1 INTRODUCTION

This paper will introduce you to the roles and practices that will increase the effectiveness of someone in the customer on an XP project. Customers have one of the most complex and difficult roles on a project, yet XP includes very few practices that support the customer in their role — the aim of this paper is to change that.

Over the last three years, we have investigated many projects around the world to identify how customers succeed in this complex and difficult task — discovering not what people think should have happened, but what really happened and what actually worked! This paper distils this research, grounded in practical experience, into a number of patterns:

* Covering the key roles required on a customer team, both what they are and why they matter.
* Covering the nine practices that enable customers to sustainably drive XP projects to successful completion – think “XP practices” BUT for customers.

2 CUSTOMER TEAM ROLES

The XP Customer is typically a team of people; as there is too much work for one person:

"We probably needed about three of me ... it’s been my life for about a year ... look at these grey hairs"
-- Customer, KiwiCorp

"I’ve always worked at least 70 [or] 80 [hrs a week] I don't even mind it, its like what I do"
-- Customer, RavenCorp

In the successful project teams that we have studied, each one had a customer team, and although each of the teams had an identified customer, there were nine key roles being performed on these successful customer teams.

The roles discussed will range from those typically associated with the customer team such as “end-user” or “acceptance tester” through to those less recognised but absolutely critical roles such as “political advisor” and “super-secretary”. Each of these roles directly supports the success of the customer role in some aspect, but which are needed will depend on the nature of the project. More than one role can be played by one person, and more than one person might combine to play a role. How these roles are established is also a matter for context: someone in customer role may informally create the roles to provide the support they need, or the roles may be created as part of a more formal management process.

2.1 Pattern: Acceptance tester

Problem

Classic, or first edition XP [reference] had programmers seconded to the customer to help the customer test the application. Programmers hated it, didn't have the temperament for it, and were politically conflicted.
So, how do you ensure that there is a focus on quality, from the customer’s perspective rather than the programmers?

**Forces**
- We want to ensure the customer’s perspective is represented when the application is tested. A focus on how the customer and/or end-users will use the software to achieve their business goals, rather than how they get a story signed-off.
- We want to ensure that the testing is structured and prioritised so that the most important tests (from the customer’s perspective) are undertaken and not the easiest to test and/or all tests ... so a constant cost/benefit analysis of when to test, always considering the impact to the quality of the application versus the ability to add new functionality.

**Solution**
We need to ensure that someone on the customer team has testing training and is prepared to take on the role of acceptance tester on the project.

**Forces Resolved**
We found acceptance testers as assistants to Customers on almost all large standard contemporary XP projects. Real testers understand testing, are good at it, and take the customer’s side!

The role of acceptance tester may or may not be a full-time role on the project, but we have found that it tends to be a full-time and recognised role on the project team. It is essential the acceptance tester role is perceived both by themselves and by the rest of the team as belonging to the customer team, otherwise we can end up back with programmer focused testing occurring.

### 2.2 Pattern: User interface designer

**Problem**
Again, Programmers are famous for not being able to design User Interfaces, at least as far as UI designers are concerned, not to mention users!

**Forces**
- We want an application that end-users will be able to use effectively to perform their tasks, UI design is more than just "looking good", it is all about interactions.
- However, we would also like an application that "looks good" not like a programmer who has been on a coke and pizza binge for the last 5 days in a dark corner designed it with pastel colours.

**Solution**
In the situations where the User Interface of the project is considered critical to the application then it is essential that we hire a user interface designer. In other situations (i.e. the User Interface is not seen as critical) then it is still recommended that someone with user interface development training is assigned to the customer team, as designing an application that meets the essential interactions for the end-user is an essential part of any application.

**Forces Resolved**
We found UI Designers end up on the customer team, providing UI designs to the programmers. In the first case (UI is seen as critical), this role is likely to be a full-time recognised role on the project team. In the second case (all other situations), this role is likely to be performed in conjunction with another role on the project team, although it is
highly recommended this role is not performed in conjunction with the role of programmer. One especially important reason that UI work be aligned with the customer is UI design, in order to provide usability, may lead to new requirements.

Often the User Interface Design is done as Big Design Up-Front (BDUF), with the web design / graphic design house providing "pixel perfect" designs, as UI designers generally hate incremental design; "it’s impossible" "we must see the gestalt". But we (and they) are learning how to manage this (e.g. web & textual redesign practices).

2.3 Pattern: Technical writer

Problem

Kent says you’re allowed to do documentation, if someone else insists, or if people will actually use the software! Programmers can’t (or won’t) write user guides.

Forces

- We want to deliver support documentation (e.g. user guides) to end-users so that they can use the application effectively
- We do not want to interrupt delivery, or pay the cost (programmers are typically very expensive) of a programmer to write the documentation, badly.

Solution

In the situations where end-user documentation is to be produced then it is essential that someone on the customer team has technical writing skills.

Forces Resolved

We have found that real technical writers often end up on customer teams, particularly when the application is a software product. Typically technical writers are assigned to the customer team on a part-time basis, and will often be assigned to multiple projects as a technical writer. The good news is that technical writers love Agile Development:

"At least I’ve got something to write about from the start”
-- Technical Writer, EagleCorp [Check quote wording]

In traditional software development the technical writers often start writing the user guides from the requirements specification, only to find when the software product is delivered a few days before shipping, that the requirements specification does not reflect the software products functionality … many long and intense hours are then spent re-writing the user guides to match the software delivered.

So, while agile software development allows the technical writer to spread their load, as the software changes and evolves during the process the technical writer will be required to evolve their technical documentation regularly. This situation could quickly become frustrating for the technical writer and may result in them pushing for a more defined specification up-front, in order to better balance the amount of work and re-writes over time.

2.4 Pattern: Super-Secretary

Problem

Within the customer team there are many administration and organisational tasks that need to occur in order for the customer team to be effective in their interactions with both the business and the programmers. Overloaded customer team members find it easy to either let these tasks “slip” or become a burden that results in them either not being as effective (e.g. stories get lost) or working even more hours in a day.
Forces
- We want to ensure that customer team members are not distracted from their core roles by administrivia
- We want to ensure that the administrivia occurs or stories might get lost, cards run out etc

Solution
We have found that typically one person on the team will surface to pick up the administrivia load from the rest of the team; we have called that role the super-secretary.

Forces Resolved
We have found that the super-secretary always has another formal role on the customer team, so this role is always “part-time”, despite the sometimes very large amount of work in the role. The super-secretary will typically always write down the stories, and keep them organized as well as track them through their lifecycle, often with a sticker system with different colors representing each stage. The super-secretary also undertakes other tasks such as:
- Following up the story status with the programmers
- Ordering stationery, including cards and marker pens
- Printing cards or tracking cards on the wiki, as required by the programmers or business
- Organising meeting rooms for iteration kick-offs or planning meetings

“I know a woman who took this route – and ended up almost taking over the company”

One thing to be aware of with this role, particularly given that it is always a secondary role, and often unrecognized role, is that the person performing this role can become very overloaded, and while we have named the role “super-secretary”, it is fair to say that there is often a limit to this person’s “super” powers. In one case we investigated, the super-secretary had become too overloaded and had recently left the project. The team was feeling the ramifications of her departure and perhaps becoming aware of the true load they had been shouldering for the best part of the year-long project. It is important to keep an eye on this person’s load and consider ways to mitigate the overload they will experience.

2.5 Pattern: Geek Interpreter

Problem

“H3Y D00DZ, L3TZ C0D3 UP SUM ST0R1Z”
-- Geek, 2005

Programmers and Customers do not always speak quite the same language, even when they both speak English (or French, or ...). It is easy for a customer to become baffled by a programmer; did they actually answer my question, what did the answer actually mean to me, will it fix my problem?

Forces
- We need a translator, someone who knows how to talk to programmers and customers
- We need someone to help the Customer talk to the Programmers
Programmers say “it will take fifteen days”
- Programmers mean: “I don’t want to do this story”
- Programmers say “Essential Technical Refactoring”
- Programmers mean: “I want to learn to use Java# dotNet2SE 5.0”
- Programmers say: “Let’s just use a text field:
- Programmers mean: “I can’t be bothered to find a custom widget”

Solution
We have found that Customers who are not themselves (ex-) programmers often lack expertise in the argot1 of programmers, and need a geek interpreter, a person who helps the customer understand and talk to the programmers.

Forces Resolved
The Geek Interpreter generally does not talk to these programmers directly … But coaches the customer in 3lit3 5p33k. The Geek Interpreter role is never an official team role / position on the team. Often the Geek Interpreter has the official role of a Tester or PM and is a recent ex-programmer. However, the Geek Interpreter can also be a programmer (on either the same or different project) whom the customer trusts.

It is also interesting to notice that in all cases we have studied, the customer has been very careful with the use of the Geek Interpreter role and never plays the Geek Interpreter against another programmer directly. If a customer were to play the Geek Interpreter off against the programmers then the customer could (a) damage their relationship with the programmers who may feel that the customer no longer trusts them and/or (b) the customer could damage their relationship with the Geek Interpreter who may no longer feel comfortable providing assistance to the customer. Additionally the Geek Interpreter’s relationship with the programmers could be damaged and this could be significant depending on their role on or relationship with the programmer team.

2.6 Pattern: Technical Liaison

Problem
Most projects don’t exist in isolation, they have to deal with existing organization technical infrastructures. Programmers can’t deal with this directly
- There are too many of them
- It’s not their role – not to do with their stories
- They get pissed off
- External technical support people also hate programmers (think they are fly-by-night “hoons” who don’t understand why we cannot rebuild the organizations entire database so that the simplest thing might possibly work)

Forces
- We need someone who is able to interact with the existing technical infrastructure and the organisation/departments that are in place to support it.

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1 argot: (n) specialized jargon, especially of thieves [reference]
Solution
We have found that a person on the team picks up the Technical Liaison role, removing this communication “overhead” from both the programmers and the rest of the customer team.

Forces Resolved
This role can sometimes be a formal role on the team, particularly in organisations with large IT departments or in organisations where their operational facilities have been outsourced. In situations where the IT departments are smaller and operational facilities are in-housed then this role may be a part-time role that is picked up by a member of the project team.

We have also found that this person may be able to support the programmers find answers to the legacy system queries and at times even code, although typically this person is post-technical but with a strong technical knowledge base.

It is important to ensure that this person remains a part of the team and does not go native (get captured by the larger IT organisation), and obtains support from the team as they will be facing a lot of pressure externally and can easily become battered and bruised.

2.7 Pattern: Political advisor

Problem
Every organization of more than two people has politics! Customers are – by their nature – involved intimately and continuously in a development project. This means they cannot – by themselves – keep up with organization’s politics and power structure

Forces
- Customers need help to identify the players and the rules
  - Who needs to say “yes!”
  - Who needs to stop saying “no!”
  - Which rules to follow
  - Which rules to break
  
  Note, this is different from XP’s Goal Owner & Gold Donor, as organizations are much more complex than this, with many stakeholders at different levels.

- We may need multiple political advisors, depending on the size and complexity of the organization and its political by-plays.

Solution
We have found that a wise customer, recruits one or more political advisors whom they can (hopefully) trust.

Forces Resolved
The political advisor will help the customer work out who the political players actually are!

- You didn’t expect to be told did you? There are always the official versus the unofficial players to be discovered and understood.

- And then, how to play them, both in the short term and long term. A wise customer is aware that they need to not only see this project succeed but will also set up their political network for the next project to succeed as well.

It is important to ensure that you are constantly assessing the advice and guidance of your political advisors, are you really plugged in to all of the political dimensions that you need to
be. For example, in one project, it become pain-fully aware to the project team that one political player had been missed, in this case, operations. The project was delayed and portrayed within the larger IT organisation as a failure due to the delay, despite the fact that the project team delivered working software that added business value, and all much quicker than originally expected ... all that was remembered was that the team was a month late. The customer had missed a key political player within the organisation and the long-term perceived success of the project was compromised.

2.8 Pattern: On-Site Customer

Problem
But wait, we need an on-site customer, someone who decides what to build when and talks to the programmers. None of the other roles do this, so where has my on-site customer gone?

Forces
- Programmers need to know who to talk to concerning their story, and they need to be confident that it is the “right” person, someone who has the confidence of both the person paying the bill and the end-user of the system ... and who can talk to the programmer in a way the programmer can understand.
- Business people need someone to help them clarify their vision and ensure that an application gets built that will meet their competing needs, and will be accepted by both stakeholders and end-users as achieving the business goals/vision.

Solution
Ensure that an onsite-customer is clearly identified on the team and is the single-point of contact for all initial programmer queries and decisions. This was the original and insightful idea, and it is important for it not to get lost. All the other roles exist to support this one, so don’t forget it!

Forces Resolved
On every project we studied everyone in the team (and typically outside of the team) could clearly identify the on-site customer. We have found that to be effective, customers must be able to:
- “Forgive and Forget” – as they will be “beaten up” regularly
- Be good (active) listeners
- Be able to bring out all of the different perspectives (in both the business and programmers worlds) ... and helping them to see each other’s world.
- Appear calm, confident and decisive
- Be comfortable working at both the “big picture” level and at a detailed level
- Be able to “know their limitations” and work with a customer team
- Be able to handle intense pressure ... workaholics should apply!

Despite the fact that there is a customer team, on most projects we have studied the person performing this role has clearly been overloaded, often leading to burn-out or the person performing this role leaving the organisation after the project completes. The organisation looses this person’s valuable knowledge and the application may suffer once the strong identified vision holder is changed.

Interestingly by clearly separating the responsibilities of the customer (team) from the programmer (team) we have also noticed a tendency from programmers to simply say “it’s
not my problem that is for the customer to solve”. We very much doubt that was Kent’s intent with XP, to create a division, instead we believe his intent was very much to improve the communication between the customer and the programmers and see a whole project team approach. We believe that some of the practices we outline next, directly help to remove some of the divisions created between the customer and the programmers.

3 CUSTOMER PRACTICES

This section outlines the nine practices that enable customers to sustainably drive XP projects to successful completion – think “XP practices” BUT for customers:

- Programmer On-Site
- Customer’s Apprentice
- Customer Counselor
- Customer Pairing
- Story Standards
- Demos
- Programmer Holiday
- Big Analysis Up Front
- Three-month crisis

While this list is not complete, it provides the initial core patterns that we have seen working on real projects that allow customers to do their jobs effectively. Later papers will extend and explore these practices further. Like the roles described above, these practices exist to support the customer role, but may be established with lesser of greater formality, as a situation requires.

3.1 Pattern: Programmer On-Site

Problem

The onsite customer can create a number of problems:

- If the customer needs to move physical location to become the “onsite” customer then there is a risk that they will become isolated from the business organisation, and can also become prone to the Stockholm effect.
- Programmers do not get to understand and respect the end-users of their application as they have no knowledge of their world.

Forces

- The customer representative needs to remain grounded in their organisation and connected to all of the end-users, business stakeholders and political advisors.
- Programmers need to better understand and respect the end-users and other stakeholders.

Solution

We should re-tune our advice, instead of “on-site customer” and “programmer” roles, we should have “customer” and “on-site programmer” roles.

Forces Resolved

This advice of getting programmers into the field is not new.

"Boeing offers all its avionics programmers seats on an early test flight”
-- Professor, 2005 [track down original reference]
"In a factory, the software controlled the robot arms. Make a mistake and somebody dies. So put the programmers on the factory floor"
-- Programmer, 2003

Programmers need to understand the rhythm and flow of users jobs and experiences – who they are, what they do, why they will ignore the software. This practice is not about making decisions but instead it is about understanding the end user and context of use, and gaining enough information to making helpful suggestions.

"I worked with a social worker, doing a death review. This is what she does every day, it helps put the importance of the system we are developing in perspective, while it might be the most important thing for me as I am 100% assigned to it and have deadlines, is it more important for her to help us or do her day job?"
-- Business Analyst, 2005

Let’s quickly compare and contrast the two versions of the practice that results in customers and programmers being co-located:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer On-Site</th>
<th>Programmer On-Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good for programmers</td>
<td>Good for users ... if a pain in the butt!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes customer aware of programmer’s jobs and issues</td>
<td>Makes programmers aware of user’s job and issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates customer into programmers culture</td>
<td>Incorporates the programmers into the users culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer capture is a “bad” thing.</td>
<td>But programmer capture is a “good” thing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, it is important to emphasise that a little knowledge can be dangerous, programmers may end up believing that they “know best” based on their limited knowledge. Programmers need to understand that while they are gaining an appreciation and understanding of the end-users world they will never know it to the extent that the customer does, they will never have the customer’s overall view.

### 3.2 Customer’s Apprentice

**Problem**
The previous practice helps bring the programmers into the world of the end-users, but they still lack an understanding of the world of their projects customer. We have found many situations where programmers see the customer as the bottle-neck and have no understanding why the customer cannot pump out stories to keep up with them.

**Forces**
- Programmers need to understand and respect their customer.
- The customer needs to manage their excessive work-load.

**Solution**

"To understand someone, walk a mile in their moccasins”
– Native American Web Saying

So, rotate programmers to act as the Customer’s Apprentice:
- Making coffee, writing stories, being secretary
– Attending meetings with users & stakeholders

**Forces Resolved**

We have found in all cases where this practice has been used that the programmers quickly change their tune, their complaints rapidly diminish and they become aware of the true load the customer carries on the project; they quickly gain a deep respect for the person playing the customer role. This practice tends to work best when the programmer acts as the Customers Apprentice for at least one iteration, otherwise the programmers do not truly get to see all of the demands on a customer’s time. Programmers who have played the role of the Customer’s Apprentice are more likely to see the team as a whole team and will step in to help the Customer out when the Customer becomes overloaded, and will also “defend” the Customer within the Programmer team, helping other Programmers become aware of the true demands on the Customer.

However, convincing programmers can sometimes be problematic. In our experience, this practice works best when either the programmers instigate it themselves. But it is possible to head-hunt a good Programmer candidate for this role when the Customer becomes aware of the Programmer “grumbles” or realises they are overloaded and need extra help.

### 3.3 Customer Counsellor

**Problem**

The customer role is a lonely and intense role that we know has “caused” burn-out. Programmers get a coach, Customers need someone too!

**Forces**

- The Customer needs someone to talk to, to help them resolve their issues, ensure they realize they are “not alone” and to mitigate the risk of customer burn-out. To be effective this person must:
  - **Not** be on the project
  - **Not** be a manager
  - Have enough IT & business experience to provide effective and pragmatic support
  - Will not try to solve their problems
  - Is someone the Customer can **trust**

**Solution**

We need to provide professional support to customers, a **Customer Counselor** (think Deanna Troi from Star Trek: The Next Generation).

**Forces Resolved**

We have found that the Customer Counsellor practice makes a difference to the well-being and effectiveness of the Customer. To be effective the **Customer Counselor** meets the Customer regularly in a private place that is completely confidential. If the Customer gets stuck they can call Counselor straight away.

The Coach and Customer Counselor could be the same person (if you can hire Ward!) as there is no intrinsic conflict of interest, but more realistically they will be separate people as the skill sets are different:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Customer Consellor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works publicly</td>
<td>Works confidentially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with Programmers</td>
<td>Works with the whole team but focuses on the Customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrates on technical practices (e.g test first, refactoring, pair programming etc)</td>
<td>Concentrates on the customer practices (identifying political advisors, understanding the domain etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be difficult to justify the expense of a Coach, justifying the expense of another “soft” practice such as that of the Customer Consellor may be an impossible task.

### 3.4 Customer Pairing

**Problem**

The On-site Customer is overloaded and many are suffering burn-out despite being in a customer team. One of the significant parts of the problem is “being alone”, making hard decisions alone.

**Forces**

- We need to find a way to provide effective support to On-site Customers so they do not feel alone.
- Customers need to discuss issues that do not relate directly to their stakeholders nor the developers, but to the decision-making process itself.
- Stakeholders and developers cannot be expected to discuss the process itself dispassionately with the customer, as they are affected, and have their own concerns.

**Solution**

If Pair programming is good – pair customering must be good!

**Forces Resolved**

It works for the CUSTOMER, in every case we’ve found! It is important to consider the most effective technique for managing customer pairs for your project, the solutions we have seen include:

- Divide by functional area
  - “Along the grain of the domain” (Brian Foote)
- Divide geographically
  - Distributed projects
- Inward/outward division
  - One customer works with the programmers
  - Another works with stakeholders & users
- Visionary & Detail
  - One has the Visions! Goals! Plans! Dreams! Coffee!
  - Another does the work
- Most extreme: like pair programming – don’t divide!
Close working relationships are key to any division of the customer role. However, Programmers can get uppity about Pair Customering:

- Programmers often prefer one customer to another
- Programmers play customers like divorced parents
- Programmers get frustrated because they see more clearly that the customer is not GOD
- Different Pair members give different direction
  - From the perspective of this paper, that's not nearly as large a problem as the customer going mental and taking down the whole project!
  - But XP programmers are a spoilt bunch of toddlers.

### 3.5 Story Standards

**Problem**

How do you break a problem down into stories that are both meaningful to the business and at the right level of detail for the programmers, how big should a story really be?

**Forces**

- We need to provide a consistent way of writing stories
- We need to find a way to break problems down, to ensure that we understand the context of a story so that it can be effectively prioritised. For example, in one project we are aware of, the business prioritised their stories, and these stories were built and released. The problem, no end-user could perform any task with the software, as sometimes lower priority stories need to be implemented in order to deliver software that provides value to an end-user.

**Solution**

We need to provide a common template for every story, the most effective template we have seen in use, is the template with the form "**persona needs something so that goal is achieved**".

However, that is not enough! We also need to provide a larger “container” in order to effectively prioritise development work so that it provides value to the business, one method of doing this is use cases, another is process diagrams and yet another is user-centred design task analysis [what is the right term for this?].

**Forces Resolved**

Customers need to take time to get stories right; story decomposition and prioritization is hard! Story standards and ways to organize the stories so that the business can prioritize at a higher level of granularity are essential (e.g. use cases), but we need to be very careful so that stories do not simply become specifications and the importance of a conversation between Programmers and Customers is lost!

### 3.6 Demos

**Problem**

Middle level bosses need to be convinced the software is making progress, Programmers need hard milestones, and in the case of product development, Sales and Marketing need software to demonstrate to clients in order to solicit their feedback.
Forces

- We rely on demonstrating progress with working software rather than Gantt charts, so we need to actually demonstrate working software to the people interested in our progress!

Solution

Schedule regular demonstrations of the working software to those internal or external parties that are interested in (or need to provide feedback into) the project/application being developed.

Forces Resolved

We have found that demonstrations are one of the most effective ways to:

- Gain the trust of senior and middle management, once they see progress and are assured it is not “smoke and mirrors” they become more confident that the project will meet its deadlines. It is often worthwhile retaining status quo reporting and demonstrations until such time as management become comfortable enough with the demonstrations to remove the need for the overhead of MS Project and all that it entails.

- Obtain regular feedback from the larger external population who will be end-users of the system, either internal users in the case of in-house business applications or external clients in the case of product development. In many cases, sales and marketing departments are able to leverage this opportunity to not only inform the direction of the application but also to provide confidence to this community that this project will deliver and it is not simply vapour-ware.

Demonstrations can also be useful internally within the project team, however one down-side or pitfall of internal demonstrations is they need to add value. Often with the Programmers and Customers working closely together the demonstration of functionality is not the thing that will add value, rather it is more likely about environments, integration or stability. On one project we investigated weekly internal demonstrations were the norm, Programmers could not see the value to themselves but thought they added value to the Customer, Customers could not see the value to themselves but thought they added value to the Programmers. No-one commented on the valueless practice during retrospectives as each group believed the practice added value to the other group. In the end, we discovered demonstrations were instigated at the start of the project when there were a number of environment problems and no-one had re-questioned their use since then. So, whether it is an internal or external demonstration, always confirm that a demonstration adds true value to the participants.

3.7 Programmer Holiday

Problem

XP is intense; Sometimes Customers just need more time to get ahead of programmers as the stay ahead dynamic is REALLY important. It’s the same for programmers, but they can slack around, take a gold card, do a technical refactoring or a code cleanup or redo the build machine or polish the disk drives or reorganise their workspace.

Forces

- A balance is needed between the need to deliver working software with ensuring the customer does not burn out AND that the project delivers what the business truly needs.
Solution
Customers need to send the programmers on holiday when they need time to focus on acceptance testing, communication with stakeholders, and cannot commit to new stories or priorities.

Forces Resolved
At first glance, this practice may seem particularly expensive, after all 10 programmers on an XP team at say $1000 per person will burn around $10,000 per day. But if the customer doesn’t know what stories to write, it’s money down the gurgler anyway! So, we would encourage Customers to consider more flexible resourcing
- Reassigning internal programmers to other projects
- Not paying for outside/contract programmers if there is no work for them to do
- Programmer’s On-Site day; Customer’s apprentice;
- Negotiate Technical Refactoring timings to suit the Customer

3.8 Big Analysis Up Front

Problem
Software projects, even small ones cost money (e.g. 10 Programmers for 6 months can cost upwards of $1M) and someone needs to decide if that investment is worthwhile before the project begins.

Forces
- We will need to prepare a business case, a requirements document and some kind of scope before organizations authorize projects!

Solution
Customer should lead initial analysis and design workshops for 2-4 weeks before coding begins. These sessions are release planning and scoping sessions, working out at a high level what to include in each release. We need to do some “pre-thinking” about what we are going to build and why, and ensure that this project adds value to the business ... and in some cases make sure it adds more value than another project that might cost around the same amount (ie. the organization needs to decide which projects to invest in, prioritize the projects).

Forces Resolved
To be effective the (small) up-front analysis should be:
- Led by the Customers,
- Involving end-users, stakeholders (across multiple departments where appropriate), to ensure that a shared understanding of the problem and solution is developed that takes into account the multiple perspectives of the project within the organisation.
- “Washed” programmers should observe so that they can gain an understanding of the business and be able to more effectively estimate during release planning sessions.

It is important to put a reasonable time-box on this “research” activity. Analysis (or problem definition and solution clarification) will not be complete at the end of this process, only enough to make a decision as to whether the project is worth taking further. Too large a time-box could put us back into the same place we have been with traditional Big Up-Front Analysis, too small a time-box will mean we could attempt to start a project that is not the most important to the business, or just as easily the reverse, miss a project that would have
added significant value to the business. Our research tends to indicate that the 2-4 week time-box is about right for most projects.

### 3.9 Three-month crisis

**Problem**

After three months, projects realize that “their eyes were bigger than their stomachs” ... And they aren’t going to deliver everything they promised. At this point in the project the Customer feels *absolutely betrayed!*

- Programmers have insisted on ruthless prioritization, so the spec is the *absolute minimum* the business can accept ... Or perhaps the customer believed they would get the medium-priority stuff
- Even if customer has been on a project before, they believe XP will deliver *(that’s why they picked it)*

Interestingly enough, the customer’s sense of betrayal is larger than on traditional projects, perhaps because XP and Agile emphasise prioritization or perhaps because the Customer believed XP/Agile was the silver bullet. Whatever the cause, you should be aware that the backlash is strong, and a pat answer of “well XP/Agile let you know this sooner than traditional software development” is often not well received.

During the crisis period, XP projects

- Typically stop doing iterations and development
- Have lots of meetings with stakeholders & bosses
- Do another big analysis up front
- Redo budget and scope
- Customer has to do lots of selling to organization, programmers don’t often realize just how serious the situation is.
- Customer finds it hard to come up with stories as they are even more overloaded, and is unsure what to prioritize given the project may be doomed.
- Morale low throughout whole team

**Forces**

- We need to find a way to ensure that the business is prepared for this event, as it has happened on all of the projects we have studied.
- We also need to find a way to ensure that the Programming Team are also prepared for this event AND they realised the seriousness of the situation.

**Solution**

We recommend customers understand this event is a possibility, be ready to recognise it when it occurs, and be prepared to address it on its own terms, rather than with outrage or denial.

**Forces Resolved**

We recommend that we consider doing this *(every season in the cuddly biorhythm-driven 2ed world)*. Yes, this is nothing new, it is just XP release planning but it is essential to do it and set customers expectations that it will need to occur ... despite programmers hating it!

We must manage customer expectations concerning this event, we must be more upfront that customer won’t get everything. They *will* get something but there is *no guarantee* that it will be enough!