The Challenge

In most work situations today, people are requested to deliver items whose implementation resides in the Obvious, Complicated, Complex and even sometimes in the Chaotic domain. Specifications are far from trivial apart from those in the Obvious.

Projects and initiatives still deliver sub-optimal results due to misunderstanding of specifications. The challenge in reaching common understanding between stakeholders, management and those performing the work has never been greater.

The old big up-front specification and plan just cannot keep up with the demands anymore, too much goes wrong too often.

ALL Specifications, the Solution

This ALL Specifications course takes the student through the basics of producing useful specifications. This includes using advanced narrative techniques to achieve common understanding and high recall factor of facts. A balance between structure and flexibility has to be constantly upheld.

In ALL the “pull” principle is used, customers “require” something of suppliers. Specifications are the common language for these requirements.

- What outcome or impact does the customer really want?
- How can expectations be expressed so that misunderstandings are minimized?
- How can expectations be expressed so that delivery can be verified to the customer’s satisfaction?
- How can expectations be expressed so that impact or outcome can be monitored and verified as satisfactory?

Several examples and exercises take the participants through the various patterns that experience has proven are useful in communicating what should be achieved and hence be done. Special focus is devoted to visualization of the overall solution, lest people lose the overview and suboptimize in one corner.

Learning Objectives

Agile Lean Leadership context
Understanding the foundational challenge of reaching common understanding of specifications when working in the complex domain.

Foundation
Understanding how Agile Lean specifications rely on reaching common understanding through dialogue, not through detailed contracts. Have applicable knowledge of the various cognitive and psychological constraints that govern this process.

The toolbox
Apprehending a collection of patterns, tools, practices and templates that can facilitate this process. Understand the applicability of each.

Real life
Understanding how different visualization techniques can strengthen the cognitive and communicative process, and how such artifacts can keep the common understanding fixed on the same facts.

Kurt B. Nielsen
6 ALL - Specifications, Content

- **Basic specification theory** – How can the wishes and requirements of stakeholders be transmitted to those delivering?
  - The case for using narratives for specification. User Stories and their practical use. Start with the “why”.
  - Reaching common understanding, the importance of verbal communication in this process.
  - Adding acceptance criteria, detailed scenarios.
  - Relevant metadata – Specifications carry extra information to help determine prioritization and course of action. Discussion of what is relevant.
  - A tactile exercise to try specify a delivery.

- **Decomposition of specifications** – Specifications have to be broken down into manageable sizes so that implementation can be reasonably understood and estimated.
  - The storymap as the backbone of understanding and aggregation of metrics.
  - Different patterns for decomposition.
  - Minimal user value quality (marketable feature).

- **Estimation at large** – Predictability is always a desired quality. Different methods for estimation of different things.
  - Estimation Poker, Magic Estimation, Buy a feature, keeping the references for estimation realistic.
  - Uncertainty, impact estimation, cost of delay.
  - Complexity estimation, special specifications for experiments and investigations.
  - Kano analysis, desirability of qualities.

- **Visualize and understand** – Different ways to illustrate a solution and focus on common understanding.
  - Backlog in varying detail, Story map in detail.
  - Storyboarding. Impact mapping.
  - Building a high level roadmap to focus everybody
  - State event pattern, ways to illustrate.
  - Workflow for preparing specifications for action.

"Now, what is simplicity? Simplicity is the shortest path to a solution." Ward Cunningham

Prerequisite for this course is #1 ALL Introduction.

Example of Specification with metadata

Read more about ALL - Executive here: https://goo.gl/Zo7vUm