

*A Zomblatt Guide*



# The Official Guide To Zomblatt

**From the Zomblatt Alliance**



# Zomblatt Guide

## The Official Guide to Zomblatt

Ted M. Young

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# Preface

Zomblatt<sup>1</sup>, which was initially discovered by David J. Bland, has grown to become a worldwide phenomenon. Numerous Zomblatt presentations have been rejected from the highest profile and most popular conferences in the world, clearly demonstrating that the methodology establishment fears its power. Zomblatt is a radical departure from other systems and processes, yet remains approachable to the common thinker.

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<sup>1</sup>The events behind this discovery may only be revealed to Certified and Acknowledged Zomblatt Members (CAZM), the highest level of certification available in Zomblatt.



# Introduction

This book is the official guide to Zomblatt, approved by the Zomblatt Alliance. Be aware that there are Zomblatt books, guides, and fortune cookie inserts that are not official and in no way represent the one true way of Zomblatt. You may follow those unauthorized sources, but doing so increases risk and invites failure.

This guide will be expanded, extended, and updated as Zomblatt is used in more and more profitable and powerful organizations worldwide.

In this guide, you'll find a discussion of the Zomblatt Manifesto in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 covers the required best practices to use in your Zomblatt implementation. Chapter 3 introduces the Rules of Zomblatt. Future chapters include Chapter 4, which shows how to deal with resistance to change using the power that is already available to you through the directed graphs of resources. This guide closes with Chapter 4, which contains a glossary of Zomblatt terms that you should commit to memory and must use correctly at every opportunity.



## Feedback and Comments

There are aspects of Zomblatt that are recursive in nature, which you will learn about in Chapter 2. Feedback and Comments on this book are most welcome. One of Zomblatt's core values is Clarity – after all, you cannot follow a prescription without it being crystal clear, hence why doctor's medical prescriptions are written in a strange, yet precise, language – and so if there is anything that is unclear to you, please let us know so that we can Clarify it (did you notice how similar Clarity is to Clarify? Zomblatt sometimes amazes even us with its subtle genius).

## Contact Information

You can send feedback, comments, requests for Clarification, etc., via Twitter to @jitterted or via Shortmail to jitterted@shortmail.com. Note that we use Twitter and Shortmail, which limit your text to 140 characters and 500 characters, respectively, as this ensures that we receive the most concise information.



## Release Notes

### 1.0.3 - Feb. 7, 2014

Added the “Zomblatt Rules” chapter as [Chapter 3](#).

### 1.0.2 - April 16, 2012

- Added information to Chapter 2 on “Best Practices”, including why following them is so important to Zomblatt.
- Updated the Introduction’s Release Notes to include information on the 1.0.2 release.

### 1.0.1 - April 14, 2012

- Added feedback information to the Introduction.
- Removed some of the Manifesto text as it was deemed to complex for those new to Zomblatt to understand.

### Meta-Notes

Like any software product, this book is not meant to be put into production until



at least the second or third minor (or patch) release. This book is no different, so in the long, but necessary, march to a book that you can use in “production”, we release the 1.01 version of this book.

While some might say that the 1.0.0 release was incomplete, Zomblatt says that it’s important to release products that appear on the surface to be complete so that the customers of the product can prepare themselves and their environment for the installation and use of the product as it will eventually be (in that later release). That process takes time (see [Utility of Delays](#), which allows you to complete the features that the customers are now busily preparing themselves for.

## **1.0.0 - April 13, 2012**

- The initial release of this book.



# **Required Best Practices**

While the most approachable of known processes, Zomblatt does require you to follow these best practices, regardless of context. It's important to note that those who have Zomblatt Certifications who are found to be not following these practices as described, are in danger of being de-certified. While it's possible for those who have been de-certified to regain their certified status, the costs may prove to be prohibitive.

## **Why Following Best Practices is Required**

The reason for this is simple: many projects attempting to adopt Zomblatt have gone awry trying to adopt only some of the best practices, or modified best practices, without understanding the complex interdependencies between the practices. More importantly, not following the best practices as defined makes it difficult to hire Zomblatt Coaches as they will be



unfamiliar with any modifications made and will be unable to help you until you resume conforming to the best practices.

## Predicting Schedules

Companies rely on being able to predict when their software projects will be completed. In many cases, companies use estimates to coordinate multiple critical projects so that they all are completed at the same time (usually at the risk of the company going bankrupt). Therefore, Zomblatt does away with “estimating” practices, varying scope, non-numeric values (such as “T-shirt sizing”), or units that can’t be directly translated to a concrete schedule (such as “points” or “jelly beans”).

Zomblatt, however, has found through extensive thinking, research, study, and overwhelming anecdotal references, that the use of “gaggles” as the unit of measure for time, and irrational numbers for the values provides the most accurate and precise way to predict how long the development of any non-trivial software project will take.

***Therefore*** you must use  $\sqrt{2}$ ,  $e$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\pi$ , and similar irrational numbers as the inputs into your schedule prediction formula. Spreadsheets to convert these



into a completion date are available from your local CAZM.

## **Delays: Why They're Necessary**

Zomblatt has found that when feedback is given too frequently, systems that are unable to handle the feedback tend towards refusing the feedback. This is why delays in feedback are a vital part of Zomblatt.

## **Requirements**

Requirements are named the way they are because, well, they're required. If they aren't required, then there's no point in taking time to write them down. User Stories are the recommended way to capture these requirements. User Stories are pieces of functionality that are written on 3"x5" index cards or sticky notes.

### **Card/Note Size**

Cards or notes must be 3 inches high by 5 inches wide and displayed in a horizontal orientation. (larger



formats are *not* recommended, as that's considered cheating)

## Don't Use Color

When using colored index cards or colorful sticky notes, do not assign meaning to the colors of the notes to prevent confusion later. It's guaranteed that when you need a pink sticky note to indicate an urgent issue, there will be none available, and you will have to take whatever color is available and color it in with a red marker. Also, white index cards and yellow sticky notes are much cheaper than the colorful ones.

## Decision-Making

Zomblatt recommends that decisions be made by consensus. It's vital that the entire team have a hand in making decisions as this is the core of empowering the team. This allows each team member to personally buy-in to the decision and make it their own. If consensus cannot be reached, then the decision must be postponed until such time as the team can come to consensus. If the deadline for a decision has arrived (see The Last Responsible Moment), e.g., the T-shirts for the product need to be made so as to arrive in time



for the conference, then the most senior manager will make the decision.

The advantage of this type of “escape hatch” decision-making is that the team will learn that compromise is important in consensus decision-making.

## **Last Responsible Moment**

This section will be filled in shortly.