

# SCRUM

---

Looking for a project management framework to enable your teams to get the right things done in the right order while maximizing the value of the outcome simultaneously? Then this highly efficient methodology to realize and organize product development processes might be just right for you.

by Christopher Bickford

SCRUM is less a creativity tool – than for instance Design Thinking and others – but helps to gain traction in specific tasks. It aims at performing everything with a high focus on realization by self-organized teams. The agility in SCRUM is often misunderstood as a hyper flexibility to shift priorities. But this ad-hoc attitude is far removed from reality. SCRUM is highly structured, and it works best if you get to the heart of it.

## Start with a sprint

Basic elements of the methodology are a specific timeframe and certain events which recur on a regular basis. Every sprint of approximately three to six weeks starts with sprint planning and is followed by a full circle of the SCRUM events (sprint planning I/II, the daily stand-ups, review, retrospective). Before we start, we define a capable product owner to handle the user stories. The user stories are short feature descriptions in a certain syntax like: »I as a <role> would like to have the following <feature> in order to have a certain <value>.« All user stories are put in the product backlog, where prioritization takes place during sprint planning. Additionally, the product owner defines some acceptance criteria to give the developers a frame in which they can find a proper solution to the requested feature. The subsequent effort is estimated and broken down into tasks by the project team.

## Lead with crisp events

Stand-up, review and retrospective as regular events structure your sprint. The daily stand-up, as the name already suggests, is a morning meeting where all developers meet in front of their sprint backlog. Every person discusses the questions: What did I do yesterday? What challenges did I have to master? What am I going



to do today? Almost all meetings in SCRUM are time-boxed; the stand-up is scheduled to last for 15 to 30 minutes.

The review meeting is generally at the end of every sprint, where product owners and developers come together to explain their solutions. If all user stories meet the defined criteria and are therefore accepted, this means the sprint was successful.

The sprint is followed by a retrospective meeting, where the development team meets to reflect on how the collaboration within the team worked. The retrospective meeting is one of the key elements to make a team perform better.

### **Stick to your role**

All meetings are facilitated by the SCRUM master, who is not to be mixed up with the project manager of a classic project management approach. As a moderator, the SCRUM master makes sure that agreements are honored and SCRUM-specific structures are followed. It is the role of a *servant leader* and the SCRUM master can be a member of the development team, as well. In any other situation it is impossible for the prod-

uct owner to be a member of the development team, due to conflict of interest. After the effort estimation, the development team commits to the tasks for the next sprint. It is solely a team decision; there is no excuse if the committed user stories are not delivered at the end of a sprint. The development team shifts their tasks from the product backlog to their sprint backlog autonomously.

The development team is responsible for developing usable software or a product increment as a result of every sprint. The team usually consists of six to nine members with all abilities to deliver a working product. The development team decides how to realize the requested features.

This short summary illuminates the basic components of SCRUM as a tool for agile product development. Sticking to the methodology will lead to a higher pace and better output. Some of the principles are easily transferable into agile settings. Alternatively, it can be used as a stand alone tool. You will never know if SCRUM can achieve the desired success in your setting if you don't try it. If you need to get some assistance for your first agile projects, ICG is here to support you. ●