Table of Contents

How Do We Work with PI Objective Business Values During the Program Increment?

At the end of the PI Planning event we have a set of business values. And and the end of this PI we would like to have a set of values that are updated to reflect the value of what was actually delivered so we can improve on our ability to deliver value. In other words the updated values are used to calculate the predictability metric and so is an input into the Inspect and Adapt).

One mistake a lot of Release Train Engineers make is to wait until the end of the Program Increment to gather up the values. The thinking is that we don’t want to waste a person's time (especially these senior Business Owner types) on updating these values so we should wait for the next big event.

As said, this is a mistake:

- The timing is such that the most time (say a quarter) has occurred between the initial commitment, the demonstration of value and the assignment of updated business values. Even with the best intention in the world, it is difficult to ask the Business Owner to remember all context that went into each of these steps especially when they are now being asked to update all the numbers at once.
- The teams will often feel slighted when, from their perspective suddenly a value is reduced when their numbers go down. While this might actually be valid (now that the delivery is seen, the value could be less than expected) it’s pretty hard on a team who then has no recourse to ask why there is a change and / or perhaps point out considerations the business owner is not seeing.
- The entire Train is wasting time while the business owner makes decisions about the value they are seeing. This seems like a poor trade-off of time - 1 or 2 business owners' time vs 100 people on the Train.
- The Train is constantly delivering value as represented by demonstrations of deliverable functionality. If we only get people to comment on value at the end of the PI this gives the false impression that value only is delivered at the end. We want to encourage discussions about delivering value continuously, not on some arbitrary time-box and so want to make sure everyone, especially senior people, know that value is always delivered.

A better approach is to have the business owner update the values as they are delivered. Typically as a result of a System Demonstration the business owner (or their proxies) will have seen the value provided. The team(s) are responsible for providing the link between the feature, the objectives and the work they have completed so there is a clear understanding of the value being provided.

If the Business Owner attends the System Demonstration, we could get an updated value by saying to the Business Owner “ … at PI Planning you said this was an 8. Now that you have seen it what do you think the value is?”

It is OK for the Business Owner to say “this is now valued a 7 (i.e. lower value) than we original thought.” Sometimes this is because the business situation changed. Or it might be that after having seen the capability it’s just not as useful as it was. Whatever the case, we need this data to figure out how we can improve. Is there something we could have done to improve our communication? Is there something we could have done to understand the change in business environment? The key thing to understand is that there is no blame assignment here; the Team did not somehow fail. It is just data and we might be able to learn something from it. Metrics like the Predictability will fluctuate based changes in the Team's ability to deliver and the changing business environment. We use this data in the Inspect and Adapt to help drive improvements.

Sometimes we find that Business Owners say they do not have the time to attend a System Demo or that they need to wait on something else before providing the value. My feeling is that the RTE should set up a working agreement with the Business Owner where in the event that the Business Owner is unable to provide a value, the RTE will simply assign the value that was originally given. Like most working agreements of this type, the other side of the agreement will be that the RTE will work hard to show the value to the Business Owner so they can provide feedback. In general this is a bit of an anti-pattern (we want Business Owners involved as much as possible), but especially as you are establishing Trains in a new organization, it something that you will often see.

> > In summary, "How do we update the Business Value?" Incrementally, as the PI Objective is completed.

Consultant, Tools, PIPlanning, Program, PIObjectives, SAFe, FAQ