What does a scrum master do all day? [closed]

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago   Modified 3 years, 7 months ago

Viewed 74k times

57

As it currently stands, this question is not a good fit for our Q&A format. We expect answers to be supported by facts, references, or expertise, but this question will likely solicit debate, arguments, polling, or extended discussion. If you feel that this question can be improved and possibly reopened, visit the help center for guidance.

Closed 13 years ago.

To quote wikipedia:

> Scrum is facilitated by a ScrumMaster, whose primary job is to remove impediments to the ability of the team to deliver the sprint goal. The ScrumMaster is not the leader of the team (as they are self-organizing) but acts as a buffer between the team and any distracting influences. The ScrumMaster ensures that the Scrum process is used as intended. The ScrumMaster is the enforcer of rules."

Working on this basis, and the fact that most businesses are running 2-3 projects at a time, what actual work tasks does a SM do to fill a full time job? Or, is it not a full time job and that individual do other things such as development, sales etc?

Do any SM's out there have anything to share?

scrum   methodology

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17 Answers

Sorted by: Highest score (default)

46

Unfortunately we don't have the luxury of having dedicated scrum masters. I am also a team leader and senior developer which more than fills the day.

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3   Not sure why I got voted down here, I thought I answered the question. – Simon Keep Sep 24, 2008 at 15:25

You likely fill the role of Scrum Master, even if you do not have the title – David Arno Sep 24, 2008 at 15:25

2   Yep I do, it is one of my titles. – Simon Keep Sep 24, 2008 at 15:26

I'm not sure why you were voted down either as you made a valid point. So I promptly voted you back up again ;) – David Arno Sep 24, 2008 at 15:28

1   Unfortunately? Sure, you might feel you have some extra work load, but I'd take a scrum master that really understands the problems we're facing, any time. – Espen Schulstad Aug 17, 2010 at 10:35

I typically am on Stack Overflow all day. Oh, and I try to co-ordinate lunches.

39

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answered May 19, 2009 at 1:29

Jordan S. Jones
13.9k ● 5 ● 46 ● 49

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7   +1 love it. Funny but true at times. – Alex Nolasco Dec 17, 2009 at 18:33

7   What is this stack overflow you speak of? – sixtyfootersdude Jun 23, 2010 at 1:33

2   Can anyone explain, i didn't get the humour? – Faizan Oct 23, 2013 at 19:43

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The key to the ScrumMaster role is to remove impediments.

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answered Oct 1, 2009 at 17:16

Christian
229 ● 2 ● 6

16   +1 And this can take a **LOT** of time depending on the context. Ultimately, my goal as ScrumMaster is to become useless. – Pascal Thivent Jun 29, 2010 at 17:34 ✏

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16

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The ScrumMaster/ Iteration Manager

- Builds the Release Plan

- Builds the Scrum/ Iteration Plan

- Plans and hosts the

    - Scrum/ Iteration Planning Meetings

    - Show & Tells

    - Release Planning Meetings

    - Retrospectives

- Owns the blocker board and actively works with the team to identify and remove blockers

- Updates the team WIKI

- Updates Big Visible Charts in the team room including the story card wall

- Participates in the daily standup

- Participates in the daily Scrum of Scrums

The ScrumMaster/ Iteration Manager is also the sheep dog, that is they protect the team (herd). Finally, the ScrumMaster/ Iteration Manager is the point of contact for the team to external resources but primarily the Project Manager.

Share   Improve this answer   edited May 27, 2009 at 10:03

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answered May 19, 2009 at 1:24

Cam Wolff
1,420 ● 15 ● 13

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6   Scrum master is not responsible to do all that, the team is. Scrum master is only to make sure process is running, but not doing the process itself. – Joshua Partogi Sep 29, 2009 at 21:59

The first half of this post sounds more like a product owner to me. – Oskar Duveborn Dec 20, 2012 at 19:56

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"acts as a buffer between the team and any distracting influences"

That is a full time job. There are a bunch of people who would love to get information from the team and it is the SM to handle those questions. To do that job well, it is important to be proactive, not reactive. Therefore they should be keeping all the wheels running smoothly. It is an amazing transformation when the SM is working well.

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edited Oct 1, 2009 at 17:32

Josh Kelley
58.3k ● 20 ● 162 ● 256

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 15:20

Craig
11.9k ● 13 ● 45 ● 62

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I think there will be as many answers to this question as there are people to answer it. On a small team with dedicated people who mostly know what they doing, the role of SM is almost invisible; on a larger team trying to cope with vague requirements and power struggles the SM will be highly visible and probably never have a moment to themselves, as they will become the lightning conductor for all the frustrations of the team (and stakeholders outside it).

There's no substitute for knowing what you want to achieve and having a small team of people who know how to achieve it. If you have that, and you "adopt

SCRUM", you will probably be convinced quickly that being a Scrum Master is easy. But if instead you have a big mess of a team, and an undefined goal, and a lot of political fighting going on, and you "adopt SCRUM", you will probably come away thinking that being a Scrum Master is a full-time (perhaps impossible) job requiring a combination of very rare talents. Most real teams are probably somewhere between these extremes.

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answered Oct 1, 2009 at 17:25

Daniel Earwicker
117k ● 38 ● 208 ● 286

This is a very accurate estimation of the realities.... – Exitos
Jan 11, 2013 at 14:33

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Please note: this question and answer is over twelve years old. The consensus understanding of the role of scrum master has moved on massively since then and so I no longer view this as a valid answer to the question, let alone one worthy of being the accepted answer. By all means downvote it. Beyond that, pay it no heed.

The Scrum Master will do things like ensuring scrums occur, organising sprint planning meetings, retrospectives etc. Also (s)he will be able to explain to management what the team is doing and why the team members cannot be poached off onto other projects until the sprint finishes. Beyond that, there aren't really any defined tasks

for the Scrum Master. So one person should easily be able to be Scrum Master for 3 teams, and still have time left over to either do management type jobs (holiday requests, procedures, attending boring meetings with directors or whatever), or be free to contribute to the development resources of the team.

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answered Sep 24, 2008 at 15:24

David Arno
43.2k ● 16 ● 88 ● 132

14 It is not recommendable for one scrum master to facilitate more than one team or even get involved in the development team. – Joshua Partogi Sep 29, 2009 at 21:57

22 This answer does not accurately reflect the role of ScrumMaster, particularly the bit about "So one person should easily be able to be Scrum Master for 3 teams, and still have time left over to either do management type jobs (holiday requests, procedures, attending boring meetings with directors or whatever),..." – DrivenDevelopment Oct 1, 2009 at 19:48

23 You just forgot the **most** important part of the ScrumMaster role: removing impediments. This can be a huge task and take a lot of time. And a ScrumMaster should be used for more valuable things than project office management. This answer is simply incorrect. – Pascal Thivent Jun 29, 2010 at 17:40 ✎

1 It's really hard to see subtle, systemic, communication, environmental and many other impediments if the Scrum

Master is "fully loaded" on teams. Ever wonder why the "player-coach" is no longer found in professional sports? – Ryan Cromwell Apr 11, 2012 at 3:29

3   If a scrum master role takes 100% of the alloted work time there's a huge problem with the organization. I'd say the scrum master should be a part of the development team and do the scrum master role when needed, ie act as a gateway towards outside disturbances (which however is mostly covered by a product owner!) and mostly make sure Scrum processes are adhered to, book plannings, retrospectives and help remove impediments. The scrum master role in my personal opinion is extremely well suited to be rotated within a Scrum team. – Oskar Duveborn Dec 20, 2012 at 19:54

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While ScrumMaster is a role within the Scrum framework, the individual fulfilling that role must be a member of the Team. In Scrum, **Team members should at all costs be full time**. Team members should be able to pick up tasks on the Sprint backlog. They might be development tasks, testing tasks, configuring the CI server tasks, etc... If you can't contribute to the burndown then why be on the team? Buggering off and joining another team is the last thing any self respecting ScrumMaster should do. ScrumMasters should be servant leaders that are *embedded with and dedicated to* their Team and product. ScrumMaster is a role on a Team, not a job title. I disagree with those that think you can be a ScrumMaster on more than one project at a time and still be world class. The fact is, that's just not Scrum.

Share   Improve this answer   answered Sep 29, 2009 at 21:45

DrivenDevelopment
559 ● 4 ● 11

> A good scrum master can work with two teams, a great scrum master with one. Don't remember the origin of this saying :(– Heinzlmaen Apr 7, 2019 at 16:59

First and foremost: **remove impediments**.

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It is best if a Scrum Master is dedicated to one team, so that impediments are removed as soon as possible. Some of this can be done proactively, for example by pushing the PO to analyze certain stories better for the next Sprint.

If there is extra time available it is convenient if the SM has some skills that can make him function as a developer or tester on the team. I've seen good result with SM's that delegate as much as possible to a (classical) project manager and focus on development most of their time.

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answered Aug 17, 2010 at 10:15

iwein
26.2k ● 13 ● 74 ● 112

> +1 this is what it's all about imo. – Oskar Duveborn Dec 20, 2012 at 19:57

To make a long story short, the Scrum Master is responsible for making things happen. And in practice it is often the case that the Scrum Master is actually a project manager in disguise. At least that's the case in my company.

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edited Sep 24, 2008 at 15:38

answered Sep 24, 2008 at 15:33

Jivko Petiov
586 ● 7 ● 15

> Working on this basis, and the fact that most businesses are running 2-3 projects at a time, what actual work tasks does a SM do to fill a full time job?

Anything within their skillset to help the Team achieve the goal.

> > Or, is it not a full time job and that individual do other things such as development, sales etc?

ScrumMaster was not originally intended to be a full time job. ScrumMaster is a role fulfilled by someone on the Team. That team member is dedicated to the product full time. So, when he\she is not doing ScrumMaster duties

they default back to burning down tasks on the Sprint Backlog.

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answered Oct 1, 2009 at 17:13

DrivenDevelopment
559 ● 4 ● 11

7   can you add supporting evidence to "not originally intended to be a full time job"? – iwein Aug 17, 2010 at 10:10

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Everything and anything that developers need to keep being productive. Order pizza. Go talk to admins, management, other teams. Do bureaucracy kind of stuff. Fix the build server if no one else's available.

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answered Oct 1, 2009 at 17:32

Andriy Volkov
18.9k ● 9 ● 69 ● 84

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The key word here is that a Scrum Master's role is a facilitator's role. And as someone rightly mentioned up there his most important job is to ensure seamless distraction free environment for his team, which means removing impediments, making sure his team has whatever they need at all times. Scrum master is a link between the Product team and the Development team. The decision making is done by the TEAM and not Scrum master. It is bad idea to share one Scrum Master between multiple teams as requirement of one team may

be an impediment for the other team and hence defies the whole purpose of a Scrum Master. Also it is very dangerous to have your Manager as your Scrum master as the pressure of delivery on the manager may force him to micro manage which is a killer for any scrum team. Other than the regular stuff which is

- Arrange Sprint planning and retrospectives

- Facilitate daily standups Arrange

- Demo's at the end of sprint iteration

- Address team's concerns mentioned at the standups

A few important things that a Scrum Master has to manage on a day to day basis is

- Foresee and remove any distractions for the team before even it hits the team.

- Encourage team to communicate more

- Maintain constant communication with product team to check what needs to be done in preparation for future sprints

- Make sure the team follows the processes they have collectively agreed upon as sometimes during sprint busyness some processes slip through the crack

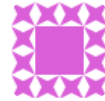- Constantly find ways on how to improve the processes followed by the team

Most importantly a Scrum Master has to standby and support his team.

All this work takes up a lot of time and does require a dedicated Scrum Master who performs no other role.

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Scrum Master is like the mother bear for the team. They look after the team's health (project wise), protect them from pesky outsiders and remove any obstacles for the team. I play ScrumMaster for my team but I am also a development lead (for the same team!) who takes part in technical discussions, design discussions, coordinating between the developers and QA on our team(if they arent already doing it themselves). I do try and take on actual development tasks to burn the chart down when time is available.

Isnt it extremely distracting for the ScrumMaster to play that role in multiple teams. God I would find that confusing. Which impediment is blocking which team again?? Wait who was working on this task??

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A Scrum Master role implemented correctly, is invaluable to the Project and should not be look upon as a Part time role. The most important aspect of the role is to act as an

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obstacle remover for any queries raised in the Scrum meetings by the Development Teams. A Technical Scrum Master (which is what most SMs tend to be) should not be a Developer on the team, but should be able to advise on design and solutions (an extension to pair programming if you will).

They are responsible for updating the ProductBackLog (stories should be created by the business), SprintBackLog and BurnLog and for liasing with the business and IT Management on progress. They also manage a SpikeLog for any items that require investigation that may evolve into Stories (again driven by the business).

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answered Apr 14, 2010 at 16:44

Liam Reilly
9 ●1

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As drivendevelopment implies, the ScrumMaster is a full team member and thus should be full time. I generally treat my role as "ensuring the team functions as a well oiled machine", which can have a number of meanings at different times. Frequently, a SM spends a lot of time facilitating the team's interactions with people outside the team, especially those related to business analysis and stakeholder expectations. Beyond that, it is a matter of meeting the mechanical items listed by Cam and looking after the physical and emotional state of the team.

Related to one of the earlier answers, one of the fundamental aspects I insist on is that no member of the team is a direct report to me, nor to each other. This precludes things like vacation time, expenses, etc from being part of my job, but goes a long way towards not cluttering the trust relationship that must exist.

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answered Jun 29, 2010 at 17:27

Eric Willeke
119 ● 3

As generally understood priority # 1 on scrum-master list is to remove impediments as reported by team. But this should not stop here, he should constantly look out for potential impediments.. and more importantly impediments that are there but not yet identified. Ken said Impediments are opportunities. So **scrum-master should avail these opportunities all day along to bring his team(s) to hyper productivity**.

Ultimately purpose of scrum is to bring success to projects. Purpose of having a scrum-master is to ensure that scrum succeed in fulfilling purpose of scrum. Now to to fulfill purpose of scrum-master, he/she must think & act at strategic level as well. This is full-time job.

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answered Jul 2, 2011 at 20:56

Asim Ghaffar
387 ● 2 ● 10

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