

SCRUM

FOR MANAGERS

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HMEXPRESS

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PREFACE

The first publication on Scrum appeared twenty years ago in 1995. After the first uncertain steps, the methodology has matured in the new millennium and has become a hit. More and more examples of best practices are published, the external knowledge and certification options grow, and a large number of articles and books have been published.

The authors of this book are convinced that “agility”, being able to quickly respond to change, will make the difference in the coming years. Scrum is able to make a jump start with this – and we are not alone in this opinion, as you will be able to read on the following pages. Over the years, we have learned that support and vision of management is essential for becoming successfully “agile”. Therefore, this book is specifically targeted at management. Indeed, managers will need to discover the importance of Scrum and what advantages they can achieve by applying it. On the following pages some of them have shared their view on it.

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Did you also hear that managers are useless or not needed in Agile? We wonder...

Indeed, the Agile movement promotes emergence. Indeed, agile software development thrives on self-organization. Indeed, Scrum has no defined role of “manager”. And Scrum – after all – is the most applied process for agile software development. But is that sufficient to label managers as useless or not needed in an agile environment?

The agile movement successfully established a set of values and principles that better fit the creative and complex nature of software development. The focus is on teams, collaboration, people, and self-directed discovery. The Scrum framework provides a great foundation for organizations to grasp agility.

The adoption of agile thinking via Scrum represents a major shift in our industry. And it is still gaining traction as the context in which we have to create software becomes increasingly complex and uncertain. Even without Scrum having prescriptions for management, it is clear that the self-organizing fundamentals of Scrum have a profound impact on the role, approach, and act of managing. The challenge is to discover and implement the new needs and demands for managers when the product development process is transformed to Scrum.

The book *Scrum for Managers* by Rob and Rini explains the Scrum framework to managers. It provides them with clear insights in Scrum, what it is, what it isn't. From that basic understanding, options are presented

on how to deal with it as a manager. *Scrum for Managers* guides managers in discovering where their added value is when their organizations adopt Scrum for their product development and their teams grow more mature in the use of Scrum.

Perfection is an illusion. Perfection is not the goal. Gradual improvement is. This book, *Scrum for Managers*, is part of that. Read it. Learn from it. Act, learn, improve. Re-invent yourself as a manager and increase the value you bring to the organization and its teams while transforming to Scrum.

RON VAN KEMENADE
CIO, ING

—

Change happens quickly. This seems obvious, but there are clear reasons why this applies now more than ever. On the one hand, technological advances are happening faster and faster. On the other hand, customers are increasingly able to share their experiences in real-time. Examples in my sector, financial services, are the explosion of Tweets after a disruption of the payment services and the immediate feedback in the app stores when a new mobile app is released.

Companies, banks, and governments will need to find ways to deal with this fast way to share feedback. We need to become more and more responsive. We do not have a choice.

Scrum offers an excellent way to realize this change. And not just conceptually but in the form of a real and concrete way of working. It has been my experience that the change process towards Scrum takes real effort of management and especially also a lot of personal involvement.

Scrum for Managers is a very handy book. It is written on the basis of a large number of common questions in practice. I recognize questions I have had myself and questions I frequently encounter. This book gives clear answers which have also been written in a style which is easy to read. The book is useful to anyone who needs to decide whether or not to start with Scrum. I recommend starting with the chapters which are especially about this decision (Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 8). Subsequently, you can take your time to read the other chapters.

I recommend every manager to start with Scrum. Each manager will, as I do with my teams, face unique challenges. Therefore, you should start small, learn from your initial experiences, improve your way of working, remove impediments, and most important of all, listen to the people you work with. This book helps with this.

JEROEN TAS
CEO, INFORMATICS, SOLUTIONS & SERVICES AT PHILIPS
HEALTHCARE

—

Under the “Accelerate!” theme Philips is going through an in-depth transformation necessary to realize the full potential of the company. The traditional functional and product-oriented approach is gradually replaced by a customer-focused “end-to-end” approach. This requires organizational and cultural change. Multi-disciplinary teams with specialists in marketing, supply chain, IT, design, and R&D closely collaborate to realize solutions that match the specific needs of a market. Insights in market requirements need to be realized in products quickly: action!

In 2011, we decided to adapt to the new reality of agile business. Scrum was chosen for this because of its seamless connection with the needed mindsets and behaviors:

- **“Teaming up to Excel”**. Self organizing teams of seven people. These teams need to be multi-disciplinary to be able to effectively create solutions.
- **“Eager to Win”**. Every team needs to make the created value transparent and steer based on this. We prefer to measure this value in terms of the customer and market impact.
- **“Take ownership”**. Self-steering teams are the basis. The tight collaboration of disciplines

increases the problem solving skills and pace tremendously.

Another important argument to choose for Scrum was the awareness that we cannot specify the needed changes in Philips in detail in advance. There is much we need to learn and discover iteratively.

Scrum’s starting to quickly spread outside of the IT organization as a means to make Philips an agile company. We’re convinced that making Philips agile is an important prerequisite to be able to operate successfully in the dynamic markets of today and tomorrow. For now, Scrum’s the most important part of this.

Scrum for Managers is an excellent guide to learn the new way of leading which is part of the transition we are going through. The book answers the most important management questions about managing an agile organization. This book will make an important contribution to the conceptualization in the management of Philips. *Scrum for Managers* should be mandatory for anyone in a management position in a quickly changing world!

VIKRAM KAPOOR
CEO, PROWARENESS

—

At Prowareness we help our customers to be more effective with Scrum and agility among other things. We try to be in the forefront in this and we advocate the statement *“practice what you preach”* or even better *“drink your own champagne”*. We want our company to be the most agile organization in the world.

When I saw the title of this book I was a bit startled. I don't believe in the concept of managers. Managers are reactive; you *“manage a situation”*. For me personally it is mostly about leadership. An excellent leader primarily leads himself. Leading is causing something, making something happen, and doing so in a directing fashion. To do so you need to unlearn a number of things as well and you can only do this if you stay close to yourself. Leaders need to know what stance to take in an agile environment and how best to act.

This book helps in this. It makes the challenges of a leader concrete and provides you with practical and concrete tips on how to act. In particular the dialogues, the roadmap of the transition, and the practical To Do lists at the end of every chapter have been very helpful to me.

Of course I know both authors very well and I completely support their ideas. I know how passionately they work and recognize this in this book as well. I wish you luck with the next step for yourself and your organization, as a manager or a leader. Have fun reading this book!

SIMON REINDL
PROFESSIONAL SCRUM TRAINER AND AGILE CONSULTANT

—

A recurring theme with organizations that are in the early stages of adopting an agile mindset is what do the managers do? A common misconception is that since there is no reference to managers in the *Scrum Guide*, then they must not be needed. Who will help the organization change if not the managers – but how should they do it?

This book addresses that question, in a pragmatic easy-to-read fashion. If you are looking for a helpful guide from people with practical experience, this is it. The advice in this book is based on years of experience helping organizations move to a value-driven approach – to develop the sustained competitive advantage of having an engaged motivated workforce that builds a product that delights the customer. The handy checklists at the end of each chapter provide a useful check to see if you are moving in the right direction.

**WHY SHOULD
YOU BE
INTERESTED
IN SCRUM?**

**SCRUM BRINGS
IMMEDIATE
RESULTS IN
A SHORT TIME
FRAME AND
REQUIRES
BARELY ANY
PREPARATION.**

WHY SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SCRUM?

Scrum isn't magic. It's simple logic. Apply it to deliver results faster, learn how to improve these results, and last but not least, gain more satisfied customers. Achieve all this by focusing on small tasks, looking at them from the customer's viewpoint, and completing them as soon as possible.

In short, Scrum helps you deliver value to your customer quickly, bringing you many benefits and making you much more agile. But isn't this what everyone is trying to achieve? Why would the result be any different when you use Scrum? Because applying Scrum to an organization redefines the work system in an organization by introducing new roles, processes, documents, and responsibilities. These aren't added to the current system but completely replace it. The special thing about all this is that Scrum requires barely any preparation. You can start using Scrum within the existing structures right now. It's a revolutionary intervention that works, as long as you do it completely. Remember: don't put in half the effort unless you're satisfied with half the result!

In fast-changing innovative environments in which challenges are found with planning and with delivering the right quality in time and within budget, Scrum can tremendously improve things, and do it quickly.

"How can you do your work without making a plan? How can you promise to finish on a certain date without making a plan? That's impossible!"

"I don't understand what you're trying to say?"

"Well, using Scrum, right? You never know what result you'll end up with or when it's finished. How can this work for us? We have to specify a price and a completion date. It's impossible to do that without a plan!"

"I think you're mistaken! Let me try to explain. What are you going to have for lunch later?"

"Well, salad with an avocado! I made it myself this morning."

"Alright, what are you going to have for lunch on Monday eight months from now?"

"Well, I have no idea of course!"

"Exactly! But that doesn't mean you won't eat at all, right?"

"I'm not following."

"You're claiming that without a plan you won't achieve anything. But you're certain you will eat something on a date eight months from now, without knowing exactly what that will be. That's also how Scrum works. Because you're allowing yourself to make some decisions later; by enabling yourself to do so now, you can be certain it will work out."

"Come on, that's nonsense! It's completely different for us. We have to make commitments about what functionality we will deliver. We need the details to be able to do so."

"That right there is your mistake. What if I told you eight months in advance what you would eat each afternoon? That would give you absolute certainty, but it wouldn't be much fun, would it?"

"No, of course not. I want to be able to decide what I want to eat later."

"Precisely! I'll prove to you I know how to cook, and by doing so you'll trust me to postpone decisions about details. So the only thing you do need to change is your promise. Instead of promising what to deliver you'll promise that you'll solve the problem. I cannot promise you what you'll eat eight months from now, but I can promise it'll be good! That's how Scrum works. Promising to solve the problem instead of promising what exact detailed functionality you'll deliver. Of course, this does require one extra condition."

"Which one?"

"That we periodically review the taste and decide how we can improve. We do this together."

"But that isn't a problem. That's for my own benefit!"

"Exactly! Scrum defines a process in which both parties have a common goal to continuously review and improve how things are done. Do you get it now?"

"I do! Right, it's time for lunch."

"Alright, then I'll start cooking. I'll show you the end result in eight months!"

"Yeah, yeah, I know. Joker!"

When is Scrum for you?

Do you work in an environment where you're judged on results, where customers are served, or where products are being made? Do you work in an environment where products or services are often delivered late, budgets are exceeded, quality is often too low, or expectations are regularly not met? If any of these apply to you, Scrum will help you.

By introducing Scrum, you make a revolutionary intervention, solely with the aid of one result, two lists, three roles, and four meetings, which jointly make up a new framework that quickly leads to valuable results. These valuable results for your customers quickly make you more successful and make your people much happier.

In most organizations, false security is key: plans, specifications, documents, promises, etc. But this doesn't work in practice because everything changes. If it's not the requirements, it's the implementation technology. If it's not the implementation technology, it's the market. Our world is extremely dynamic and unpredictable. Still, we insist on using processes created with the implicit assumption that nothing ever changes.

In short, we use plan-driven approaches in complex, adaptive environments. One of the core properties of a complex environment is that a plan is outdated before the ink it was written with dries. And when, inevitably, something does change, we would rather stick to our outdated plans than embrace the new situation and adapt accordingly. Pretty weird, huh?

And the funny thing about all this is that the world is becoming increasingly dynamic. The market is more dynamic than it has ever been. Scrum is an excellent approach to deal with this. One of the core assumptions in Scrum is that everything changes and it defines a structured way to be flexible. In a dynamic, complex environment, Scrum is successful because the framework defines a learning component in which the framework is adapted based on empirical data. Because of this, Scrum is able to help deliver predictable and valuable results.

Scrum enables agility, to help unleash all the power in an organization.

When should you avoid Scrum?

Scrum isn't particularly useful in simple situations. When results are highly predictable and few things change (a simple environment), the added value of using Scrum is low. In such situations, it's best to just make a plan and execute it. Scrum is also better avoided when either the team or the goal are too small to make implementing Scrum worthwhile. For example, the overhead of running the framework with a team of two people is too high. However, on the other hand, Scrum concepts are always applicable based on the idea of transparency of progress, being ready to respond to unexpected events, and being able to handle uncertainty and change. If any of those are important to you, Scrum works to your advantage.

Much of our work however, involves being able to adapt to complex situations and to act in a predictable manner. Uncertainty is the factor that severely limits our ability to work predictably. When we focus our attention on a knowledge-intensive situation in general or a software-intensive situation in particular, the uncertainty is strongest with respect to implementation technology and customer requirements. The higher the uncertainty of the technology and the higher the instability of the requirements, the more chaotic the situation becomes.

A common misconception is that you shouldn't use Scrum for anything large, complex, and complicated. According to this misconception, it would be best to use Scrum for anything simple, small, and clear. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Especially in complex situations with many interdependencies, Scrum is highly valuable. This is due to the short iterations and many small steps, continually creating an integrated product. The more complex a project is, the bigger the potential impact of even a small change. If something breaks, you want to know immediately so you can take action. When in a complex environment, you simultaneously

change multiple things at once, you'll have no idea what the cause is if something breaks. So Scrum is most effective for things like complex backend systems, large construction projects, and complex collaboration structures. Scrum helps to reduce complexity and emphasizes getting to working results quickly. When the situation is simple and clear, Scrum isn't really needed.

The nine most important benefits of Scrum

- 1. More control of the outcome.** Using Scrum offers significant value in situations where you need to control the result. Because work is being done in short cycles or iterations – working from one stable situation to the next – the amount of control is increased. Because of this, it is possible to adjust the direction between iterations or Sprints.
- 2. Opportunity to leverage new insights.** Scrum is particularly valuable in situations where you're figuring things out as you go and, as such, it would be naive to think you can plan everything in advance.
- 3. Happier customers and users.** Scrum is valuable to customers and end users. They are much more content when an iterative and customer-focused approach is used. The aspects that are most important to them get priority instead of the preconceived plan.
- 4. More value for less cost.** By constantly re-prioritizing all the work to be done based on value, the highest value results are reached much sooner. Moreover, often when executing a plan you'll see opportunities you didn't know existed when you originally made the plan. Consequently, you can stop when you reach an optimal return on investment (ROI) and leverage the next opportunity. By doing so, you're maximizing the amount of work you don't (yet) do, without losing any value.
- 5. Shorter turnaround times.** When using Scrum, a result that solves the most important problems is ready much sooner. Consequently, Scrum offers strong benefits in delivering value soon and solving important problems quickly.
- 6. Higher productivity.** Using Scrum leads to higher productivity, firstly businesswise, because more value is created for less money. Also, the team productivity increases because: focus is constantly on solving the biggest problems and improving the team itself; there are less handovers; and the team members simultaneously work on the same problem. All the waste due to things such as storing knowledge, searching for information, waiting for team members, and the “how did we do that again”-effect is cut away.
- 7. Better quality.** Using Scrum requires the quality to be higher because it defines short iterations to work from one stable release to another. Therefore, errors and problems are detected and fixed much sooner.
- 8. The ability to stop.** Scrum brings a lot of value in situations with large external influences and when drastic course changes are needed. Because there is a stable release at the end of every iteration, stopping is a valid option with acceptable consequences.
- 9. Happier employees.** Finally, well-executed Scrum also encourages the employees to be more content. This is caused by the high degree of team self-organization but also because constantly working towards a short-term valuable end product is a great motivator.

Is Scrum a hype?

Scrum is certainly not a hype, but more of a trend. A hype is excessive attention for something with little substance. A trend, on the other hand, is a long-term development in a certain direction.

Agility is such a long-term development and Scrum is an effective approach to implementing this trend. Incorporating Scrum helps organizations take a first step towards being agile.

By saying Scrum is merely a hype, you're denying its true value. Scrum has proven its value for more than twenty years already in a wide range of organizations: from small to large, young to old, and in both the public and private sector. Examples are Microsoft, Adobe, Google, ING, Exact, Philips, and CoolBlue.

Scrum is long past being a hype. In nearly every organization you'll find people using Scrum or at least preparing to start using it. Many marketing departments, highly successful sales teams, communication departments use Scrum, and in the education industry Scrum is already getting a foothold.

Besides this, Scrum itself is maturing as well. More and more best practices are documented, books and articles are being published, and external training and certification are becoming available. The Scrum Guide itself, the original description of Scrum, is open to revisions. Jeff Sutherland and Ken Schwaber regularly publish new versions in which they incorporate experiences with Scrum in practice.

Examples of the wide applicability of Scrum

Scrum is popular, being used in a wide variety of settings, even those for which it wasn't originally intended. To make Scrum applicable in these settings, changes are made to the method and terminology but the principles remain the same: the most valuable thing first, short iterations, self-improvement, transparency, and team effort.

Scrum in education. Scrum is being deployed in secondary education using the name EduScrum. The largest adaptation is that only the teacher sets the goals and acts as a Product Owner. The students are part of self-organizing teams and are responsible for their own learning process. The results are phenomenal: motivated students, increased collaboration, and increased exam grades.

Scrum in marketing, sales, or communication. Marketing teams often work within a select number of themes and Scrum is perfectly suited for this. The teams make a weekly plan for each theme on a Scrum board in the hall. Sales teams use Scrum to process their sales pipeline and customer base. "What are we going to do this week to help all our customers advance a little bit?"

Scrum in business. Managing your entire business with Scrum? It is possible! The meetings, roles, and aids are suitable for this, as is working result-oriented with truly cross-functional teams. Marketers, salespeople, advisors, and developers can all be assigned to one team and make customers happy with valuable results using short iterations.

Scrum in public policy formulation. Making year plans can take months and many iterations. Several governments have experimented with using Scrum to do this. So they used short iterations and complete focus to make a full version of the year plan for each iteration.

Scrum for lawyers. Contracts are basically like software: they aren't physical. It's all about the collaboration. It's astonishing to see it sometimes takes companies years to finalize a contract and, in effect, also postpone the collaboration (and therefore the creation of value) for years.

Scrum in finance. It is possible to manage investments using Scrum. Don't make the entire investment in advance and wait for it to make money but rather work in short iterations. Assign a limited budget to a project for a number of Sprints and use the proceeds of the results of those Sprints to pay for the subsequent Sprints. If it's impossible to finance the subsequent Sprints by monetizing what was created in the first Sprints it might be a good idea to stop the project altogether.

Scrum to get your house ready to be sold. Crazy examples exist! One of the authors has “two left hands” and has used Scrum to get his house ready to be sold. He made a Scrum board and put everything that needed to be done in the “To Do” column. Then he invited all his friends and together they finished all the tasks via “Busy” and “Done”. Fun and focused! And the last task on the list? Having a barbecue together, but... only when all the other tasks are finished!

Do you know any other examples? Let us know! It's great to see how wide Scrum is applicable and how much happiness it brings.

What should you always remember?

- Scrum is a simple intervention to work in a completely different way.
- Scrum is particularly suited for dealing with complex and dynamic situations.
- Scrum is especially suitable for large complex and dynamic systems.
- In small and simple projects that are easy to plan, Scrum is less valuable.
- With Scrum, you deliver more value in a shorter time.
- With Scrum, you face lower and predictable costs.
- With Scrum, you are able to deliver higher and more predictable quality.
- With Scrum, you can stop anytime, increasing your flexibility.
- In a fast-changing environment, you shouldn't plan details far in advance.
- Dynamics and complexity cannot be controlled by making a plan.
- By making you organization agile and flexible, you make better use of the potential of your team.
- Scrum isn't a hype but a trend.
- Scrum is widely applicable in practice.

**ALWAYS ASK
TEAMS FOR
WORKING RESULTS
AND HELP THEM
WITH CLEARING
ROADBLOCKS**

HOW DO YOU MANAGE SCRUM TEAMS?

In a Scrum team, everyone in the team takes on management tasks. This relieves you as a manager of these tasks. Because of this, quite a lot changes for you. However, this doesn't limit your ability to steer the team. With Scrum, you gain access to a completely new instrument: steering based on working and tested results that are truly finished.

Scrum teams deliver a working and tested result every Sprint. So they don't just deliver the end result after a year, but a small extra step every month or less. But remember, they only deliver results that are truly finished! This expands your ability to steer so greatly that using a process of control loses much of its importance. Therefore, this can, for the most part, be done by the Scrum teams themselves. At the same time, it's essential that teams continuously improve.

This is the critically important role that you as a manager play – helping the team improve by removing obstacles for them. You help create an environment that the Scrum team can work in. This means you should hold yourself back from intervening too much. Explain the set of rules they should follow and why they should follow them, and allow the team to organize itself within this set of rules.

You can steer based on the finished results and by helping the teams to improve every single Sprint.

"Hey, quick question: management has asked me to look into Scrum. They think the concepts match my department very well."

"Cool! Nice to hear management is waking up to this."

"Well, yeah on the one hand it's nice. On the other, however, I want to prevent having Scrum imposed on me. I don't believe that works. To me, Scrum is a means to an end and not an end goal."

"I couldn't agree more. Did you want me to confirm that?"

"Well, no, I'm wondering about the role of manager. I looked into Scrum and I really believe that working as a team towards short term results is a good idea. I also see how the three roles balance each other out: one Product Owner who makes the decisions, a self-organized development team collaborating to create a working and tested product, and a Scrum Master to guard the process."

"So what's your question?"

"Well, what am I supposed to be doing? If I look at the overall picture, they will all work it out amongst themselves with nothing left for me to do. At the same time, I don't believe my teams will be able to do this right from the start. On the one hand, they should figure this out for themselves but they aren't self-steering yet. On the other hand, I can't go and make the decisions for them, because doing so will prevent them from ever becoming a self-steering team. How do others manage this?"

"Ah, right I recognize that, it's the big management dilemma between intervening and allowing for self-steering. When do you intervene and how do you get your teams to take on responsibility?"

"Exactly!"

"Well, the truth is, it's not that hard. You'll get it when you see it. You simply transfer some of your tasks to the team. So you're completely sure what they'll be doing."

"Huh?"

"What you're doing right now, is deciding how to setup the process based on the set of rules imposed on you by your superiors. Well, you're going to let the team do that. It's your task to define the set of rules."

"Is that it?"

"Well, no, that's only the first step. There's two more after that. First there's getting the result they're responsible for to be visible. In the end all that counts is what results are delivered. Second, you're going to have to help them."

"Help them? With what?"

"Help them with getting better. Scrum teams will only increasingly deliver more and more value if they continuously get better in what they do. This means you should help them to get better. This can be by providing them with the means to do so, but also by eliminating problems they can't solve themselves."

"Kind of like a coach?"

"Yes, exactly like a coach! You're helping them train to get increasingly better in what they do, but in the end they're the ones that have win the big game. Learn them to steer themselves and help them get better at it. That will be your new role. Sounds good, right?"

"Actually, yes, it does! Helping my people to get better and eliminating impediments. Sounds like fun!"

Scrum doesn't have an official manager role

Scrum doesn't have an official manager role. Scrum only defines Product Owners, Scrum Masters, and Development Teams.

The Product Owner focuses on the “what” and “why”, the Development team focuses on “how”, and the Scrum Master makes sure everything in the process is going smoothly and continuously improves. Together they form the Scrum Team, which completely manages itself. When there are many Scrum Teams, the Product Owners of the different teams coordinate and prioritize between the teams and elect a Chief Product Owner when necessary to make final decisions in difficult cases. The Scrum Masters coordinate collaboration between the teams and sometimes elect a Super Scrum Master for supporting the learning process across team boundaries.

As always, practice is often more difficult than theory. Organizations are stuck with predetermined structures in which managers play a prominent role. Transitioning from a hierarchical organization with managers to an organization with self-steering teams isn't without obstacles and takes some time. In fact, many organizations that are very interested in Scrum don't (yet) have the ambition to become a fully agile organization. It's often unclear whether this ambition will ever arise at all. The more prominent the ambition is to become an agile organization, the higher the importance to heavily rely on Scrum teams. The specific circumstances will determine the best way to structure the organization.

The most important job of the manager in Scrum is to define the set of boundaries of the self-organizing teams. Part of this is creating a culture in which it's normal to work in teams towards results while continuously improving. By doing so, the manager is able to steer the teams towards becoming better. That's nice for the manager, because who's judged on growth again? That's right, the manager! So, allowing the manager to primarily focus on increasing the success of his or her teams is an important secondary advantage of using Scrum.

Primary focus on improvement

The purpose of the manager is to help teams to improve. However, the responsibility for producing results always lies with the Scrum team itself. This enables the manager to focus on getting better at producing results.

In the terms of the late Stephen Covey: production versus production capability. Or in regular English: chopping trees versus sharpening your axe. Everyone knows that working smarter beats working harder. Chopping harder and harder with a blunt axe is a far worse tactic than taking the time to properly sharpen your axe before you start chopping. It's very effective to take the time to structurally take away quality-related issues (technical debt).

This is the role of the new manager: constantly focusing on “sharpening the axe”, focusing on production capability over production. This works because the manager knows that by improving these capabilities, the team will produce more with less energy. In the pre-Scrum situation, the manager also knew this, but was responsible for production as well. When choices need to be made between short-term urgency and long-term benefits, often the short term prevails. Scrum splits these two responsibilities: the Scrum teams focus on short-term results while the manager focuses on improving in the long term.

In this, it is important to differentiate between large roadblocks (impediments) and small ones (issues). We expect Scrum teams to deal with everyday issues themselves and improve their own environment as far as they're able to do so. This is not the manager's job. The manager's job is to resolve impediments. Examples are securing a budget for setting up a representative test-environment and setting up “customer days” in which Product Backlog workshops are given.

We expect the manager to continuously look out for things that could impede the Scrum teams, so they can resolve them. He or she should resolve at least one impediment in each Sprint. By doing so, the working environment of the Scrum teams increasingly improves, allowing them to realize more results, faster. In short, the manager no

longer focuses on production but rather on production capabilities. A “sharpened axe” is the primary result of this.

Aim for effectiveness, flexibility, and flow

In traditional work approaches, work is continuously handed off from one person to another. Those who think up something hand it over to designers, who hand it over to builders, who hand it over to testers, who hand it over to senders, who finally hand it over to the customer. The big drawback of such chains is the isolation. Everyone can do valuable work in their own isolated subtask, while at the same time adding little value for the customer. You should look at an organization as a “value chain” and wonder: which of the links in the chain actually add value?

The main problem with such a chain becomes clear when you try to individually improve each of the links. Because when you try to make each of the links as efficient as possible, the entire chain ends up being slower. The cause of this is every link in the chain will start accumulating a stock of work. Doing nothing is inefficient, so a backlog of work will help in working continuously and efficiently. So, the more efficient each link in the chain becomes, the longer it takes for the entire chain to be passed through.

In the end, it’s not the efficiency that decides the success of a chain, but rather the effectiveness! This is sometimes called “*concept to cash*” or the flow rate of a chain. The faster we can work out a concept into a result, the more effective and, therefore, the more agile!

Let’s explain the importance of effectiveness over efficiency when considering a highway. What is the most *efficient* use of a highway? Ironically, a traffic jam! And preferably, a very long traffic jam that’s barely moving. In that case, every piece of road is optimally used. It’s not effective but extremely efficient. The most effective use of a highway is when the number of cars on it is such that everybody can get from A to B in as short a time as possible. So the best use is: flow!

If you focus on effectiveness, you will get efficiency for free in the places it matters. Just like in traffic. On large intersections it pays to

be efficient, but only when effectiveness is maintained. Being efficient on large sections of straight highway? Please don’t. I like to drive on! Good examples of free efficiency are the so-called desire paths. The roads are built to be effective and people create cut-through paths to be more efficient. People will automatically strive for efficiency and steering them to do so is therefore unnecessary.

The six most important changes for managers

- 1. Make sure your teams understand the “why”.** Help Product Owners master their vision and use it in making Backlogs, putting them on the wall (making them visible), and going through them with customers and stakeholders. Make sure everyone knows when they’re successful.
- 1. Make sure teams focus on working results.** Always go to the Sprint Review. And try not to go alone: regularly take your own superior with you or invite the director of a customer. Nothing is better in providing insight than actual results. Engage in the meeting and provide the Scrum team with feedback.
- 2. Trust your team and help them where needed.** In the end, it’s essential to make sure your teams get the confidence they need to organize themselves. They should understand that while they’re responsible, making mistakes is normal and won’t have personal consequences. Position yourself as support for resolving problems. You can, for example, hang an Impediment Backlog on your door with the impediments you’re currently working on.
- 3. Lead by example in agility.** Prioritize everything, time-box, finish everything completely, hang the Agile Manifesto in your office. Make “getting better” the primary goal, not just for your teams but for yourself as well. Take

initiative in celebrating parties: turn the spotlight on positive results and exemplary behavior. Make everything open for discussion and transparent. But above all, reward making mistakes and *learning from them*. Show that making mistakes is essential to be able to learn and grow. To be able to be credible enough to lead the agile changes, you'll need to show exemplary behavior.

4. Make sure your teams understand they're responsible.

Don't ever make detailed decisions for them. Even when you see the team make a choice you consider wrong, allow them to make that mistake, unless it is safety critical. Ask them questions about how and why but do not intervene. Even if it works out like you thought, it's fine. You've just confirmed that they, and not you, are indeed responsible. Furthermore, allow them their own learning process. You learned by making mistakes as well.

5. Make team accomplishments transparent.

Arrange for overviews in which teams and people can judge themselves. Make how things are going transparent – whether good or bad – and don't intervene. Again, asking questions and defining boundaries is fine. If teams aren't able to be successful within those boundaries, then adapt them. But keep the team responsible for its own work within those new boundaries. The HR-cycle could become more frequent and, next to the individual, also focus on the team.

6. Make sure teams strengthen their capabilities and coach them in doing so.

If teams should improve, individual team members should work on their skills as well – taking courses, reading books, and experimenting. So, the teams should be provided with the time and space to do these things. You can choose to provide teams with their own training budget.

If you do this, the team members can decide together how best to employ those funds for the good of the team. Really see yourself as the coach for these teams. How can you best help them in getting the best out of themselves?

What should you do?

- Give teams the confidence and room for self-organization.
- Grant everyone the opportunity for their own learning process and don't intervene.
- Make sure all results are always transparent.
- Focus on providing value for the customer.
- Aim for effectiveness, value, flexibility, and flow.
- Provide boundaries within teams arrange their process.
- Make team improvement your goal.
- Lead by example by also using a transparent list (backlog) yourself.
- Help teams by resolving impediments.

**CAN EVERY
ORGANIZATION
ADOPT SCRUM?**

EPILOGUE

We are passionately involved in introducing and training agility on a daily basis. For us, Scrum is an excellent first step towards high effectiveness and agility. In the last years, we found that support and vision of management is essential in achieving this. It is necessary for management to fully comprehend Scrum and help the Scrum teams to be successful.

We are 110% convinced that agility will make the difference in the next decades. Because of the increasing power and influence of social media and the profound computerization of our society, it is difficult to survive if you are unable to quickly respond to change. In an ever-changing and increasingly small world, survival of the fittest is the norm. We hope this book helps in this.

Nobody ever writes a book alone. Inspiration comes from many people and our learning experiences have occurred in the presence of many. It is impossible to mention everyone we want to thank here. Nevertheless, there are a few people we like to thank specifically:

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We especially want to thank our families. Without their support it would have been impossible for us to go through the effort of doing our job and the additional steps necessary for writing this book.

Finally, we want to address you. Yes you, our reader. Of course, thanks for the time and energy you have taken to work your way through our book. Thanks for being prepared to read this book and if you intend to hand the book to future readers, thanks for that as well.

We'd like to emphasize one thing to you at the end of this book: your leadership is crucial for making Scrum a success. This book is the contribution we can give you in this.

Now it is up to you!

It won't always be easy to start working with Scrum. However, try to find support in Darwin's words, which may apply more today than ever: *"It is not the strongest of species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."*

We wish you all the energy and decisiveness you need to create valuable results in our dynamic world, and hope this book will be both support and inspiration for you.

Delft, October 2014

Rini van Solingen

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rini van Solingen (Prof. Dr.) is a part-time full professor in Global Software Engineering at the Delft University of Technology, where he heads the research and education regarding worldwide-distributed software teams. Rini is also CTO at Prowareness (www.scrum.nl), where he helps, together with his colleagues in the Netherlands, Germany, India, and the United States, to quickly deliver working and valuable results for and with customers. He also advises management teams on this subject. He is always happy to give lectures or lead training courses or workshops, so feel free to invite him.

Next to his work for Prowareness and the TU Delft, Rini actively works for the "Logeerplezier" foundation, which he founded together with his wife Patricia. Logeerplezier arranges holiday homes and sleepovers for handicapped children and their families.

Together with Eelco Rustenberg and Jeff Sutherland, Rini published *The Power of Scrum* in 2010. Rini blogs at www.rinivansolingen.com and can be followed on Twitter (@solingen) or via his YouTube channel.

Of course you can also send Rini an email at rini@scrum.nl or d.m.vansolingen@tudelft.nl. Feel free to approach Rini to ask a question or have a discussion. He likes hearing from you and usually responds faster than you would expect.

Rob van Lanen is an Entrepreneur and member of the leadership team at Prowareness. Additionally, he is a Professional Scrum Trainer for scrum.org. As a Management Coach, Rob enthusiastically works towards improving the organization of the Prowareness customers. Nowadays he is more frequently presenting in boardrooms because from there it is possible to realize support for organizational change. As a Change Agent, he contributes his passion and experience with Prowareness to jointly take the next step in the mission to spread agility across the world.

As a Professional Scrum Trainer (PST), Rob is certified by scrum.org to give specialist trainings for the Scrum Master (PSM) and Product Owner (PSPO) roles. To be able to do this, he was trained by Ken Schwaber, the Inventor of Scrum and CEO of scrum.org, the training institute for Scrum. Rob puts a lot of passion and energy in his trainings, which is appreciated by his students.

Rob is also a husband, father, son, brother, and friend. You can learn more about him by following him on Twitter (@robvanlanen) and you can also contact him via email at rob@scrum.nl.