

The great Product Owner guide of Ticorporate 2019

Abbreviations & Explanations

Abbreviation	Full word	Explanation
SM	Scrum Master	The person responsible for the Scrum process and its implementation. Maximizes the benefits of agile development.
PO	Product Owner	The person responsible for managing the Product Backlog. His role is to maximize the value of the hours spent on the project.
-	Scrum Team	Group of people that is responsible for managing itself to develop a product, in this context usually software or a game
PB	Product Backlog	
TC	Ticorporate	Ticorporate is a business simulation course, where teams (3-6 people) develop games and software products
DL	Demo Lab	1st half of Ticorporate. Used to teach students Scrum and groupwork skills alongside tech and art
PL	Product Lab	2nd half of Ticorporate. Business and entrepreneurship oriented
DoD	Definition of done	List of criteria which must be met before the work item is ready to be added to the product
CoS	Conditions of satisfaction	The conditions under which a product owner would be satisfied that a product backlog item is done. Conditions of satisfaction are acceptance criteria that clarify the desired behavior.
-	Acceptance criteria	Acceptance criteria are a formalized list of requirements that ensure that all user stories are completed and all scenarios are taken into account. Put simply, acceptance criteria specify conditions under which a user story is fulfilled.

Introduction

This document is made for and is to be used in Ticorporate environment and the contents of this document reflect that. It is **not** a comprehensive nor a perfect guide on how to act as a product owner. The document also assumes that the reader has basic knowledge about agile methods and specifically Scrum but we will dip into the process too. On that subject we will look at the differences and procedures between Scrum team, Scrum Master and product owner.

Project Owner?

The role of product owner is critical and often the hardest one in the Scrum team. Judy and Krumins-Beens [1] say that "*The product owner has gone from someone who could blame development if a project failed to someone who is responsible for the success or failure of the project.*" Simply put the product owner in agile software development is responsible for that the development teams work produces as valuable as possible product.

The product owner must find a balance between the business value, his own vision and what can be done in given time. In that way, the product owner is the person who connects it all. They negotiate with the stakeholders, they answer the Scrum teams questions and they collaborate with the Scrum Master.

It is important to realize that the PO isn't a committee, it is a role for single person. Scrum Guide defines that only one person is responsible for maintaining and sustaining the content and priority of the Product Backlog. If many team members give their inputs to the PB the product loses its vision, business requirements are not met and it opens a great number of problems with different stakeholders. That is not to say that PO can't or shouldn't take input from the team. In fact they should. However PO always has the last word on what goes to backlog and with what priority.

Product Owners responsibilities

Clinton Keith in his book, "Agile Game Development With Scrum" lists the following responsibilities for the product owner as follows:

- Managing the ROI (return of interest) for the game
- Establishing a shared vision for the game among the customers and developers
- Knowing what to build and in what order
- Supporting sprint planning and reviews
- Establishing the "definition of done"

Even though he speaks of game development, all those things apply to software business too.

Lets expand those points a bit!

Managing the ROI

It is the product owners responsibility that the investment in the product is returned with a profit. Product owner needs to know what the market wants and the customers need. Product owner is the link between marketing, sales and the developer team.

Establishing a shared vision

It is really important that the product owner has the ability to share their vision for the product. Without it the product can become a jumbled mess without any clear direction. Shared vision is particularly important in game projects where the project owners (sometimes lead designers) vision is the whole product. Thats not to say that its not important in software products too. You could compare Miyamoto from Nintendo and Jobs from Apple (particularly the 1st iPod and iPhone).

Product owner should be the single voice for the vision. They ignite creativity and ownership within the tieam and collaborates with everyone as the vision evolves.

Product backlog

Product backlog is the product owners property. Product owner decides the priority of the backlog items and what is important and what is not. This is done by looking at which items are most valuable to the customer and which items have the biggest ROI. For example 100% accurate simulation of ballistics might be valuable to the player of a military simulator, but it might be too costly to implement properly. Managing the product backlog is a compromise between, value, ROI and the vision of the product.

Sprint planning and reviews

Product owner has few major duties during a sprint. Those include backlog grooming, sprint planning and sprint review.

Definition of Done & Conditions of satisfaction

Because PO is the bridge between stakeholders, SM, and the Scrum team he must also be the one to negotiate the definition of done. **Agreement on definition of done must happen before a story is broken into tasks.** This is because the stakeholders might expect production level quality when the team thinks that only placeholder art is needed for the feature. That is why definition of done is so important. Product owner can't accept the work if it doesn't satisfy this criteria. If the work *done* isn't actually **done** it causes debt which could, and most likely will, delay the project.

There are standard and additional definitions of done. The basic version applies to every story. For example this could mean that the system runs on development server without any bugs.

Product owner and Scrum Master

The roles of the product owner and the Scrum Master complement each other. Product owner is responsible for what to do and Scrum Master is responsible for how to do it. It is impervious that the two persons have good communication, and that neither tries to step on the others toes.

Product Owners at Ticorporate

During the Product Lab the faculty of BIT will arrange lectures and visits from industry members and experts. These will be announced on Microsoft Teams, on class and on the Ticorporate Calendar. You could think that the product owner is like the traditional lead designer of the game. According to Clinton[2] this is the case in most game companies which have adopted Scrum. Lead designers are the ones with the vision for the game and they usually have the experience in communicating that vision to all disciplines.

Sources

1. Great Scrums Need Great Product Owners: Unbounded Collaboration and Collective Product Ownership (2008)
2. Agile game development with Scrum - Clinton Keith (2010)