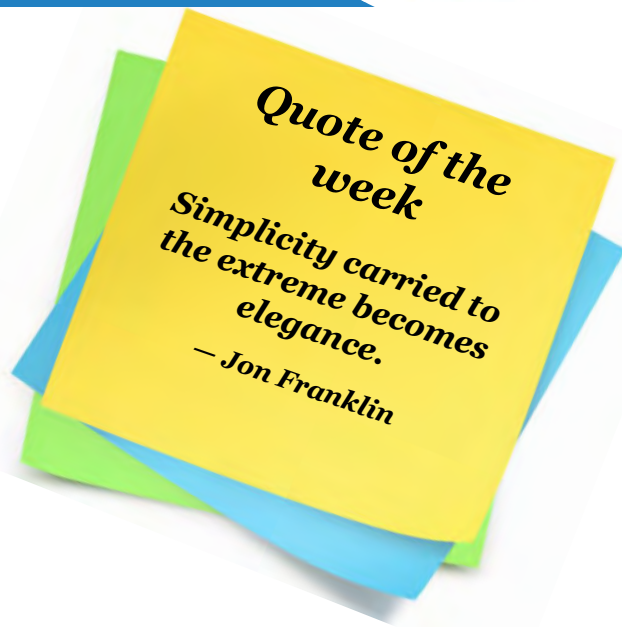




Welcome to this week's issue of the Lean Pig! Just like Scrum makes use of sprints as its time-boxes in which work is completed, Extreme Programming introduces the concept of cycles in which work is completed. This issue of the newsletter discusses the two primary practices related to cycles, namely Weekly Cycle and Quarterly Cycle.

## Working in cycles

One characteristic that is shared between Agile methods is that they are iterative in nature. This means that teams complete chunks of work in short time-boxed periods. In this way progress is seen much faster, feedback is received much faster from end users, and ultimately projects that use an iterative approach have a higher return on investment (ROI). In Extreme Programming (XP), Kent Beck suggests two practices that address the iterative nature of this method, namely Weekly Cycle and Quarterly Cycle.



**Quote of the week**  
*Simplicity carried to the extreme becomes elegance.*  
— Jon Franklin

In XP, the practice of **Weekly Cycle**, involves teams planning their work one week at a time. The concept of weekly cycles (or iterations), are similar to the concept of sprints used in the Scrum framework. While XP recommends one week for a cycle or iteration length, Scrum gives the option of using iterations of one month or less in length.

According to Kent Beck in the second edition of his book **Extreme Programming Explained: Embrace Change**, teams should meet at the beginning of every one week cycle to review their progress on the project, get a list of stories to implement for the week from the customer, as well as break down and estimate these stories. The goal for every weekly cycle is to deliver a piece of software that is deployable, should the customer choose to. This constitutes the team's primary measure of progress, and fits in perfectly with the **Agile Manifesto's** value of "working software over comprehensive documentation".

The first edition of Kent Beck's book suggested that two or three week cycles be used, however as team environments and situations have evolved, these practices were adapted to fit better with a fast-paced world. Therefore Kent Beck's latest edition of his book, recommends one week cycles. This ensures that teams are focused on delivering only the highest value items to the customer. Additionally, by constantly using the same iteration length, teams develop a sustainable **cadence** which assists them to deliver working software.

For teams just working in weekly cycles, it can be very easy to lose track of the bigger picture and goals. According to **Kent Beck** teams tend to have a higher focus on smaller details of work being done during every cycle. XP suggest the **Quarterly Cycle** practice to counteract this problem. Teams implementing this practice have quarterly planning sessions during which work for the next quarter is planned and themes (larger groupings for stories) are identified. The main purpose of this practice is to turn the team's focus back to the big picture to ensure that all work completed aligns back with the project's goals.

When developing software in iterations, not all iterations will go equally well. In some iterations, the team might get along better than in others, and less unexpected issues might be encountered with regards to the project. It is therefore crucial for teams to look back from time to time and reflect on things that went well, as well as things that didn't go so well, or that worked on everybody's nerves. When using this practice, teams look back at work completed for the previous quarter to **identify impediments** encountered and identify possible actions for the next quarter to prevent these impediments from happening again.

As can be seen from the discussion above, implementing the above two practices of XP, corresponds to Scrum's sprints with sprint planning at the beginning of every cycle, and sprint retrospective and review ceremonies every quarter. Teams making use of cycles or iterations with regular opportunities for feedback and learning will not only be more productive, but more effective in delivering working software as well!



## Last Issue's Quiz

The correct answers were:

1. Slack is an Extreme Programming (XP) practice which involves including spare capacity or a buffer in your iterations, to allow a team to react and respond to unforeseen events as well as continuously improve. It increases a team's reliability to deliver more frequently with higher quality.
2. True
3. Add extra valuable work into the iteration that is not time critical (e.g. architectural refactoring, legacy code tests, paying off technical debt or book learning). These items can then be left out of the sprint if more time-critical issues come up.

## This week's new quiz

The deadline for this week's quiz is COB next week Wednesday 31 July. Correct answers can be **emailed to me**.

The answer to the question will be revealed in the next newsletter.

Thanks for reading this week's newsletter!  
Enjoy your weekend!



**Based on the article, answer the following questions:**

1. What is the core focus of the Weekly Cycle practice?
2. What is the core focus of the Quarterly Cycle practice?
3. Why, in your opinion, did Kent Beck revise the cycle duration from two or three weeks to weekly?

