



## User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck))

By Mike Cohn

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### User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) By Mike Cohn

This is the eBook version of the printed book.

Agile requirements: discovering what your users really want. With this book, you will learn to:

Flexible, quick and practical requirements that work  
Save time and develop better software that meets users' needs  
Gathering user stories -- even when you can't talk to users  
How user stories work, and how they differ from use cases, scenarios, and traditional requirements  
Leveraging user stories as part of planning, scheduling, estimating, and testing  
Ideal for Extreme Programming, Scrum, or any other agile methodology-----  
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Thoroughly reviewed and eagerly anticipated by the agile community, *User Stories Applied* offers a requirements process that saves time, eliminates rework, and leads directly to better software.

The best way to build software that meets users' needs is to begin with "user stories": simple, clear, brief descriptions of functionality that will be valuable to real users. In *User Stories Applied*, Mike Cohn provides you with a front-to-back blueprint for writing these user stories and weaving them into your development lifecycle.

You'll learn what makes a great user story, and what makes a bad one. You'll discover practical ways to gather user stories, even when you can't speak with your users. Then, once you've compiled your user stories, Cohn shows how to organize them, prioritize them, and use them for planning, management, and testing.

User role modeling: understanding what users have in common, and where they

differ

Gathering stories: user interviewing, questionnaires, observation, and workshops

Working with managers, trainers, salespeople and other "proxies"

Writing user stories for acceptance testing

Using stories to prioritize, set schedules, and estimate release costs

Includes end-of-chapter practice questions and exercises

User Stories Applied will be invaluable to every software developer, tester, analyst, and manager working with any agile method: XP, Scrum... or even your own home-grown approach.

ADDISON-WESLEY PROFESSIONAL

Boston, MA 02116

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### Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

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## About the Author

**Mike Cohn** is the founder of Mountain Goat Software, a process and project management consultancy and training firm. With more than twenty years of experience, Mike has been a technology executive in companies ranging from start-ups to Fortune 40s, and is a founding member of the Agile Alliance. He frequently contributes to industry-related magazines and presents regularly at conferences. He is the author of *User Stories Applied* (Addison-Wesley, 2004).

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I felt guilty throughout much of the mid-1990s. I was working for a company that was acquiring about one new company each year. Every time we'd buy a new company I would be assigned to run their software development group. And each of the acquired development groups came with glorious, beautiful, lengthy requirements documents. I inevitably felt guilty that my own groups were not producing such beautiful requirements specifications. Yet, my groups were consistently far more successful at producing software than were the groups we were acquiring.

I knew that what we were doing worked. Yet I had this nagging feeling that if we'd write big, lengthy requirements documents we could be even more successful. After all, that was what was being written in the books and articles I was reading at the time. If the successful software development teams were writing glorious requirements documents then it seemed like we should do the same. But, we never had the time. Our projects were always too important and were needed too soon for us to delay them at the start.

Because we never had the time to write a beautiful, lengthy requirements document, we settled on a way of working in which we would talk with our users. Rather than writing things down, passing them back and forth, and negotiating while the clock ran out, we talked. We'd draw screen samples on paper, sometimes we'd prototype, often we'd code a little and then show the intended users what we'd coded. At least once a month we'd grab a representative set of users and show them exactly what had been coded. By staying close to our users and by showing them progress in small pieces, we had found a way to be successful without the beautiful requirements documents.

Still, I felt guilty that we weren't doing things the way I thought we were supposed to.

In 1999 Kent Beck's revolutionary little book, *Extreme Programming Explained: Embrace Change*, was released. Overnight all of my guilt went away. Here was someone saying it was OK for developers and customers to talk rather than write, negotiate, and then write some more. Kent clarified a lot of things and gave me many new ways of working. But, most importantly, he justified what I'd learned from my own experience. Extensive upfront requirements gathering and documentation can kill a project in many ways. One of the most common is when the requirements document itself becomes a goal. A requirements document should be written only when it helps achieve the real goal of delivering some software.

A second way that extensive upfront requirements gathering and documentation can kill a project is through the inaccuracies of written language. I remember many years ago being told a story about a child at bath time. The child's father has filled the bath tub and is helping his child into the water. The young child, probably two or three years old, dips a toe in the water, quickly removes it, and tells her father "make it warmer." The father puts his hand into the water and is surprised to find that, rather than too cold, the water is already warmer than what his daughter is used to. After thinking about his child's request for a moment, the father realizes they are miscommunicating and are using the same words to mean different things. The child's request to "make it warmer" is interpreted by any adult to be the same as "increase the temperature." To the child, however, "make it warmer" meant "make it closer to the temperature I call warm."

Words, especially when written, are a very thin medium through which to express requirements for something as complex as software. With their ability to be misinterpreted we need to replace written words with frequent conversations between developers, customers, and users. User stories provide us with a way of having just enough written down that we don't forget and that we can estimate and plan while also encouraging this time of communication.

By the time you've finished the first part of this book you will be ready to begin the shift away from rigorously writing down every last requirement detail. By the time you've finished the book you will know everything necessary to implement a story-driven process in your environment. This book is organized in four parts and two appendices.

**Part I: Getting Started**-A description of everything you need to know to get started writing stories today. One of the goals of user stories is to get people talking rather than writing. It is the goal of Part I to get you talking as soon as possible. The first chapter provides an overview of what a user story is and how you'll use stories. The next chapters in Part I provide additional detail on writing user stories, gathering stories through user role modeling, writing stories when you don't have access to real end users, and testing user stories. Part I concludes with a chapter providing guidelines that will improve your user stories.

**Part II: Estimating and Planning**-Equipped with a collection of user stories, one of the first things we often need to answer is "How long will it take to develop?" The chapters of Part II cover how to estimate stories in story points, how to plan a release over a three- to six-month time horizon, how to plan an ensuing iteration in more detail, and, finally, how to measure progress and assess whether the project is progressing as you'd like.

**Part III: Frequently Discussed Topics**-Part III starts by describing how stories differ from requirements alternatives such as use cases, software requirements specifications, and interaction design scenarios. The next chapters in Part III look at the unique advantages of user stories, how to tell when something is going wrong, and how to adapt the agile process Scrum to use stories. The final chapter of Part III looks at a variety of smaller issues such as whether to write stories on paper note cards or in a software system and how to handle nonfunctional requirements.

**Part IV: An Example**-An extended example intended to help bring everything together. If we're to make the claim that developers can best understand user's needs through stories then it is important to conclude this book with an extended story showing all aspects of user stories brought together in one example.

**Part V: Appendices**-User stories originate in Extreme Programming. You do not need to be familiar with Extreme Programming in order to read this book. However, a brief introduction to Extreme Programming is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B contains answers to the questions that conclude the chapters.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Holly Silva:

The book *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the good thing like a book *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck))? Several of you have a different opinion about book. But one aim that book can give many data for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer with your book. Knowledge or info that you take for that, it

is possible to give for each other; you could share all of these. Book *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) has simple shape however, you know: it has great and large function for you. You can look the enormous world by available and read a book. So it is very wonderful.

**Lenore Ryan:**

This *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is usually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. That *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) without we realize teach the one who studying it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't end up being worry *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) can bring whenever you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even telephone. This *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) having great arrangement in word and layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

**Janet Smith:**

This *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) are generally reliable for you who want to be considered a successful person, why. The main reason of this *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) can be one of the great books you must have is usually giving you more than just simple studying food but feed you with information that possibly will shock your prior knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions both in e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this *User Stories Applied: For Agile Software Development* (Addison-Wesley Signature Series (Beck)) forcing you to have an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you test of critical thinking that we all know it useful in your day action. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

**Henry Rodriguez:**

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