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Journal: Product Owner

Product Owners in an Agile team hold many important roles. It is primarily their responsibility to manage the Product Backlog and prioritize stories that make up the Product Backlog. It is also their responsibility to ensure that agile team members understand what these stories mean. Considering the Product Backlog is essentially the backbone of any given project, it is especially important that these stories are clear and concise so there is no, or less, confusion down stream. Although if there is ever any confusion, the Product Owner should be available to clarify those questions.

Another responsibility that the Product Owner oversees is engaging with stakeholders. Depending on the dynamic of the agile team, there is a possibility that Product Owners are the sole communicators to the stakeholders. Regardless if more than one team member communicates with the stakeholders, the Product Owner should always maintain open communication. Establishing one, or a select few, individuals to primarily communicate to stakeholder is useful because it sets a representation that the agile team is organized, structured, and professional. In addition, it encourages communication from the top down and vis-versa.

Communication from users is also beneficial. Existing customers or users can provide valuable information to the stakeholders and Product Owners about application features that work well or, on the contrary, need improvement. Often these user stories are used by the stakeholders and the scrum team to plan the features of the product, which in turn will be added as features of the Product Backlog. With the end of every Scrum the stakeholders meet with the scrum team including the Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Developers. During this time the there may be new features added to the Backlog, as the project progresses toward completion and additional feedback is received from end users.

User stories are written based on interviews or meetings with users. The feedback or information gathered from these users can have a big impact on the outcome of the project. It is important to organize this information. Prior to adding any new features based on user stories, it is imperative to analyze and priories these stories. The Product Owner should define task size, priority, description, and justification for each user story. The user stories should be prioritized on the backlog prior to progressing to the agile team.