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Agile Testing DevOps Security AI

Are You Done Yet?

ARTICLE

By Steve Berczuk | August 3, 2010

SUMMARY

Johanna Rothman recently wrote, commenting on Joshua Kerievsky's proposed definition of done. Both posts are worth a read, if for no other reason than to better understand why we have such a difficult time defining what "done" is, and why defining "done" is one of the major challenges for teams trying to adopt agile practices.

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Thinking about both Joshua's and Johanna's points I wonder if the difference isn't similar to a discussion of whether principles or practices are more important to be successful when adopting agile methods. On the one hand following practices diligently allows you to develop good habits and even to get some good results early on. The challenge comes when it's time to reflect and improve on your practices. Without a good understanding of practices it's hard to optimize.

Similarly, defining done earlier in the process can cause problems if you are thinking about the meaning of "done" the wrong way. If "done" means washing your hands of issues ("we met the spec..."), evaluating done as late as possible makes sense, enforcing the idea that you are not done until the customer is happy is a useful driver.

If, on the other hand, you understand (and *believe*) that your goal as a developer is to deliver useful, quality software, and if the customer understands that that they may not have understood the problem until they had a working system in hand, defining done for earlier steps means that you have more tools with which to evaluate your effectiveness, status, and progress. *Done* closer to the developer means that you have *more*, rather

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Having the definition of done closer to the team (as Johanna recommends) allows you to measure progress and identify risk. You also need to be able to acknowledge that it is possible that completing all the stories may still mean that there is still work to do. Then you have to inspect, adjust, and adapt. Which is to say: *be agile*.

Topics: agile,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Steve Berczuk is a Principal Software Engineer with experience as a manager, Scrum Master and technical lead in Boston, MA. The author of *Software Configuration Management Patterns: Effective Teamwork, Practical Integration*, he is a recognized expert in software configuration management and agile software development. Steve is passionate about helping teams work effectively to produce quality software. He has an M.S. in operations research from Stanford University and an S.B. in Electrical Engineering from MIT, and is a Certified ScrumMaster. Contact Steve at steve@berczuk.com or visit berczuk.com and follow his blog at blog.berczuk.com.

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