

Extreme Programming, an agile software development process

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Extreme Programming

Extreme Programming (XP) is

“a humanistic discipline of software development, based on values of communication, simplicity, feedback and courage”

People: Kent Beck, Ward Cunningham, Ron Jeffries, Martin Fowler, Erich Gamma...

More info: www.extremeprogramming.org,
Beck “Extreme Programming Explained: Embrace Change”

Agile processes

What the spiral models were reaching towards was that software development has to be *agile*: able to react quickly to change.

The Agile Manifesto <http://agilemanifesto.org>:

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

We'll now look in more detail at one agile process, XP.

Risk: The Basic Problem

- ▶ schedule slips
- ▶ project cancelled
- ▶ system goes sour
- ▶ defect rate
- ▶ business misunderstood
- ▶ false feature rich
- ▶ staff turnover

“Use XP when requirements are vague or changing”

Key insight of XP

Traditional methodologies are that way because

the cost of coping with a requirements change or correcting a defect rises exponentially through the development lifecycle

– but what *if* it needn't be so? *Then* it is possible to be much more flexible.

Keeping that cost down is partly luck (i.e. being in the kind of project where it's possible to do so) and partly judgement (e.g., following those of XP's practices, like refactoring, which help to make it so).

XP Practices

The Planning Game
Small releases
Metaphor
Simple design
Testing
Refactoring
Pair programming
Collective ownership
Continuous integration
40-hour week
On-site customer
Coding standards

XP classification of software development activities

- ▶ coding
- ▶ testing
- ▶ listening
- ▶ designing

Illuminating exercise: map these onto “standard” activities and contemplate implications of differences.

The Planning Game

Played with user story cards.

- ▶ Release planning game – customer and developers
- ▶ Iteration planning game – just developers

Customer understands scope, priority, business needs for releases: sorts cards by priority.

Developers understand risk, estimating: sorts cards by risk.

“Game” captures, e.g., that you can't make a total release in less than the sum of the times it's going to take to do all the bits: that's against the rules.

On-site customer

A customer – someone capable of making the business's decisions in the planning game – sits with the development team (maybe doing their normal work when not needed to interact with the development team), always ready to clarify, write functional tests, make small-scale priority and scope decisions.

Small releases

Release as frequently as is possible whilst still adding some business value in each release. This ensures that you get feedback as soon as possible and lets the customer have the most essential functionality asap. (May be talking about every week to every month – outside XP each 6 months would be more usual even in an iterative project, longer not uncommon.)

Metaphor

Is basically XP's word for part of what other people call architecture – it avoids the word architecture to emphasise that it doesn't *just* mean the overall structure of the system. "Metaphor" is intended to suggest an overarching coherence, easily communicated.

Continuous integration

Code is integrated and tested at most a few hours or one day after being written. E.g. when a pair wants to checkpoint they go to an integration machine, integrate and fix any bugs against the latest full build, add their changes to the central CM database.

Simple design

Motto: *do the simplest thing that could possibly work*. Don't design for tomorrow: you might not need it.

Testing

Test everything that could break. Programmers write unit tests using a good automated testing framework (e.g. JUnit) to minimise the effort of writing running and checking tests. Customers, with developer help, write functional tests.

Refactoring

As we discussed before: but here refactoring is especially vital because of the way XP dives almost straight into coding. Later redesign is vital. A maxim for not getting buried in refactoring is "Three strikes and you refactor": For example, consider removing code duplication.

1. The first time you need some piece of code you just write it.
2. The second time, you curse but probably duplicate it anyway.
3. The third time, you refactor and use the shared code.

i.e. do refactorings that you *know* are beneficial

(NB you have to know about the duplication and have "permission" to fix it... ownership in common)

Pair programming

All production code is written by two people at one machine. You pair with different people on the team and take each role at different times.

There are two roles in each pair. One partner, the one with the keyboard and the mouse, is thinking about the best way to implement this method right here. The other partner is thinking more strategically about:

- ▶ *Is this whole approach going to work?*
- ▶ *What are some other test cases that might not work yet?*
- ▶ *Is there some way to simplify the whole system so the current problem just disappears?*

Collective ownership

i.e. you don't have "your modules" which no-one else is allowed to touch. If any pair sees a way to improve the design of the whole system they don't need anyone else's permission to go ahead and make all the necessary changes. Of course a good configuration management tool is vital.

Coding standards

The whole team adheres to a single set of conventions about how code is written (in order to make pair programming and collective ownership work).

Sustainable pace

aka **40 hour week**, but this means not 60, rather than not 35!

People need to be rested to work effectively in the way XP prescribes. There might be a week coming up to deadlines when people had to work more than this, but there shouldn't be two consecutive such weeks.

Mix and match?

Can you use just some of the XP practices?

Maybe... but they are *very* interrelated, so it's dangerous.

E.g., if you do collective ownership but not coding standards, the code will end up a mess;

if you do simple design but not refactoring, you'll get stuck!

Where is XP applicable?

The scope of situations in which XP is appropriate is somewhat controversial.

- ▶ there are documented cases where it has worked well for development in-house of custom software for a given organisation (e.g. Chrysler).
- ▶ A decade ago I wrote “it seems clear to me that it wouldn’t work for Microsoft: big releases are an essential part of the business; even the frequency of updates they do use annoys people.” Now of course we have automated updates to OSs, Microsoft is a Gold Sponsor of a 2008 Agile conference...

XP does need: team in one place, customer on site, etc. “Agile” is broader.