



Agility with uncertain tasks

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Inspiration for uScrum (uncertainty scrum):

- Classify tasks by order of ignorance.
- Manage efforts instead of tasks.
- Over-commit, delegate micro-management to writers.

Home-brew method created out of need:

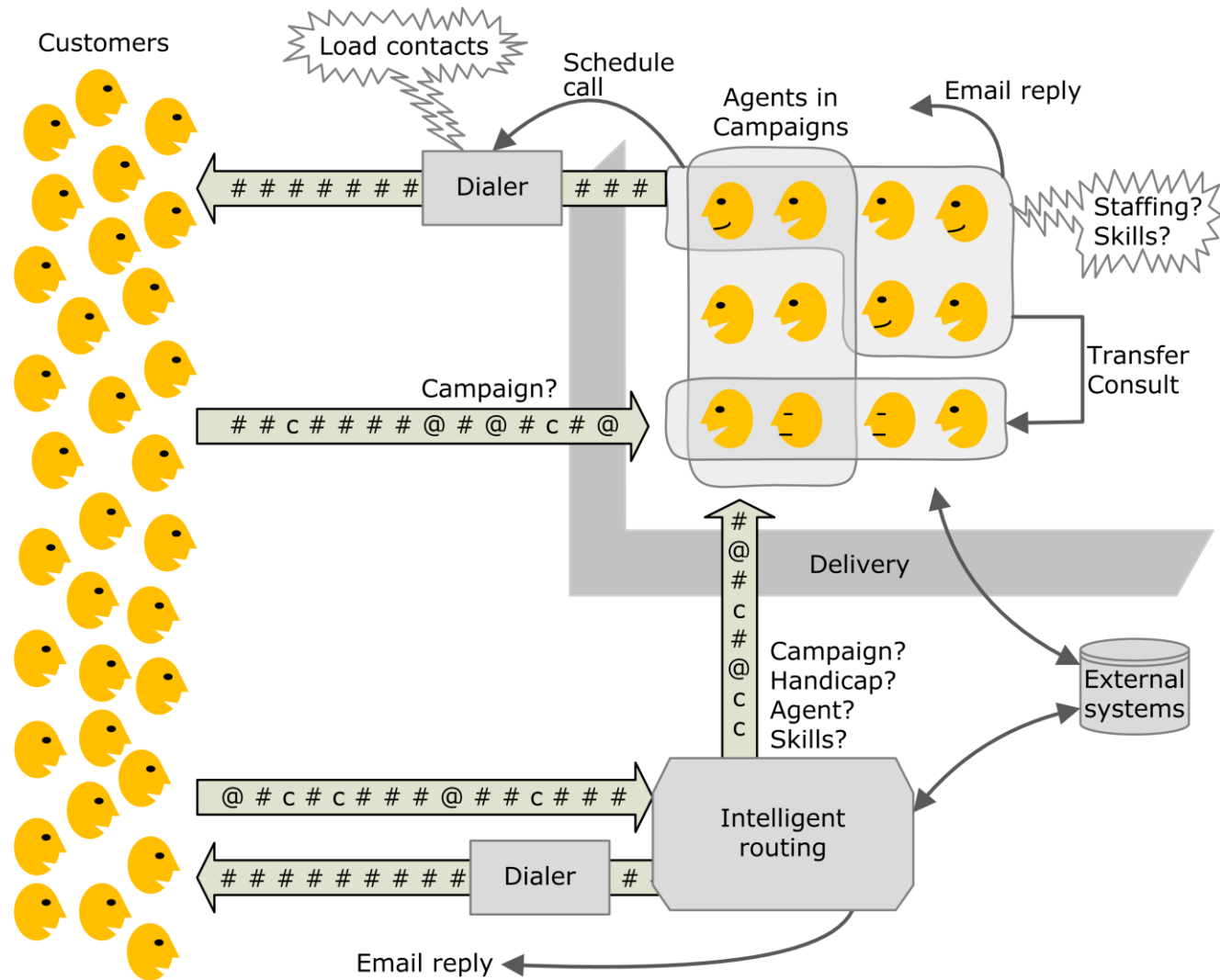
- Team of 3, down from 8.
- Half manager, half writer, half everything else.
- Desire to limit “management interruptions”.
- Yearly team meeting for introspection.
- Rationalized for SIGDOC’08 in Lisbon.

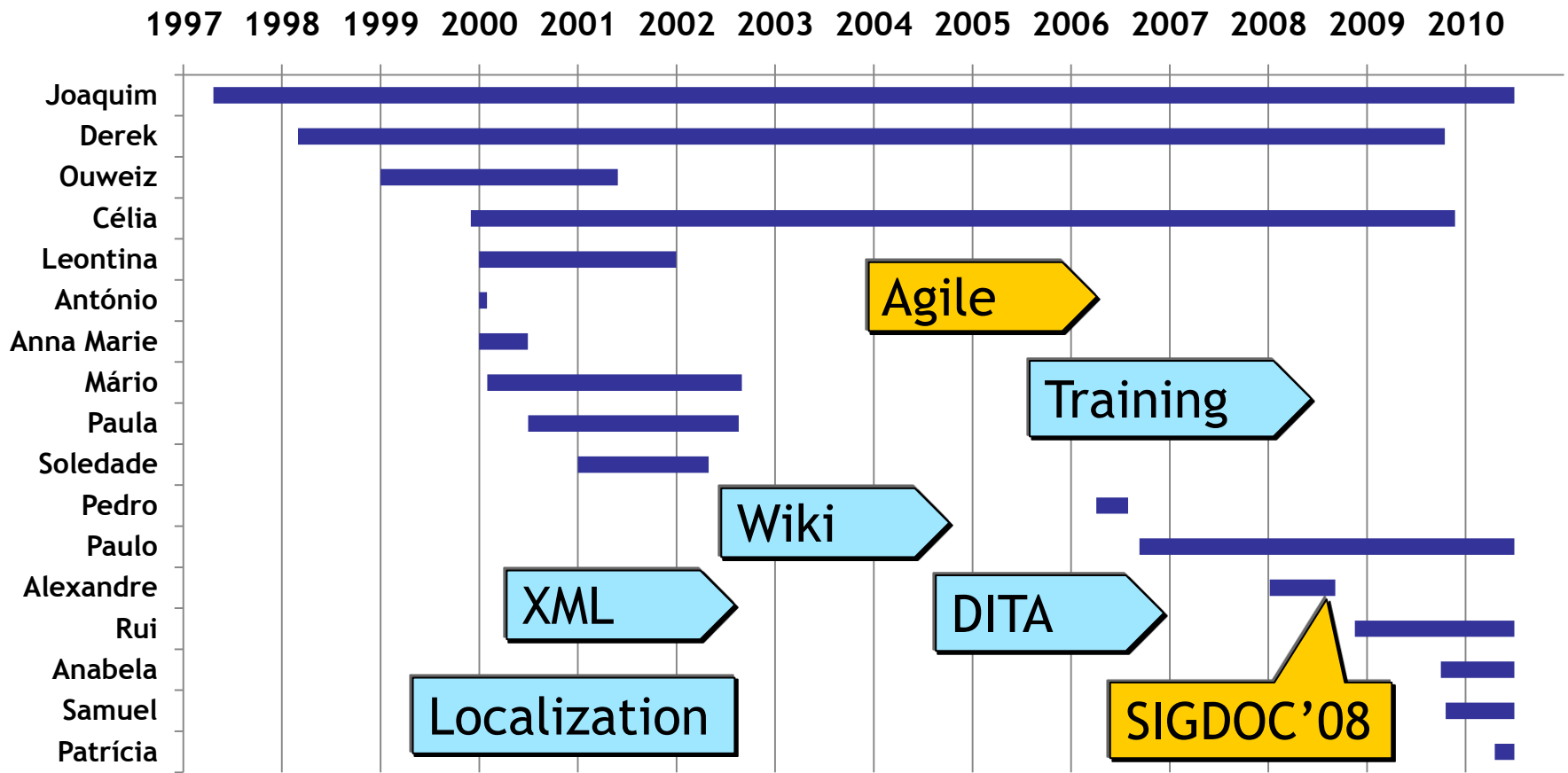
Altitude Software sells software for contact centers:

- Product.
- Setup services.
- Customization.

Employees:

- 150 in Lisbon (including R&D).
- 150 worldwide.

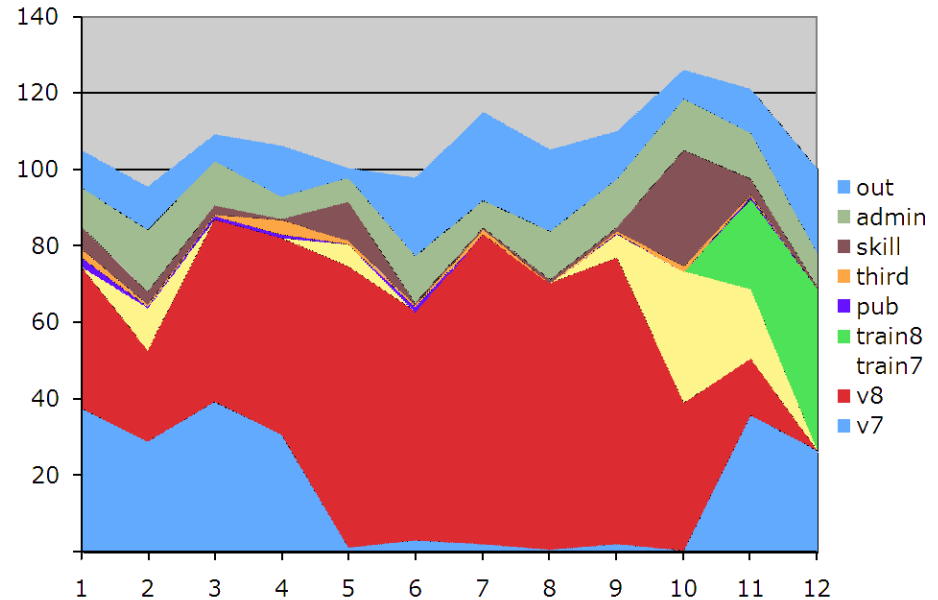




Writing requires (lots of) learning:

- 70% Learn and organize info.
- 10% Write first draft.
- 20% Revise to final.
- Metrics since 2000.

Puzzling: Estimates either good or completely off the mark!



Philip Armour, “The laws of software process”, CACM Jan-2001:

- 0oi: Everything is known.
- 1oi: Gather information for known output.
- 2oi: Follow process to determine output.
- 3oi: Hard problem, not sure how to proceed (no process).

Over-commit writers:

- Let writers micro-manage their daily work.
- Ideal for 1oi tasks.

Measure:

- Use metrics to figure out where did the time go.
- Let writers help each other and do *ad hoc* work.

Inspect and react:

- Decide whether to continue tasks after each sprint.



Scheduling of simple tasks

Get things done

- Tasks at 0oi, 1oi
- Many finished at end of sprint



Try with fallback

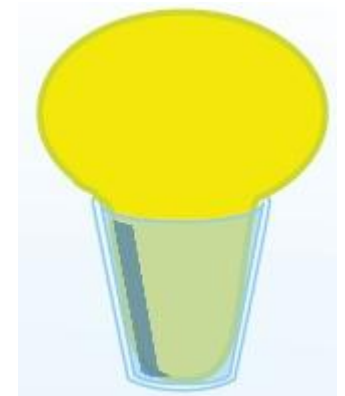
- Advance 2oi task
- 0oi and 1oi as filler



Scheduling of harder tasks

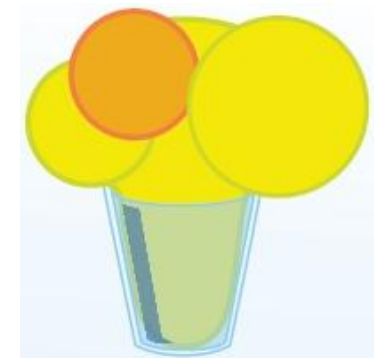
Just try

- Break a 2oi task



Cannot go back

- Disruptive reorganization



Assumptions	Scrum	uScrum
Product backlog	Top is prioritized and estimated.	20i tasks cannot be estimated.
Sprint goal	Demo at sprint review.	Results for effort invested.
Team	Work tightly coordinated among members.	Work mostly independent of other writers.
Sprint tasks	Backlog broken into 4 to 16 hour tasks in first day.	What to do is large part, cannot be fully anticipated.
Progress	Burndown chart.	Nothing to count down.
Obstacles	Scrum master can quickly remove any obstacle.	Some obstacles cannot be removed or anticipated.

Continuum from predictable (waterfall) to unpredictable (chaos).

Waterfall	Scrum	uScrum	Chaos
Control tasks of project.	Control tasks of sprint. Waterfall for sprints?	Control effort of sprint.	Efforts have unpredictable results.

Agility is never “done”:

- Method evolves with team and work at hand.
- Adapt meetings to needs.

Thanks! — @pxquim — px@altitude.com