

Scrum Team Habits, Practices, Behaviors

as applied to Trust, Transparency, Commitment, and Continuous Improvement

Area	Low Performing Teams	High Performing Teams
Performance	Clearing the sprint board is optional.	Clearing the board is top priority, even if velocity must be dropped to do so. Addresses <i>commitment</i> to certainty and stability.
Planning	Planning does not include formal comparison of implementation plan (tasking in hours) against capacity plan (in hours).	Implementation/Capacity plan comparison show effort to minimize risk of blowing the sprint and encourage certainty/stability. Builds <i>trust with PO, stakeholders, leadership</i> .
Planning	PO forces team to commit to stories that team is unsure about during sprint.	PO agrees with team that clearing the board takes higher priority than risking stories that don't pass Definition of Done (DoD) at end of sprint. Reinforces <i>commitment and continuous improvement</i> .
Planning	PO is not prepared to bring extra stretch stories meeting Definition of Ready (DoR) to planning.	Team wants extra stretch stories to look at if their Implementation/Cap comparison exercise shows they have extra capacity. Provides opportunity to bump up velocity. Addresses <i>continuous improvement</i> .
Planning	Planning time is taken up with pointing stories/late refinement that don't already meet DoR (assumed INVEST* criteria already met and executed).	Planning is considered a final check and balance for stories that have already been reviewed and meet DoR. Drives <i>continuous improvement</i> .
Planning	Team has no stated internal Definition of Done reinforcing quality.	Internal Definition of Done is reviewed and includes 100% acceptance test coverage (<i>commitment</i> to PO), and for development teams, a stated Unit Test coverage and a goal of 0 escaped defects (<i>commitment</i> to quality).

*INVEST: I)ndependent (or immediately actionable), N)egotiable, V)aluable, E)stimated, S) sized to fit according to team, T)estable

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Planning	Team agreements aren't reviewed at every Planning.	Team agreements are reviewed, with days/times for Scrum (standup), Refinement, Review, Retro confirmed. Agreements can also include, Feature and Code freeze dates, along with agreement to unit test first. This is a team building exercise that enhances <i>trust</i> and speaks to <i>commitment</i> .
Planning	Team has no prepared Emergency Procedures.	Team reviews their existing emergency procedures for burndown slippage, equitable story exchange if requested by PO (if story meets DoR), and aborting the sprint with hard restart if requested (especially by leadership). Reinforces <i>commitment</i> , <i>trust</i> , <i>transparency</i> .
Planning	PO/team never use "buffer interrupt" stories.	PO/team optionally leave room for a general "buffer interrupt" for possible tech debt or variability in the sprint backlog, not to exceed an estimated number of points. Addresses <i>commitment</i> and <i>continuous improvement</i> .
Planning	PO/team have no understanding of kaizen (improvement) stories.	Retro may yield kaizen stories that team wants to schedule for future sprint. PO understands importance of kaizen stories and considers them highest priority as considered by team during planning. Emphasizes <i>trust</i> and <i>continuous improvement</i> .
Planning	Team is allowed to get credit towards velocity for tech debt stories.	Team never takes additional credit for fixing escaped defects. Credit for original stories has already been taken. Taking additional credit would water down the value of story pointing and undermine the team's delivery of certainty and stability. Speaks to <i>trust</i> , <i>transparency</i> , <i>commitment</i> , and <i>continuous improvement</i> .

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Planning	Team uses average of last x sprints for target velocity as needed by PO to determine stories brought to next Planning.	Always use “yesterday’s weather,” as in velocity completed in last sprint, as averages hide dysfunction. In the case of a holiday sprint and following sprints, PO knows to bring extra stretch stories to get team velocity back up to standard baseline. Always using yesterday’s weather shows <i>trust in and commitment to the process</i> .
Daily	Scrum is considered a status meeting for managers.	The whole team owns and has committed to the sprint backlog and board during execution of the sprint, so they discuss how well they are advancing to clearing the board, if team member(s) need help, or have surfaced risks, impediments, etc. No one can interrupt during the scrum, managers can ask questions after scrum is completed, and POs must always be present to answer questions from the team. This is a team exercise the scrum master must reinforce! Addresses <i>commitment and trust</i> from all roles.
Daily	Team tracks sprint progress with burndown chart in story points.	Team tracks sprint progress with burndown chart in task hours. Tracking story points on burndown hides dysfunction and doesn’t provide actionable data that can be responded to on a daily basis. Affects <i>commitment and continuous improvement</i> .
Review	In review, rolling stories not completed is considered optional. Team can always split points if they aren’t completed.	Team never considers rolling stories as optional, but as an indicator of dysfunction that must be addressed. State triggers <i>continuous improvement procedures</i> backed by substantive retro conversation. Splitting points for stories not completed is generally bad practice suggesting lack of <i>trust</i> in the process.

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Review	No review planning is done, with consideration for what stories the PO would like to see demonstrated.	As necessary, team will be prepared with a full production of demonstration activities, as required by stakeholders. Team understands the whole world is invited to Sprint Review, and looks forward to demonstrating their work. Demonstration of <i>transparency and commitment</i> .
Review	PO and team not prepared to pre-review story candidates for next sprint.	Team expects to see story candidates equaling 150% of velocity just completed, as per review. Stories must at least meet DoR and be clear of dependencies. This advance prep will allow team to be even more certain about delivery after bringing these stories to next sprint planning. Speaks to <i>transparency and commitment</i> .
Review	Team and PO not ready with updated Release Burnup chart.	Team/PO ready with updated Release Burnup, covering accumulating points burned, accumulating cost, and adjusted completion date/cost forecast based on current scope. Exemplifies <i>trust and transparency</i> .
Retro	Team does anonymous online Retro (avoiding direct conversation) that covers Keeps, Starts, Stops, along with also doing a kudos session.	1) PO/Team consider Retro a full analysis produced by their telemetry system showing what changed since last sprint (sprint delta). All discussions are transparent within the team, and cover areas such as proximity to MMF/MVP, verification, design, edge cases, exceptions, process, cost and budget, refactoring, etc. 2) From discussion, team uses their internal assessment for kaizen story creation. 3) Manager has limited scope for this session. Scrum master enforced. Speaks to <i>continuous improvement</i> practiced by high-performing teams.

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Backlog Refinement	Team does typical refinement sessions lasting perhaps an hour, multiple times a week..	Team uses a rigorous refinement technique called “Trailblazing,” requiring simultaneous execution of a refinement kanban board designed specifically to get stories to DoR, along with execution of their sprint. Individual team members manage availability to work Trailblazing board as needed during capacity planning in Sprint Planning. This effort provides Team/PO best chance for developing a backlog that meets Rule of 3’s (3 sprints of ready stories, inside of 3 months of estimated stories, inside a backlog of stories at least 3 quarters into horizon). This effort enhances <i>trust and commitment</i> .
Testing	Team uses a separate QA team or separates testing out into subsequent sprint. Both approaches introduce unnecessary development risk.	Team makes use of fully embedded Acceptance Test Driven Development to provide greatest chance of not allowing defects to escape current sprint. QA is not a separate operation, as development/testing go hand-in-hand. Not only does this testing approach greatly minimize risk, but also reduces development cost spikes caused by late testing leading to release delays. This testing approach reinforces <i>commitment to certainty and stability</i> .