



Training, Transition, Transformation
www.agilecrossing.com
San Jose, CA

Agile Product Discovery Framework

Agile software product development can be separated into three major activities:

- Discovery
- Release Planning
- Development

The sequence is shown in Figure 1. As each increment of work is completed, the release plan is revised before choosing the next increment.



Figure 1. High Level Agile Project Work Flow

Discovery for a small project (1-2 teams of up to 9 people) is typically done by the customer/client and the development team in 1-3 days. A larger project benefits from more planning done by a team of representatives of the development team such as lead developers and analysts.

This paper describes a Product Discovery framework that spans 2-4 weeks for a large project. It defines a number of activities that produce a set of outputs needed to create the initial release plan. Following Agile principles, discovery tends to be workshop-based, collaborative and adaptive. Rather than creating a schedule of meetings with set agendas, a backlog of tasks is agreed to and work proceeds iteratively to complete the backlog.

Workshop timing is determined based on availability of the client customer of the discovery team.

A typical discovery backlog contains the following tasks:

Product Envisioning

- Discuss overall concept with client
- Define major features
- Design product

Product Planning

- Determine product architecture
- Define test strategy
- Determine team skills needed
- Identify major risks
- Define product benefits
- Estimate development effort (high level)
- Estimate development cost (first cut)
- Create initial release plan
- Determine budget (first cut)
- Define technical staffing needed
- Determine business staffing needed

Some tasks are accomplished by the entire discovery team, others are done by sub-groups having the necessary specialties. There is a daily 15 minute meeting to assess the status on the tasks currently in progress. Any intermediate information that is developed may be revised as new information is discovered. Final outputs are used as inputs to the release planning activity to follow. Actual release planning typically involves the entire development team(s).

The dependency relationships between the discovery tasks are show in Figure 2.

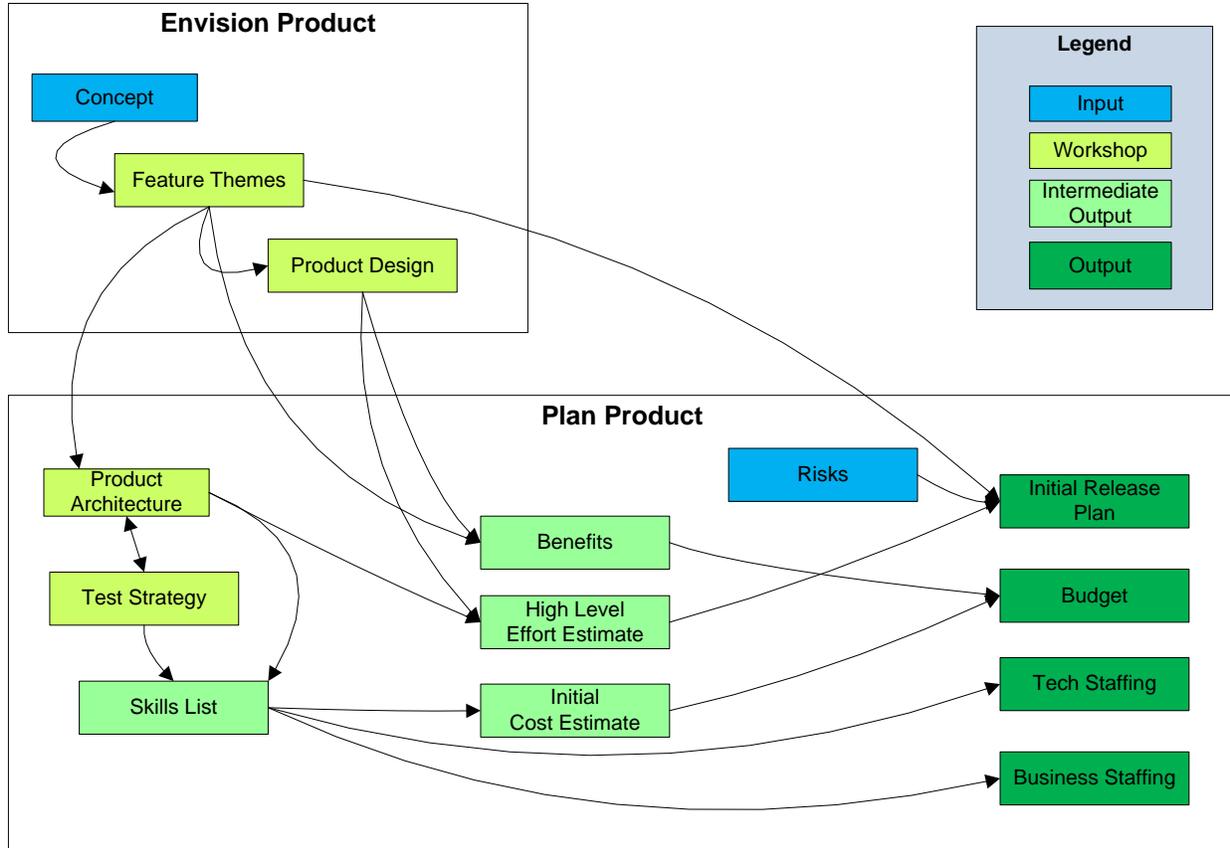


Figure 2. Discovery Task Dependencies

The discovery process produces a number of outputs that will guide more refined project planning and the development work. It is possible that those outputs will result in a “no-go” decision if they indicate that the project scope and budget are incompatible.