



SCRUM MASTER

Defining Roles & Responsibilities



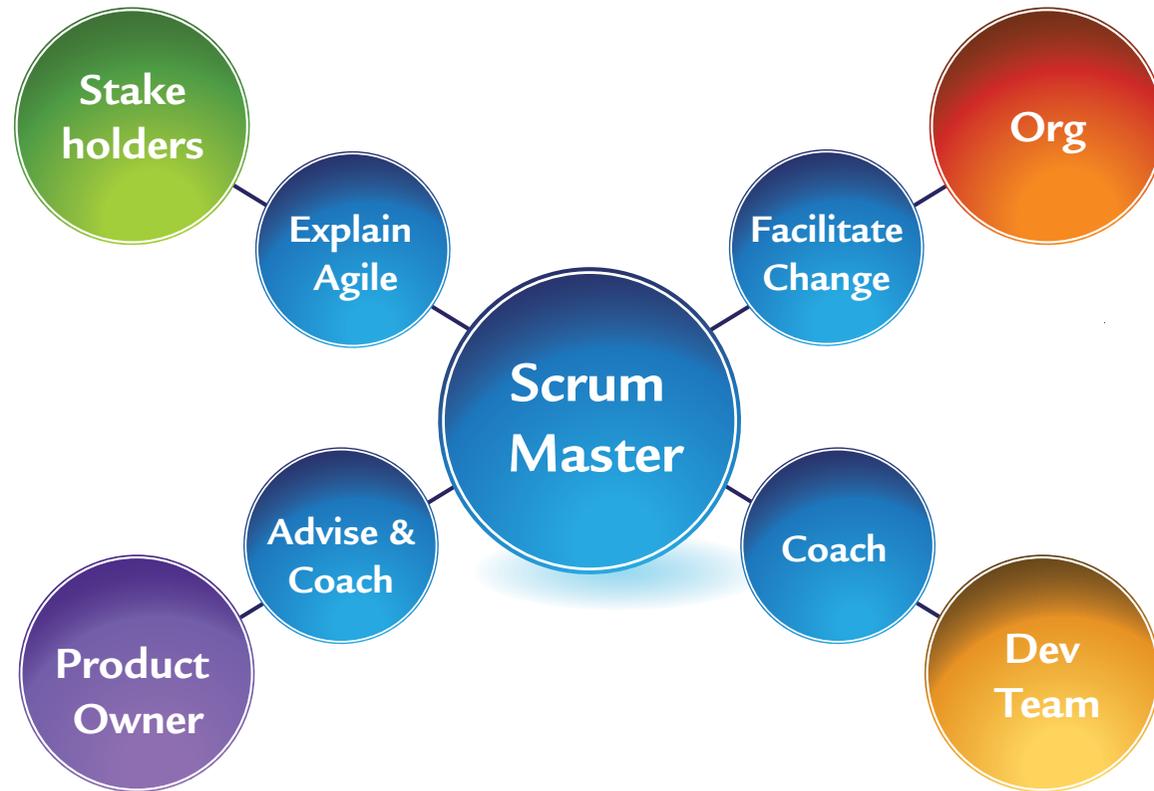
BRIEF BACKGROUND

The utilization of Incremental software development methods trace back to 1957. In his paper titled, “Managing the Development of Large Software Systems,” in 1970, noted American computer scientist and pioneer in the field of software development, Dr. Winston W. Royce picked apart sequential development.

He explained that software should not be developed like a vehicle in a factory assembly line; wherein every component is combined into a whole, in a set of sequential phases, where every such phase depends on what has gone before. Therefore, Dr. Royce opined that it was not appropriate to adhere to the phase-based approach.

In February 2001, a group of 17 software developers published the “Manifesto for Agile Software Development”. It must be noted here that Scrum is an Agile framework that is accordant with Agile Manifesto values.

SCRUM ORIGINATION



Hiroataka Takeuchi and Ikujiro Nonaka are hailed as the pioneers of Scrum. They introduced the concept in 1986 by in the "New New Product Development Game" (Harvard Business Review, January/February 1986). The duo explained that their approach was a "flexible, holistic product development strategy". In addition, they opined that this methodology would bring about fast and flexible product development.

SCRUM ORIGINATION

Takeuchi and Nonaka further elucidated that the Scrum theory was a holistic or "rugby" approach as one cross-functional team passes the "ball" around back and forth on the way to the "goal line" exactly the way in which a rugby match is played. This was and is varied in distinction to earlier approaches that tended to advance in a rigid, linear fashion.

Therefore, Scrum is an iterative and incremental agile software development methodology for managing product development. It defines "a flexible, holistic product development strategy where a development team works as a unit to reach a common goal", challenges assumptions of the "traditional, sequential approach" to product development, and enables teams to self-organize by encouraging physical co-location or close online collaboration of all team members, as well as daily face-to-face communication among all team members and disciplines in the project.

SCRUM ORIGINATION

A key principle of scrum is its recognition that during a project the customers can change their minds about what they want and need (often called "requirements churn"), and that unpredicted challenges cannot be easily addressed in a traditional predictive or planned manner. As such, scrum adopts an empirical approach—accepting that the problem cannot be fully understood or defined, focusing instead on maximizing the team's ability to deliver quickly and respond to emerging requirements.

The product is built incrementally in a series of short time spans called sprints. These sprints work to a clear-cut periodic duration—normally ranging from anywhere between one to four weeks. This is welcomed by teams, because they believe that short sprints are far more effective when compared to longer ones. During each sprint, the Scrum team builds and delivers a product increment, which is a shippable subset of the product. Each product increment is a recognizable, visibly improved, operating version of the product, meeting defined acceptance criteria and built to a level of quality called done.

SCRUM ROLES



There are three pivotal roles in a Scrum team

- **Product Owner:** responsible for envisioning the product
- **Scrum Master:** helps teams to build the product
- **Development Team:** constructs the product competently

SCRUM ROLES

Product Owner

The goals of the product owner are well-defined. As a member of the Scrum team, he or she is expected to optimize the complete value and performance level of the work delivered by the team.

More importantly, the onus is on the product owner to develop and implement the product vision by controlling the budget and the ROI, working closely with various stakeholders including end users, customers and also the business as a whole, to originate and sustain a community around the product.

The product owner enables routes of communication between the team and stakeholders in order to ensure that the team is building the correct product. In short, the product owner describes what should be built and why, but not how.

SCRUM ROLES

The product owner carries out the following tasks to accomplish the role

- Determines what goes into the product backlog and what does not.
- Maintains the product backlog and orders the items in the backlog to deliver the highest value.
- Works with team and stakeholders to continuously improve quality of the product backlog; and everyone's understanding of the items it contains.
- Decides product backlog items to ask the team to deliver in the current sprint.
- Decides when to ship the product, with a choice for frequent delivery.

Even though other individuals can assist the product owner, it is preferable that it is a single person who handles and determines matters. This helps greatly in protecting the clarity, vision and requirements.

SCRUM MASTER

Scrum is facilitated by a Scrum Master, who is accountable for removing impediments to the ability of the team to deliver the product goals and deliverables. The Scrum Master is not a traditional team lead or project manager, but acts as a buffer between the team and any distracting influences. The Scrum Master ensures that the scrum process is used as intended.

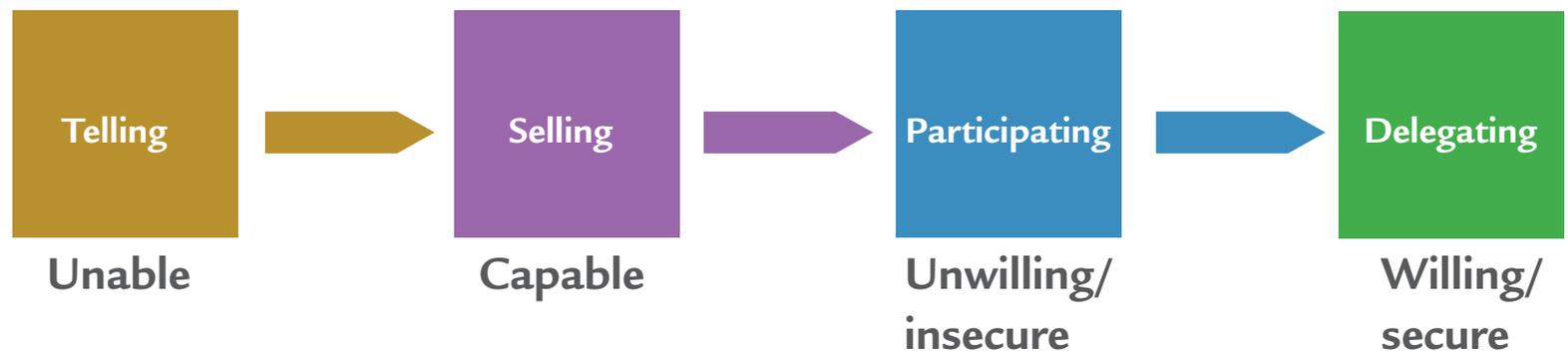
The Scrum Master helps ensure the team follows the agreed scrum processes, often facilitates key sessions, and encourages the team to improve. The role has also been referred to as a team facilitator or servant-leader to reinforce these dual perspectives.

The first activity of a product development team every morning is to organize a quick meeting that enables a proper review of the progress made; and essentially restart the project. In these meetings, also known as "scrums," the Scrum Master poses three important questions before team member.

SCRUM MASTER

1. What did you do yesterday?
2. What will you do today?
3. Are there any impediments?

Though the designation ‘Scrum Master’ evokes a sense of power and inspires awe; Scrum Masters cannot be likened to a project leader and is certainly not responsible for outcomes—that factor comes under the team’s ambit.



A SERVANT LEADER

Compared to the more classical project management methods that we are accustomed to, Scrum does not have, or rather, does not need to have a product/task manager or even a team leader. In essence the Scrum Master is basically a “servant leader” who helps the Scrum team to work towards achieving goals. The Scrum Master maintains productivity and learning in the Scrum team. Against this backdrop, it is extremely essential that the Scrum Master should have thorough knowledge of the Scrum framework; and more importantly, should possess the capability to train other members to use it.

Scrum Master has three essential responsibilities:

Team Coach

The Scrum Master helps the entire team perform better. They help the product owner understand how to create and maintain the product backlog so the project is well defined and work flows smoothly to the team.

A SERVANT LEADER

They also work with the whole Scrum team to determine the definition of done. The Scrum Master coaches the team on how to execute the Scrum process, helping them learn and use the framework and find and implement technical practices so they can reach done at the end of each sprint.

Help the Team Progress

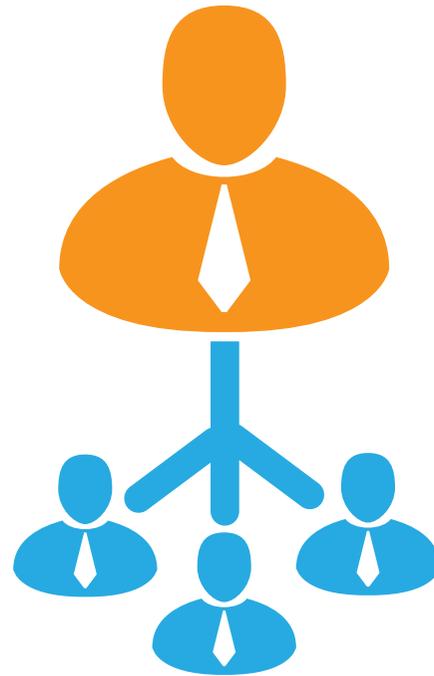
As a servant leader, the Scrum Master fosters the team's self-organization and then sees that distractions and impediments, or roadblocks, to the team's progress are removed.

Impediments may be external to the team, like lack of support from another team, or they could be internal, like the product owner not knowing how to prepare a proper product backlog. They may also facilitate regular team meetings to ensure that the team progresses on its path to done.

A SERVANT LEADER

Teach Scrum to All

The Scrum Master ensures that Scrum is understood and in place, both inside and outside the team. They help people outside the team understand the process, as well as which interactions with the team are helpful and which are not. The Scrum Master helps everyone improve to make the Scrum team more productive and valuable.



RESOLVING IMPEDIMENTS

Impediments, more commonly known as hindrances, can be a major headache for the smooth workflow of projects. Teams can get distressed and disturbed if obstructions occur often.

Problems can be classified into three categories:

The first category of problems comprises those that the team cannot resolve. Take for example this scenario: The team finds it impossible to carry out performance-tests as the hardware is not available. To add to their woes, the IT-department fails to provide Bug tracker; or the software did not reach the team in time. Another impediment can arise if the sales or marketing manager ends up demanding the inclusion of another feature rapidly.

The second category deals with those impediments that are a direct outcome of strategic decision-making or the existing organizational structure. Maybe the office is not capable of handling the important meetings or teamwork – e.g. due to lack of media.

RESOLVING IMPEDIMENTS

This is often because of the classical role of a project leader, but using Scrum it only leads to conflicts of interests and is strongly against its major principle: The team owns a management role in the method of Scrum and is therefore coequal with the Scrum Master and the Product Owner. Another aspect can be the insufficient bandwidth of the internet for the new project.

The third problem refers to individuals. Someone needs a hand with the debugging. Another one cannot solve a task alone and needs someone else for the pair programming. Someone else has to reset his computer; and so on.

Even though a Scrum Master can't and shouldn't realize some requirements himself, he is still responsible for solving and getting rid of problems and needs to give proper criteria. This task often takes up a lot of time and requires great authority and backbone. The Scrum Master has to create an optimal working-condition for the team and is responsible for this condition to be retained, in order to meet the goals of every sprint – i.e. for a short sprint the defined requirements.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Different from other methods, in Scrum a team is not just the executive organ that receives its tasks from the project leader, it rather decides self-dependent, which requirements or User Stories it can accomplish in one sprint. It constructs the tasks and is responsible for the permutation of those – the team becomes a manager. This new self-conception of the team and the therewith aligned tasks and responsibilities necessarily change the role of the team leader/project leader.

The Scrum Master does not need to delegate all the work and to plan the project, he rather takes care that the team meets all conditions in order to reach the self-made goals. He cleans off any impediments, provides an ideal working environment for the team, coaches and is responsible for the observation of Scrum-rules – he becomes the so-called Servant Leader.

The changed role perception is one of the most important aspects, when someone wants to understand Scrum and with the intent to introduce it in their own company.

CONCLUSION

Scrum is certainly not a foolproof framework as it does have its own set of limitations; which is the reason why it may not be the best fit for every team or product. There are other Agile and Lean approaches too, like Kanban or XP.

Therefore, what is crucial is for us to comprehend that these current shifts call for a dynamic and progressive outlook from developers and managers. The need of the hour is to utilize the benefits that a Scrum Master brings to the table, in terms of opening up team communication and problem solving techniques.

About Orchestrate

Orchestrate is a US based business process management organization with Headquarters in Dallas, Texas. Orchestrate offers services to diverse outsourcing requirements of clients in an extensive range of businesses including IT, finance, mortgage, and contact center. We provide a comprehensive suite of technology and services to our clients that help accelerate sales and boost their profit. Our comprehensive solutions and services help SMEs and enterprises to implement technologies and processes that boost their profitability across the organization.



1330 Capital Parkway, Carrollton TX 75006

Toll Free: 800-232-5130 | success@orchestrate.com

www.orchestrate.com

