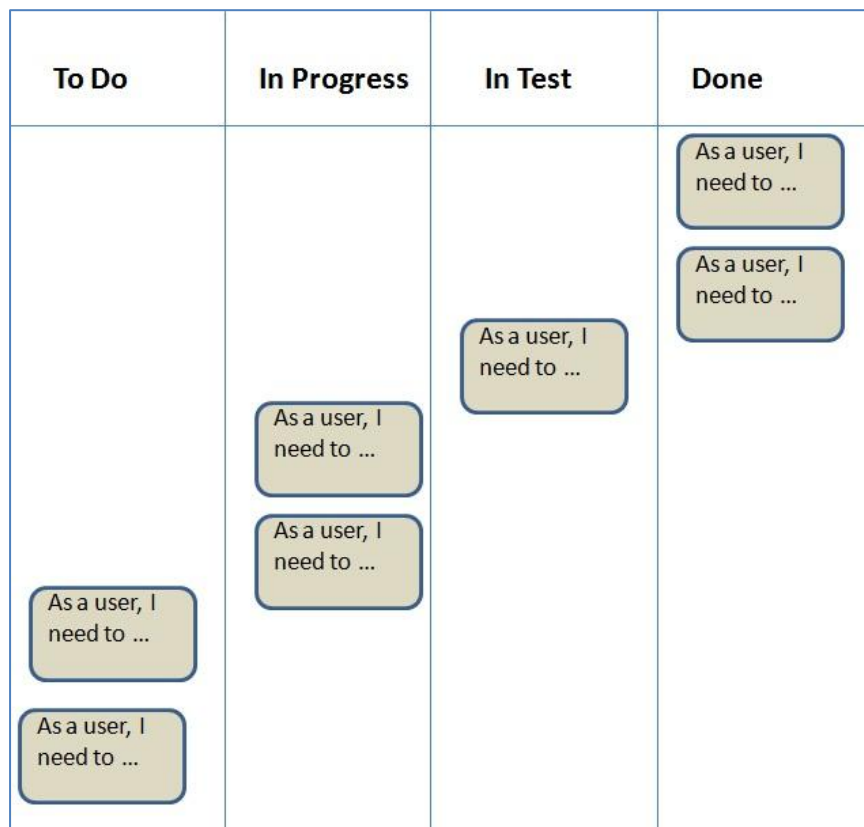


Agile Story Wall

The Agile story wall is an important tool for a self managing team. The Agile story wall is used to give visibility of the work being done by the team. That means that anyone in the team can easily work out what is the next thing to pick up, and anyone from outside the team can get an immediate picture of the current state of the project work.

The wall should be located where the team is easily able to get access to it. If the wall is located close to the team, the information on the wall will be used throughout the working day, and the team is more likely to adopt it as the normal way of working. If it's tucked away in a meeting room, often it'll be used only for the daily stand-up.



The best Agile story wall is a simple representation of the workflow that a team is following. Normally this would be laid out as a set of columns, with each column labelled clearly as to what state it represents – the most commonly used states are ‘To Do’, ‘In Progress’, ‘In Test’ and ‘Done’. There is often a column for the ‘Backlog’ of work.

If there are too many columns, it can become harder to get a quick view of what work is in progress. If there are too few, there is no sense of the work progressing. As the team learns more about the way they work, the wall can be adapted – the best time to discuss this is at the retrospective, and to implement the change between iterations (sprints).

The work itself on the wall is often represented on index cards. It should be possible to read what is written on the cards from a reasonable distance. Cards of different colours can be used to represent different types of work (eg. red cards for defects, or index cards used for story cards, with smaller post-it notes used for tasks). The priority of the work should be clear – maybe through using the order of the cards with highest priority at the top.

It is important to have a clear team understanding of when work can be moved from one state to the next, and that the 'Definition of Done' is well defined and agreed to by the team. It's good practice to have the 'Definition of Done' clearly documented and easily visible on the wall.


At the start of a project, agree a definition of 'Done' that is simple and easy to remember. The 'Definition of Done' is often refined as the team learn more about the work they are doing, with the retrospective being the best time to discuss this, and the change being implemented between sprints.



There are a number of symbols that are frequently seen on the story wall

- Avatars used to indicate who has picked up a piece of work
- Stop symbols used to indicate that a piece of work is blocked
- Slow moving card symbol

There are a number of companies that provide tools to be used as electronic story walls. While electronic walls are useful for distributed teams, they shouldn't replace the physical wall. The physical wall seems to be a better information radiator and results in the team having a greater sense of collaboration and commitment. The small effort of keeping both in sync is well worth spending.



Definition of Done

The team believe we won't have to touch it again

The user story can be showcased

Document provided courtesy of Solnet Solutions PTY Ltd for use on your Agile project

