**Release Ceremonies**

**Motivation**

The purpose of this task is to confirm that everything has been done right in the current iteration and the basis for further development is ensured. Release ceremonies are the final steps before making a release of the software. In practice, release ceremonies consist of two essential activities; release audit and baseline creation.

**Goal**

The goals of Release Ceremonies are to:

1. **Ensure that team has performed all relevant activities** before making a release of software (by conducting a release audit)
2. **Ensure the basis for further development** (by creating a baseline)

**Entry & Inputs**

1. Development and testing have been completed in the current iteration.
2. All the pre-audit activities have been conducted (e.g. document review if utilized)

**Inputs:**

1. **Latest versions of development artefacts.** For the purpose of the release audit it is good to have all the relevant development material available (e.g. story and task cards, documentation and source code).

**Exit & Outputs**

1. **Deficiencies found in the release audit have been corrected (or at least listed).**
2. **Baseline has been created.**

**Outputs:**

1. **Filled release audit checklist,**
2. **Baseline** (e.g. in the version control system).
The following figure illustrates the steps in Release Ceremonies:

![Diagram of Release Ceremonies]

The individual steps of Release Ceremonies are described below:

**Steps**

1. **Conduct a release audit.** Go through the release audit checklist and write down detected deficiencies (if any).
2. **Perform corrective actions.** Any anomalies found during an audit should not only be corrected but the root causes of the problem should be identified and corrected to ensure that the problem does not occur again. It may be that some deficiencies can not be corrected right away.
3. **Create a baseline.** Baseline is a configuration of the product. If the project uses a version control tool a baseline can be created easily by using tool’s functions. Baseline can also be created manually by copying project files/folders to separate location.

**Templates & Tools**

The following document templates and tools are used in Release Ceremonies:

- Templates:
  1. ReleaseAuditTemplate.doc
  2. SystemReleaseAuditTemplate.doc

- Tools:
  1. **Version control tool.** A version control tool is very useful for a baseline creation purposes. However, it is only a one advantage that can be achieved with a version control tool.

**Roles**

The following roles can be identified in executing Release Ceremonies:

1. **External auditor.** The person who goes through the release audit checklist and writes down detected deficiencies. Ensures that the results of the release audit are valid and acceptable. The auditor should have good knowledge of the project.
2. **Project team/Developer.** Is present during the audit for answering questions that may occur. Establishes baseline after successful release audit.
FAQ

The answers to the frequently asked questions will provide the Release Ceremonies with additional in-depth information gained when applying it in practice.

**Q** Can I modify release audit checklist to better suit our project?

**A** Of course you can. Release audit template is just an example and can be modified as needed. For example, you can add checks that suit better to your project.

**Q** What exactly is a baseline?

**A** Whitgift [1] defines a baseline as a fully approved product of a phase of the project lifecycle which forms the basis for subsequent phases. According to Taramaa [2], a baseline is a document or product that has been formally reviewed and agreed upon and can serve as a basis for further development. Baseline is an accepted configuration of the product.

**Q** What items I should include to a release baseline?

**A** You should define the contents of baselines at the beginning of the project (e.g. in project plan). At least project source code should be included, because it is the most critical part of the product. In addition, you can include also product binaries and documentation.

**Q** Our project do not use a version control tool, can I still create a baseline?

**A** Yes, you can. Baseline can also be created manually by copying project files/folders to separate location. However, some version control tool is highly recommended (and not only for baselining purposes).

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**Related patterns**

Other patterns which are part of, composed of or associated closely to Release Ceremonies are identified here.

- **Release Day.** Release Ceremonies are part of Release Day.

**Variations**

Possible variations of Release Ceremonies are presented in the following:

1. **Release Ceremonies for the system release (i.e. for the final release).** In practice release ceremonies for the system release contains the same steps as common release ceremonies. However, a system release audit is intended to be more extensive and to contain more checks than regular release audit (see SystemReleaseAuditTemplate.doc).

**Risks**

Possible risks which can result from Release Ceremonies as well as the solutions including pre-emptive actions for avoiding the risks and actions to take to minimise the risks’ effects are discussed here:

- **The baseline creation is forgotten.** In a busy release day it may happen that the baseline creation is completely forgotten. With modern software configuration management tools this situation is not catastrophic. Perhaps you already have advanced in the next iteration and have done several changes to project files. However, a baseline can be created by date and time.
References:
