Agile2011 Proposal for Talk

Staying Agile in a Regulated Environment

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Abstract:
Agile software development is a light framework that focuses more on early value delivery and incremental improvement than traditional tasks like detailed up-front planning, comprehensive specifications and technical documentation. But from the perspective of information security, this planning and documentation serve a purpose. How can we reconcile agile development teams that value their working product over documentation with the need to meet information security requirements such as data privacy and regulatory requirements? I will discuss how to bring together the apparently conflicting needs of information security and agile, and show by example how agile teams actually approach tough regulatory requirements.

Keywords:
Agility
Regulations
Governance
Compliance
Regulatory Requirements
Agile Transition

Duration, Space and Supplies Requirements
- 60 minute talk
- Alternatively, this can make a good 90 minute tutorial to extract more information/experience from the participants, and draw conclusions from both our experiences and that of the audience.

The topic has been submitted to XP2011 as a tutorial, rather than talk or experience report. The talk has been given as part of an ISACA Agile and Auditors meeting in 2010, where it drove strong discussion, and at the Berlin Scrumtisch (2010), to positive feedback.

Intended audience and prerequisites:
Practitioners trying to make agile principles and values work in regulated environments.
Any role (Developer, Tester, Compliance or Project Manager) will add value to the group.
Participants should have working knowledge of agile practices like Scrum, Kanban and XP and at least a theoretical knowledge of compliance or governance requirements.

Motivation
Many agile development teams have to deal with restrictive regulatory environments which make it hard for them to really finish any feature within an iteration. Iteration after iteration, the work is accepted as ‘done’ without passing the compliance checks, often one of the most critical hurdles to shipping a final product. This can lead to considerable waste, either because of extensive ‘hardening’ of the product before shipping or even discarding of many iterations of work, depending on the outcome of the regulatory compliance checks.
These restrictions originate in external regulations (e.g. legal, audit) and internal habits of an organization, e.g. long running processes for rather simple tasks. At the end of a project there can be necessary external services like translation of documentation, or internal services like quality management approvals, verification, and validation tasks.
If it is not possible to remove these impediments for whatever reasons, how are you able to get your features done? How can you gain the benefits of agile approaches in such an environment? From experience gained with clients in a number of heavily regulated environments, I show how the conflict of agility in a regulated environment has been resolved.
Learning outcomes

- Consideration of apparent conflict between desired outcomes and recommended practices of compliance managers and auditors and agile teams
- Combining complex compliance requirements and long-cycle approval processes with the cross-functional teams, fixed-length iterations and a shippable product increment to deliver agility in a regulated environment
- Keeping an agile team agile in a regulated environment

Presenters

Dave Sharrock oversees the agile42 professional services operations in North America and is responsible for introducing agile42’s unique approach to that region of the world. Dave thrives in dynamic and fast-changing environments – building, leading and coaching technology and product development teams in start-ups or fast-changing, results-driven environments. Quick to grasp business concepts and creatively address business challenges. He is a natural leader with extensive international and off-shoring experience, working in large multinational corporations, small and medium enterprises, and fledgling start-ups, from manufacturing to online social networks to telecommunications. Within agile42 he has trained and coached management teams, transition teams, scrum teams and stakeholders in enterprise-wide agile roll-outs targeting over 100 teams distributed world-wide.