Scrum Team Velocity vs Capacity

There is a difference, and why you should care
Randy Schmidt, recovering work-a-holic
Strategic Results Architect
iSPCT, PMI-ACP, RTE, SPC4, SA

757-303-7705  #TYFYT
Bottom Line Up Front

Velocity is history – Capacity is future, they are not the same...
“hippie scrum days”... no longer reality

”Velocity is ZERO” when team changes
- Teams should be built to last for the long run
- Any given change in team membership equates to a zero velocity
- Velocity is an indicator of efficiency or value delivered

Capacity is based on ‘hours’ available
- Hours of productivity were matrixed
- User Stories were scored based on hourly estimates
- Tasks were used to break up the delineation of work – results in water-falling the story/sprint
Velocity - merely a historic baseline

• Once established – never look back; only forward

• “Defendable” velocity can be determined after several sprints (3-6) typically used in discussions about future ‘load’

• “Velocity” is a problematic metric because it is easy to manipulate and often misused as an indicator of efficiency
Capacity - used for future planning, based on a number of additional factors

- Logical estimate for changes in team membership
- Capacity should be forward looking, review vacations, holidays, actual team members’ % limitations
- Normalization may be used in lieu of an established baseline (8 points per member)
Thought thread for using capacity rather than velocity

Measure Velocity for a historic baseline to be used to defend against future overload requests, but can be easily manipulated.

Evaluate Capacity based on the future availability of team members.

Review all circumstances during planning.

If required, Focus on generic “Normalization”
- 8 points per “producing” Team Member (aka ‘doers’)

Common Sense should prevail.
...the team quantifies their capacity to perform work in the upcoming iteration. Each team member determines their availability, acknowledging time off and other potential duties.”

Copyright © Scaled Agile, Inc.
Additional capacity/load considerations
Questions?

757-303-7705  #TYFYT