

Instructions for Agile Auction

Agile Auction is a card game similar to poker that can be used for project planning and project estimation. Agile Auction is often used as a tool or technique in connection with agile software development approaches.



Rules

Note that in this document the term story is interchangeable with project task.

1. In the planning session each participant (player) gets a set of cards with the values 0, 0.5, 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, and +5.0.
2. One story is estimated at a time.
3. Each story is discussed briefly.
4. At the end of the discussion each player selects a card but doesn't reveal his/her choice yet.
5. Upon a signal of the facilitator all players simultaneously put their cards on the table. The average of the values is the estimate.
6. If the average is "+5.0" then the story has to be split up and its parts be re-estimated.

Additional Comments

- If the spread of the estimates is too wide then the planning team should do another round of estimations for the particular story by comparing the assumptions for the estimate. Often it is these discussions that reveal more aspects to be considered.
- All people who would work on delivery estimate. In software projects this does not only include developers but also database experts, performance engineers, testers, documenters, etc.
- If you print the cards on differently colored paper each player can have cards in a different color. This saves some time to prepare for and run the game.
- The template uses the values between 0 and 5.0. If you are not used to this technique yet, think of the values in terms of ideal engineering days. E.g. a 2.5 would indicate that it would take a programmer (or if you prefer a pair of programmers) 2.5 days of solid work to complete the story. With more experience you will notice that the unit will become less important over time.

Suggested Reading

Mike Cohn: "Agile Estimating and Planning", Prentice Hall PTR, November 2005, ISBN-10 0131479415.