

## **BEP 314 – Project Management 5: Scrum Stand-up Meetings (Part 2)**

Hello and welcome back to Business English Pod. My name's Edwin, and I'll be your host for today's lesson on participating in a scrum stand-up meeting.

Most people I know would agree that the best meetings are those that are short and focused. And that's exactly how a scrum stand-up meeting is designed. Scrum is an approach to project management, especially in software development. Every day the scrum team has a short meeting where everyone gives an update.

In a good scrum meeting, those updates should only take 15 minutes. The scrum master keeps everyone focused. That may mean he or she sidebars any discussion that doesn't relate to the three questions everyone should answer. And what are those three questions that you should answer in a scrum stand-up meeting?

Firstly, you should report what you have been working on. That normally means telling everyone what you accomplished the day before. Next, you'll let everyone know what you're going to work on next, or on the day of the meeting. Already you can notice that the meeting focuses on a limited time period.

The third question you'll answer is whether you face any impediments. An impediment is an obstacle or challenge. Removing those impediments is the job of the scrum master, but your fellow team members may also be able to help. For that reason, you might ask for assistance during the meeting. When everyone's finished their updates, the scrum master will close the meeting. But not before outlining sidebar topics for discussion *after* the meeting.

In today's dialog, we'll rejoin a scrum meeting at a software company. The team is working on a new piece of software for a logistics company. We'll hear Jill, the scrum master, and Katherine, who's giving her daily updates. We'll also hear from Sam, who you might have heard give his own updates in our last lesson.

As you listen to the dialog, try to answer the following questions:

1. What does Katherine say she will be working on today?
2. What is the first impediment Katherine reports?
3. What does Katherine want help with?

## **Vocabulary**

**The something side of things:** a certain aspect or feature of something larger; "Well, I like your design ideas, but I'm not sure about the budget side of things."

**Wireframe / Wireframing:** a blueprint or framework for an app or website; "Once I started doing some wireframing, I realized the app is going to be much bigger than we originally thought."

**Paper prototype:** a rough or basic paper drawing of a computer or mobile interface; "It may be best to sit down with the client and do a paper prototype together so there's agreement on how it looks."

**To work something up:** to develop something step by step; "Jason, while you work up the database over the next few weeks, I'll start on the design."

**Draft:** a drawing or piece of writing that may have changes to it before it is finished; "We need to submit the proposal on Friday, so I'd like you to show me a draft on Tuesday."

**To run through:** to examine or deal with a set of things; "All right everyone, the last thing we should do is just run through some of the recent policy changes."

**Use case scenarios:** possible paths through a computer application, used for testing organization and design; "Those use case scenarios we went through really helped us figure out how to simplify the program."

**On the right track:** doing something in a good or effective way, but not yet finished; "Frida, could you have a quick look at these charts and tell me if I'm on the right track or not?"

**Involved:** complicated or difficult to understand; "If the problem with the city gets too involved, we may have to bring in our legal team."

**To touch base:** to contact a person; "Well, if you've got everything you need, then I'll head back to the office and touch base again next week."

**Stuffy:** a place or room that is "stuffy" lacks fresh air; "I can't wait to get out of these stuffy basement offices and into our bright new space down the road."

**Like an oven:** very hot, for a place or room; "The shop foreman is saying it's like an oven down on the floor and the workers are really suffering."

**Station:** a specific place where a person performs work activities, especially one with a computer; "So Dale, we're going to give you this station here next to Ernest; he'll be able to answer any questions you have."

**Sketch:** a graphics editing computer program used on macOS; "I have ample experience in a Mac design environment, and am comfortable with Sketch."

**Illustrator:** a graphics editing program used on either macOS or Windows; "We need a graphic designer that's good with both Photoshop and Illustrator."

**To get up to speed:** having the latest information or skill; "We have a consultant coming in to get everyone up to speed on the latest changes to environmental regulations."

**To sidebar something:** to delay dealing with something; "I understand that's a big issue for you Hal, but let's sidebar it for now and you and I can discuss after the meeting."

**As far as something goes:** regarding or concerning something; "So, it sounds like we all like the same colors, but as far as photos go we can't seem to agree."

**Product owner:** the key stakeholder in a software project who understands and conveys the vision for the software; "I just got word from the product owner that we might have to deliver a couple of weeks before we anticipated."

**To hang around:** to stay in a place, especially casually; "I'm hoping a few people are willing to hang around after closing and decorate for the staff party later."

**Burndown chart:** a graph showing how much work and time remains on a software development project; "Well Tanya, just looking at the burndown chart here I think we've made some really good progress this month."

**"That's a wrap:"** we are finished, especially at the end of a meeting or piece of work; "So... if nobody has anything else to add, then that's a wrap. We'll meet again same time same place next Tuesday."

## **Dialog**

**Jill:** All right Katherine... looks like you're last. When you're ready.

**Katherine:** Okay, I guess I can start off by saying that I've been working on the app **side of things**. Yesterday I did some **wireframing** based on the **paper prototype** we **worked up** last week.

**Jill:** Nice work.

**Katherine:** Yeah, happy to get a **draft** done. And that's it for my completed stuff. So, what I'm going to do today, hopefully with Paul's help, is **run through** some more **use case scenarios** and see if we're **on the right track**.

**Jill:** Those can be a bit **involved**... so you might want to **touch base** with Greg. I know he's done a lot in that area.

**Katherine:** Sure, will do. Now, as far as impediments go, I do have a couple of things... For one, I'm finding that back room really hot and **stuffy**. It's **like an oven** in there. Hard to keep focused without taking a break.

**Jill:** No reason you have to be back there Kath. I think we just used that room for the prototyping session because it has a whiteboard. But there's a whole row of **stations** down the hall you can use.

**Katherine:** Okay great, I'll take a look later... Oh, and one more thing: I know someone suggested using **Sketch** instead of **Illustrator** for wireframing, but I'm finding it a little hard to **get up to speed**. Wondering if anybody might be able to help me out with that?

**Sam:** It's been a while... but I'm sure I can help. What is it you're having trouble with?

**Jill:** Maybe we can **sidebar** that for after the meeting. I'd like to keep us within the 15 minutes if we can.

**Sam:** Sure thing.

**Katherine:** Well... that's it for me **as far as** impediments **go**.

**Jill:** Great. So, a few things on the sidebar here: we've got dealing with Liam, some questions for the **product owner**, and now we've got Katherine's questions about Sketch. Feel free to **hang around** if you've got anything you'd like to contribute on those issues. Oh, and before you go Sam, could you update the **burndown chart**? And then... **that's a wrap**. Nice work everyone.

## Debrief

Now let's go through the dialog again and look at the language and techniques used in the meeting. We begin as Jill asks Katherine for her update.

**Jill:** All right Katherine... looks like you're last. When you're ready.

**Katherine:** Okay, I guess I can start off by saying that I've been working on the app **side of things**. Yesterday I did some **wireframing** based on the **paper prototype** we **worked up** last week.

Katherine knows how a scrum meeting works, and so she immediately reports on what she's been working on. First, she mentions that she's involved on the app. Then she mentions more specifically that yesterday she did "wireframing." A wireframe is a rough framework or blueprint for an app or website.

One thing you'll notice is that Katherine uses two different verb tenses. She uses "have been doing" to talk generally about her recent work, and she uses "did" when she reports her specific activities yesterday.

Let's practice some more ways of reporting what you've been working on, using both these verb tenses:

- Yesterday I worked with Adam on the database.
- I've spent the past two days checking code for the website.
- I've been focused on testing the mapping tool.
- I managed to finish the audio files late yesterday.

Now let's listen as Katherine moves on to the next part of her update.

**Jill:** Nice work.

**Katherine:** Yeah, happy to get a **draft** done. And that's it for my completed stuff. So, what I'm going to do today, hopefully with Paul's help, is **run through** some more **use case scenarios** and see if we're **on the right track**.

As you can hear, Katherine doesn't go into a lot of detail about what she did yesterday. It's enough just to say she got a "draft," or a first version done before talking about what she's going to do today. Her plan is to "run through," or examine, some "use case scenarios." In simple terms, that means she'll look at how users will engage with the app.

As with her report on yesterday's activities, Katherine keeps her update on *planned* activities short and to-the-point. What are some other ways we can give simple and concise updates on our next steps? Let's run through a few more examples.

- Today I'm going to continue testing the web-based interface.
- What I'll do next is figure out what we'll need in terms of video.
- My next steps are working with the client's IT people on testing.
- Next, I'd like to get started on the help section.

What does Jill think of Katherine's next steps?

**Jill:** Those can be a bit **involved**... so you might want to **touch base** with Greg. I know he's done a lot in that area.

If you tuned in to our last lesson, we practiced different ways for a scrum master to suggest collaboration. That's what Jill does here when she suggests Katherine "touch base," or contact, Greg.

Next, Katherine answers the third question in a scrum update.

**Katherine:** Sure, will do. Now, as far as impediments go, I do have a couple of things... For one, I'm finding that back room really hot and **stuffy**. It's **like an oven** in there. Hard to keep focused without taking a break.

Katherine very clearly introduces the fact that she's going to talk about impediments, or problems, next. By stating that she has "a couple of things" and then saying "for one," Katherine is making this part of her update easy to follow. She then identifies her first problem, which is that the back room is uncomfortable.

Let's try some more examples of identifying impediments. And notice that when we talk about challenges, we often introduce them with a bit of extra language, just to make them softer.

- I'm dealing with the fact that we don't have enough testers for this feature.
- One challenge I have is lack of training in Java.
- As for impediments, I'm finding it difficult to adapt to everyone else's schedule.
- For me, it's tough when the product owner keeps interfering with what I'm doing.

Remember, as scrum master, it is Jill's job to help *remove* impediments. Let's hear how she does this, before Katherine reports her second impediment.

**Jill:** No reason you have to be back there Kath. I think we just used that room for the prototyping session because it has a whiteboard. But there's a whole row of **stations** down the hall you can use.

**Katherine:** Okay great, I'll take a look later... Oh, and one more thing: I know someone suggested using **Sketch** instead of **Illustrator** for wireframing, but I'm finding it a little hard to **get up to speed**. Wondering if anybody might be able to help me out with that?

Again, you can hear Katherine softening the problem a bit with language like "I'm finding it a little hard." It's important to treat problems carefully. It's also important to show you're looking for solutions, which is why Katherine asks whether anybody can help her out.

Reporting impediments isn't a chance just to complain. If you're having difficulty, don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Let's practice asking for help with some more examples.

- It'd be great if someone could come with me to meet the client this afternoon.
- Would anyone be able to help me populate the database?
- I'd appreciate some assistance designing the next round of tests.
- I think I'll need some help today going over the list of requirements.

So can anyone help Katherine with the software she's using?

**Sam:** It's been a while... but I'm sure I can help. What is it you're having trouble with?

**Jill:** Maybe we can **sidebar** that for after the meeting. I'd like to keep us within the 15 minutes if we can.

**Sam:** Sure thing.

**Katherine:** Well... that's it for me **as far as** impediments **go**.

It's enough for Sam to just offer to help, without asking for more information about Katherine's problem. A more detailed discussion between two people can wait until *after* the meeting. This is why Jill wants to "sidebar" the issue.

Now, if Katherine has finished reporting impediments, and if she was the last person to give updates, then what's next?

**Jill:** Great. So, a few things on the sidebar here: we've got dealing with Liam, some questions for the **product owner**, and now we've got Katherine's questions about Sketch. Feel free to **hang around** if you've got anything you'd like to contribute on those issues.

Since the last person has finished her updates, the meeting is basically finished. But at several points during the meeting Jill asked participants to sidebar certain topics. So now she outlines these topics and invites anyone to "hang around," or stay, if they want to discuss them. If you're the scrum master, or leading any kind of meeting for that matter, it's important to come back to sidebarred issues at the end of the meeting. Let's try some more ways of outlining these issues.

- Okay, now we can come back to the issue of bringing on another engineer.
- If anyone wants to talk about testing or color schemes now, feel free to stay.
- On the sidebar now, we've got spreadsheet issues and workspace.
- We're all done, but you can stay if you'd like to discuss team dynamics or bugs in the database.

Now that Jill has outlined the topics she had sidebarred, she can close the meeting.

**Jill:** Oh, and before you go Sam, could you update the **burndown chart**? And then... **that's a wrap**. Nice work everyone.

In a scrum project, the “burndown chart” is the graph that shows remaining work and time. It helps people see what they have to do and how much time it should take them. Updating this chart is the last thing to be done in a scrum stand-up.

And as you can hear, Jill closes the meeting in the same way she has conducted it: briefly and to-the-point. The expression “that’s a wrap” is an informal way of saying “we’re finished.”

Now let’s practice some of the language we learned in today’s lesson. Imagine you are on a scrum team that is developing a new game. You’re attending the daily scrum meeting. You’ll hear a statement by the scrum master, then I’ll give you a suggestion for what you can say in response. We’ll guide you through each step in the practice and provide an example answer for each response.

Ready? Let’s give it a go.

**Cue 1:** First, let’s hear about what you did yesterday.

Start by saying that you worked with the designers on the game map.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 2:** That sounds good. And so what’s next on your list?

Now say that today you’re going to show the game map to the artists.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 3:** Super. And do you have any impediments to report?

Next, say that it’s difficult using the small meeting room for your discussions.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 4:** Well then, you can use the board room, but you’ll have to move the tables around.

Now ask for some help moving the tables in the board room.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer 1:** Well, yesterday I worked with the designers on the game map.

**Answer 2:** Next I’ll be showing the game map we created to the artists.

**Answer 3:** Yes, actually I’m finding it difficult to use the small meeting room for discussions.

**Answer 4:** Okay, and would anyone be able to help me move those tables around?

Now let’s practice some of the vocabulary we’ve covered in this lesson. In a moment, you’ll hear a series of sentences with a word replaced with a beep. Repeat each sentence, *including* the missing word.



For example, if you hear:

**Example Cue:** It usually takes new workers a couple of weeks to get up to **<beep>**.

You can say:

**Example Answer:** It usually takes new workers a couple of weeks to get up to **speed**.

After each response, we'll provide the correct answer. Let's begin.

**Cue 1:** Okay team, thanks for coming. That's a **<beep>**.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 2:** Hey, could you read my report and tell me if I'm on the right **<beep>**?

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 3:** Well, it was great to talk, and I'll call again next month just to touch **<beep>**.

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cue 4:** Tony, do you mind hanging **<beep>** for a few minutes after the meeting?

**Answer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Answer 1:** Okay team, thanks for coming. That's a **wrap**.

**Answer 2:** Hey, could you read my report and tell me if I'm on the right **track**?

**Answer 3:** Well, it was great to talk, and I'll call again next month just to touch **base**.

**Answer 4:** Tony, do you mind hanging **around** for a few minutes after the meeting?

We've reached the end of this lesson, the fifth in our series on project management, and the second on scrum stand-up meetings. We've learned how to report on what you've done and what you will do. We've also covered how to identify an impediment and ask for help. And finally, we practiced outlining sidebar topics for after the meeting.

Thanks for listening and see you again soon!

## ***Language Review***

### **A. Review Quiz**

For each question, you must choose the sentence that best fulfills the given language function or purpose.

1. Which of the following is a good way to report generally what you've been working on?
  - a) This morning I found a chunk of code that was really messed up.
  - b) I've been thinking that we might have to change the whole flow of the app.
  - c) Lately I've been working on designing some tests for the database.
2. How could you report next steps during a scrum update?
  - a) So, what do you think I should do once I'm done this piece of work?
  - b) Anyone else think we should grab some lunch right after this?
  - c) Next, I am going to debug the reporting tool.
3. What is one way to identify an impediment?
  - a) One challenge I have is getting work done in this open office environment.
  - b) I was wondering if I could work from home one or two days a week.
  - c) Well Dayton, I think that sounds like a real challenge.
4. What would be a good way to ask for help from another team member?
  - a) I'd really appreciate a bit of help from someone on the Java side of things.
  - b) Ursula, I'm going to need you to take on the Java part of this.
  - c) So, anyone else having some troubles with Java?
5. How could you outline sidebar topics for after a meeting?
  - a) All right, what have we got left to discuss?
  - b) Okay, we're done, but feel free to stay if you want to talk about the sound or video files.
  - c) Perhaps tomorrow in our next meeting we can discuss testing and client relations.

## B. Vocabulary and Idioms

Fill in the blanks with words from the box below. Be sure to put any verbs in the right tense.

**work  
speed**

**touch  
far**

**hang  
wrap**

1. I'm busy right now Mike, but if you \_\_\_\_\_ around for about 30 minutes I can go grab some lunch with you.
2. Let me know when you've \_\_\_\_\_ up some good sketches and we can sit down and look at them together.
3. Nice work everyone. That's a \_\_\_\_\_. I'll see you all tomorrow.
4. So, I'm going to send out a bunch of info by email so everyone can get up to \_\_\_\_\_ on the new operating plan.
5. Hey Jill, have you \_\_\_\_\_ base with Smith Co lately? Just wondering when our delivery will be here.
6. There have been a lot of questions on this, and just wanted to say that as \_\_\_\_\_ as the deadline goes, there's no room to move it.

### ***Study Strategy***

Giving an update in a scrum stand-up meeting is pretty straightforward, as long as you keep it brief and concise. You shouldn't give unnecessary detail or long and boring explanation. And this kind of update is effective in any type of meeting, not just scrum. People will appreciate an update that is clear and to-the-point.

Think about your past week of work. What did you do each day? What did you plan to do each day? What kinds of impediments did you face? For each day of the week, make notes for a brief update. That update will include what you've been working on, your next steps, and any impediments. You can also include a request for help.

Now, with a colleague or friend, you are going to imagine you are in one daily scrum for each day of the week. Your partner can ask for updates, and you can tell the imaginary team what you did the day before, what you'll do next, and any impediments. When you're finished, then you'll move on to the next day. Repeat the process for each day of the week. When you're done, switch roles and let your partner try.

## **Answers**

### **Listening Questions**

1. Today Katherine will go through more use case scenarios.
2. Katherine's first impediment is that her work space is very hot and stuffy.
3. Katherine wants some help using a program called Sketch.

### **A. Review Quiz**

1. c; 2. c; 3. a; 4. a; 5. b

### **B. Vocabulary and Idioms**

1. I'm busy right now Mike, but if you **hang** around for about 30 minutes I can go grab some lunch with you.
2. Let me know when you've **worked** up some good sketches and we can sit down and look at them together.
3. Nice work everyone. That's a **wrap**. I'll see you all tomorrow.
4. So, I'm going to send out a bunch of info by email so everyone can get up to **speed** on the new operating plan.
5. Hey Jill, have you **touched** base with Smith Co lately? Just wondering when our delivery will be here.
6. There have been a lot of questions on this, and just wanted to say that as **far** as the deadline goes, there's no room to move it.