

THE EXECUTIVE'S QUICK GUIDE TO SCRUM

WHAT IT IS AND HOW
IT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR
COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS SCRUM?

When most people hear the word “Scrum,” they envision a mashing of heads and limbs on a rugby pitch — an organized, should-to-shoulder fisticuffs that results in some guy with short shorts and cauliflower ear emerging with an oblong ball and everyone chasing him.

As a senior manager or executive at a software company, however, you probably envision something completely different. Maybe the software development team in your organization has been mentioning the boost in productivity they can achieve with Scrum and pushing for its adoption. Or maybe they’re already successfully leveraging it. Maybe you’re curious if implementing it further could help optimize your entire organization’s output.

This guide is meant to serve as a high-level overview of Scrum and why it can be such an effective methodology for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of your team — whether it’s sales, marketing, product development, or customer service.

What we won’t do is get bogged down in details. If you are looking for a deep dive into the ins and outs of the methodology you’ll have to look elsewhere (visiting Scruminc.com is a good place to start). But if you are looking for a quick high-level break down of what Scrum is, why it matters, and what it can do for your business then this is the guide is for you.

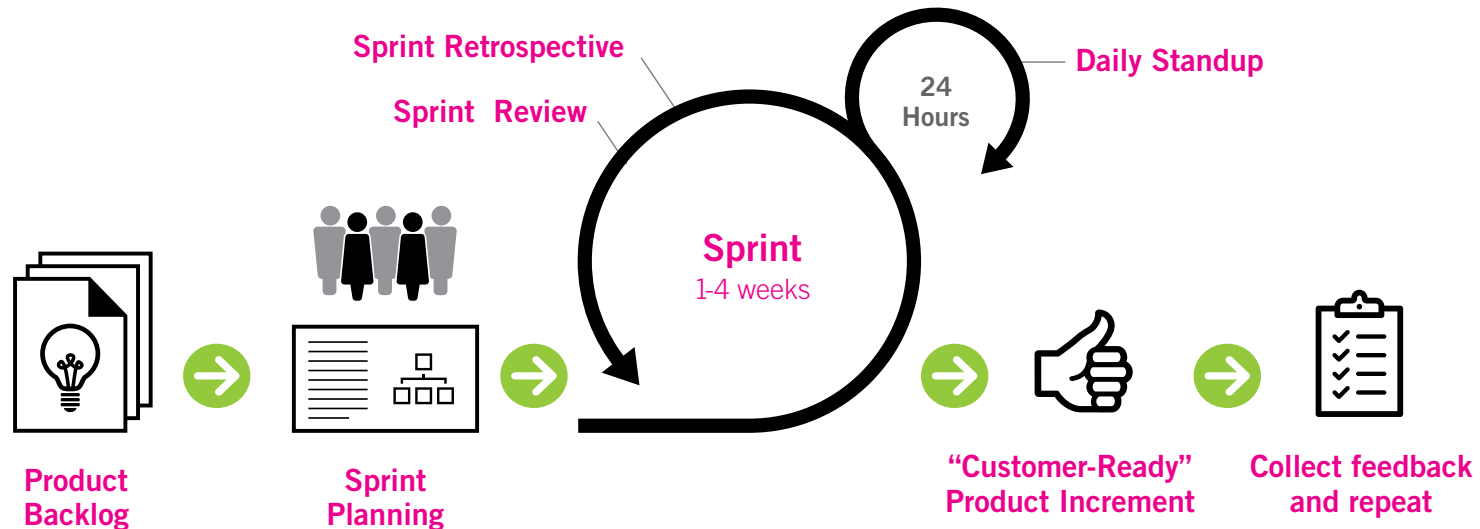
Without further ado, let’s start from the top with an obvious question: What exactly is Scrum and why should you care about it?



THE SCRUM PROCESS IN A NUTSHELL

At its core, Scrum is a process that enables teams to achieve a level of continuous improvement. It revolves around operating in short cycles called “sprints” with built-in opportunities for teams to prioritize their workloads, hone in on and attack the few things that truly matter, identify what worked well and what could help them perform better, then rinse and repeat.

The graphic below highlights some of the key elements and depicts the process in action.



THE SCRUM FRAMEWORK IN 30 SECONDS

Here is how the process is explained on the [Scrum Alliance website](#):

- » A **product owner** creates a prioritized wish list called a product backlog.
- » During sprint planning, the team pulls a small chunk from the top of that wish list, a **sprint backlog**, and decides how to implement those pieces.
- » The team has a certain amount of time — a **sprint** (usually one to four weeks) — to complete its work, but it meets each day to assess its progress (**daily Scrum**).
- » Along the way, the **Scrum Master** keeps the team focused on its goal.
- » At the end of the sprint, the work should be potentially shippable: ready to hand to a customer, put on a store shelf, or show to a stakeholder.
- » The sprint ends with a **sprint review** and **retrospective**.
- » As the next sprint begins, the team chooses another chunk of the **product backlog** and begins working again.

For another quick breakdown of the Scrum framework from beginning to end, see this [interactive infographic](#) from Scrum Inc.



WHAT DOES SCRUM DO?

That's all well and good, but what does Scrum actually do?

Very simply, Scrum is an organizational framework for developing highly productive teams that neatly combines many elements of good leadership practice. It can be deployed to more effectively complete work — whether that “work” is executing sales strategies, delivering better marketing campaigns, or building better product features. As an agile development methodology, Scrum has been proven to help software development teams build and release better software, but that doesn't mean its benefits are limited only to software development.

In fact, if you look at the most admired companies in the world, you'll likely find that they're all agile in some way (typically across multiple functions), and that agility generally helps them produce better products faster, provide better user experiences, and drive more revenue and profit. What expansion-stage software company couldn't benefit from accomplishing those same things?

THE BIG PAYOFF:

4X
PRODUCTIVITY



“200% productivity growth is considered easy, and we routinely see productivity enhancements of 400% to 800%. Companies that can successfully produce at 4x the rate of their competitors dominate their market, because you just can't compete with that.”

— Alex Brown, COO of Scrum Inc.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF SCRUM

To get things started, let's explore the three main ideas that encapsulate Scrum:



Divide & Conquer

At a high level, Scrum is a simple organizational framework that enables any team or person to break complex tasks or ideas into simple, bite-sized pieces. This is done by dividing work among smaller teams, and breaking deadlines or goals into shorter cycles (known as “sprints”).



Inspect & Adapt

Scrum also allows teams to better analyze and prioritize their work by regularly revisiting plans and assumptions, improving processes, adapting to change, and optimizing product value.



Create Transparency & Visibility

When people are equipped with all of the information they need to make smart decisions, businesses thrive.

Ultimately, that's the real business case for Scrum. By implementing a system that encourages teams to build better software faster and focus heavily on user satisfaction, your company can create an ecosystem where more and more users want more and more of your software. And when that happens, good things naturally happen to revenue.

“In my old role as a management consultant, I would have been delighted to deliver a consulting engagement that delivered a 30 percent productivity improvement,” says Alex Brown, Chief Operating Officer of Scrum Inc. “But in the Scrum implementation world, 200 percent productivity growth is considered easy, and we routinely see productivity enhancements of 400 to 800 percent compared to pre-Scrum output. Companies that can successfully produce at four times the rate of their competitors dominate their market, because you just can't compete with that.”

WHO IS SCRUM FOR?

So, is Scrum right for your organization? What kind of team is it best suited for? Is it for developers only? How do you implement it?

For starters, while it's true that Scrum was initially designed to improve the efficiency of software development, the fact is it can actually be used to improve the work output of any team or profession.

It can be particularly beneficial for creative teams working on complex problems where the end outcome isn't clear. Traditionally, those types of teams have not been well served by traditional project management processes. Even [some schools and churches](#) are adopting the principles of Scrum to drive stronger communication and collaboration, and improve their working environment.



“At OpenView, we’ve found that Scrum can double the production of anything – it doesn’t matter whether it’s sales, marketing, software, finance. It works everywhere.”

— Dr. Jeff Sutherland OpenView senior advisor and Scrum Inc. CEO

5 WAYS SCRUM CAN HELP ANY TEAM (AND MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER)

1

Understand how tasks fit into the bigger picture

Because Scrum allows you to break down complex projects into manageable tasks, it forces teams to think about the specific actions needed to reach a goal, and it encourages reviewing and revising those actions to ensure they're focusing on the most high-impact work possible.

For executives and managers, that means less time hand-holding, and a focus on setting high-level goals rather than assigning individual tasks. For the team, the ultimate goal is always in mind, and discovering the best steps necessary to achieve it is up to them.



2

Keep better tabs on the team's progress

With its rhythm of daily stand-ups and weekly reporting meetings, one of the major benefits of Scrum is improved visibility into a team's workflow and its results. By utilizing Scrum boards (that's where online tools like Trello or the good old fashioned Post-It Notes come in), team members and managers can get a quick glimpse into the team's progress and track the current status of any individual task in a very clear and visible way.

Keep in mind, however, that while Scrum encourages transparency, it actively discourages micromanagement (more on that in Chapter 2). Of course you need to know what your team is doing and when you can expect it to be done, but it is up to the team members, themselves, to complete their work how they best see fit. In that way, Scrum encourages autonomy within a team structure. There is no real "boss" on a Scrum team, although Product Owners are ultimately held accountable for a finished product.



3

Build in deliverables

The goal of every Scrum team is to have something deliverable at the end of every sprint. That means complex projects are naturally broken down into smaller, more specific tasks, and teams can paint a much more detailed picture of what needs to happen (and when) in order to have the larger project completed.

For managers and executives, that means more detailed insight into what your teams are doing at any given point, and when you can expect their work to be done.

4

Stay organized

Effective project management requires organization, and that requires open communication and tracking. This is really at the heart of Scrum (and effective project management in general). As a framework it enables teams to lay out a logical roadmap for getting things done, stay on top of individual tasks, and actively identify and remove any impediments getting in the way of them doing their work faster and more efficiently.

5

Remain flexible but focused

Sometimes it can seem like Scrum has a lot of “rules,” but it’s important to remember this: it is an agile framework. It is purposely built around short cycles (sprints are capped at 1-4 weeks), iteration, and continuous improvement. Flexibility is a key component, and teams are encouraged to leave room in their sprints for the unexpected. In order to stay on track, each team has a Scrum Master whose role is to actively surface issues sparked by impediments, distractions, and unplanned work, and figure out how best to handle them to help the team reach its ultimate goals.

The second question — how do you implement it — is the \$20,000 question, however.

The truth is that, while the rules of Scrum are easy, implementing Scrum isn't as simple as flipping a switch. After all, organizational change management is difficult, and you might find that some employees are resistant to a new way of managing work. In that sense, it's important that your teams “opt in” to using Scrum and you clearly communicate the benefits of doing so.

In the following pages, we'll help you better understand what you can accomplish with Scrum, determine whether it's a good fit for your team, and take the appropriate steps toward proper implementation.

HOW MUCH TIME AND EFFORT DOES SCRUM REQUIRE?

If you're just learning about Scrum for the first time, the learning curve can be steep. Implementing it does require time and you will likely experience growing pains as your team adjusts to a new way of doing things. As such, you might be wondering whether Scrum is really worth implementing when you're already being pulled in a hundred different directions.

Here's the good news: Once properly implemented, the value of Scrum significantly outweighs the upfront investment of time and effort. Even better, this guide will help you quickly and effectively understand how to reach that point sooner. In fact, it's important to realize you don't need perfect implementation from day one in order to see results — even partial Scrum implementation can start to drive improvement. From that perspective, implementing Scrum is actually a low-risk proposition.



From that perspective, implementing Scrum is actually a fairly quick, low-risk proposition.

Now, let's address another important question that many non-technical teams often have about Scrum: If this methodology was designed for and first implemented by a software team in 1993, why would we use it?

As we discussed, Scrum doesn't just allow software development teams to produce better software quicker and make customers happier. It also creates happier teams and promotes increased productivity across a variety of functions and industries — from education and journalism, to physical manufacturing and even religious organizations. This is because Scrum enables teams to do their jobs better and faster, and empowers individuals to make decisions and truly harness their talents.

SO, WHAT NOW?

We understand that digesting the Scrum framework can be overwhelming, and effectively implementing it can be even more challenging. But don't fret. In the next chapter, we'll dive deeper into what you can expect as you get started with Scrum, and explore the benefits — both short- and long-term — that it can deliver. In chapters two and three, we'll explore the things your team will need from you to be successful and the key steps you need to take to get your organization primed for Scrum.



CHAPTER 2

WHAT TO EXPECT AS YOU IMPLEMENT SCRUM

Ultimately, the most basic goal of Scrum is to discover and deliver on customer priorities as quickly as possible. All work should be viewed through the lens of what generates the most business value, and a heavy emphasis must be placed on consistently making process improvements by actively removing impediments and waste.

Adhering to that mantra can give your business a significant boost, even in the initial stages of implementation. With that being said, it's important to establish realistic expectations of what Scrum can deliver if you do it right, as well as explore the challenges you'll likely encounter as you adopt the process.

SCRUM BENEFITS YOU'LL ENJOY

Increased productivity

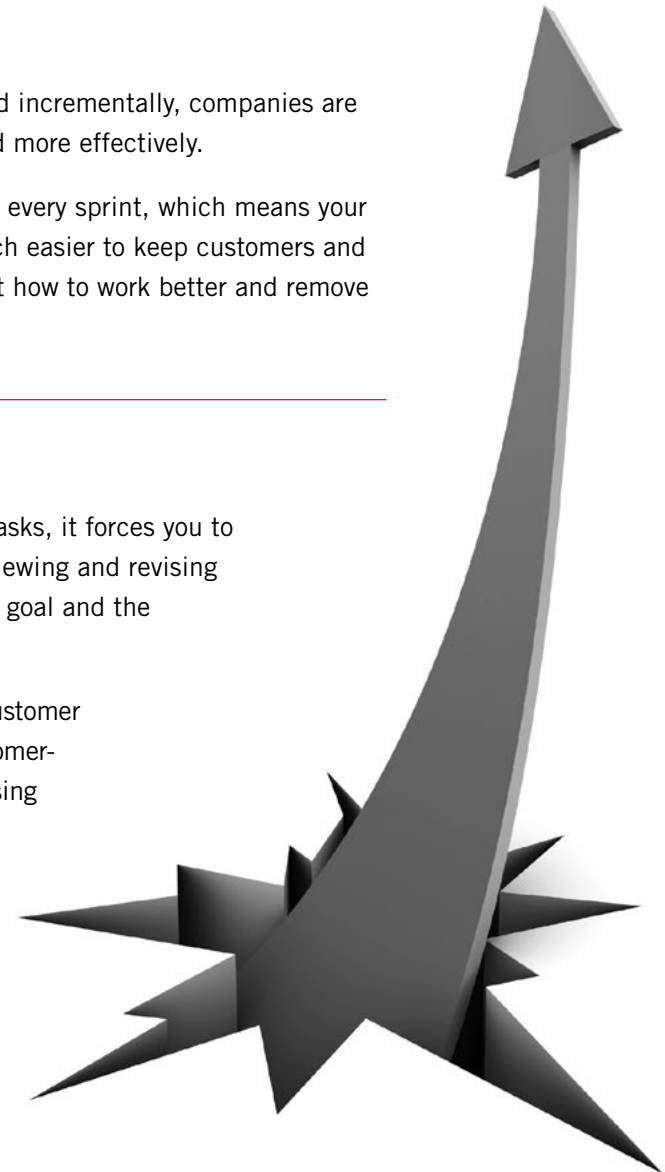
Simply put, Scrum helps teams get to output faster. By building iteratively and incrementally, companies are able to deliver customers the products and services they really need faster and more effectively.

With Scrum, you can receive and incorporate customer feedback at the end of every sprint, which means your results get shaped by real-world use, not your assumptions. This makes it much easier to keep customers and key stakeholders closely involved and engaged. Everyone begins to think about how to work better and remove impediments to progress.

Improved visibility & better product

Because Scrum allows you to break down complex projects into manageable tasks, it forces you to think about the specific actions needed to reach a goal, and it encourages reviewing and revising those actions with your team. That gives everyone better visibility of the larger goal and the steps necessary to achieve it.

Also, because of the incremental development process and the chance to get customer feedback in process, you actually end up with a product that's much more customer-centric and better suited to buyer needs than if you'd developed in a vacuum using abstract focus groups.



Happier employees

As we mentioned earlier, Scrum can unleash the potential of your team because it empowers and enables them to perform meaningful tasks every few weeks. There are very few talented people who enjoy working on dead-end projects that either don't yield value or fail to see the light of day. Scrum ensures that every team member remains focused on building or doing something that drives results.

Ability to adapt & manage uncertainty

Software companies today operate in a very complex, dynamic business world that can fluctuate rapidly, often without warning. To survive, you have to adapt to those changes, which is where Scrum can be enormously valuable. Because of its iterative, fast-paced nature, your team will have the confidence and capability to quickly act when uncertainty arises.

Higher ROI

In addition to driving new revenue through new users and new products, Scrum can also improve your team's return on investment by reducing costs and eliminating waste.

With Scrum, teams devote time to eliminating non-essential work and employees are able to focus on being faster, leaner, and more cost-effective. Teams measure their output of actual work in each sprint, and conduct systematic process experiments to increase this output. By keeping process changes that increase output and rolling back ones that don't, teams are able to dramatically increase output over time.

Additionally, Scrum allows you to push a "portfolio management" mentality further into the organization by not just tackling the highest ROI projects first, but also delivering the highest ROI features first.



SCRUM ISSUES YOU MIGHT STRUGGLE WITH AT FIRST

Accepting transparency

While transparency is one of the biggest benefits of Scrum, it can also create problems in the early stages of implementation. The reason: As transparency begins to shed light on previously ignored dysfunctions, many people can begin to feel threatened. Are they really qualified to do their jobs? Will they be exposed as a fraud?

Maybe. But exposure is a good thing — and it shouldn't mean you have to wipe out your entire team. The good news is that Scrum also reveals the valuable contributions employees make and it empowers them to do more of that and less of the activities they're not as qualified to perform. Importantly, Scrum encourages transparency, but not micromanagement. Your team needs to know what they should be doing, but it should be up to them to complete that work how they want.

Stepping back, letting go, & trusting your team

Too often, employees on the ground complain that management's role in the Scrum process is burdensome, while management typically prefers to have more control. Finding the right balance between those concerns can be very difficult in the early stages of Scrum adoption.

Ultimately, there is no real “boss” on a Scrum team, although Product Owners are held accountable for finished work. Scrum encourages autonomy within a team structure and people need to know that you trust them to complete their sprints. So, in order for Scrum to be effective, you need to learn how to provide leadership vision, not management.



Embracing organizational transformation

If you're going to take Scrum seriously and create team-wide hyper-productivity, then you're going to have to change how you do things — and that almost always leads to some measure of organizational disruption. Some people won't want to change, or they'll resist the principles of Scrum. You may even lose some talented team members.

It's important to remember, however, that change often creates a fantastic opportunity for growth and improvement. Organizations that manage uncertainty well often have a strategic competitive advantage over their slower moving competitors.

Articulating a clear list of priorities

This might seem easy enough, but teams and their managers often disagree about the highest priorities for specific projects, and many individuals have become accustomed to multi-tasking, which can be a productivity killer.

Effective project management requires a clear and agreed upon set of priorities, and that requires open communication and tracking. You must create a logical, prioritized, and sequential roadmap for getting things done, because the reality is that multi-tasking — despite being associated with greater productivity — is actually a horribly inefficient way to work.

Breaking down traditional hierarchy

Again, Scrum's structure is such that there is no real manager in charge of an entire organization or team. Yes, there is a Product Owner who helps prioritize what the team does and owns the output of specific projects, but it's not that person's job to tell team members what to do. And that's not always an easy mindset for individuals to transition to.

Disassembling traditional corporate hierarchy is critical to Scrum success, however. This will allow you to give your team only the guidance it needs to complete specific tasks, and provide the kind of encouragement and enablement that helps teams achieve their full potential.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT YOUR TEAMS NEED FROM YOU

The relationship between a company's Scrum teams and its management can be adversarial at times — particularly if managers have unrealistic expectations, or measure individual performance against an arbitrary set of metrics.

To avoid that, it's critical that managers provide a compelling vision, have a business plan in place, provide the necessary resources, remove impediments the team cannot remove themselves, and challenge the team to move beyond mediocrity — all while practicing what they preach. Scrum is not a process you can simply dump on your team and expect to work. Instead, you've got to lead the charge — setting a clear example of how to manage the process and enabling your team to self-organize and self-manage.

6 THINGS YOUR TEAM NEEDS FROM YOU

1

Clear vision & priorities

Senior managers need to know where they want to take the company, and they must use that vision to inspire their Scrum teams. Scrum is all about organization. So, in addition to creating and prioritizing a list (or backlog) of all of the projects your team needs to work on (be it this month, this quarter, or even this year), you must also tie everything back to the company's vision. Doing so will create a roadmap for completing work in a given time period and ensure that everyone remains focused on how that work will impact the bigger picture. See the appendix for a template you can use to build your first prioritized backlog.

2

Challenging — but achievable — goals

When managers ask Scrum teams to commit to unrealistic deadlines 6 to 12 months in advance without understanding the team's actual capability to commit to those deadlines, it's a recipe for disaster. Instead, you should encourage your team to do more in less time. The best way to do that is with an aggressive, inspiring vision and associated goals. If the Scrum team is not comfortable committing to something, make sure to surface the impediments and work with the team to remove them.



3

Tolerance of mistakes

In order to build better software faster, you have to accept (and, in many ways, encourage) fast failure. The only way to improve faster is to adopt an iterative, agile approach. Mistakes and failure will come as a result of that, but properly implemented Scrum will ensure your team learns from its errors and quickly gets back on track.



4

Time for providing input & collecting feedback

According to Scrum Inc. founder Dr. Jeff Sutherland, 65 percent of software features are never used by the customers they were created for. That speaks volumes about most businesses' failure to listen to customer feedback and deliver features that customers really want. To improve on that number, managers must encourage their team to seek regular feedback (at least every 30 days) and give them a forum for sharing that input. Ultimately, that context is critical to building better software faster.

5

The right incentives

Traditional incentive schemes typically reward individuals based on how hard they work, but it turns out that both individual performance and effort are much less correlated with successful outcomes than you might think. After all, "output" is the true goal, and research has found that teams that work well together deliver 200 times more output than groups of high performing individuals who fail to function cohesively as a team. As much as possible, incentives for high performing Scrum teams should be tied to collective outcomes, such as the profitability of a product developed by the whole team.

6

Appropriate structure to support self-organizing teams

While the goal isn't to micromanage Scrum teams, those groups will need some support to continuously improve their process over time. Scrum Masters typically fill this role, leading in a “servant” or “consultant” model (for more on the Scrum Master role, [click here](#)). Scrum Masters can come from virtually any background or discipline (i.e., engineering, design, testing, journalism, academia, etc.) and their purpose is relatively simple: remove impediments, guide the team in Scrum practices, and protect against outside interference. Importantly, Scrum Masters are facilitators, not managers. Typically, former or current managers do not fill the Scrum Master role, largely because their formal authority often makes it difficult to successfully facilitate.

Ultimately, Scrum is all about committing to certain tasks and getting them done. Not half done, or 90 percent done, but what is called “done-done.”

Establishing a clear vision and priorities, setting the right goals, and empowering your team to fully complete a finite set of tasks each week will help you get up to speed on Scrum more quickly, and ensure that your process isn't undermined by the challenges we covered in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER 4

SIMPLE STEPS FOR HELPING YOUR ORGANIZATION GET THE MOST OUT OF SCRUM

It can be easy to forget how different and difficult the adoption and practice of Scrum can be. Yes, Scrum is transformational. And, yes, it can deliver some incredible benefits for every function in every business. But that transformation also requires significant preparation, patience, and discipline if you hope to achieve the best results.

That's particularly true of non-software development Scrum implementations. With sales and marketing teams, for example, the Scrum language doesn't always perfectly translate. As such, your organization will likely need to invest time and work into determining how to interpret some of Scrum's best practices and guidelines in order to adapt them to your team. Over time, the terminology and rituals of Scrum will take hold, and you will begin to see incredible results.

The good news is that getting started with Scrum takes less time and effort than you might think. Yes, you'll experience growing pains and you'll likely need to frequently adapt the Scrum framework to new organizational goals and objectives. But in this chapter, we'll share three key steps that can help you build early Scrum momentum and, eventually, master its core principles.

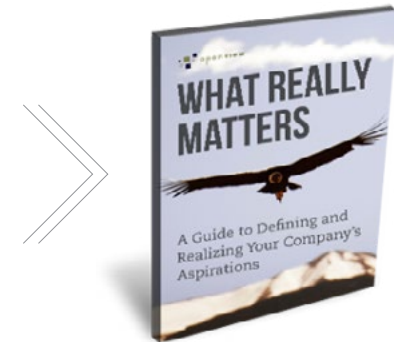
3 CORE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING SCRUM

1

Set enterprise-level goals

The single most important thing that Scrum teams need from their leadership is a clear sense of the outcome they are shooting for, and why. This clear context equips them to make the hundreds of important project decisions they make every day, and in a way that aligns with their leadership's vision. Without that clearly communicated vision and a way to recognize success when they see it, teams can easily get off track.

[Download our eBook](#) *What Really Matters: A Guide to Defining and Realizing Your Company's Aspirations* for a free workplan to walk you through establishing your vision and goals.



2

Assign an Executive Sponsor (or owner) & transition team for the initiative

Scrum teams are charged with identifying impediments that slow them, down and removing them so that they can go faster. In most circumstances, Scrum teams can remove impediments on their own, but some (such as cumbersome HR policies or reporting requirements) may require help from senior leadership. The Sponsor and transition team are responsible for removing these types of impediments quickly and effectively so that the teams can focus on delivering greater output.

3

Select a pilot team

Take a team (maybe one that's struggling), give them a prioritized backlog, and allow them to learn Scrum by simply doing it. Organizational change is hard under the best circumstances, and trying to implement Scrum in one "big bang" can be challenging to coordinate across all areas of the company.

Companies often begin their agile transformation with one or more pilot teams that volunteer to try the new approach. Typically, these pilot teams are struggling to complete a complex project using traditional "waterfall" implementation and are willing to try something different to make the pain stop. Your organization should focus its support behind those pilot teams, work out any challenges they encounter, and help them deliver a successful project. This success will help diffuse any skepticism about Scrum and provide a roadmap for subsequent Scrum teams to follow.

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1

THE SCRUM EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP'S "BILL OF RIGHTS"*

A major focus of Scrum may be empowering teams, but it's also about giving management better visibility into team performance and results. A board or executive leadership team can reasonably request and expect to receive the following performance metrics from any Scrum team:

The team's current Velocity, and how it has been trending over time

- » Includes list of key impediments that must be removed to increase velocity

The current estimate of outstanding product backlog points remaining to completion, with a rough release plan by feature/epic

- » Includes an estimated time to completion using current velocity

A financial roadmap for the next year

- » Financials for the current quarter are "locked in" and are a commitment
- » Financials one quarter out are "draft" and can be updated to reflect new learning
- » The remainder of the year is "estimated" based on current trends

The current level of Technical Debt (bugs, internal projects, and other overhead) that needs to be completed

- » Level of debt estimated in "point equivalents" using team's current velocity
- » Includes business case based plan to eliminate technical debt

*Courtesy of [Scrum Inc.](#)

2

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST

Here are six things teams will need from you in order to successfully implement Scrum:

- ☐ **Set a clear vision and prioritize**

Leadership must provide a clear and singular direction for teams to pursue. “It is all important, so just get it done” kills team productivity and results in nothing getting done

- ☐ **Remove identified impediments**

Executive team, Sponsor and transition team must move quickly and deliberately to remove impediments identified by the Scrum team. Leadership must allow time to fix issues

- ☐ **Be patient during ramp-up**

For the first 3-4 sprints, the Scrum team will be establishing a rhythm and determining its velocity – during this time, the answer to most questions may be “I don’t know yet”

- ☐ **Embrace transparency**

The transparent Scrum environment will reveal a number of issues that have previously been hidden – treat them as opportunities to improve rather than assigning blame

- ☐ **Maintain consistent focus and attention**

As the Scrum implementation picks up momentum and begins to demonstrate results, do not stop tracking progress and maintain a visible interest in deployment

- ☐ **Manage the human side of change**

Recognize that change is difficult and involves a natural ebb (the inevitable setbacks) and flow (the triumphs) of morale

*Courtesy of [Scrum Inc.](#)

3

GLOSSARY OF SCRUM TERMS

Roles

Product Owner: The product owner is one of the key stakeholders of Scrum. He/She is responsible carrying out the vision of the product and ensuring the development team's success. This includes taking ownership of the product backlog. To learn more about the product owner role, [click here](#).

Scrum Master: This role's primary responsibility is removing impediments and setting teams up for success. Not to be confused with a manager, the Scrum Master is instead a servant leader focused on encouraging and enabling the team to reach its full potential. For a list of 4 must-have qualities of great Scrum Masters, [click here](#).

Scrum Team: The Scrum team is made up of the Product Owner, Scrum Master, and development team. All members are involved in project management, which includes estimation, backlog prioritization, and sprint planning. For five measures of Scrum team success, [click here](#).

Meetings

Sprint Planning Meeting: Once the Product Owner has established a product backlog, it is time for the Sprint Planning Meeting. This is where all members of the Scrum team collaborate on the goals of a sprint and prioritize the backlog. Scrum co-founder Jeff Sutherland explains the importance of sprint planning in [this video](#).

Daily Scrum Meeting: Communication doesn't end after the Sprint Planning Meeting. 15-minute Daily Scrum Meetings allow team members to stay on the same track and implement goals effectively. It's crucial to not let topics exceed their allotted time during these short meetings. To view daily scrum meetings' best practices, [click here](#).

Sprint Review: The Sprint Review may be thought of as a ["demo" of the Sprint Retrospective](#). However, this informal meeting is crucial to development because it allows the team to discuss what was accomplished during the sprint and what needs to be done.

Sprint Retrospective: During Sprint Retrospectives, teams take a deeper assessment of the Sprint. This meeting can typically last 1–3 hours. The goal of the retrospective is to reflect on the previous sprint in order to determine improvements for the next sprint. In [this post](#), OpenView Founder Scott Maxwell shares four questions to answer in retrospectives.

Other Terms

Sprint: This is the hallmark of Scrum. The Sprint is the period of time — typically one week to four weeks, max — the commits to executing the product goals and taking on stories from the sprint backlog. To determine the right Sprint length for your team, [click here](#). Learn how to execute large-scale sprints [click here](#).

Product Backlog: The Product Backlog is the responsibility of the Product Owner. It is a list of what needs to be done by the development team in order to carry out the vision of the product. During Sprint Planning Meetings, the Scrum team evaluates the Product Backlog, and the most important tasks are moved to the Sprint Backlog. In this post, Scrum Inc. consultant Joe Justice explains how to [let your customers determine your product backlog](#).

Sprint Backlog: The Sprint Backlog is a product of the Sprint Planning Meetings. Using a voting system, the Scrum Team prioritizes and ranks the Product Backlog. The team uses the Sprint Backlog to determine the goals of the upcoming Sprint. Learn how to organize your Sprint Backlog in this post from [Mike Cohn](#).

Scrum Board: The Scrum Board is an organization and management tool. It allows team members to visualize the Sprint Backlog, tasks in progress, completed tasks, and what still needs to be done. Tools like [Trello](#) and [VersionOne](#) allow your team to utilize a digital Scrum Board.

Points: Also called “Story Points” and “Estimations,” Points are used by Scrum teams to measure how much effort a story — a task — requires. These estimations are determined during the Sprint Planning Meeting. Unlike in waterfall, Scrum doesn’t emphasize the time a task takes, but rather the work. View more benefits of measuring Points over hours in this post from [Jeff Sutherland](#).

Velocity: Velocity is the measure of “points per sprint.” It is a metric of production as opposed to time. As Jeff Sutherland advises, the Product Owner can create a release roadmap based on team velocity and adjust the plan if velocity changes. Learn more about ramping up velocity [here](#).

Burndown Chart: The Burndown Chart is a management tool intended to keep an eye on all of the simultaneous agile development methods going on within a Scrum Team. It helps monitor any issues that may prevent development. To learn Jeff Sutherland’s inspiration for the tool, [click here](#).

User Stories: User Stories provide the Scrum team with another way to frame their tasks in order to better break down, prioritize, and discuss their work. They are short, simple descriptions of functionality that traditionally follow the basic pattern: As a [type of user], I want to be able to [action] so that [goal]. For more info on User Stories including examples, visit Mike Cohn’s guide at [Mountain Goat Software](#).

4

LIST OF SCRUM TOOLS

Scrum Boards / Story Planning & Tracking

[VersionOne](#): VersionOne helps manage your project backlog by allowing you to consolidate, prioritize, and rank stories.

[Trello](#): Trello is a web-based organization tool that helps keep your team on track. It's easy-to-use interface organizes projects in boards and allows you to see your team members' real-time progress.

[Acunote](#): Acunote is a project management tool that shows you the actual progress of your team through burndown charts.

[Agilefant](#): Agilefant is an iteration management tool that caters its view to different project stateholders.

[easyBack](#): An intuitive time saving backlog management tool for Agile practitioners working in or with agencies.

[Agilo for Scrum](#): Agilo for Scrum addresses the needs of each scrum role by providing an intuitive workflow that facilitates the ceremonies of the scrum process.

[Scrum Poker Cards](#): This simple app helps you make more accurate estimations during Scrum planning.

[Rational Team Concert](#): This tool integrates task tracking, source control, and agile planning with continuous builds and a configurable process to adapt to the way you work.

Retrospectives

[Sensei](#): Sensei allows you to facilitate retrospectives and track your team's improvement over time.

[ScrumDesk](#): ScrumDesk allows all team members to be heard: Using cards, it presents ideas, allows team members to vote, and identifies the most wanted ideas.

5

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING BETTER RETROSPECTIVES

The following is an excerpt from our eBook *Get Better Faster: The Ultimate Guide to the Practice of Retrospectives*. Download the full [eBook here](#).



WHAT ARE RETROSPECTIVES?

Retrospectives are periods of reflection during which a team or individual reviews and reflects on a project, action, or occurrence and asks four key questions:

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

**WHAT WENT WELL
& WHY?**

WHAT DID NOT GO WELL & WHY?

**WHAT CAN WE DO
DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?**



EIGHT TIPS FOR CONDUCTING BETTER RETROSPECTIVES

WHAT IS PREVENTING YOUR RETROSPECTIVES FROM HAVING AN IMPACT?

1. Lack of buy-in and/or commitment from the top. This will make your employees believe that the retrospectives are not a priority. Communicate to employees why you are doing this and the benefits you expect to achieve. Allot the proper time for retrospectives. Ensure that teams are staying disciplined with the practice and not rushing through the process.
2. People may perceive that reflections are about individual performance and assigning blame. This could lead them to become overly self-protective. Reinforce that retrospectives are about team performance (not individual performance) and finding ways to improve. A key benefit is that when done right, reflections make teams stronger, not the reverse.
3. For many different reasons — some cultural, some managerial, some interpersonal — people won't say what is truly on their minds. It takes time to build a climate of trust. But if the team members fail to speak the truth, the improvements will never be as good as they could be. If you know that certain people are not being honest, take them aside to talk in private about their concerns.
4. The meetings get off track. The facilitator should set and enforce ground rules. The meetings should be structured to prevent team members from rambling and going off topic. Facilitation is both a skill and an art; facilitators need training, but they should also have a natural gift for communicating.

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5. No ideas for improvement are offered. At Toyota, even if a project is successful, a hansei-kai (reflection meeting) still takes place. They have a saying that “no problem is a problem,” and believe that no matter how good something is, there is always something that can be improved. If the team is stuck, the facilitator can uncover problems by asking “why” many times over while discussing how a project or process unfolded.
 6. Ideas for improvement are given, but are not specific enough. The facilitator should get the team members to make specific statements. For example, a general statement such as “we need faster service from our proofreader,” could be reframed as “our proofreader needs to e-mail the marked-up proofs to John within 24 hours.”
 7. Too many ideas for improvement are offered. Team members should choose three areas to focus on and immediately implement. The facilitator should put the additional ideas into an idea backlog for further discussion at the next retrospective.
 8. If there is no follow-up on the recommended improvements, the team members will question the point of the meetings. The facilitator should follow up to ensure that the improvements have been made and report the results to the team. All of the ideas for improvement should be recorded in a shared knowledge database.

“The purpose of the retrospective is to identify and prioritize process improvements and act immediately to execute the top-priority process improvement by incorporating it into the product backlog in the next sprint along with appropriate acceptance tests. This is called ‘Scrumming the Scrum’ and failing to do this renders the retrospective ineffective.”



Jeff Sutherland
CEO, *Scrum, Inc.*



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