



# SPRINT PLANNING

## DO'S AND DON'TS

The most common pain points and how to avoid them based on the concepts from *Chapter 7: Workloads and Capacities*

# CHALLENGES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

In chapter 7 of the book, I gave a quick overview of sprint planning and how it works. Though sprint planning can bring a lot of benefits in terms of operational efficiency, I understand that it can also be tough to change the way you work. If you're thinking of making the switch, there are a few things you should keep in mind. We've compiled a list of growing pains we've seen teams go through, along with our advice on how to overcome them.

## **Growing Pain #1: I feel like I'm being micromanaged more than ever!**

Having to allocate a certain number of hours to each task can feel a bit overkill at times. For someone who's used to working in their own way, it might feel like they're being micromanaged more than ever—as if their boss wants to know exactly how they're spending every minute of each day.

But that's not the case, or at least, it shouldn't be. Sprint planning is actually supposed to limit micromanaging because it empowers individuals to plan out their week. Once a manager approves someone's sprint, they don't really need to be involved anymore as they can check in on progress from afar.

At the end of the day, the time allocated toward each task is merely an estimation. Sprint planning is used to align expectations between team members and their managers, not to hyper-analyze how everyone is spending their time. And while estimating hours might seem like a pain, remember that this is what protects people from having work assigned to them that puts them over capacity. Plus, time spent planning your sprint and estimating hours should be accounted for within your admin hours.

## **Growing Pain #2: Not completing everything in the sprint.**

Sometimes, you'll get to the end of your sprint and realize that you didn't finish everything that was on your list. That's perfectly normal, and the typical recourse is to move any incomplete tasks to the next sprint while also taking some time to determine why you couldn't complete everything. Was it because something took longer than anticipated? Did some other priority come up that you had to accommodate?

Generally speaking, this isn't a huge problem. We're not robots. It would be ridiculous to expect every single person to accomplish every single task in their sprint week after week without fail. There could be any number of reasons as to why someone may not be able to complete their entire sprint, the important thing is to determine what that reason is and learn from it.



### **Growing pain #3: Not estimating or updating hours correctly.**

Estimating the exact number of hours it takes to complete a task can be difficult—but keep in mind that it is called estimated hours for a reason. The specific hours are not important, it's more about aligning on top priorities and ensuring everyone is taking on a reasonable (not overwhelming) amount of work.

Here are two easy ways to solve this problem:

- After completing a task, update it with the actual number of hours it took. This will show you how long certain tasks actually take and provide a clear explanation if you don't get to everything in your sprint.
- In our experience, most people spend at least two hours per day on communication alone. If the previous method doesn't solve most of your problems, you're likely underestimating your time spent on precommitments. Be sure to go back and update that number accordingly.

## Growing Pain #4: Shifting priorities and urgent tasks.

Sometimes, priorities need to be shifted. Urgent tasks come up, and that thing you were previously working on isn't nearly as important as this next big thing. The problem is that constantly shifting priorities tend to do more harm than good, and they basically defeat the entire point of sprint planning.

One benefit of sprint planning that we haven't quite touched on is its flexibility. It allows for shifting priorities—if some new task comes up, you can either add it to your next sprint or shift the work in your sprint to accommodate it. But that doesn't mean you should be shifting priorities constantly. In general, try to stick to completing at least 80% of your sprint after it's locked in. If you're constantly shifting more than 20% of your sprint, something is wrong.

Sprints are not completely rigid. If you have a big opportunity that falls into your lap, you can quickly reprioritize to accommodate it.



**Book a call** to learn how we can help you plan and run your sprints effectively.