



What is a Product Backlog?

The Product Backlog is the physical manifestation of the Product Owner's vision for the product. It is comprised of a set of Case Types, Case Stages and underlying User Stories which help articulate the "Work To Do" to accomplish the product vision.

As part of the Define Business Vision phase, Case Types, Case Stages and the related User Stories should be documented using the [Case Type Backlog](#) spreadsheet. This becomes the overall Product Backlog.

Each Case Type is assigned a Business Value of High, Medium or Low and a Priority relative to the other items in the Case Type list. For each Case Type, the Level of Effort of High, Medium or Low is also assigned, as well as the Interfaces, Personas and Channels which would be required to complete that Case Type.

Case Types and their related User Stories are worked on in priority order until the project ends. It is likely that the Backlog will never be completely empty – usually the lower priority Case Types and User Stories are considered of lower value and not done.

The Backlog does not need to be perfect or complete but needs to be frequently "refined" – reprioritized, resized, elaborated and is always a work in process.

User Story Anatomy:

A User Story has a prescribed anatomy and structure as follows:
"As a [type of user], I want < some goal > so that < some reason >."



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An example might be: "As an HR Recruiter, I want to match an open position's required skills with candidate resumes so I can create a short list for candidate screening"

User Stories are often written on index cards or sticky notes, and arranged on walls or tables to facilitate planning and discussion. This shifts the focus from writing about features to verbally discussing the User Story to flesh out important details with the Product Owner during Sprint planning sessions. These discussions are more important than whatever text might be written.

During Sprint Planning, it is important to identify the capacity of the team in terms of total available team hours, and plan the Sprint accordingly to help ensure the team can commit to the work planned in that Sprint. The Scrum team should take 1 Sprint's worth of user stories into the Sprint. While User Stories are not all complete, the process of building them in a Sprint is what makes some of them move to "Done"

Who Owns the Product Backlog?

The **Product Owner** is ultimately responsible for the Backlog.

The role of the Product Owner is:

- Defining and communicating the Product Vision
- Maximizing the value of the product by making constant cost/benefit decisions
- Managing and prioritizing the Backlog and ensuring the Backlog is visible and transparent
- Optimizing the value of the development teams
- Determining Release dates and Iteration Dates
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- Developing story details and helping the team understand those details.
- Continuous evaluation of business needs and reprioritize backlog as necessary
- Responsible for the ROI – making sure the Development teams always work on the User Stories with the highest business value

The Product Owner attends Daily Standup meetings and communicates closely with the Scrum Team, preferable face-to-face.

For more information, please visit the Pega Academy for a 30-minute video presentation and the role of the Product Owner and the Backlog.