# Guidance for Developing the Critical Task Schedule

Agile is a value-driven approach to software delivery and requirements are always flexible. This presents a challenge when attempting to provide firm estimates of the project schedule. It is not realistic to have a baselined project plan with detailed tasking at the initiation of the project using an agile methodology.

In an agile environment, short-term plans are made throughout the software delivery life cycle. Long-term plans and schedules are not made in advance. The Agile Project Manager cannot estimate, with any certainty, tasks that may occur six to twelve months out. Agile projects aim to deploy working software as quickly as possible; therefore, development cycles, made up of sprints or iterations, have a short duration. Because the sprints are planned in shorter increments of time with a smaller amount of associated resources, more accurate estimates for a specific release are possible.

From an agile perspective, the project is in a continuous planning mode and a Critical Task Schedule evolves throughout the development of the release. The Critical Task Schedule should reflect the plans for a specific Release, including the number of iterations and estimates of the time-boxed sprints, and reviews. During the Release Planning phase, the schedule is a high-level estimate, based on the known velocity of the team. After a few iterations within a release, the IT Project Manager will be able to provide more realistic estimates of the schedule as more data is made available.

Depending on the tools used to track the Product / Release Backlog, it may be convenient to export the high-level user stories and tasks to build the Critical Task Schedule. Currently, there is not a required format for the Critical Task Schedule, project teams can use Gantt Charts, Microsoft Office tools, etc. The Critical Task Schedule should be presented during the Release Planning Review and include estimated dates for the following:

* High level milestones
* Critical tasks
* Deliverables
* Release Planning Review
* Release Readiness Review
* Deployments
* Retrospectives