

Characters:

- **Character role: Character Name in Script**
- Pat the Product Owner: Pat
- Payton the Programmer: Payton
 - Person playing Payton: Your part is somewhat humorous, and it will be more humorous if you'll exaggerate your acting where it says [Emphatically]
- Charles the Programmer: Charles
- Taylor the Tester: Taylor
- Bailey the Business Analyst: Bailey

Script: “User Story Utopia”

Charles: Hi Team, thanks for coming to our backlog grooming session, or Story Writing Workshop, you know, whatever we're calling it this week. I'd like to introduce Pat, our new product owner. Pat has a lot of experience in Product Management and product visioning. He/She doesn't have a lot of experience in User Stories, so we'll have to help him/her out in that area. He/She has read up on some User Story basics though. Welcome, Pat. I'll turn it over to you here.

Pat: Hi Team, thanks for the introduction. Let's get started. The first story I'd like to talk about is a new Confirmation page for orders placed online.

Charles: [Grabs a notecard and writes "Confirmation Page" on it]

Pat: Right now, as you all know, when a user places an order on our website, after hitting the final order submission button, it just takes the user back to our home page. I'd like to improve on that.

Taylor: I've been waiting for someone to prioritzie that. By the way Pat, I'm Taylor, and I'm a Tester on the team.

Pat: Hi Taylor, glad to meet ya. So, I have a list of things I'd like to see on the Confirmation Page. I'd like to see the order number, the estimated

shipping arrival date, the order itself, the payment details, some suggested companion items, and a link that says something like "Continue Shopping".

Payton: [Emphatically- like you're telling a horse to stop] Whoa Whoa Whoa! [Optional Line - a La "Borat" - Emphatically] Whoa Whoa Wee Wah! [Back to normal voice] Sorry to interrupt, Pat. I'm Payton, a Programmer on the team, and I have to stop you here a bit. Don't get me wrong, those are all good ideas, but we try to limit our stories to 2-3 days each.

Pat: Oh, I'm sorry. Will it really take you all more than 2-3 days to do this?

Payton: Oh, I'm sorry, I meant to say 2-3 ***person*** days. In other words, roughly one person working 2-3 days. We can do all of the things you want, we'll just split them into smaller chunks so they're easier for us to digest.

Pat: Ahhhhh, ok. So, do you have any ideas on how you want to split them up?

Payton: Well, we usually go in priority order according to business value. It's a Scrum backlog type of thing. So, what's the most important things to you?

Pat: Hmmmm. Probably the most important things on the confirmation page

are an order number, an estimated shipping arrival date, and the link to continue shopping.

Bailey: Hi Pat, I'm Bailey, and I'm a Business Analyst on the team. What do you think about also putting our customer service email address or the customer service phone number on there, too? When I order stuff online, I usually print my confirmation pages and it would be nice if there was some sort of customer service contact info on there.

Pat: I like that idea. Let's do the email address.

Charles: Ok, so so far, I've got the following things on our story card: [Charles holds up the card] The title, of course. "Confirmation Page". Plus I've got noted that we need to display the order number, estimated shipping arrival date, the link to continue shopping, and the customer service email address. Is that right?

Pat: Yes, but what about all those other things I mentioned?

Charles: Oh, don't worry, we'll get to those. I'm going to make some placeholder cards for those stories. [Charles grabs new cards and begins writing.] [Charles shows the cards] I've got one here for "CP - order details", I'm abbreviating "Confirmation Page" as "CP". One for "CP- payment details", and one for "CP - Companion Items". Did I get everything?

Pat: Yes, and... Oh... Throw one in there for emailing the confirmation page to the user.

Charles: Wow, that's probably going to be a lot of work. Ok. "CP-email confirmation". Ok, let's go back to the original Confirmation Page story and talk through some of that.

Pat: Ok.

Charles: I think we can handle the order number and the customer service email address pretty easily. What did you mean by a link to continue shopping?

Pat: For now, it will just take the user back to the home page.

Charles: Oh Ok.

Pat: Charles, don't you need to write that down on the card?

Charles: Naaah. I've already written the "continue shopping" note down. For details that small, we usually don't write them down. It's not really worth it. We're going to work on this story in a few days, and with all of us here, I'm sure someone will remember the continue shopping link takes the user

back to the home page.

Pat: Oh, Ok. That makes sense.

Charles: Well, if there is something important to you, or you think we might forget, don't be afraid to tell us to write it down, or you can even write it on there yourself sometime.

Pat: Ok, you don't need to write the "continue shopping link goes to the home page" thing down. I'm sure someone will remember.

Payton: Pat, I have a question about the estimated shipping arrival date. How do we estimate that?

Pat: Well, when I looked at your website... I mean ***our*** website. I noticed we have 3 shipping options. Overnight, 2 day shipping, and ground shipping. So I guess we can just estimate based on those.

Payton: Hmm. I guess that can work. I think it can take up to 3 days before we ship things, so I'm assuming you want us to take this into account, right?

Pat: Yes, definitely. I'm not really concerned that we predict the exact arrival date. I guess what we're trying to communicate here is something like this:

If you don't receive the product by the estimated arrival date, please send us an email. We can even fudge by an extra day or so to give us a little more room for error.

Taylor: That's good, because I was worried about how we calculate the days -- do we do it based on 72 hours from the date and time of the purchase? Or some other way? Anyway, it sounds like you don't want to get that precise.

Pat: No, I don't want it to be that hard. Just a rough estimate will do.

Bailey: Pat, I think we need to put some clarifying language in there that kind of explains how we calculate the estimate, and that it also includes time for us to pull the inventory and package it up for shipping.

Pat: Ok, then let's come up with something. How about something like...

Charles: Pat, why don't you and Bailey take that off line? I'll put a note on the card here about "estimate language" and you can finalize the language when it gets closer to the time of the development.

Pat: Ok, well, should I take the action item to come up with the language? Or how do you you all handle that?

Charles: No one really needs to take the action item. I noted it on the card.

When a developer begins work on that story, they'll come talk to you about the language. You'll see the note about "estimate language" on the card, and you'll have a chance to approve the language before you sign off on the story.

Pat: I was going to ask you about that, Charles. How do you guys handle GUI and look and feel requirements in User Stories?

Charles: Generally speaking, when the developer begins work on the story, they'll either get with you to sketch out a GUI, or in most cases that are minor like this one, they'll just throw something up on the page and then show it to you to get your feedback.

Pat: Do they do that at signoff of something?

Charles: Hopefully not. Hopefully they show it to you as soon as they get the first draft of the page displaying. Then again probably a couple of more times before signoff. When you do signoff, hopefully we'll only be making very minor tweaks to the GUI at that point. We try to shorten the feedback cycle as much as possible, and we try to seek feedback several times for each story.

Pat: That's going to be a fair amount of interaction for just one "two to three day story." I guess I can multiply that by three or four if you're all working on other stories, right?

Charles: Oh yeah. User Stories, when done right, requires a whole buku of verbal communication, especially from the Product Owner. It's a full time job. That's why you sit in the same room as us. You'll probably spend about two thirds of your time with us, and another one third of your time interacting with customers and other departments on finding the most high value features.

Pat: You mean User Stories, right?

Charles: Yeah, features, User Stories, whatever we're calling it this week. They're basically the same thing. The main difference is that when we talked about features a year ago, they were pretty big efforts -- like 2-6 person weeks sometimes. User Stories have to be much smaller because we rely so much on verbal communication. Plus, if you make them too big, Payton will call the User Story police, and you don't want that! Just kidding, just kidding. So, you can think of User Stories as super small features, ones that only take 2-3 days to produce.

Pat: Does that time include testing?

Charles: Yep, it includes the whole enchilada. From the time the programmer picks it up, codes it, to the time the tester spends automating tests and testing it. It even includes a little time to get your signoff and make

minor changes you might have at the last minute.

Pat: Most developers I know don't like last minute changes.

Charles: Well, we're fine with them so long as they're minor. If they're more than minor, we may ask you to create a new story for the change, but even then we can still get the work done relatively quickly after that. Anyway, time to move on. I think we're pretty much done with this story.

Pat: What about the acceptance tests? Or I guess they sometimes call it ..."test confirmations" ?

Charles: Yeeaahhhhh...Whatever we're calling it this week.

Pat: Mike Cohn's book had some good suggestions on that. He said you can start off almost any acceptance test with the words "Test that"

Charles: Yeah, that works well, but here's the deal with that. Most of what we've already talked about has obvious acceptance tests, and we've essentially noted those acceptance tests as details on the story card. For instance, we know we need the "continue shopping" link, so an obvious test is to... "Test that the 'continue shopping' link takes the user back to the home page." We could write that all out, but why? We've essentially noted all of the main acceptance tests, and because we keep our stories really small, it's

easy to just list them as bullet points on the card. That's why Payton was all "Whoa Whoa Whoa" before. He/She knows how important it is to keep stories small. Now, that "shipping arrival estimate thing," that's a whole different matter. For now, we'll just make a note to test that the arrival estimate is calculated correctly. Some people call that a "High Level Acceptance Test", and that's all that's really required before we begin development. Once we begin development, we'll need to create some examples to test that logic out.

Pat: Who does that?

Taylor: Pat, Generally I do that as I'm the person most focused on testing on the team.

Pat: Do we just write something like "Test that the estimated arrival date is 5 days from the order date if it's overnight, 7 days if it's 2 day shipping? And 12 days if its ground shipping" ?

Taylor: You can do that, but we've learned a really cool technique that makes testing easier and better for these kinds of scenarios. Rather than write all of those "test that..." sentences on the card, what we usually do is just create a few examples with different dates and shipping speeds to show what the expected shipping arrival date is. Then we check that the expected arrival date we calculated is what shows on the confirmation page. The technique is

called "Specification By Example."

Pat: Do you put those examples on the story card?

Taylor: It's usually easier to put them on a wiki page of some sort, in a table. Here we use Fitnesse for automating some of our acceptance tests, and it has a built in wiki that allows us to create tables with test inputs and expected test outputs. I'll show you when we get to it. It's easier to show you than tell you.

Pat: More verbal communication, huh?

Taylor: Exactly, but when it comes to software development, I'll take talking and collaborating over updating huge requirements documents and test plans any day of the week!

Pat: Me too! [Pause] Charles, I have one last question about User Stories. Earlier you mentioned signoff. When do I do that? At the end of the Sprint?

Charles: Oh no. We generally ask you do to signoff, or what we sometimes call "Story Acceptance," as soon as the team thinks the story meets all of the acceptance tests. There are a lot of reasons for doing Story Acceptance as soon as possible, but I'll just sum it up by saying that we've learned that we can be much more efficient that way. Does that answer your question?

Pat: Yes, it does. Do you guys generally call it "PO signoff" or "Story

Acceptance?"

Charles: Depends on the week, of course! I'm kidding, I'm kidding, we use both terms. Like everything else in the Agile world, there's 5 different names for the same thing. The important part is that we all know what it means.

Ok team, sounds like we have a decent handle on this story. I'll end the discussion on this story with our normal question: "Does everyone here feel as if we know at least 90% of what we need to know to complete this story?"

Payton: Yep.

Taylor: I'm good.

Bailey: Me too. I think we know closer to 100% for ***this*** story.

Charles: Ahhh... The beauty of keeping stories small.

Payton: [Emphatically] Hallelujah!

Charles: Ok, team, I think it's time to move on to the next story...

And SCENE!

The End