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## Estimating Difficulty Worksheet

### Problem

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You are having trouble estimating work and need a better way to understand difficulty.

### Context (aka Purpose)

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A worksheet to help team discussion so that a difficulty factor can be generated and then used to improve real effort estimates. The most important aspect is that teams have a conversation about the difficulty of doing the work. The difficulty factor can then be used to adjust job estimates based on the adverse affects. Each adverse affect is treated as an independent dimension on the worksheet. The team conversation can occur any time and as often as needed. It is more important to raise team awareness thus build new habits for tackling hard work than it is to codify a specific process for use of this worksheet. Therefore, use this when you detect a need and apply it any time, any type and any size work-item.

### Solution

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For each team member, print worksheet and hand each person a copy at the estimating session a copy. For each job (story, epic, project) under consideration have them estimate the effort involved. Note: that the items are on opposing axis to each other but, this should not be consider opposites rather they are independent dimensions but are being aggregated into a whole for what makes the work easy or hard.

#### Axis Defined

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Ideal Effort (IE): in a perfect world ... what would it take to do the job? size the work up top in relative points.

#### Adverse Affects

Noise of Interaction (NI) = how easy is it to talk with this client? are they bombarded with distractions?

Clarity of Request (CR) = is the work clear? does the client appreciate and make the effort required to clarify the work? do they just abandon the thinking and expect someone else to clean it up? do they have little to no appreciation of the details? do you expect them to appreciate that kind of detail?

Guidable (G) = does the client take our advice? do they listen and try things we suggest?

Nit Pick on Acceptance (NPA) = after we clarify work does the client still not accept it? do they expect more work and significant change for free.

Surge Tendency (ST):

Does the client go into laundry listing? do they dump work onto the team? from zero work to dump work? This makes all work harder manage and makes the price of working with that client higher overall

Highly Exploratory (HE):

is there a lot of discovery expected in the work? is this work type new to us? are we dealing with new storyotypes? should we expect the unexpected? We don't know what they are but, there are some new things we will learn when we do the work.

Difficulty Factor is a summation of the adverse affects. Each adverse affect is estimated from 0 to 3 where a score of 1 is considered normal. So a difficulty factor is calculated as  $\text{Sum}(\text{Adverse Affects}) - 5 = \text{DF}$

$\text{DF} * \text{IE} = \text{Modified Effort Estimate}$