DECISION LENS

How to Break the Reactive Cycle in Resource Capacity Planning

Contents

Introduction

The past several months have taught us all that disruptions are inevitable. To keep moving forward, **product teams need to apply innovation to accelerate the way they adapt to the ripple effects of disruptors — whatever they may be.** But innovation alone is insufficient to successfully navigating change. How product teams choose to react to change and enable faster decision making is the major differentiator between success and failure.

The Tech Lag for Product Teams & Their Resources

The engineering world adopted and customized Agile over the last decade to support continuous delivery of software — a marked change from the annual software shipments they had been accustomed to.

Made possible by agile product development solutions such as JIRA, the resulting innovation has been astounding and allowed for the rise of SaaS offerings to service nearly every potential use case.

New tools — Waterfall in particular — have helped foster developers' change in approach, but product teams and project planners have not benefited from these innovations.

Consequently, teams remain stuck in a reactive mindset, never being able to fully prepare for the inevitable disruption looming around the corner.

On a macro level, product teams have only a few adjustable elements to navigating change:

Work Quality.

Customer expectations of quality are already high, and you can only descope so much while still staying competitive in the market.

Scheduling.

The element of time is pretty finite. Moving Epics around to meet launch targets can help but can also cause ripple effects, such as resource bottlenecks.

Resource Capacity.

Team and development resources can only handle so much in their workload, no matter how creative the scheduling.
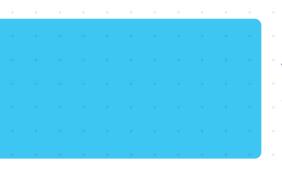
Breaking the Reactive Cycle:

AN AGILE APPROACH TO RESOURCE CAPACITY PLANNING

While many view reactive planning as a negative, a product team's effective application of the Agile technique enables it to **remain proactive and achieve maximum productivity.** This approach requires preparation, however.

Accepting that disruptors will almost certainly derail a team's best laid plans, the Agile approach allows for superior scenario planning to position a company for new solutions, regardless of what type of chaos comes knocking.

The Benefits of Real-Time Strategic Re-Allocation

Responding to the unexpected is the nature of project planning.

The primary benefit of Agile's real-time resource allocation and impact assessment is it breaks the reactive nature of future planning.

Once a company redistributes its resources, it can implement planning future sprints with the full knowledge of prior decisions.

Using analytics to pinpoint and address bottlenecks and systemic issues across a team's portfolio, planning gets smarter with each iteration of Agile, positioning a team to proactively prepare for and accomplish strategic goals.

While a team may not be able to ensure on-time delivery of your current sprint cycle, planning for the unexpected can save the universe of sprints planned for the future.

The average team conducts 3-week sprints, meaning a team has about 17 sprints per year. If disruptors delay each sprint by just two days, the number of available sprints drops to less than 16 — **a 12% reduction in output.**

Subsequent delays can be addressed with better reactivity:

- Identify underused assets in your portfolio

- Predict Bottlenecks before they happen

- Clearly and effectively communicate trade-offs

Address Delays with Better Reactivity

Identify underused assets in your portfolio

By foregoing reactive resource management in favor of an agile approach which provides more visibility, you can identify underused resources to capitalize on new opportunities. Agile's open resource pockets make it possible for you to squeeze in an extra project or feature that's been sitting at the top of your backlog forever.

Predict Bottlenecks before they happen

The sooner you can spot the iceberg, the sooner you can navigate around it. Agile thinking allows you to remove bottlenecks by finding or creating other open pockets of opportunity flow points. The ability to see exactly where those bottlenecks live — and what project demands are creating them — is a must in today's fast paced business world.

Clearly and effectively communicate trade-offs

Clarity also facilitates better communication. When you have clear visibility into a plan and its required resources (both as it once stood and currently stands), you can more readily share information with various stakeholders. A visual view of your resource planning can also help you explain the trade-off and ripple effects of each resourcing option.

The Big Picture

Responding to the unexpected is the nature of project planning. However, these disruptions always take different forms. A project lead finds another job, an extended internet outage occurs, and scope expansion (feature creep) are just a few of the thousands of different challenges you have to navigate. **Without knowing exactly what obstacle you will face, it is impossible to adapt in a timely manner.** Attempting to do so would result in planning paralysis.

Instead of being stuck in an endless planning loop, it's important to lean into the chaos. By using the right solutions and integrations at specific points in the product development lifecycle, it's possible to address these obstacles with real-time scenario planning. Re-allocating resources, discovering underused resources, and adjusting other deadlines are all means to leaning in.

Need help optimizing your roadmap and keeping up with resourcing demands?

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