

Kanban and Scrum Tool Rike Open Sourced

Press Release

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Frankfurt-based IT automation experts arago are now making the project management tool they have developed, Rike, available to the general public for free as open source software. arago has been using the tool in its internal product development since December 2010 – including in the development of arago AutoPilot for IT operations, for example. Rike’s special characteristics: the project management tool is based on the kanban principle and also embraces elements of other agile methods such as extreme programming and scrum. In kanban, employees select their own tasks according to a so-called “pull principle”. All employees are equally challenged as a consequence and can optimally contribute their individual strengths. By minimising the tasks to be completed simultaneously, Rike reduces the throughput times for individual tasks.

Rike boosts motivation through kanban

The kanban method requires employees’ active commitment: instead of the classic “push principle” of many solutions whereby the completed to-dos are automatically passed on to the next employee, kanban builds on a “pull principle”. Project participants select their own tasks as soon as they have the according capacities. All team members can add individual tasks to Rike beforehand and classify these according to different attributes such as their priority, expected duration, anticipated size, degree of difficulty, etc. A colleague then reviews the task and releases it. Alternatively, employees can release work to be completed themselves – though it is initially blocked for 24 hours to avoid any hasty decisions. Based on the tasks added to the system, employees then select the jobs they can – and want – to complete. This leads to increased motivation and satisfaction within the team, as no tasks are delegated. The Rike project management tool by arago allows each employee to process a maximum of three tasks at once to further boost productivity and also ensure no major delays in projects – in the event of absence due to illness, for example.

Rike: transparency within projects

Within development teams, there are countless triggers that give rise to tasks – current release planning, error reports from users or urgent queries from customers, for example. Rike is a metasystem that presides over these different work sources and allows a team to optimally manage its workforce. Within this, Rike does not replace the individual sources such as the wiki, documents in which the releases are described, or feedback or ticket system. Rather, Rike references the individual systems, creating an overview for the development team in the process.

“When a team is assessed according to the overall results, all employees must help one another,” explains Hans-Christian Boos, a member of arago’s Board of Directors. “But this can only work if everyone knows what the individual colleagues are doing, which to-dos are still open, and where the bottlenecks lie. Rike provides an overview of just this.”

Rike therefore acts as a kind of pinboard that is used by the entire team and transparently outlines the various process steps within a project.

Technology and availability

So as to keep the project management as lean and clear as possible, individual to-dos are entered in Rike using URLs where the actual information on the tasks is stored – in software development, under “Plan refactoring (URL to refactor meeting in the Wiki)”, for example. Performance data can also be calculated on the basis of the history of the projects, which provides potential for the optimisation of future work processes.

Rike has been developed with open source portal software Liferay 6, programming language Java 1.6 and portlets. The code for the Rike project management tool is now available for download at <https://github.com/arago/rike>. Rike has an MIT licence, meaning the right to use, copy and modify the software is unrestricted, however arago must be named as author in all cases.