Transcript

Communicating with Stakeholders on a Scrum Project

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *identify guidelines for effective stakeholder communication*

1. Communicating with stakeholders

In the Scrum approach, effective communication is vital for ensuring that a Scrum team understands customer requirements, and that development team members can work together efficiently to solve complex problems.

In a traditional approach to project management, customer requirements for a product are fully defined at the start of a project.

In Scrum, a team develops its understanding of a product and of the customer's requirements over time. This makes effective communication especially important.

In a Scrum project, you can distinguish between two types of stakeholders – those who are committed to a project and those who are interested in the project. Communication has to occur among and between both stakeholder types.

Select each type of stakeholder for more information.

Committed

Scrum team members are expected to be fully committed to the project and available full-time. The individuals committed to a project are those responsible for its results. This includes members of the three core Scrum roles - the product owner, Scrum Master, and developers.

The Scrum team has to communicate effectively with the project customer to meet the customer's expectations. Over the long term, good communication can also result in customer loyalty and repeat business. However, the Scrum Master should protect the team from unnecessary interruptions from other stakeholders to ensure the team can do its job within the allocated time.

Effective communication between team members is also essential. This ensures team members will work well together and can make appropriate decisions about their own work.

Interested

Individuals who are merely interested in the project but have no formal role are the project's customers. They depend on those committed to the project to do a good job, but aren't actively involved. For example, they include project directors, business development executives, marketing executives, vendors, and developers who need to integrate the product into their systems.

Not every stakeholder wants to participate in the process equally. Some may be willing to participate in the process but not have any particular requirements, while others are concerned only about the results. Others may want to contribute actively.

The Scrum methodology favors face-to-face communication over voice, text, or even video communication.

This is because face-to-face communication happens in real time, without delays.

It also helps build trust and so encourages the free flow of information.

In addition to using regular, face-to-face communication, a Scrum team may use various simple, visual forms of communication to track and communicate its progress. These include burndown charts and task boards, as well as reports and graphs generated using traditional software.

Select each type of communication medium for more information about it.

Burndown charts

A burndown chart visually displays the number of work units that the team has to complete per sprint. One line represents the ideal workflow and another tracks actual workflow as it occurs.
In an example of a burndown chart, the X-axis is labeled with the number of iterations, from 1 to 9, and the Y-axis is labeled with units of work, from 0 to 120. In the chart area, one line represents the ideal workflow, and another represents actual workflow.

Task boards

A task board shows the current status of all tasks in a sprint. It takes the form of a board with separate rows for each of the user stories that the team will develop during a sprint, and columns indicating the status of each of these. The team decides which tasks it needs to perform to fulfill each user story and adds a sticky note for each task to the relevant column. As the status of a task changes, the development team moves its sticky note to the next column.

A Scrum team can add however much detail is required to a task board. For example, it might choose to record hours spent and hours remaining for

completing each task on the board.
*An example task board contains five columns, titled Story, To do, In progress,
To verify, and Done. Notes in the column sections identify the status of various
tasks.*

Traditional software

Although Scrum favors simplicity, you can use traditional project management
software – which may be customized as necessary – to produce reports and
graphs containing various types of project information. For example, you can
track task durations and effort using timelines, and create custom reports for
presenting to interested stakeholders.

Reviews and demonstrations are also important for facilitating communication in
Scrum. At the end of a sprint, a Scrum team invites stakeholders to review the working
product, or features, it has developed. This often involves a demonstration, during
which everyone gets a chance to exchange ideas and provide feedback about the
sprint results. These ideas can then be incorporated in the next sprint.

Some customers may be reluctant to participate in the Scrum development process –
for example, citing time pressure as the reason. This can jeopardize the success of the
Scrum approach.

A Scrum team can take specific steps to involve reluctant customers:

- assign a proxy product owner – someone who knows the customer's requirements
  well – to represent the customer

- send electronic versions of demos to the customer and request feedback

- provide reasons why it's important for the customer to give feedback and make it
  clear that feedback is required in order to build value and keep production on track,
  and

- if necessary, travel to the customer

Question

What are some of the guidelines for effective stakeholder
communication in the Scrum methodology?

Options:

1. Conduct regular face-to-face meetings
2. Keep documentation tracking work progress up to date
3. Arrange product reviews and demonstrations
4. Clearly define the hierarchy of roles on the Scrum team

5.   Document all conversations

Answer

Option 1: Correct. Scrum relies on regular, face-to-face meetings of team members and between the team and the customer. Face-to-face meetings enable information to flow freely, without delays, and they build trust.

Option 2: Correct. A Scrum team needs to keep documentation such as timelines, burndown charts, and task boards up to date so that team members, as well as customers and other stakeholders, can easily track the team's progress.

Option 3: Correct. At the end of a sprint, the Scrum team may use a demonstration to present the sprint results to the customer. This facilitates the exchange of ideas and feedback. The team may also send a customer an electronic version of the demonstration and ask for feedback, if the customer appears reluctant to attend a demonstration in person.

Option 4: Incorrect. Divisions on a team with roles organized into a hierarchy are likely to obstruct communication, rather than making it more efficient. A Scrum development team doesn't recognize a hierarchy of roles – all members play an equal role as developers.

Option 5: Incorrect. It would be difficult to document all conversations in Scrum because these often take place informally. Also, Scrum focuses on efficiency rather than on producing large volumes of documentation. Only the most vital information – for example about requirements and work progress – is documented and updated.

Correct answer(s):

1. Conduct regular face-to-face meetings
2. Keep documentation tracking work progress up to date
3. Arrange product reviews and demonstrations

2. Introducing Scrum meetings

The role of Scrum meetings is to ensure communication flows smoothly between the different stakeholders and team members. There are five types of Scrum meetings – the sprint planning meeting, the daily standup meeting, the Scrum of Scrums, the sprint review meeting, and the sprint retrospective.

Select each type of meeting for more information.

Sprint planning meeting

A sprint planning meeting takes place at the start of each sprint. The purpose is for the product owner, Scrum Master, and the development team to negotiate the scope of the next sprint within a limited period of time, usually eight hours.

The product owner introduces the requirements of the product backlog in the order in which they should be developed and answers any questions the development team has about scope or goals.

The development team then breaks down the requirements into tasks and estimates their duration. Based on this information, the team develops the sprint backlog, which includes all the tasks it will be able to complete during the sprint. The Scrum team also defines a sprint goal, which is a brief description of what the development team will produce during the sprint.

Daily standup meeting

During a daily standup meeting, also known as a daily Scrum, team members discuss what was done during the previous 24 hours, what will happen during the next 24 hours, and any obstacles that have arisen. Participants remain standing throughout the meeting to keep it brief and prevent it from wasting development time. The Scrum Master monitors the meeting to ensure it remains informative and doesn't exceed 15 minutes.

The development team uses the daily Scrum to collaborate, and to track its progress in working through the sprint backlog and achieving a sprint goal.

Scrum of Scrums

The Scrum of Scrums is a meeting that takes place in large projects with multiple teams, to coordinate the work of the teams. A representative from each team meets after the daily standup meeting, for not more than 15 minutes. Each representative outlines what the team did over the past 24 hours and what it will do that may affect other teams. The aim is to reveal problems or issues that may affect other teams.

A Scrum of Scrums meeting may be held only two or three times a week. However, if projects are complex and the work of multiple teams has to merge at the end of a sprint, daily Scrum of Scrums meetings may be required.

Sprint review meeting

A sprint review meeting, which is generally scheduled to last for a maximum of about four hours, is held at the end of each sprint. During the meeting, the development team presents the result of the sprint to the product owner, the Scrum Master, and other stakeholders who are interested in the project, such as business managers and customers who'll integrate the developed feature into their systems.

The product owner then assesses the result against the sprint goal and amends the product backlog accordingly.

Sprint retrospective

After each sprint review meeting, the Scrum Master facilitates a sprint retrospective with the development team to discuss how the sprint went and how it could have been improved. The participants then develop best practices that they can apply in the next sprint.

Question

Match each Scrum meeting to its description.

Options:

A.   Sprint planning meeting
B.   Daily standup meeting
C.   Sprint review meeting
D.   Sprint retrospective
E.   Scrum of Scrums

Targets:

1.   Involves developing a sprint goal and sprint backlog
2.   Enables development team members to update one another on their progress
3.   Gives stakeholders an opportunity to inspect the results of a sprint and request changes
4.   Helps the development team identify best practices it can incorporate in the next sprint
5.   Coordinates the work of multiple teams

Answer

A sprint planning meeting takes place before each sprint. It helps the Scrum team determine the sprint goal, which describes the desired result of the sprint, as well as the sprint backlog, which is a list of tasks the development team needs to complete during the sprint.

The daily standup meeting, or daily Scrum, is a 15-minute meeting in which development team members update one another on what they did during the previous 24 hours, what they plan to do over the next 24 hours, and any obstacles that have arisen.

During the sprint review meeting, the development team presents the results of a sprint to the product owner, Scrum Master, and other interested stakeholders for review. This meeting is informal and shouldn't exceed four hours for a one-month sprint.

After a sprint review meeting, the Scrum Master facilitates a sprint retrospective, during which the team reviews the success of the

previous sprint and identifies best practices it can incorporate in the next sprint.

In a Scrum of Scrums, representatives of multiple project teams update one another on their teams' progress, highlighting any issues that may affect other teams.

Correct answer(s):

Target 1 = Option A

Target 2 = Option B

Target 3 = Option C

Target 4 = Option D

Target 5 = Option E

Summary

Scrum practices rely on effective communication among team members and between the team and the customer. Face-to-face communication is preferred because it helps build trust and encourages the free flow of information, without delays. Visual indicators of progress, including burndown charts and task boards, communicate team progress. In addition, reviews and demonstrations encourage the exchange of ideas and feedback. A Scrum team can apply several guidelines to encourage an unresponsive customer to participate.

Types of Scrum meetings include sprint planning meetings, daily standup meetings, the Scrum of Scrums, sprint review meetings, and sprint retrospectives.