

Crafting User Stories That Truly Deliver



GUIDE WITH EXAMPLES



What is a User Story?

A User Story is an **informal description of a user's need**, which can lead to defining the features and functionalities the software will have. It focuses on defining three things:

Who has the need?

What do they want to achieve?

Why do they want to achieve the goal?

How to identify user stories?

USER STORIES COME FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH USERS.

YOU NEED TO TALK TO THEM.

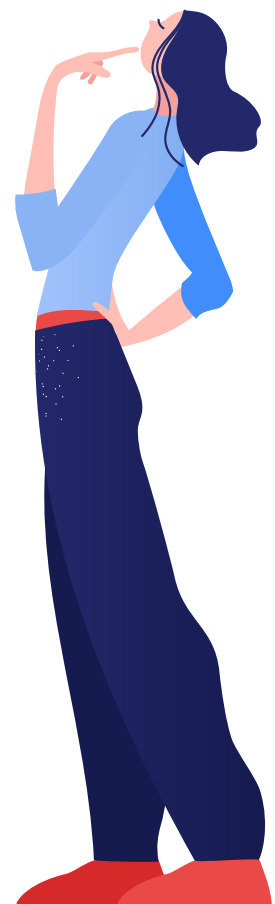
Pay attention

You shouldn't ask the user what they want, what they need, what problems they have, or what solutions they propose. As a Product Owner, you should accompany the user in discovering the requirements and gathering information.

Here are some questions that will help you have meaningful conversations with users and find the User Stories:

- What are **your daily objectives** in your work/activities?
- Which ones **haven't we achieved yet?**
- Why **are we taking long** to achieve them?
- What **activities do you want/need to complete?**
- What could **be more efficient** to achieve it?

The list above is helpful for starting conversations. The Product Owner should keep probing and frequently use **“why?”** to understand users' frustrations and motivations.



Example

In a conversation with the users, they explain that one of their responsibilities **is placing purchase orders**. These need to be **approved by the finance and operations departments**, which sometimes **take up to three days to respond**.

During your investigation, you discover that the process **involves filling out forms in spreadsheets**, which are then **emailed to the two departments**. Each department **receives and schedules the files** and assigns them to an analyst, who **manually reviews them field by field** and creates a report, which is forwarded to their supervisor. The **supervisor checks it against the budgets and budget schedules** and issues a response, which is also sent via email.

Pay Attention

At this point, it would be very natural for you to start thinking about the features of this process that should be included in the software. However, what interests us right now is finding the user's goal. **DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**; instead, ask questions.

- Is the goal to reduce response time? If so, what is the desirable time?
- Is the purpose to reduce input errors? If so, what causes these errors?
- Is the objective to stay within the budget and not exceed it? If so, what prevents them from knowing this information today?

Gather the information and conduct an analysis.

REMEMBER

Do not make assumptions.

About the author



Edgar Fernández
Software Engineering Coach

I'm Edgar Fernández, a coach focused on helping teams build better software faster. I support organizations in speeding up delivery, reducing errors, and growing with disciplined work and motivated people. I've partnered with companies like Natgas, UBS Code Systems, Dataware, and Accenture México, achieving gains such as more productivity, more sales, and far less time spent on fixes. I've also supported tech efforts for BBVA, Banorte, and research with CIMAT. My mix of industry and academic experience helps teams improve and deliver stronger results.

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