



## THE SCRUM MASTER'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE

# Scrum

"A LIGHTWEIGHT FRAMEWORK THAT HELPS PEOPLE, TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS GENERATE VALUE THROUGH ADAPTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR COMPLEX PROBLEMS."  
~2020 SCRUM GUIDE

# THE PRODUCT OWNER

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE VALUES OF SCRUM AS IT PERTAINS TO THE PRODUCT OWNER:

COMMITMENT, FOCUS, OPENNESS, RESPECT, COURAGE

- **PRODUCT OWNERS COMMIT TO:**
  - being prepared for backlog refinement
  - attending the events where they are needed
  - creating value in each sprint
  - partnering with the whole scrum team
  - working with the stakeholders and prioritizing their needs
  - also prioritizing the work that other teams request of their team
- **PRODUCT OWNERS FOCUS ON:**
  - creating value
  - product goal
  - keeping the stakeholders and sponsors in the know
  - getting ready for the next sprint
  - getting answers for the team
  - understanding the customer's pain (product discovery)
- **PRODUCT OWNERS ARE OPEN TO:**
  - working side by side with the team
  - hearing the team when a technical reprioritization will benefit the product
  - making time for the team to learn
  - making time for the team to do the work without creating technical debt wherever possible, and open to the team bringing technical debt into the sprint
  - working with competing stakeholders and hearing from them
  - working with challenging stakeholders to help them to understand the priorities
  - receiving feedback
- **PRODUCT OWNERS SHOW RESPECT WHEN THEY:**
  - come prepared to the events
  - take the technical advice of the team with regard to priority (example: if we can do your 4th priority 1st, it will technically enable us to complete 3 more items this sprint)
  - honor that the scrum master is working to implement scrum by following the processes in faith
  - meet with all the stakeholders together and invites them into discussion so they can hear one another
  - ask the team their thoughts about the how of the work, and listens
  - meets with customers to find out what they want and need, and listens
- **PRODUCT OWNERS SHOW COURAGE WHEN THEY:**
  - fearlessly face competing stakeholders to tell of the chosen priorities even when the choice may not be popular, and they stand in the conviction of their reasoning
  - meet with customers and stakeholders to demo the new functionality

## THE PRODUCT OWNER

The product owner's main accountability is to deliver value for the company and their customers. This can be seen through the work of the scrum team, whether they are delivering new functionality, fixes, or reducing technical debt. The product owner is also accountable for managing the product backlog in an effective manner. They can do this themselves, or they can delegate it, and regardless of who does the work, the product owner is still accountable.

Effective backlog management is:

- creating and communicating the product goal, and items in the product backlog
- prioritizing the work in the product backlog
- making sure that the product backlog is well-written, organized, and understood, as well as easily accessible by all
- preparing attendees to sprint planning and sprint review are prepared to talk about the most important work

You'll note that the role is called product owner. Not product owners or product owner committee. It is therefore, intended to be just one person; not two, not six, just one. It is mission critical for the organization to respect the product owner's decisions, all of which should be visible in the backlog, and in the work presented at the sprint review. That means there isn't a need for a separate decision table.

A successful product owner will:

- demonstrate an ability to communicate across the organization at different levels, as well as with all types of customers
- have a good understanding of the work needed to achieve the product goal(s)
- organize work according to that which is most important and will yield the most value, the soonest
- demonstrate good negotiating skills
- communicate with respect as they collaborate with their team(s)
- prepare and update roadmaps

**DURING THE SPRINT, THE PRODUCT OWNER:**

- works the backlog to keep it current, prioritized & filled with information needed, which includes, but is not limited to:
  - backlog refinement
  - ensuring team has list of backlog items ahead of time
  - getting answers to questions for the team so they have all they need to estimate properly
- being available to approve work
- being available for questions or clarifications
- working collaboratively with team, scrum master, leadership, other product owners, and stakeholders in no particular order

# THE PRODUCT OWNER

## THE SPRINT (THE EVENT WHERE THE WORK HAPPENS)

### SPRINT PLANNING

- SETS THE MOOD FOR THE EVENT BY:
  - BEING ON CAMERA
  - HAVING EMAILED THE TEAM THE LIST OF BACKLOG ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED IN THE EVENT AHEAD OF TIME SO THEY CAN BE PREPARED
- FACILITATES THE EVENT
- ASKS TEAM TO ESTIMATE & UPDATES TOOL ACCORDINGLY
- ACCEPTS THE TEAM'S ESTIMATES
- DOES NOT PUSH TEAM TO TAKE ON MORE THAN THEY ARE ABLE
- ANSWERS TEAM'S QUESTIONS, OR TAKES A NOTE TO DO SO IF THEY NEED TO RESEARCH

### DAILY SCRUM

- NOTHING. THIS EVENT IS FOR THE DEVELOPERS TO DISCUSS THEIR PROGRESS, & SHIFT WHAT MAY NEED SHIFTING
- IF YOU ATTEND, YOU ARE SILENT, AND CAN BE OFF CAMERA
- YOU CAN HOWEVER, BE HELPFUL IN THE 16TH MINUTE, AT WHICH POINT COMING TO THE CAMERA IS HELPFUL

### SPRINT REVIEW

- SETS THE MOOD FOR THE EVENT BY:
  - BEING ON CAMERA
  - INTRODUCING PERSONS DEMOING & LIST OF ITEMS TO BE DEMOED
  - NARRATING THE DEMO OF COMPLETED ITEMS
- ENGAGES OPENLY WITH STAKEHOLDERS
- SHOWS PLAN FOR ITEMS TO BE WORKED ON NEXT SPRINT
- TALKS ABOUT WHAT IS & IS NOT WORKING FOR THE TEAM

### SPRINT RETROSPECTIVE

- SETS THE MOOD FOR THE EVENT BY:
  - BEING ON CAMERA
- PARTICIPATES OPENLY IN THE EVENT
- GIVES THE TEAM SPACE TO SPEAK
- ASKS THE TEAM HOW THEY CAN HELP
- PARTICIPATES IN THE CREATION OF A SAFE SPACE
- CONGRATULATES THE TEAM ON A SUCCESSFUL SPRINT & SITS IN THE SPACE OF HOPE WHEN THE SPRINT ISN'T SUCCESSFUL
- IS OPEN TO A BACKLOG ITEM FOR TEAM'S IMPROVEMENT ITEM DURING THE NEXT SPRINT

## REFERENCES

*www.scrumguides.org, 2020 Scrum Guide, by Jeff Sutherland, Ken Schwaber*