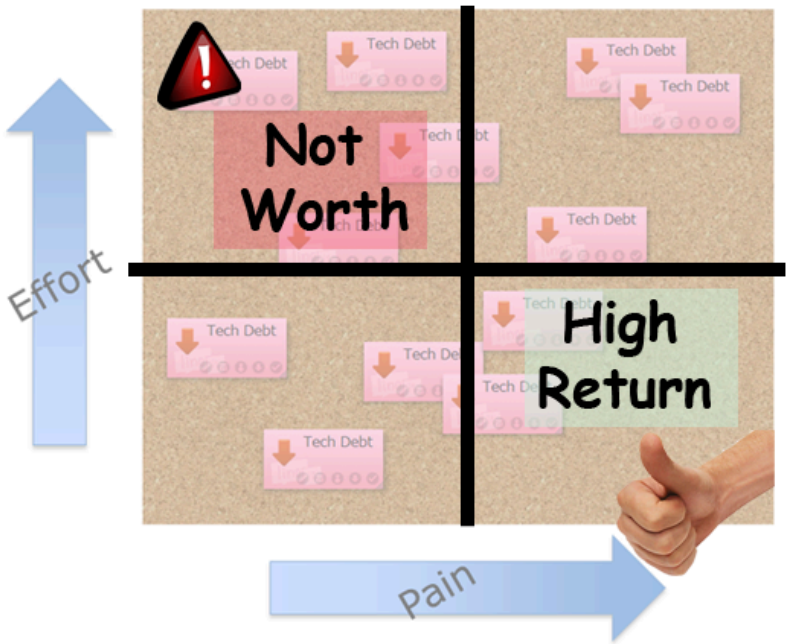
Report on DroidconNL Amsterdam 25, 26 November 2013

Droidcon is an Android conference that is held in various cities around Europe. They have a lot of international speakers, sponsors and attendees. It is mostly about the latest hardware and software for (native) Android. This year was a bit of a focus on wearables (Google Glass, Sony Smart Watch). There were a couple of streams of talks to fill the two days. Below is a short summary of a few highlights.

Mobile Engineering @ SoundCloud - Mustafa Sezgin

An interesting talk that confirmed most of the positive experiences that we've had with moving to Scrum. He recommends multi-skilled development teams, including everyone being responsible for QA. They previously had separate teams for front-end and back-end which was causing long development cycles because of different priorities, but now have teams which can take full ownership of the feature from end to end. They also previously had a lot of manual testing and not many unit tests but have now reduced the amount of manual testing and do comprehensive unit and integration testing.
They start each feature with a kickoff session with everyone from PM to developers to make sure everyone is on the same page. This ends with Acceptance Criteria that are used to drive UI testing. When the feature is complete it ends with a handover. Both the kickoff and handover are with the PM and are done behind a developer's PC.
Soundcloud have open sourced lots of useful tools: soundcloud github
I really liked the idea of a tech debt wall to ensure that technical debt gets reduced.



To Scrum or not to Scrum - Christine Karman

Christine has created many high profile apps, such as Albert Heijn, Post.nl, Efteling. Whereas the previous Scrum session emphasised the importance of Process, Christine prefers the coffee machine chat to daily standup. One thing she had in common with the other talk was to recommend pair programming. She converts User Stories into Features, and then prioritises and works on the feature list.

Runtime styling - Peter Nash

This talk was about nativeCSS, an open source library that styles native components using CSS. This can be useful for example to change the style of the app depending on the domain the user logs on to.

Authentication - Tim Messerschmidt

A nice talk mostly about single sign on methods. He started by talking about how bad password security can be.



If you need to use password security then make sure not to store the password in plain text on the device - use something like SQLCipher. He also emphasised the importance of allowing users to see their password as they type it. Not showing the password discourages users from using strong passwords because it is difficult to type on a mobile device and it's very frustrating to type a complex password and then get an error message telling you that you typed it wrong. If you provide a checkbox to allow the user to see the password he can decide for himself whether there's someone standing behind who can see it.
He then moved on to talk about OAuth. OAuth 1.0 was not good, OAuth 2.0 is better and was designed with mobile in mind. OAuth 2.0 is authorisation as well as identification. OAuth doesn't have functionality to allow the user to logout.
He also pointed out the difference between social login (Facebook, Twitter, Google+) and specialized login (PayPal, LinkedIn). With specialized login the user is verified.

Camobi presentation device

Not a talk, but a sponsor. Every Android conference I've been to has used one of these to project the device onto a big screen. They cost from about €400.

