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Scrum Master Startup Guide

Startup guide for new Scrum Masters

Introduction

What is this guide?

This guide contains the most important information on how to start working in the Scrum Master role. Majority of Scrum Masters work in the role in addition to their normal "day job". This guide is meant for them.

Scrum Master role can be a full time role. However, most full time Scrum Masters take care of several scrum teams. Much more often, the Scrum Master is a role that someone in the development team takes on in addition to his or her normal duties. As part time Scrum Master, you will probably spend only 5-10% of your work time for the Scrum Master duties (this does not include participation on the team ceremonies, which all the team members naturally participate in).

Who is if for?

This guide is meant for people who are just starting to work as Scrum Masters, and do so part time, continuing their other duties. This guide is also useful for teams who decide to rotate the scrum mastership from team member to team member.

There is no need to rush in to book a seat on a "Certified Scrum Master" two day course. You can get up to speed and be an effective Scrum Master in just couple hours.

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Benefits of Good Agile

Benefits of Agile

With effective agile methods and scrum, the team will achieve better performance with less stress. The team can improve and work sustainably for long times without the need for overtime.

This achieves following benefits:

- Better visibility on how the work is progressing
- Better adaptability if situation or the environment changes unexpectedly
- Faster delivery of business value
- Reduced risks

Visibility

Adaptability

Business Value

Risk
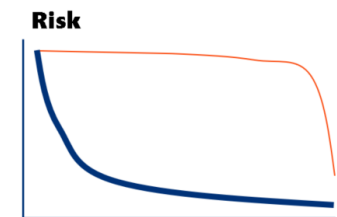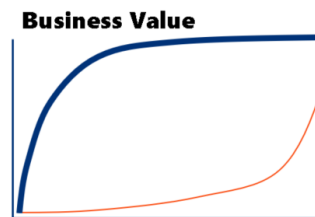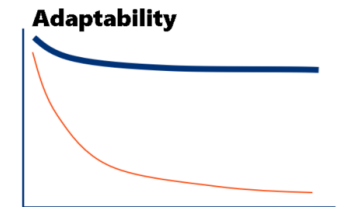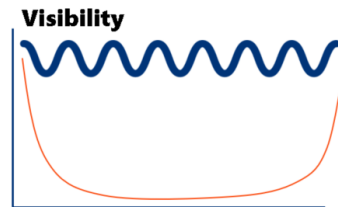
Additionally, key stakeholders are more happy with good agile ways of working:

- Increased customer satisfaction
- Increased management satisfaction
- Better employee satisfaction and team spirit

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Agile Manifesto and Principles

Agile Manifesto

Individuals and interactions	over	processes and tools
Working software	over	comprehensive documentation
Customer collaboration	over	contract negotiation
Responding to change	over	following a plan

Agile Principles

1. Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software.
2. Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer's competitive advantage.
3. Deliver working software frequently, from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, with a preference to the shorter timescale.
4. Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project.
5. Build projects around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
6. The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation.
7. Working software is the primary measure of progress.
8. Agile processes promote sustainable development. The sponsors, developers, and users should be able to maintain a constant pace indefinitely.
9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design enhances agility.
10. Simplicity--the art of maximizing the amount of work not done--is essential.
11. The best architectures, requirements, and designs emerge from self-organizing teams.
12. At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly.

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Scrum Values and Principles

Scrum is based on the three principles of Transparency, Inspection and Adaptation.

Transparency: this means for example, that no work, specification, problems, risks or progress of work is hidden. Everyone on the team and outside must have access and visibility of how the work is proceeding.

Inspection: this means that the team is motivated and willing to look at the results of the work, and the process that created it – and then analyse the result and compare it to what the team wants to achieve.

Adaptation: this means that the team actively seeks to adjust course based on what it feels is the correct direction to take.

Respect   Openness   Commitment   Focus   Courage

Transparency   Inspection   Adaptation

Scrum Values

- o **Respect**: All the team members contribute to the target. Collaboration and other's ideas are respected. Other peoples accomplishments are celebrated
- o **Openness**: Team members are honest when they need help. Open minded team always seeks to improve and learn. Ceremonies like daily and review show clearly and openly how things went. Assumptions are voiced out loud.
- o **Commitment:** Team is protected from sprint scope changes, and the sprint planning session seeks opinion from team to deliver. Daily - team feels pressure to deliver promise.
- o **Focus.** Team finishes what they start and does not get sidetracked
- o **Courage.** Question the status quo, feel safe to ask for help and say no. Team does not fear difficult conversations

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Agile Ceremonies

Agile ceremonies are meetings that happen regularly on a weekly, daily or per sprint frequency. The content and format of the meeting varies very little. The ceremonies are integral part of the agile way of working.

Ceremony facilitation and improvement usually is the responsibility of Scrum Master.

Scrum uses all the below ceremonies. Kanban uses four of the ceremonies, but lacks Sprint planning and review because Kanban does not have sprints. Kanban-teams must have another frequency to discuss items that fall into Sprint planning and Review agenda.
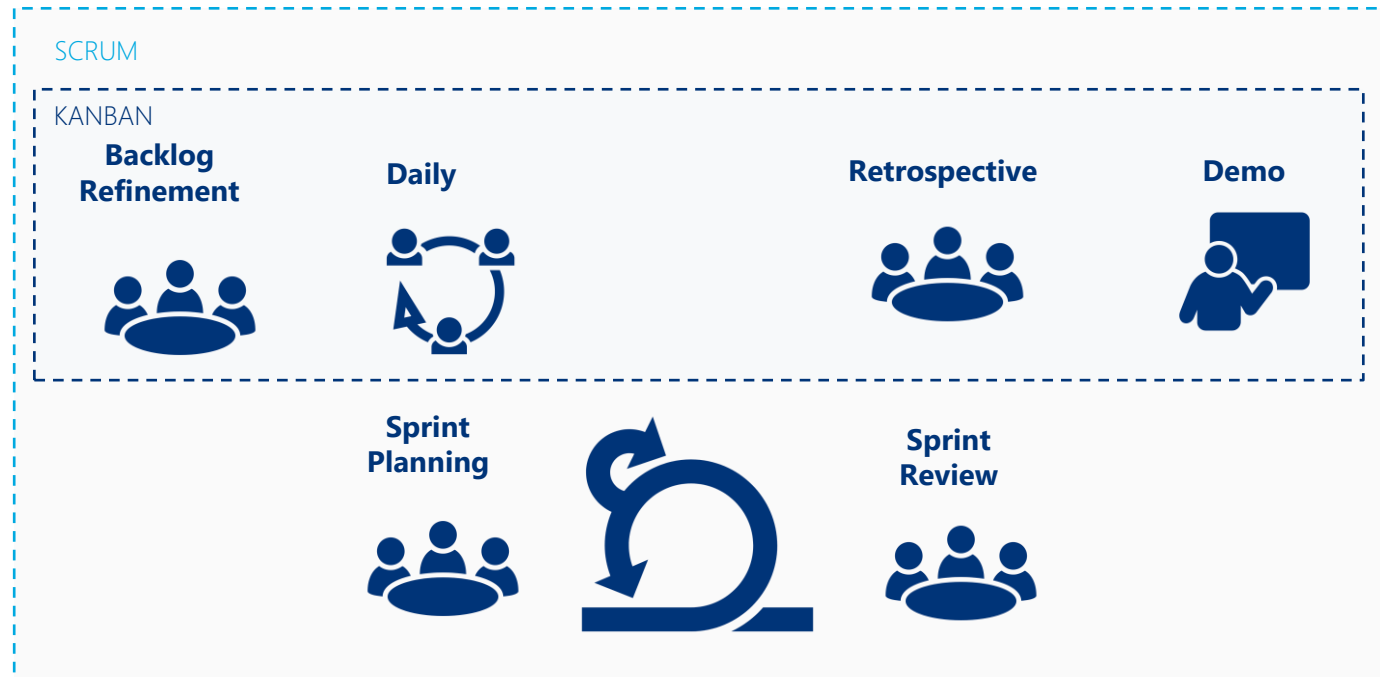
Agile Ceremonies

o **Backlog Refinement**: Regular meeting to improve the top of the backlog, and maintain the rest of the backlog

o **Sprint Planning**: At start of sprint, the team and Product Owner get together to plan and commit what can be done in the coming sprint.

o **Daily**, A short, daily meeting where team self-organizes what has been completed, what is started next, and keeps work going forward.

o **Retrospective.** Regular meeting that reflects on past work, and finds out better ways to do things.

o **Sprint Review.** At the completion of the sprint, the team and PO get together to review done and not done items and reflect on learnings and big picture.

o **Demo:** Team presents complete work to stakeholders to get feedback.

Backlog Refinement

Regular backlog refinement is key to achieving good quality work items for the team's process. Backlog refinement relies on Definition of Ready – the team's agreement what kind of work it agrees to start.

KEY POINTS

Regular – preferably one hour every week

User value focused – the team asks what user problem is solved with this backlog item

Discussion – the team must have discussion among itself and with the product owner – everyone is also involved

Definition of Ready – without a written definition of ready, the team will forget to what level the backlog item should be specified

START WITH THIS

Agree with Product Owner who organizes it

Workshop the Definition of Ready with the team.

Start with 1 hour meeting every week, with all the team present. Investigate and trial other approaches later.

Backlog
Refinement

Sprint
Planning

Daily

Sprint
Review

Demo

Retrospective

Sprint Planning

Sprint planning is where team finalizes any backlog items that it agrees to be part of the sprint scope. Sprint planning starts from a Product Owner's proposal or prioritized backlog. Definition of Done must exist for the team to be able to commit to any sprint scope. Velocity must be used as "how much to load" guide.

KEY POINTS

Start from Product Owner's proposed set of backlog items, add what team feels should be considered. Check that the backlog items pass Definition of Ready.

Latest here – effort estimates and compare these to velocity. Do not load too much. Slightly over velocity is maximum.

Definition of Done – without a written definition of done, the team cannot effectively commit to deliver anything.

START WITH THIS

Agree with Product Owner to bring a proposal or start with prioritized backlog

Workshop the Definition of Done with the team.

2 hour meeting at first day of Sprint.

Backlog
Refinement

Sprint
Planning

Daily

Sprint
Review

Demo

Retrospective

Daily

Daily is the only meeting during the sprint that aims to ensure that the team achieves the sprint goals. That is why it is so important. The team must be made to feel that it is checking done, in progress and still to be done sprint backlog. If there are any problems, risks or blockers, these should be voiced, so that the team can react in an agile manner to any setbacks.

Daily is also a planned interruption. Things that are urgent, should not wait for Daily. But other things, that are not urgent, can wait for daily. This way other interruptions can be minimised.

KEY POINTS

Three classic questions: 1) what I did yesterday 2) what I will do today 3) is there any problems or blockers and 4) did I learn anything that others should know

Promote highlighting issues and solving them in meet afters

Always start sharp at the same time (even if someone is late)

Strict timebox of 15 minutes, most meetings can be shorter.

Off-topic discussions only X seconds – then meet after.

START WITH THIS

Be strict with the rules.

Teach the team to update scrum board before meeting – every time.

Teach the team to self-organize (speaking order, no off topic, meet afters) rather than always choreograph it yourself

Backlog
Refinement

Sprint
Planning

Daily

**Sprint
Review**

Demo

Retrospective

Sprint Review

Sprint review is where team checks the result of the sprint – which backlog items were done and which not. This is also a place for reflection – do the completed items fulfill the needs of the user / customer? Did we find some new issues which need to be on the backlog?

KEY POINTS

What were the reasons that something wasnt done? What should be done differently to achieve more things in the future?

What to do with the things that were not done – move to next sprint / back to backlog / not needed

Has the team learned something – about priorities or new items

Sometimes compare the results with Definition of Done, to verify that team obeys it

Review big picture situation also

**START WITH
THIS**

Check the done items against DoD

Check why things were not done, and what to do with them

This meeting can be combined with Demo, but they can also be separated

Demo

Demo targets to show what was Done in the last sprint. The target audience is stakeholders that are interested in the work items. The demo session can be adjacent to the Sprint Review meeting, or it can also be on a different time, if more stakeholders can participate it. The key thing is to get comments and feedback.

KEY POINTS

Key target of the demo session is to inform, communicate and to get feedback from the stakeholders and other teams.

You can also record the session for viewing at other times

Show only Done items

In larger programs, it is also good idea to consider a program level common demo

START WITH THIS

Arrange demo session adjacent to the Sprint review, but with a separate invitation. The review is for the team, and the demo is for the stakeholders

Ensure you get feedback for the demoed items - if no other way works, ask direct questions

Retrospective

Retrospective aims to allow the team to analyse, explore and improve the ways of working. Team can consider what worked well, and what did not work so well. There are thousands of methods to use to guide the retrospective discussion. The key things are that the team agrees concrete action points to take in the next sprint. The team should most of the time focus their energy to the things under their control.

KEY POINTS

Use different retrospective methods, not only a discussion "what was good, what was bad". There are thousands of retrospective methods out there.

Regular retrospective is essential for the team spirit and improved performance. Keep retro every sprint or every month.

1 hour retro is good investment

Retrospective should be split to exploration, discussion & analysis and action point agreement.

START WITH THIS

You are the host and facilitator. Start with an easy method like "Mad, sad, glad". Explore other methods and try out.

Watch the time – spend max 1/2 of time to exploration, 1/3 to analysis and the rest for agreeing on actions

Do not take too many actions at one time! Actions can be added to sprint backlog

New Scrum Master Checklist

The most important things to do as new Scrum Master

1. Read this guide completely.
2. Find and bookmark the scrum guide and read it the first time (you should return to it regularly to reflect your skills and progress)
3. Agree with your Product Owner on who will invite the team ceremonies. (if you don't know who is the product owner, talk to your manager and halt the process here while you get a name)
4. Book all the team ceremonies. Make the ones that can be regular and recurring so in the calendar invitation. (this means most of them). Make also the necessary meeting room or video call arrangements.
5. Ensure that you and your team is well prepared for your first round of team ceremonies with instructions from this guide.

Enjoy your Scrum Master role! You are a key player in your team road to successful scrum!

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Development Path

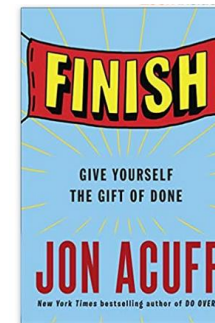## Scrum Master Recommended reading

Scrum Field guide book
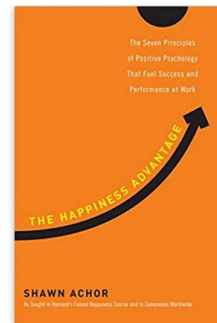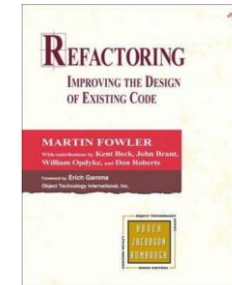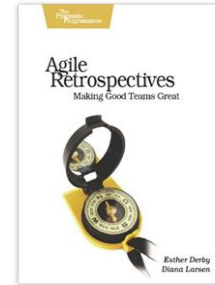The happiness advantage
Refactoring
Finish
Agile Retrospectives
Contribyte super-ceremony guide

Further training

Want to become a world class Scrum Master?
Contact Contribyte for the World Class Scrum
Master training program.

About Contribyte

Contribyte is the coach of winning product organizations and teams of the future. We help organizations become better in product development.

Contribyte also trains product leaders, product managers, product owners, scrum masters and development teams. Our coaches have years of experience in improving product development team practices and product creation processes.

Read our blogs and subscribe our newsletter here: https://contribyte.fi/ajatuksia/tuteblogi/

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