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AGILE USER STORY TEMPLATE

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AGILE USER STORY

<PROJECT NAME>

COMPANY NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

DATE

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1. WHAT IS AN AGILE USER STORY?

An agile project management tool, a user story describes the features and their benefits of a product or system. Projects in an Agile setting often include numerous user stories that represent various levels of system or product users. The user story defines the system or product user, the features they desire, and the benefits those features will bring. User stories are structured as follows:

It is my desire, as <user type>, to <function> in order to reap the benefits of <reason/benefit>.

Each user story is an opportunity for the development team to work together on a specific feature of the system or product. Instead of relying on detailed documentation, agile project management encourages teamwork. Therefore, the team can collaborate, decide which user stories to work on in the next iteration, further define the functionality (during iteration planning), and get the job done with each user story they create.

The project team faces the challenge of creating user stories with the right amount of detail, even though user stories are a simplified way to define functionality.

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A USER STORY

Upon completion, the functionality outlined in each user story should contribute to the overall product value. This mindset should guide all user story development. Stay away from it if it does not improve the final product.

The best User Stories are those that the project team works on together. The final consumer or product owner's thoughts and opinions must also be a part of this development process. Keep in mind that the focus of agile methodology is on teamwork rather than paperwork. As opposed to a formal specification or requirement, the user stories serve as a tool to enhance team communication and collaboration. Working together not only gets everyone on the team thinking about the project, but it also allows us to see things from the customer's or product owner's perspective, which is crucial for determining what really adds value.

It can be difficult for teams to determine how much detail to include in user stories. In order to foster innovation and creativity in solution development, user stories should be broad enough to describe functionality and benefits while still leaving room for creativity. They should not be overly specific that the team is unable to explore other options for solving the problem.

Bill Wake's INVEST acronym, which many agile practitioners follow when writing user stories, specifies that they should be:



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Independent – user stories should not be sequential or locked into a specific order. The team should be able to develop the user stories in any sequence.

Negotiable – user stories should be flexible and without too much detail. Details will be added later through team collaboration.

Valuable – the user stories should add value to the final product.

Estimable – the team must be able to use the user stories to estimate/approximate work.

Small – large or vague user stories are difficult to estimate. User stories should be able to be designed, built, and tested within a single iteration.

Testable – the user story should be able to be tested with some type of acceptance criteria or other test (even if it has not yet been defined)

User stories would be incomplete without acceptance criteria, even though they are not explicitly mentioned in the user story format. The team should talk about the criteria for success for each user story as they move toward iteration planning. When the team has reached the acceptance criteria, they will know that the user story has accomplished its goal. Product and system testers will also frequently consult acceptance criteria when crafting the user story's acceptance tests.

The purpose of creating acceptance tests is to ensure that each user story works as intended. The inclusion of a feature in an iteration is guaranteed by acceptance criteria, but the expected performance of that feature is verified by acceptance tests.

3. WHAT TO AVOID WHEN WRITING USER STORIES

User stories are a fantastic way to get everyone on the same page and working together as a team. The effectiveness of user stories is frequently diminished, though, due to a number of typical errors that teams make when creating them. Here are a few examples of these errors:

Leaving out the customer/product owner, who plays a pivotal role in an agile setting as an integral part of the team. They have final say over whether features improve the product or not.

Excessive specificity—user stories ought to be sufficiently general to permit wiggle room and a group effort to refine the story during iteration planning once the team decides to include it in the subsequent iteration. Excessively detailed user stories have the potential to restrict the team to a single solution development approach, stifling innovation, and creativity.



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Delay in discussing and documenting acceptance criteria—as user stories progress, the team should address this issue. There can be no way for the team to know when they have fulfilled the user story requirements unless there are acceptance criteria. Furthermore, the team's capacity to guarantee the product's functionality performs as anticipated is hindered due to a lack of acceptance testing, which in turn is caused by an absence of acceptance criteria.

4. EXAMPLES OF USER STORIES: GOOD AND BAD

Here are some sample user stories that demonstrate an excessive amount of detail, an inadequate amount of detail, and an appropriate amount of detail.

Too Much Detail:

My goal as an end user is to be able to update the company's staffing contact list on a regular basis by accessing the HR database and retrieving a staffing report that includes employees' names, DOBs, SSNs, addresses, and phone numbers.

Take note that the preceding example includes a detailed listing of report components. A team may be discouraged or prevented from including other important content in future reports if these items are included in the user story. Later on in the iteration planning process, this level of detail should be defined.

Too Broad:

I would like to be able to update the company's staffing contact list from time to time, so I need access to the HR database.

Keep in mind that the capability to create reports from the HR database is completely absent from the aforementioned example. Nothing is said about accessing the database. If the team does not know how to generate reports, they might not implement this crucial feature and instead wait until iteration to grant database access.

Appropriate Level of Detail:

In my role as an end user, I need to be able to access the HR database, run reports, and update the company's staffing contact list on a regular basis.

The preceding example guarantees that the team can prepare for access and report generation as iteration planning starts, while also further defining the information that reports will contain.



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5. USER STORY WITH ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA AND ACCEPTANCE TESTING

The following is an example of a user story that includes both the acceptance criteria and information about the acceptance testing.

User Story:

In my role as an end user, I need to be able to access the HR database, run reports, and update the company's staffing contact list on a regular basis.

Acceptance Criteria:

- Ability to gain access to human resource database
- Ability to generate a report which includes
 - Employee names
 - Dates of birth
 - Social security numbers
 - Addresses
 - Telephone numbers
- Ability to use report data to update staffing contact list

Acceptance Testing:

- Database is accessible internally but not from outside company firewall
- MS Access report can be generated from database based on query inputs
- MS Access report data can be exported to MS Excel spreadsheet
- Staffing contact list updates contain only most recent data from the database

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