

Personas - the secret  
ingredient for integrating  
UX in agile development?

Lene Nielsen  
lene@itu.dk

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# Who are we?



Lars Bo Larsen,  
Associate  
Professor, Signal  
and Information  
Processing,  
Aalborg  
University,  
[lbl@es.aau.dk](mailto:lbl@es.aau.dk),



Marta Kristín  
Lárusdóttir,  
Associate  
Professor,  
Reykjavik  
University  
[Marta@ru.is](mailto:Marta@ru.is)



Lene Nielsen,  
Associate  
Professor,  
Business IT,  
IT University,  
Copenhagen,  
[lene@itu.dk](mailto:lene@itu.dk)



Anders Bruun  
Associate Professor  
Institute of Data  
Science  
Aalborg University  
[bruun@cs.aau.dk](mailto:bruun@cs.aau.dk)



Jeppe Emil Kjøller  
Studerter  
medhjælp  
IT Universitetet,  
[jepk@itu.dk](mailto:jepk@itu.dk)

# Who am I?



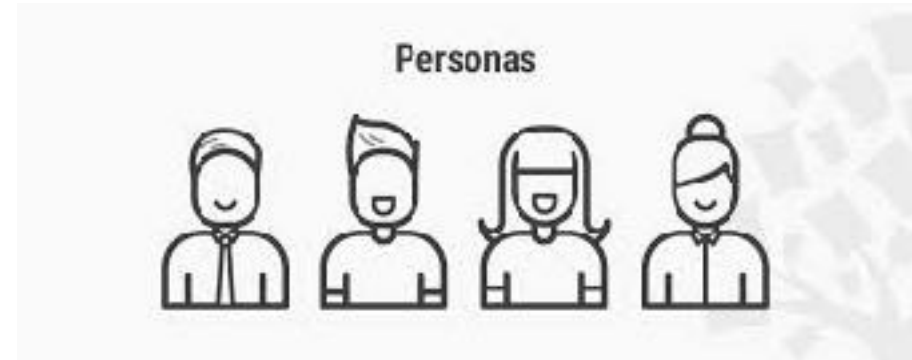
- +20 years of personas research and application
- + 50 personas projects
- + 80 research papers, most on personas
- 2 books on personas

Still puzzled about how difficult it is to integrate user knowledge into development.

What if there is a somewhat simple solution that is not much reported on, only slightly mentioned in the literature, but has a big effect - using personas for user stories.

## Agenda:

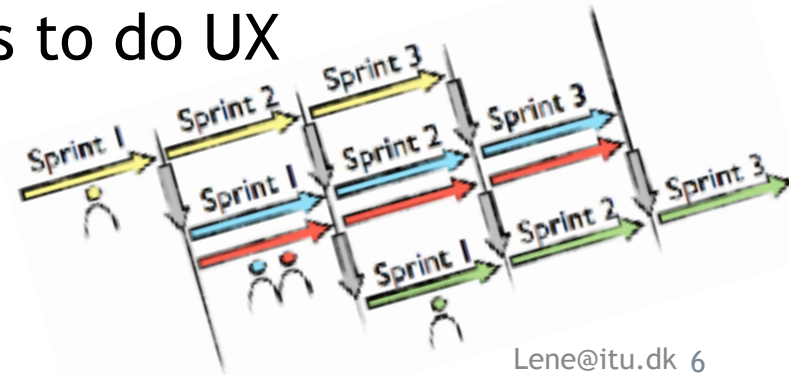
- UX in agile
- Why personas
- Personas in agile
- The workshops
- Findings
- Discussion



# UX in agile

# Methods to integrate UX in Agile development

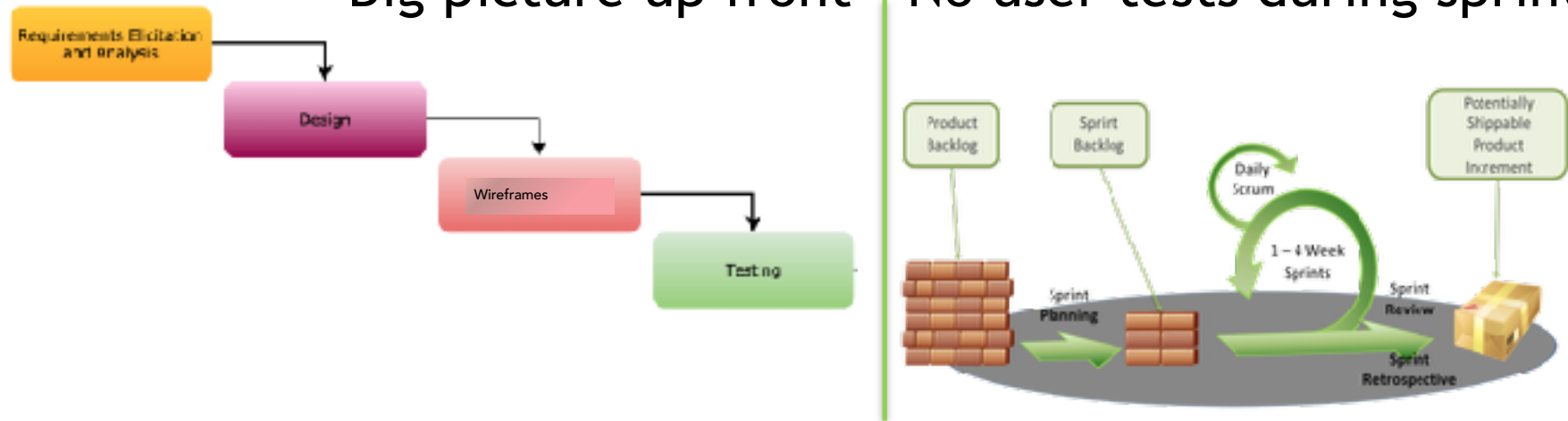
- **Sprint 0 & The parallel approach** - a preliminary sprint to gather user requirements prior to development + UX in parallel sprints.
- **The Satellite approach** - a UX specialist works as a satellite to the development team - supported by a UX team outside the development team.
- **U-SCRUM** - two product owners - one focuses on usability + one on functionalities
- **UX Toolbox** - training developers to do UX



# What we see in our research

- 1 case study on integrating UX in agile development
- 4 student projects on integrating UX in agile development

Big picture upfront - No user tests during sprints



Why personas?



# What is a persona?

- A description of a fictitious person based on data.
- A design tool.
- Nothing in it-self - it has only value when it is used.



# Why personas?

- Because we forget the end-users when developing
- Because we have different concepts of the end-users in the team
- Because we think in stereotypes



# Personas in agile

Break with the core concept of agile development as it represents documentation.

- But in a lightweight way



# A study on UCD techniques in Scrum projects

43% use personas

But only

- 2-6 times a year (25%)
- Once a year or less (38%)



Yuan Jia, Marta Kristin Larusdottir, Åsa Cajander. 2012. The Usage of Usability Techniques in Scrum Projects

# The workshops

# What we did

In April and June 2018:

2 interviews with UX researchers/product owners with positive and negative experiences.

2 workshops with 25 participants in 2 large Danish corporations.

Aim: to investigate if personas for agile user stories would be beneficial and provide a deeper insight into differences in the user group.



# Participants

## Company A - 24 participants

- 3 x UX designer
- UX manager
- Design
- Test
- Marketing & Product
- Team lead
- IT Manager,
- Agile coach
- 3 x Scrum master,
- 3 x Product owner
- 3 x Business Analyst
- 5 x Developer

## Company B - 27 participants

- 2 x Head of Development
- 2 x Interaction designer
- UX designer
- Consultant
- Head of IT
- Digital officer x 3
- Executive - strategy and execution
- Market developer
- Digital marketing
- Deputy manager
- Business specialist
- Lean consultant
- Agile coach
- Project manager
- 7 x Product owner
- 2 x Scrum master



# 1. Write user stories based on personas

Each group of 5 participants (development, business and UX)

1. Got 2 different personas chosen to represent a difference in age and attitude towards digital self-service. They had to write user stories for both based on the same epic.
2. They had to write test-tasks for the user-stories



# Task - from epics to personas-stories

As \_\_\_\_\_ (a customer) I want to to be able to select table hours so that I am sure that I understand which hour my meal booking is.

From this epic then create one or more user stories.

Repeat with the second persona

**Think about which user experience your persona wants or needs.**

**15 minutes for persona 1 then swap to persona 2**

## 2. Plan a test of the user story

1. Prepare 3 questions to check if the user is similar to the persona
2. Make one task for the user testing based on the user story
  - Make sure it fits the persona
3. Ask 3 questions to the persona about the experience after the task solving
  - Relate to the personality

# Persona-user stories & user story test tasks

The preliminary findings show:

- It has a huge impact in the way the participants perceive the users
- It has positive impact on the quality of the user story.
- It is easy to write test tasks based on the user stories
- It has positive impact on the organisational development and their use on personas

# After the workshops



- Great support in both companies
- Introducing the method with a mixture of roles and responsibilities seems to create ambassadors and understandings
- Participants can see the potential of using personas as a starting point for user tests of the finished epics
- Seems to be a bottom-up approach

# Findings

- Involving the team as early as possible in the development makes the team members understand the data and create a success.
- Successful design process goes from hypotheses, to research, analysis, personas, use scenarios, user stories
  1. Discussion of hypotheses of possible personas - includes sales and marketing
  2. From this creates proto-personas
  3. User research
  4. Co-analysis workshops in a cross-functional team to find patterns
  5. Context scenarios - "a day in the life" and use situations
- This can also be done with an introductory workshop.

- Proto-personas makes participants question the data
- More detailed personas with more data - no-one questions data
- BUT - no specific data on the focus-area - results in a lot of interpretation during the workshop.





# Persona descriptions

- Having more than one persona for the user story enables an understanding of the method
- Having more than one persona for the user story enables an understanding that there is diversity in the user group
- BUT
- Who is the voice? - having business analysts and/or customer representatives in the team might create challenges on when to ask the experts and when to "ask" the personas.

# Design and decisions

- Personas can help track a decision. E.g. using personas in a walk-through creates an argument for a solution.
- The awareness of whom you are not designing for seems to help.
- Does not prevent stereotypical talks: *She is the generation where you are somewhat flighty.*
- After the workshop one company saw a need for more data as they want to use the personas for strategic decisions.



- Introducing the method has to be both bottom-up and top-down - the persona workshop seems to create a bottom-up approach
- Involving product managers and/or scrum masters in the process results in buy-in

# Discussion