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Facilitation - Play, Pass, or Move

Aka "Secret Santa".

Premise

The idea of "relative sizing" can be applied in a lot of situations. Most first learn of the concept in agile when we do estimates of the size of work. When agile Teams require an estimate of the work, they often use Story Points, a measure of relative size, as an estimate. We use Story Points because it is faster than estimation of absolute amounts. And the data that results is often more accurate as well. The idea that we can gauge something that is bigger or smaller than something we have, that we can do it quickly, and that we can turn these the result into numbers if required (through affinity mapping) is not limited to job size. We can apply the concept to estimates of relative business size, relative risk, relative impact, relative whatever.

Relative sizing also does not have to be done in a single dimension. For example, at the same time that we estimate relative risk, we can also estimate relative impact, if we set up both a horizontal and vertical axis. The technique can be applied as both a single and dual dimensions.

When this approach is used you will see:

- Great discussion on the items
- Great development of the criteria being used (based on what you are estimation)
- Great buy-in on the results
- Shared understanding and alignment on item being discussed
- Very efficient in terms of time used to get the results required. For example, a portfolio level prioritization of business value and time criticality of more than 100 signs unseen "epics" took less than 2 hours.

Technique

For relatively comparing the size of a single axis (for example, effort, value, criticality, risk, impact, opportunity, etc.):

- Start with a list of items written on individual sticky notes
- On a wall place a large sticky on the left that say "Low" and one on the right saying "High" (or whatever the "scale" is that you want to use)
- Participants form a line
- First person in line takes the first note, reads out the item, and places it on the wall between Low & High based on his or her judgment then returns to the end of the line, discussing the thinking as they do this.

- Next player can choose to:
  - Play by picking up the next note & placing it on the wall relative the positions of other notes on the wall, discussing why their thinking as they go
  - Pass placing a note on the wall, or
  - Move one existing note on the wall, again discussing why this item needs to be moved
- Once the group places all the notes on the wall, they'll continues to circulate through the line with Pass or Move options only
- Once everyone in the line has passed on adjusting the relative size, the activity is over

Optionally, add values between low and high using numbers in the Fibonacci sequence: 1,2,3,5,8,13, etc. This is done by affinity mapping clusters of items.

If you want to do two variables, just create a horizontal and vertical axis. People place items of the wall commenting on both of these axis.

Here is an example laying out business value (horizontal) and time criticality (vertical) from "low" (bottom left corner) to "high". In this case you can see that values have been assigned as well:

Ideas

Some ideas:

- Have some fun with this - treat it as a conga line
- If you have no numbers that are commonly known by the group, don't use numbers on the axis. Low / high, big / small etc are better labels and helps people focus relative sizing as opposed to trying to guess an absolute number.

What to Know More?

- [What is the Basis of Our Estimating Process?](#) for an understanding of relative sizing

[Consultant](#), [FacilitationTechnique](#), [Tools](#)