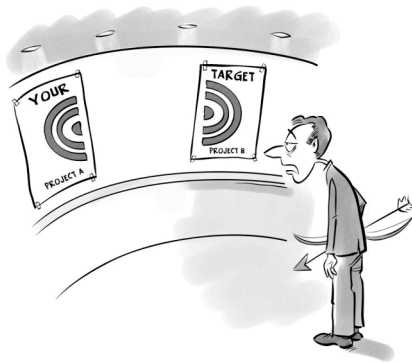- Rank requirements
- Implement by feature
- Use a staged delivery lifecycle

- One week timeboxed iterations
- Ranked product backlog
- Implement by feature

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Schedule == Commitment

- Date for a date
- Percentage confidence in a schedule

- Short timeboxed iterations
- Implement by feature
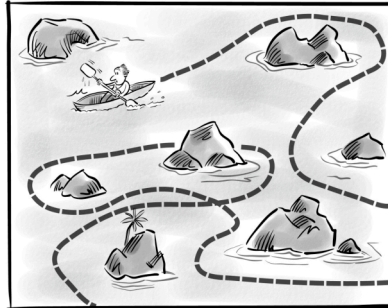
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We'll Know Where We Are When We Get There

- Beware of "chasing skirts"
- Define a goal—any goal!

- Timeboxed iterations
- Ranked product backlog
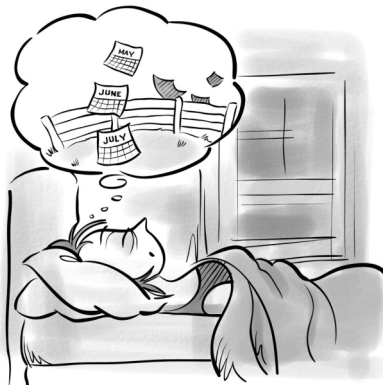- Implement by feature

Schedule Dream Time (The Schedule Tool is Always Right)

- Use rolling wave scheduling
- Use a low-tech scheduling approach
- Use confidence levels for your estimates
- Explain that pretty schedules do not make a successful project

- Short timeboxed iterations
- Measure velocity so you can better your prediction

We Gotta Have It;
We're Toast Without It

- Negotiate for more/less time, people, money, or features

- Develop a ranked product backlog
- Implement by feature
- Use short timeboxed iterations
- Offer to exchange one thing of equal value for another within an iteration

We Can't Say No

- Ask the team to generate a plan they can commit to
- Timebox overtime and see if that makes a difference
- Surgically add more people

- Timeboxed iterations
- Velocity charts

Schedule Chicken

- No public status meetings
- Help people develop inch pebbles
- Implement by feature

- Standup meetings
- User stories (1-2 day tasks or inch-pebbles)
- Implement by feature
- Short iterations

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90% Done

- Coach person to develop inch-pebbles
- Make status visible to everyone involved
- Coach person with how to track estimates

- Implement by feature (implement only what's needed for a feature)
- Short timeboxed iterations

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We'll Go Faster Now
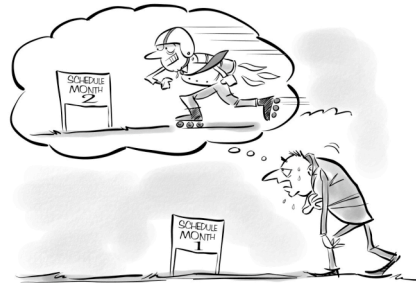
- Measure velocity
- Ask people why they are optimistic
- Measure earned value for tangible parts of the project

- Timeboxed iterations
- Implement by feature

Schedule Trance

- Measure velocity
- Use short iterations
- Daily standups
- Implement by feature

Agile Practices Help

- Ranked product backlog
- Implement by feature
- Timeboxed iterations
- Measure what's done: velocity charts
  - No credit for partial work
- Deliver highest value first

What Would Prevent You From Using These Ideas?

- Keep the kimono closed
  - You don't have to tell your management everything
  - Do they really care how you manage your project as long as you accomplish what they need?
- Open-book management
  - Explain "The whole team wants to do the best job we can. Here's a way that will help us finish the project so we can deliver a great product."

Velocity Chart

Velocity Chart

Chart legend:
- # Features Left
- # Features Done
- Total Features
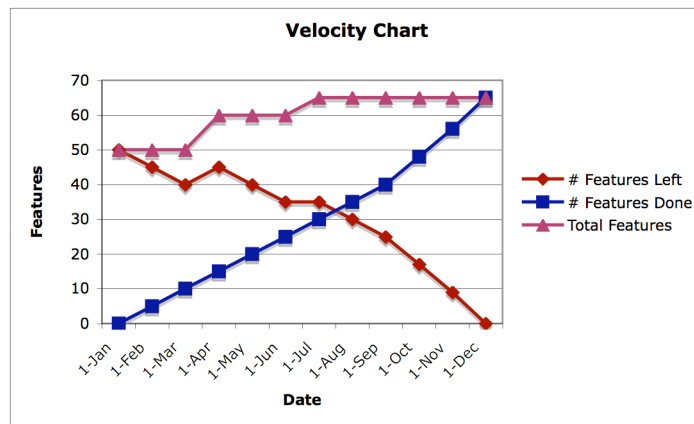
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More Resources

- Managing Product Development blog on jrothman.com/blog/mpd
- Ken Schwaber's *Agile Project Management with Scrum*
- Mike Cohn's *Agile Estimating and Planning*
- *Manage It! Your Guide to Modern, Pragmatic Project Management*

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Software Quality Group of New England

SQGNE is made possible by the support of our sponsors:

Welcome to SQGNE's 15th season!

- We are an all-volunteer group with no membership dues!
- Supported entirely by our sponsors...
- Over 600+ members
- Monthly meetings - Sept to July on 2nd Wed of month
- E-mail list - contact John Pustaver **pustaver@ieee.org**
- SQGNE Web site: **www.swqual.com/sqgne/main.html**

SQGNE Volunteers

- John Pustaver - Founder and Director
- Steve Rakitin – Programs and Web site
- Gene Freyberger – Annual Survey
- Paul Ratty (Sun) - room, copies, refreshments
- Tom Arakel (Sun) - room, copies, refreshments
- Jack Guilderson (Sun) – A/V equipment

  We are always looking for volunteers. Please see John if you are
  interested in helping out...

ASQ Software Division / SQGNE Mission

- Software Division Newsletter
- Software Quality Professional Journal
- CSQE Certification
- Additional ASQ info at http://www.asq.org/software

- **SQGNE Mission**
  - To promote use of engineering and management techniques that lead to delivery of high quality software
  - To disseminate concepts and techniques related to software quality engineering and software engineering process
  - To provide a forum for discussion of concepts and techniques related to software quality engineering and the software engineering process
  - To provide networking opportunities for software quality professionals

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SQGNE 2008-09 Schedule

Speaker	Affiliation	Date	Topic
1. Lou Cohen	None	9/10/08	Introduction to using Quality Function Deployment on Software Projects
2. Brian LeSuer	Star Quality	10/8/08	A Survey of Test Automation Projects
3. Howie Dow and Steve Rakitin	None	11/12/08	Estimating using Wideband Delphi Method - An interactive exercise
4. Russ Ohanian	Tizor Systems	12/10/08	Integrating Agile into the Development Process
5. Johanna Rothman	Rothman & Assoc.	1/14/09	Schedule Games
6. Carol Perletz	Juniper Networks	2/11/09	The Nitty Gritty of QA Project Management
7. Robin Goldsmith	GoPro Management	3/11/09	Testing the Untestable
8. Scott Matusmoto or Paco Hope	Cigital Networks	4/8/09	Automating security testing of web apps using cURL and Perl
9. Derek Kozikowski	None	5/13/09	Automated Functional Test Design
10. Stan Wrobel	CSC	6/10/09	Test Tool - Make or Buy?
11. Everyone		7/9/09	Annual Hot Topics Night…

Tonight's Speaker...

Schedule Games: Recognizing and Avoiding the Games We Play
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Are your schedules off as soon as you create them? Does your management expect you to meet impossible deadlines? Have you ever been surprised by how long tasks took to complete? If you answer yes to any of these questions, chances are someone in your organization is playing schedule games. There are many different schedule games, but they all have similar results: the project team is behind the eight ball. We'll look at how to recognize the signs of schedule games, how to address the underlying problems, and how to change the rules.

Johanna Rothman helps managers and leaders solve problems and seize opportunities. She consults, speaks, and writes on managing high-technology product development. She enables managers, teams, and organizations to become more effective by applying her pragmatic approaches to the issues of project management, risk management, and people management. She publishes The Pragmatic Manager, a monthly email newsletter and podcast, and writes two blogs: Managing Product Development and Hiring Technical People. She is the author of several books:
- 2008 Jolt Productivity award winning Manage It! Your Guide to Modern, Pragmatic Project Management
- Behind Closed Doors: Secrets of Great Management (with Esther Derby)
- Hiring the Best Knowledge Workers, Techies & Nerds: The Secrets and Science of Hiring Technical People
- Corrective Action for the Software Industry (with Denise Robitaille)

Johanna is also a host and session leader at the Amplifying Your Effectiveness Conference. Find more of Johanna's articles and her blogs at www.jrothman.com.