The
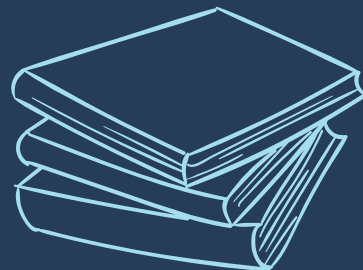# Product
Owner's
Playbook

Version 1.0

Contents

Supporting documents

Customer Central playbook
This guide gives an overview of Customer Central.
More importantly for Product Owners, it helps us
with tools and techniques for getting closer to our
customers, to understand their needs, wants and
pain points, in order to deliver better products
and services.

Agile playbook
A guide to agile practice and process for Auckland
Transport.

Introduction

Introduction

Auckland Transport is a large organisation with multiple departments, teams and projects that are tasked with delivering a high level of service across a wide range of customers.

A one size fits all approach to service, project and product delivery does not meet the changing needs of our business and our customers.

Like many organisations, Auckland Transport is adopting a bi-modal approach to delivering work.

This means we will see traditional project delivery approaches mixed with agile, product-centric, customer-focused practices that allow us to explore, experiment, and deliver value faster.

As part of this, Product Owners play a key role in connecting customer and business needs to ensure that we focus on 'the right things, to get the right outcome'.

Purpose and audience

This document is a practical guide to product ownership and agile, product-centric ways of working at Auckland Transport. It is the starting point for new Product Owners, and also provides a consistent view of how we work for experienced practitioners, and senior stakeholders.

> What we need is **product ownership.** We need a business that can make up its mind about what it wants to build and then **translate strategic direction into products, projects and ultimately backlog items our teams can build.**
>
> Mike Cottmeyer, LeadingAgile

What is a product?

Firstly, what is a product?

A product is a good or a service that can be used by our customers, partners or other businesses to solve a specific problem.

Customers use the product to satisfy a want or need. This means we must focus our efforts on making products that are desirable, easy to use, and directly meet the needs of the people who will use it.
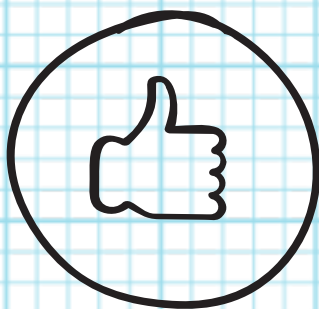
DESIRABLE
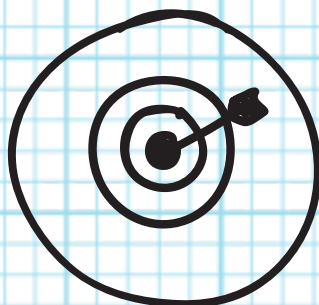
DIRECTLY MEETS NEEDS

EASY TO USE

" As a Product Owner at Auckland Transport you might be responsible for a backlog covering a product, or a capability, or a platform, or a feature.

Regardless, you'll still be thinking and acting as a Product Owner - detailing and prioritising a backlog to ensure a product team is doing **the right work, for the right reasons, the right way, to get the right outcome** for Auckland Transport and our customers. "

Patrick Everton, AT Senior Project Manager
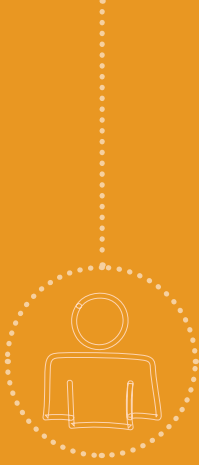
Product ownership

Product ownership

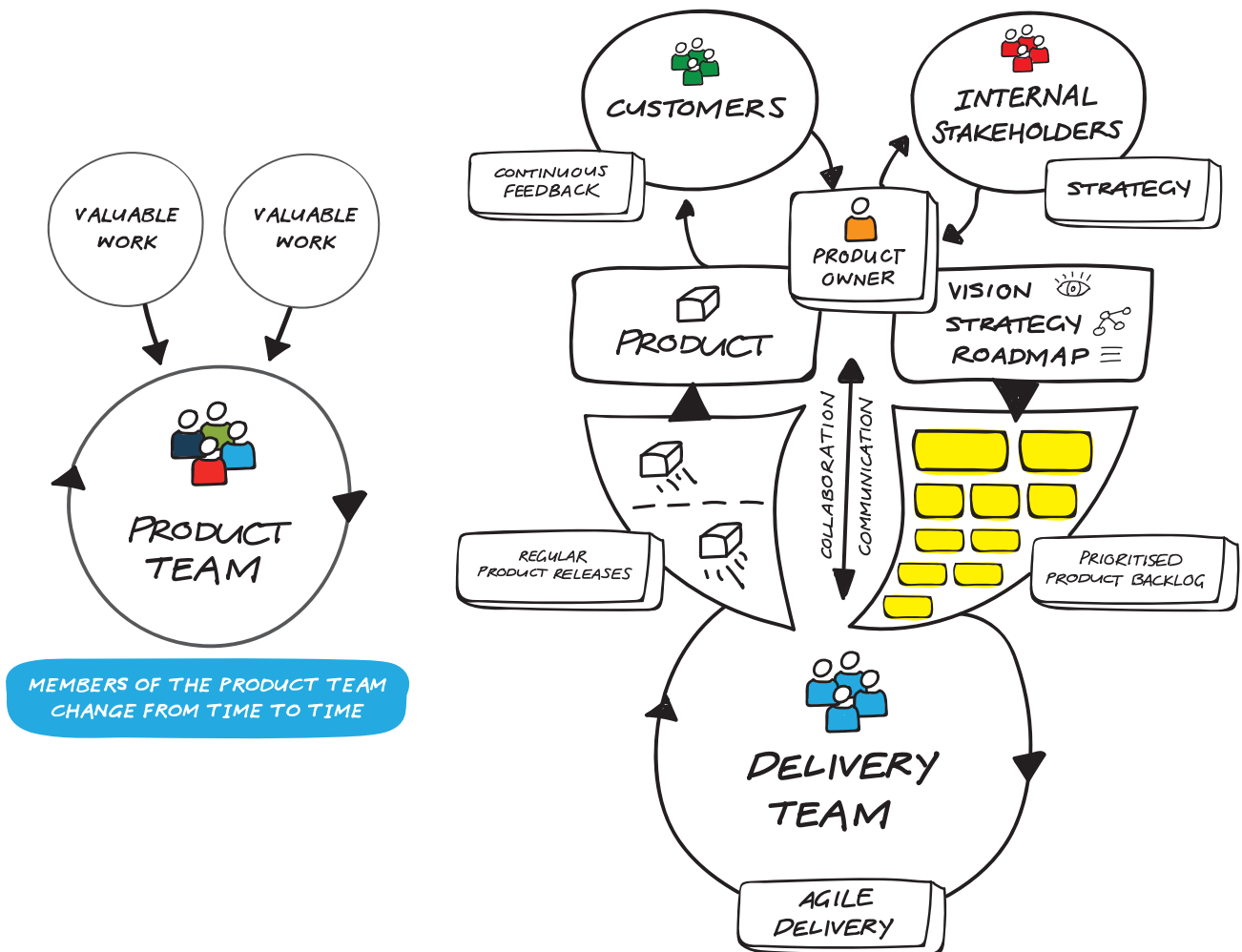Product ownership at Auckland Transport connects customers, business stakeholders and product teams to deliver better products and services using agile and customer-centric design methods.

The Product Owner plays a central role by focusing on delivering value for customers and the business. They work with a dedicated and evolving Product Team that is continuously looking for ways to improve the way they work to deliver better outcomes.

VALUABLE WORK

VALUABLE WORK

PRODUCT TEAM

MEMBERS OF THE PRODUCT TEAM CHANGE FROM TIME TO TIME

CUSTOMERS

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

STRATEGY

PRODUCT OWNER

PRODUCT

VISION
STRATEGY
ROADMAP

COLLABORATION
COMMUNICATION

REGULAR PRODUCT RELEASES

PRIORITISED PRODUCT BACKLOG

DELIVERY TEAM

AGILE DELIVERY

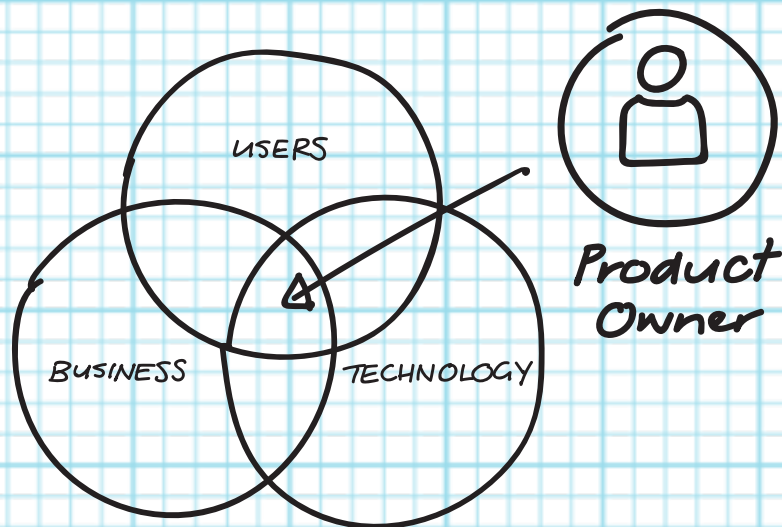Agile Product ownership in a nutshell: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=502ILHjX9EE

The Product Owner role

The Product Owner role

The Product Owner needs to understand customer needs, know how the business works, and collaborate with technology and delivery teams.

A Product Owner takes responsibility for the product on behalf of the organisation. They represent the customer, and champion the success of the product, while ensuring alignment with overall business and technology strategy.

Product Owners are responsible for articulating the product value proposition. They need to connect with customers and stakeholders to create the product strategy, vision, and roadmap, and then work with their Product Team to deliver regular iterations that provide value for the business and customers.

In clear alignment with AT strategies, a Product Owner is the person accountable for prioritising what the product team will focus on to maximise the value of the product. This requires strong collaboration with business and technology stakeholders.

To achieve this, they need an entrepreneurial mindset that is willing to experiment and challenge the status quo, whilst being comfortable with change, ambiguity, and conflict.

10 Responsibilities of a Product Owner

1. **Connecting directly with customers** to understand their needs and feedback

2. **Collaborating with stakeholders** to align with business and technology strategy

3. **Maximising value** to be delivered by the Product Team

4. **Creating and communicating** the product strategy, vision and roadmap

5. **Collaborating with the Product Team** to deliver the work

6. **Prioritising product features,** and guiding sprint outcomes

7. **Participating in Product Team events,** including planning, refinement, review, retrospective, and stand-up

8. **Motivating the Product Team** by setting clear direction, through the vision

9. **Communicating delivery timeframes** to manage stakeholder expectations

10. **Working with stakeholders** to secure funding and track ROI

The three characteristics of a successful Product Owner
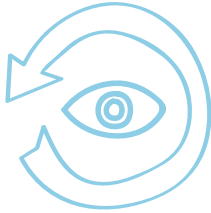
You have a vision

The Product Owner is passionate about their product, and is able to communicate the vision to everyone. They are involved right from the start, capturing ideas, listening to customers, and collaborating with the team and stakeholders. They stay true to the vision and facilitate creativity, encourage innovation and work through conflict and ambiguity to deliver a product that is delightful for customers.

You are empowered

The Product Owner needs to have the authority, and senior sponsorship to successfully navigate the organisation, and be trusted to make decisions for the good of the customer, business and product. The Product Owner is the person accountable for prioritising work to maximise the value of the product. The Product Owner is empowered to have the hard conversations that truly change the way we deliver products for our customers.
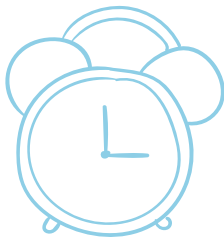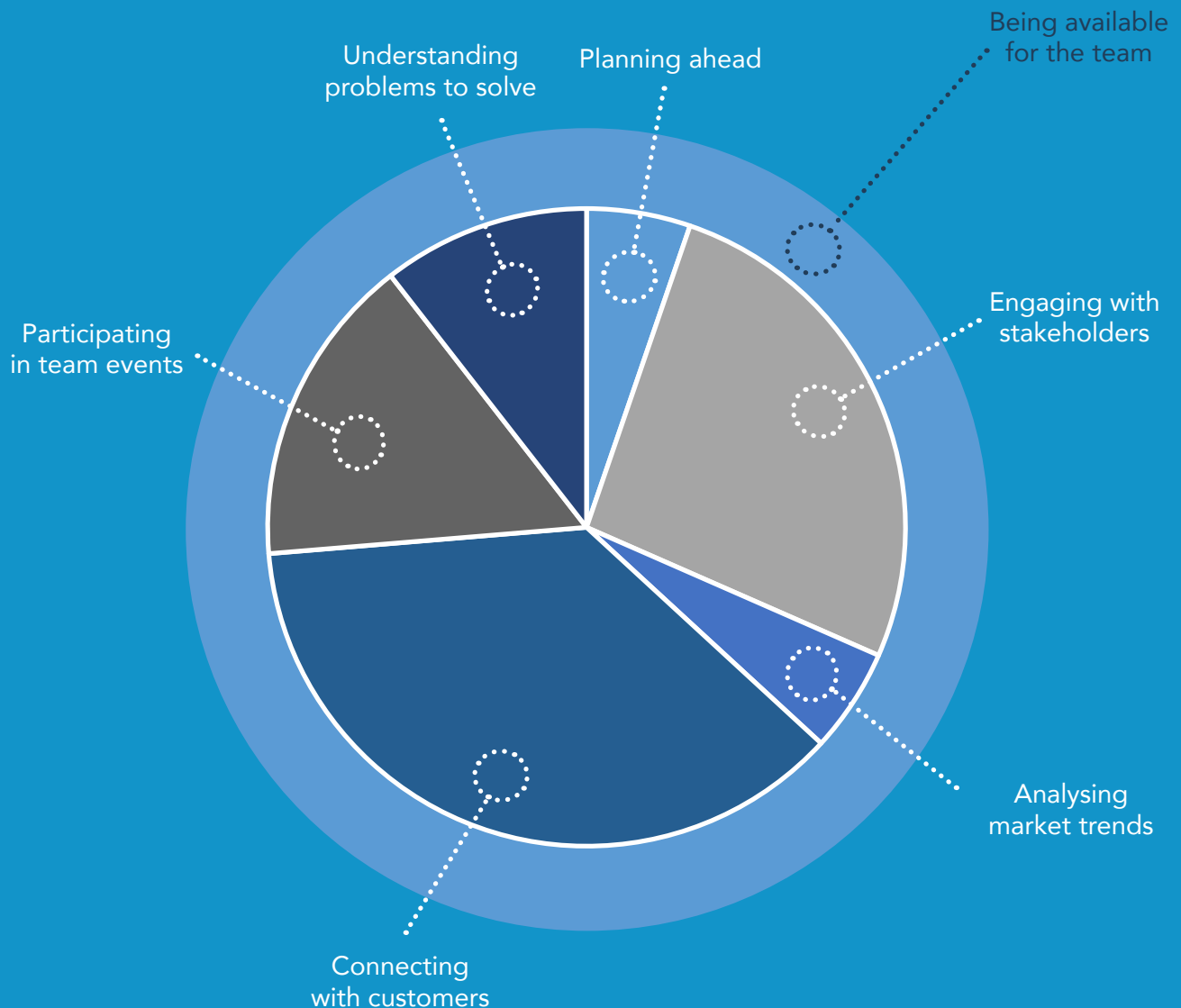
You are available

The Product Owner role is a full-time collaborative job spread between team events, working with the team during development, connecting with customers, and engaging with stakeholders. It is essential that the Product Owner is available to support the team during sprints, answering questions and dealing with issues.

A day in the life of a Product Owner

The biggest challenge for a Product Owner is striking a balance between focusing on customer needs, and keeping stakeholders engaged, while still being highly available to collaborate with the Product Team.

Understanding problems to solve

Planning ahead

Being available for the team

Participating in team events

Engaging with stakeholders

Connecting with customers

Analysing market trends

What not to do as a Product Owner

Present solutions to the team

The team needs you to communicate the intent of each user story, and it's up to them to figure out the solution that best fits the need. You give them the 'what' and 'why', so they can identify the 'how'.

Add scope mid-sprint

Once a team has committed to a certain amount of work for a sprint, you put that commitment at risk by adding more work. Sprints are short for a reason. They provide focus and allow the team to commit to what they believe is achievable.

Allocate tasks to team members

The Product Team is a self-organising group that is trusted to identify the tasks needed to deliver on the sprint goal.

Pressure the team to take on more work

The team members are the ones who do the work and have a feel for what they can achieve in each sprint. If you pressure them to take on more than they think they can realistically achieve, they will get burned out and quality will start to slip.

Tell the team what you want, then leave

The worst thing a team can hear is "here are the requirements, see you at the end of the sprint." They need access to you each day throughout the sprint to get their questions answered and to make sure they are heading in the right direction.

Pretend that you know everything

You don't need to know everything. Instead, you need to work closely with customers and business stakeholders to develop a deep understanding of their needs, in order to deliver maximum value for them.

The Product Team

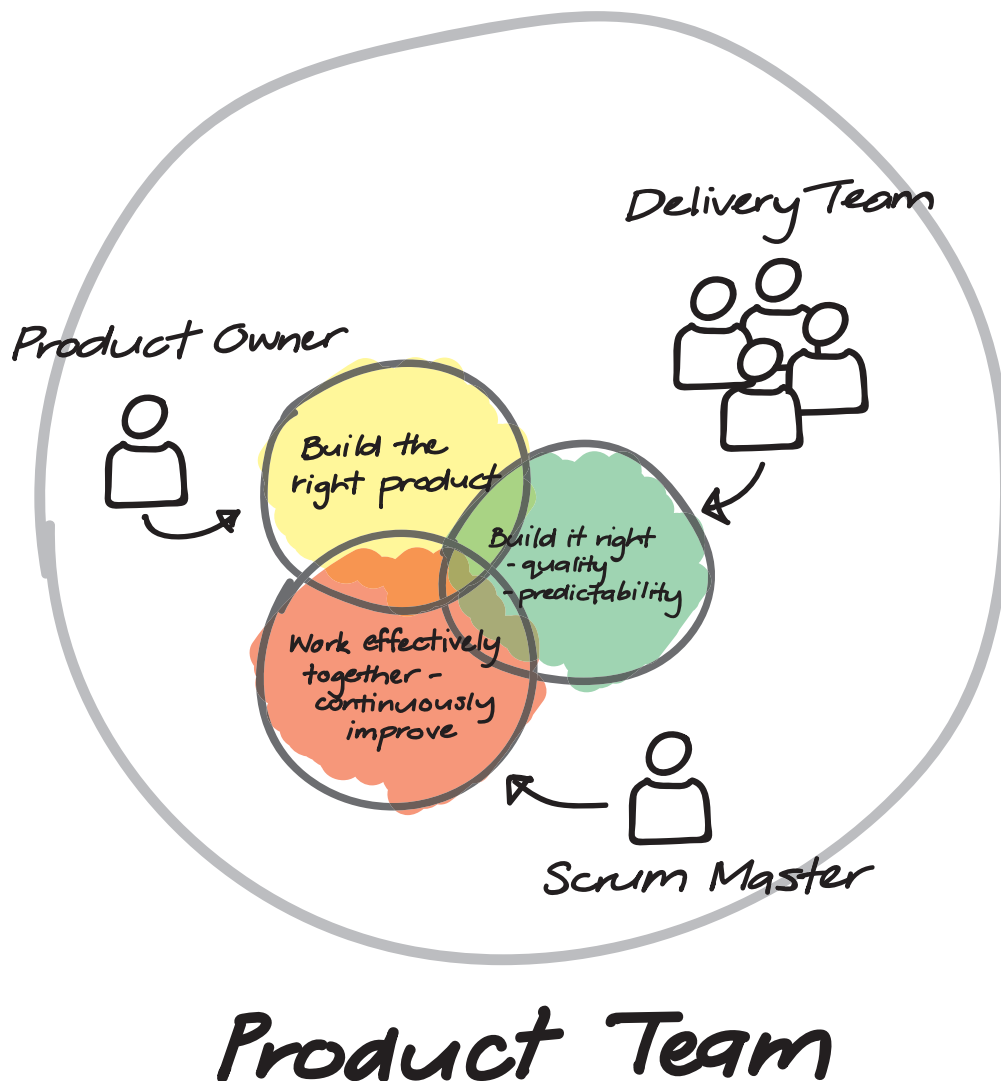# Product Team core responsibilities

The relationships and core responsibilities in the Product Team require a balance between building the right product, building the product right, and always looking to improve the way we work.

Delivery Team

Product Owner

Build the right product

Build it right
- quality
- predictability

Work effectively together - continuously improve

Scrum Master

Product Team

Characteristics of a successful Product Team

1 Small incremental releases

We aim to deliver a "shippable" product or feature set at the end of each sprint.

2 Adaptive to change

We add, change, or remove stories as we go, to increase value and reduce risk.

3 High visibility

We promote high visibility of progress to show early indications of obstacles, risks, dependencies and outcomes.

4 Continuous feedback

We involve customers (and business stakeholders) throughout the process so they end up with the product they want and will use.

5 Reduce product waste

We do not develop anything that isn't specifically needed or validated by customers.

6 Clearly defined success

We have clear criteria that is used to ensure we deliver value, and quality.

7 Clear expectations

We are clear about what is expected in the current sprint, and have a shared understanding of where we are going.
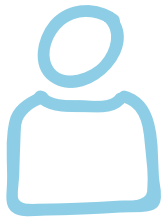
8 High performing

We share responsibility for team effectiveness and results.

Product Team roles

The Product Team is commonly made up of a Product Owner, Scrum Master and Delivery Team. These roles originate from the Scrum framework*, but should be considered a key part of any agile Product Team at Auckland Transport.

Product Owner

The Product Owner is responsible for the success of the product and maximising value. They act as the voice of the customer, business and technology engager, and product champion. They prioritise user stories in the Product Backlog, to identify highest value work for the team to work on.
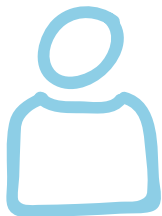
Scrum Master

The Scrum Master is the agile champion and is responsible for helping the team to perform at their highest level. They do this by coaching and motivating the team, improving processes and removing impediments. They play a lead role in facilitating team events such as stand-ups, sprint reviews and retrospectives.
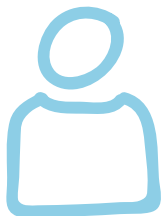
Delivery Team

The Delivery Team is responsible for achieving sprint goals and delivering a high quality product. They are self-organising and work together to decide how much and what to deliver each sprint, how best to deliver the work, and spread tasks across the team. The team is cross-functional and usually consists of 3-9 members, and there is no hierarchy in the team.

* Scrum is a popular agile framework

Inside the Delivery Team

The Delivery Team is cross-functional team, with the right mix of skills to work on the backlog. Common roles include a User Experience Designer, Developer and Analyst. Additional roles such as Tester and Solution
Architect should also be considered.

User Experience (UX) Designer

The UX Designer is responsible for conducting user-research and testing, building wireframes, task flows and user interfaces, based on user needs. They seek input directly from users, and collaborate with the development team to create intuitive, user-friendly products.

Ideally a full-time role, but at times the UX Designer can be a shared resource.

Developer

Developers build software, based on detailed visual designs from the UX Designer, and requirements in user stories. They solve technical problems and work with the Product Owner on solution options. Developers are also responsible for code quality and test automation to increase technical excellence and efficiency.

Analyst

The Analyst oversees quality and works with the Product Owner to write user stories that are meaningful for the Delivery Team. They often act as a link between developers and the Product Owner, to help translate technical issues into plain English.

Testing

Quality is not negotiable. A cross-functional team shares responsibilities, and spreads the testing function across the team if there is no dedicated Tester role.

Where's my Project Manager?

A true agile team is self-managing, and does not have a Project Manager. However, in some cases a Product Manager can add value by acting as the interface between the Product Team and legacy processes. They do this by adapting non agile procedures and governance to connect with agile teams.

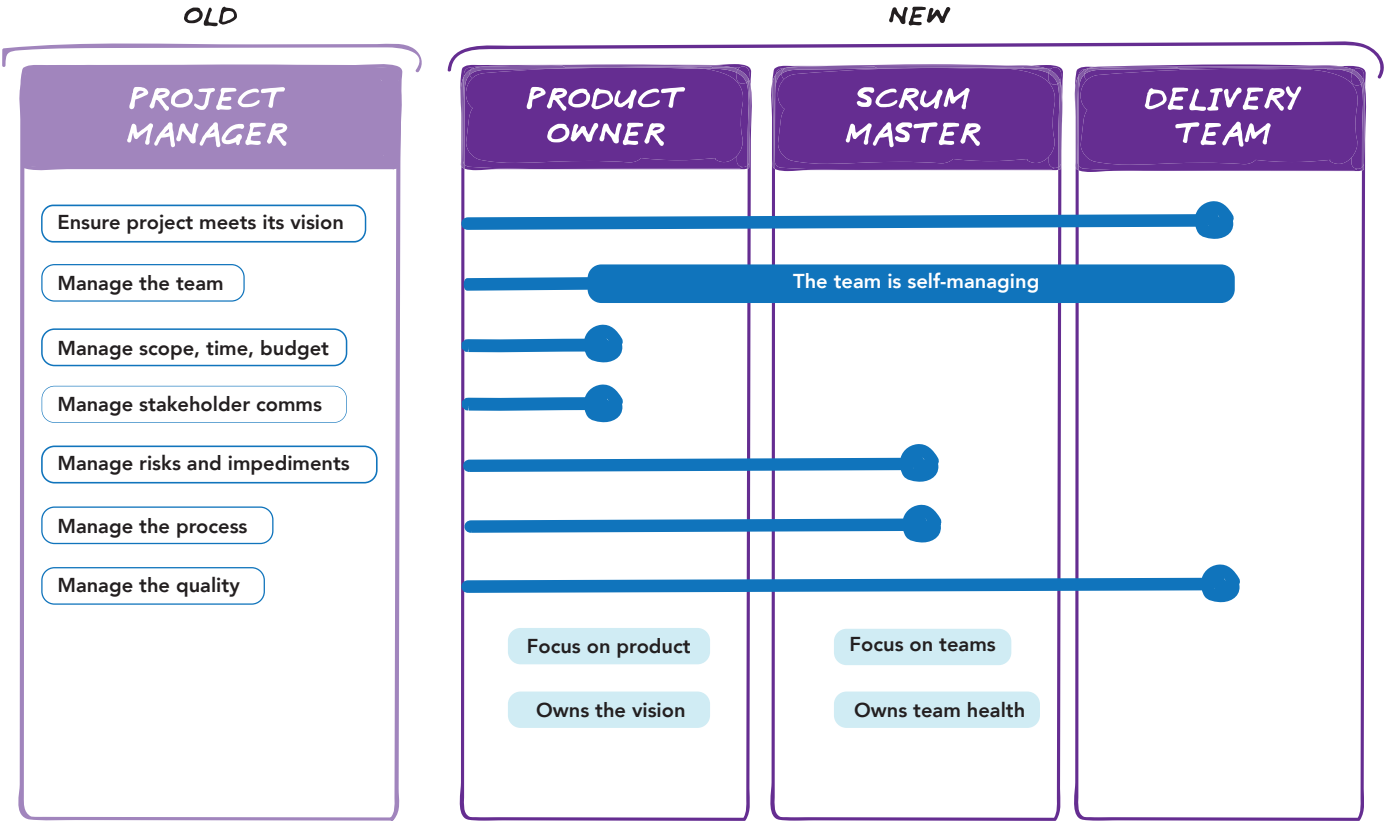## An agile Project Manager's responsibilities can include:

- Financials
- Commercials
- Governance & Controls
- Reporting

Status reporting?

Working software demonstrated at regular sprint reviews is the measure of progress in an agile environment.

Traditional project management tasks are moved into the Product Team

PROJECT MANAGER

PRODUCT OWNER

SCRUM MASTER

DELIVERY TEAM

Ensure project meets its vision

Manage the team

Manage scope, time, budget

Manage stakeholder comms

Manage risks and impediments

Manage the process

Manage the quality

The team is self-managing

Focus on product

Owns the vision

Focus on teams

Owns team health

● *Shows how project management roles are allocated in the Product Team*   Inspired by www.zenexmachina.com
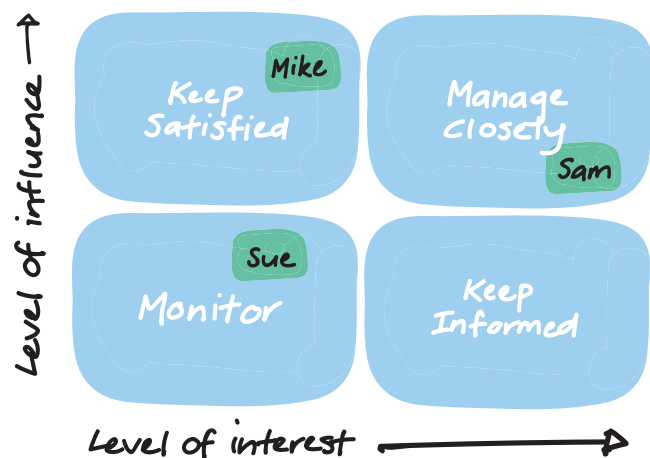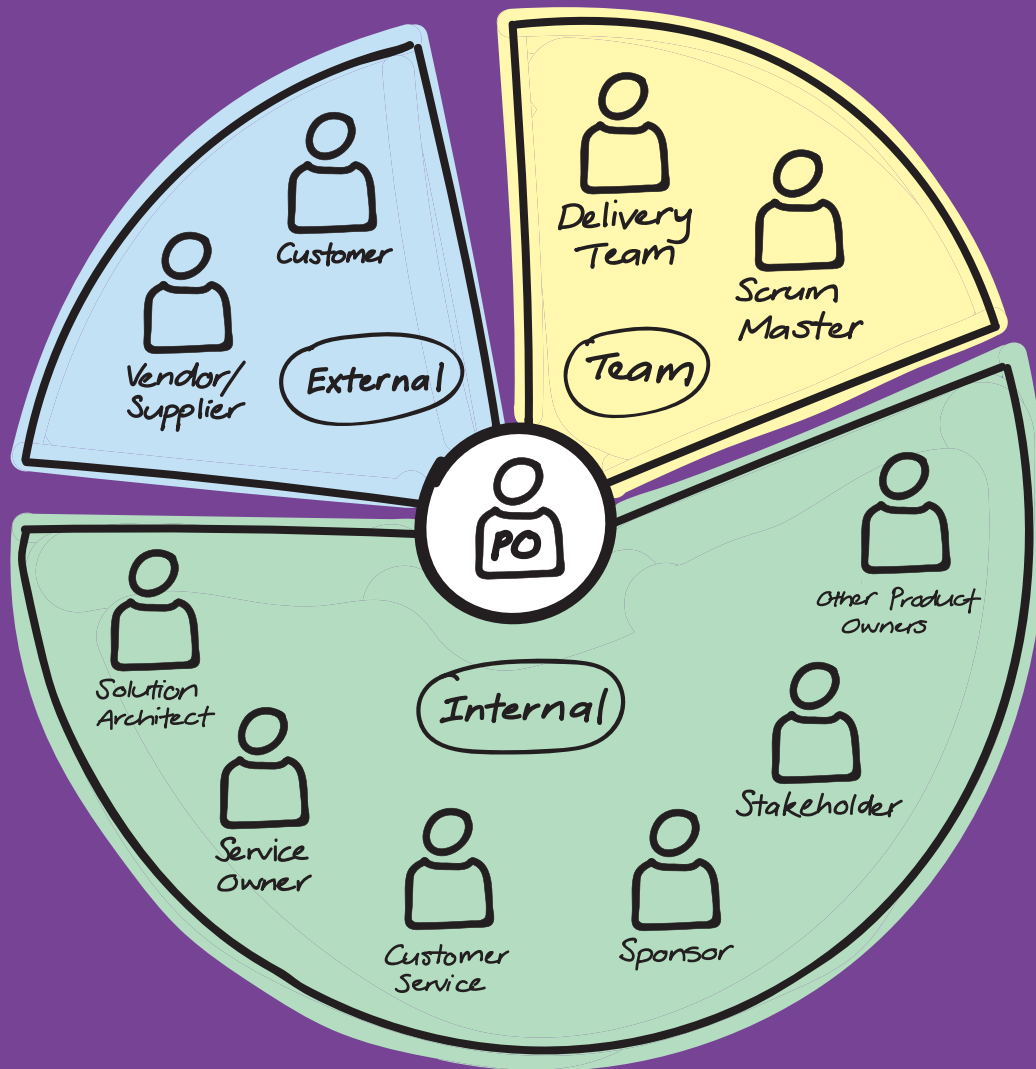
Stakeholder management

As a Product Owner, you are responsible for collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders including customers, users, managers, vendors, other Product Owners, and others, depending on your product. It's important that you understand who your stakeholders are, their interests, what they need from you and your product, and also how they can help achieve your product goals.

A carefully planned stakeholder engagement plan will help you focus your valuable time on getting the most out of the highest value stakeholders, and keeping the right people informed and involved, at the right time.

Stakeholder engagement matrix

There are a number of useful tools to help you map, understand and plan how you work with your stakeholders. This matrix is a good starting point to help you focus your engagement efforts.

Level of influence →

Keep Satisfied   Mike

Manage Closely   Sam

Sue
Monitor

Keep Informed

Level of interest →

Stakeholder Overview — Product Owners should identify their key stakeholders early, and plan carefully how and when they will engage with them.

Governance

Governance ensures that product initiatives align with organisational goals. The Product Owner needs to work with their Sponsor and Steering Committee to ensure alignment.
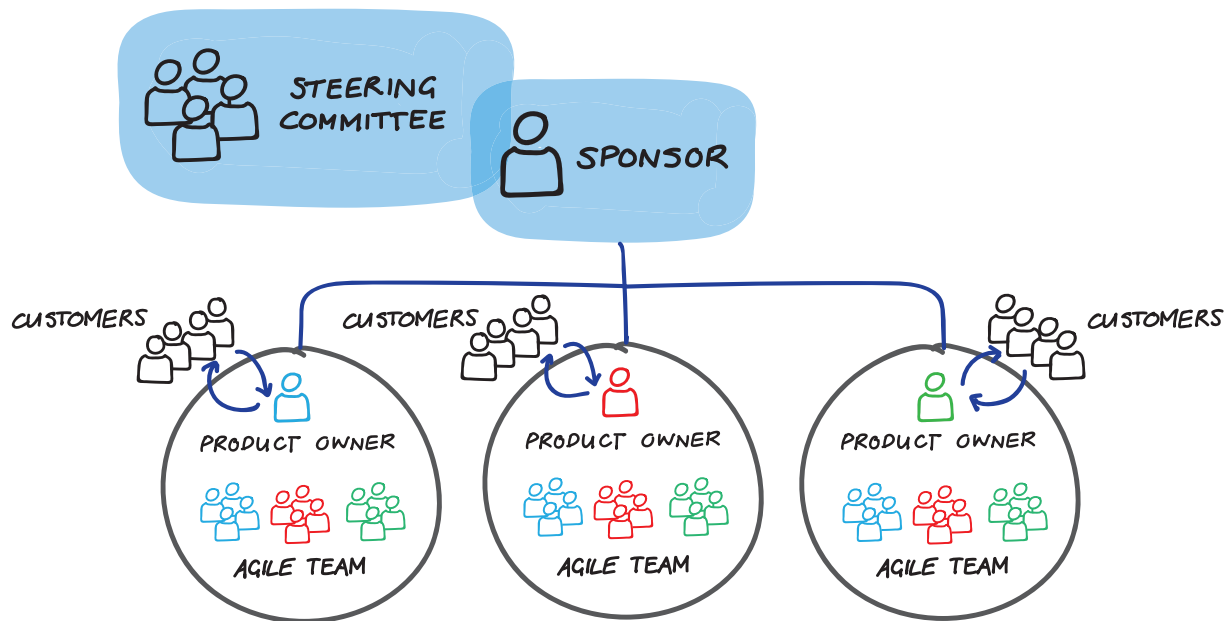
The Sponsor offers a wider view on business priorities, and acts as a point of escalation and support for the Product Owner.

They are often the funder of the Product Team, and therefore have a vested interest in the success of the product, through outcomes and return on investment.

It is critical that the sponsor understands their role, the empowered Product Owner role, and how agile principles can streamline governance effectiveness.

Setting the right governance approach

Governance for each initiative should be set up at the start, in agreement with the Sponsor. Product Owners need to adopt a "no surprises" approach by engaging with key stakeholder early and often.

STEERING COMMITTEE

SPONSOR

CUSTOMERS

PRODUCT OWNER

AGILE TEAM

CUSTOMERS

PRODUCT OWNER

AGILE TEAM

PRODUCT OWNER

AGILE TEAM

CUSTOMERS

LIGHT-WEIGHT, AGILE GOVERNANCE FOR PRODUCT TEAMS

https://zenexmachina.wordpress.com/2017/10/20/agile-and-project-operating-models/

Key responsibilities of the Sponsor vs Product Owner

A Sponsor	A Product Owner
Secures funding and resources	Guides where funding goes, through their control of the backlog. Solicit funds, resource and people (when needed).
Guides the strategic vision for the work	Creates and communicates the vision in a way that is easy for the team to understand.
Guides strategic alignment with organisational strategies, including technology, digital, etc.	Prioritises the Product Backlog so that the work delivered is aligned with organisational strategies.
Oversees economic viability	Prioritises work to deliver maximum value for the organisation and customers.
Resolves organisation level risks and conflict	Works with the team to resolve product level risks, and understands when escalation is required.
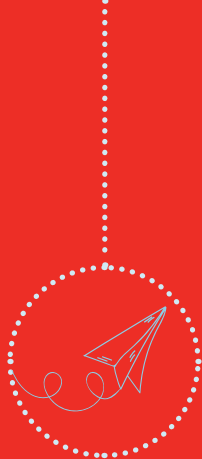
Getting started

Getting started

At the highest level there are six key steps to agile product delivery:

PRODUCT VISION   PRODUCT BACKLOG   SPRINT BACKLOG   ITERATION   POTENTIALLY SHIPPABLE PRODUCT INCREMENT

DAILY STAND-UPS

SPRINT 2-4 WEEKS

5 Have regular team meetings to track, review and improve the product, and the way we work

6 Repeat

1 Create a vision for your product, based on deep customer research and understanding of business goals

2 Understand the work needed to achieve the vision

3 Focus on the most important work to deliver something of value

4 Work as a team to deliver

The anatomy of a sprint

REGULAR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

REGULAR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

SPRINT REVIEW

SPRINT
PLANNING

BACKLOG
REFINEMENT

RETROSPECTIVE

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAILY
STAND-UP

DAY 1   DAY 2   DAY 3   DAY 4   DAY 5   DAY 6   DAY 7   DAY 8   DAY 9   DAY 10

SOME TEAMS MAY RUN 3 WEEK SPRINTS

SPRINT PLANNING	DAILY STAND-UP	BACKLOG REFINEMENT	SPRINT REVIEW	RETROSPECTIVE
The team decides which items to pull into the next sprint from the Product Backlog to meet the sprint goal.	A short daily team meeting to cover what you did yesterday, what you're doing today, and if anything is preventing you from progressing.	The team reviews and updates user stories to ensure they are sized, prioritised, have enough detail and are deemed to be ready to move into a sprint.	At the end of the sprint the team demo's what was delivered in the sprint to the Product Owner and interested stakeholders to get their feedback.	At the end of the sprint the team reviews how well they worked together. They explore what went well, what didn't and then agree on improvements to take to the next sprint.

The Product Backlog

The Product Owner is responsible for managing and prioritising items in the Product Backlog. The Product Backlog lists everything we could do to fulfil the product vision. It is the single source of truth for requirements and changes for the product.

Unlike a signed off requirements document, a Product Backlog is never complete. It starts by capturing what we know about the product at the start of the project, and then gets updated as the product, environment and user needs evolve.

The Product Backlog consists of epics, features and user stories covering functions, requirements, enhancements, and fixes lined up for future releases. It also includes bugs, technical items and spikes (items focused on knowledge gathering).

Where does the Product Backlog live?
All teams use Microsoft VSTS (Visual Studio Team Services) as a central tool to manage and share their Product Backlog.

Things to focus on

✓ The Product Backlog is a living document. As a Product Owner you'll need to update it regularly as priorities evolve and new insights about your product become available.

✓ Focus only on what's important, now. You can use your product roadmap to capture longer term plans.

✓ Make the Product Backlog available so it's easy for stakeholders to see what the team is working on now, and what's coming up in the future.

✓ Learn to say no. As Product Owner, you need to focus on realising the product vision. Adding un-validated, 'nice-to-haves' will only dilute your value proposition.

Things to watch out for

! Don't bloat your backlog. It's not a dumping ground for ideas and requirements. Unnecessary information makes it hard to prioritise and align with the big picture.

! Every story does not need to be estimated or fully detailed right from the start. As an item's priority increases, you can start adding more detail, with the team.

User stories, features and epics

User stories

A user story is one or more sentences in simple business language that describes functionality performed from the user perspective. User stories are used by the team as the 'requirements' of what to build.
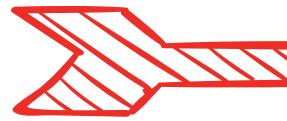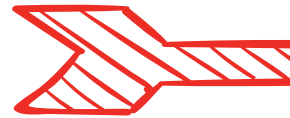
Features

A feature describes a discrete piece of functionality that delivers tangible value. One feature may be a summary or overview of many user stories, and may take longer than a sprint to deliver.

Epics

An epic outlines functionality at a high level, and is essentially a theme that can be broken down into a number of features and stories. High level concepts from your product roadmap might drop on to the Product Backlog as an epic, and then get refined into features and user stories as its priority increases.

HIGH VALUE &
WELL DEFINED

USER
STORIES

FEATURES

EPICS
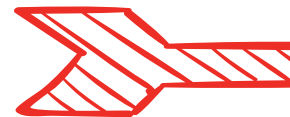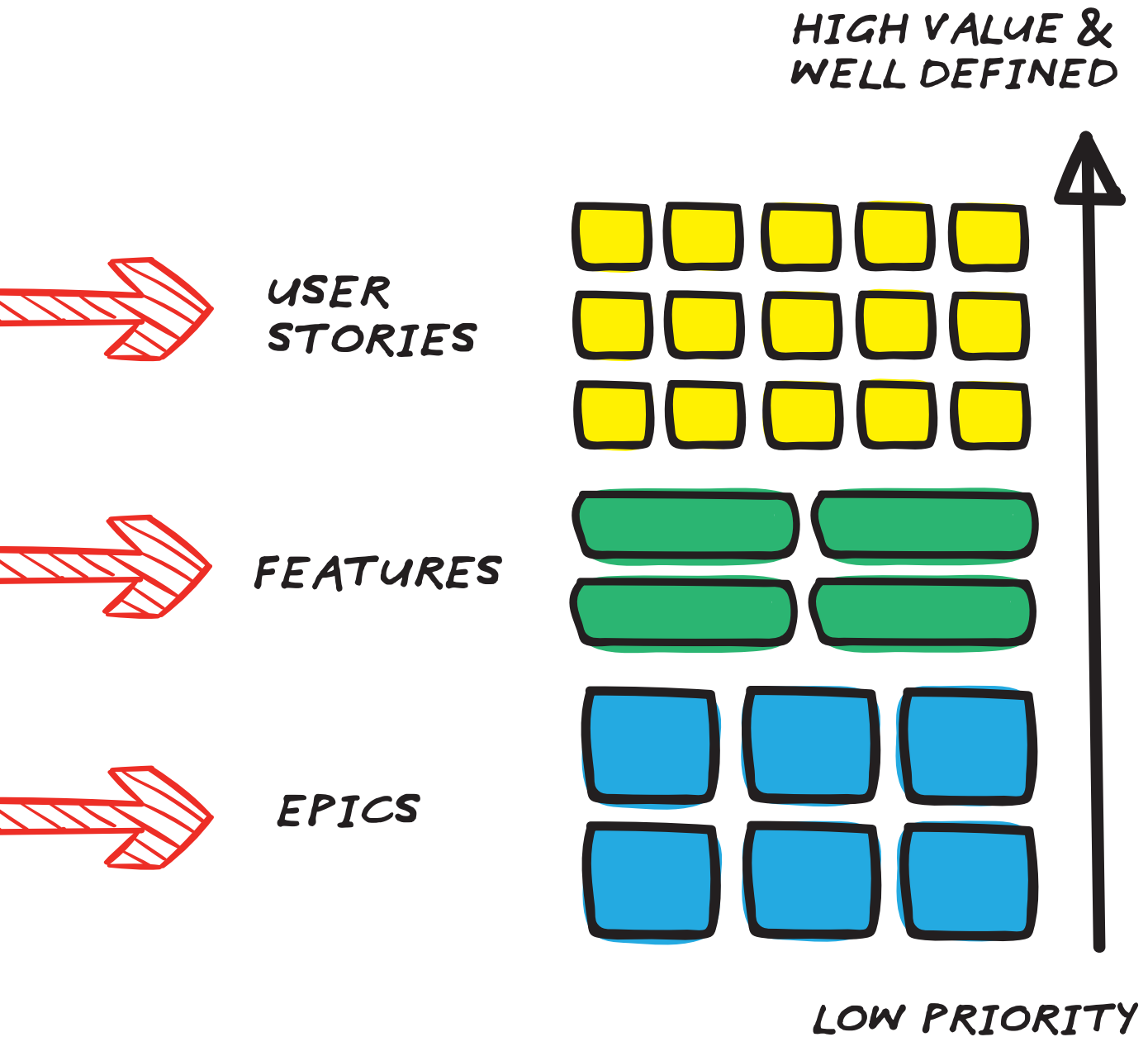
LOW PRIORITY

PRODUCT BACKLOG: HIGHEST PRIORITY USER STORIES
ARE READY TO BE PULLED INTO THE SPRINT BACKLOG

Creating a Product Backlog

A good, collaborative and visual way of creating your Product Backlog is for the team to work together to map the desired experience to achieve your vision.

You can break your product down into epics and features, and then add detail for each in the form of user stories.
Focus on the most important items first, and make sure you have good user stories for these.

Don't worry - you don't need to cover all functionality in your first workshop. Lower priority items can be captured with less detail in the form of an epic or feature now, before shaping into user stories as their priority increases.

This story mapping exercise will form the start of what will be a dynamic, ever-changing Product Backlog, and will help you prioritise what's important now and helps you focus on where to start.

FEATURES →
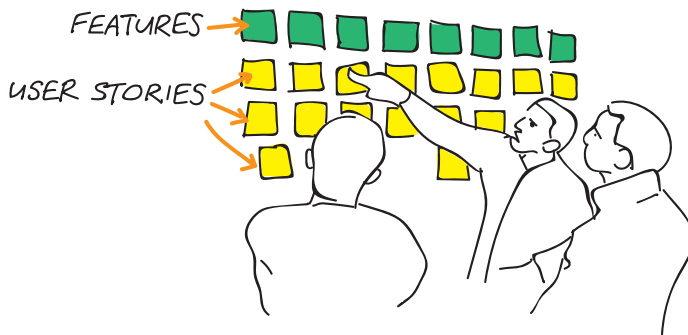
USER STORIES →

66 **Use simple maps to visualise the stories you tell about your software** **99**

Jeff Patton

Product Owners need to ensure that user stories that are added to the Product Backlog are based on real data and verified through research, rather than being based purely on assumption.

User stories

A user story is a short, self-contained description of something concrete that is valuable to the customer, written in the user's language. It describes the value delivered to customers, and how they use the product.

A user story helps to turn requirements gathering into a verbal conversation between team members and the Product Owner, and allows the work to be broken up into small increments for planning and delivery.

Once ready (see Definition of Ready), and prioritised, the user story can be moved into the Sprint Backlog for delivery.

User stories are created in VSTS. They can be printed on physical cards for display on the product board for each sprint to increase visibility of the Sprint Backlog.

Write stories that are simple and concise. Avoid confusing and ambiguous terms, and use active voice in the following format:

As a < Who? Persona / type of user >

I want < What? Goal / action/outcome >

So that < Why? Reason / benefit >

As an AT Hop user
I want to check my balance online
So that I can see if I have enough credit to use the ferry

Example user story

User story readiness

Once you have created a user story, the Product Team works together to add more detail to ensure that the story is ready for sprint planning and development.

Acceptance criteria
These are essentially tests, and also help clarify functional requirements of the user story. They follow a strict format:

Format:
Given <context>
When <event>
And <extra events>
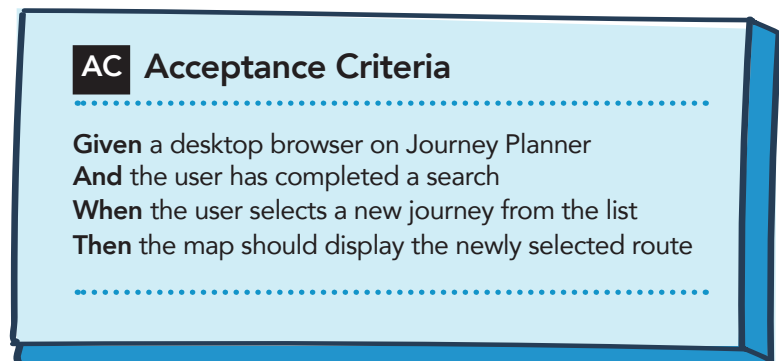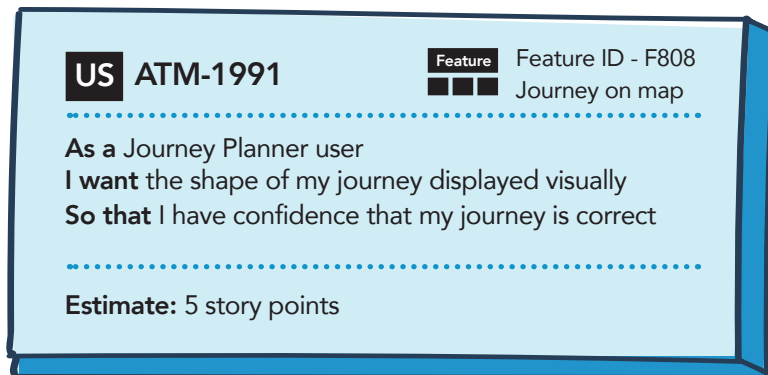**Then** <outcome>

" If you don't know who the users and customers are and why they would want to use the product, then you should **not** write any user stories. "

Jeff Patton

US ATM-1991

Feature ▪▪▪ Feature ID - F808
Journey on map

As a Journey Planner user
I want the shape of my journey displayed visually
So that I have confidence that my journey is correct

Estimate: 5 story points

AC Acceptance Criteria

Given a desktop browser on Journey Planner
And the user has completed a search
When the user selects a new journey from the list
Then the map should display the newly selected route

Example physical user story cards

66 When a team writes user stories, those stories are deliberately vague at the start. A written story is really nothing more than a promise to have a conversation. And in that conversation, the details of the story come out. 99

Mike Cohn

Definition of Ready (DoR)

It's important that the team has a criteria for declaring when a user story is "ready". If the team works with poorly defined user stories, they are unlikely to produce high quality work ("garbage in, garbage out").

The DoR criteria is a set of rules that a team uses as a guide for when a story is ready to be moved from the Product Backlog into a sprint. The team should work together to create and agree on the criteria.

Definition of Done (DoD)

While DoR focuses on user stories in preparation for a sprint, DoD outlines the shared understanding of what it means for work to be complete. It is the acceptance criteria that the Product Owner will use to accept the output of each sprint. Is it usable, valuable, and good quality?

INVEST in good user stories

You can use the INVEST acronym to guide the creation of your team's Definition of Ready.

I	**Independent**	Delivers business value on its own No dependencies on other user stories
N	**Negotiable**	Stories evolve as details are added through conversation and collaboration
V	**Valuable**	Each story should represent something of value to be delivered to the customer
E	**Estimable**	Enough detail to estimate the level of effort required to deliver the story. (See estimation)
S	**Small**	Small enough to fit in a single sprint Larger stories need to be broken down further
T	**Testable**	Able to test the function of the story Acceptance criteria is the basis for writing test scripts

Product Backlog refinement

Backlog refinement is when the Product Owner and the team review their Product Backlog to ensure that:

1. It contains the right items
2. Items are prioritised
3. Items at the top of the backlog have enough detail for the team to start building
4. Dependencies or pre-requisites are identified

Product Backlog refinement is an often overlooked part of planning. It is a meeting with the entire Product Team. Planning shouldn't take more that 10% of the team's sprint capacity.

During the refinement sessions the Product Owner and the Delivery Team collaborate to add detail, estimates, and order to items in the Product Backlog. The Scrum Master guides the process.

Items at the top of the Product Backlog have a higher priority, and are usually clearer and more detailed than lower ordered items. This allows the team to estimate the size of the higher priority stories. The story size is used by the team during sprint planning to understand how much work they can fit into the next sprint.

It also highlights to the Product Owner when a user story needs to be split into smaller stories.

During backlog refinement, the higher ordered items receive greater focus and discussion, as they are candidates for the next sprint. The Delivery Team need to confirm that the level of detail is sufficient for them to start development, and in doing so agree that the item is ready to move into sprint planning.

By the end of this session the Product Backlog should contain more than enough well-defined user stories, ready to be taken into Sprint Planning.

Things to focus on

✓ The Product Owner needs to be prepared for the session, by understanding the latest business and customer priorities.

✓ Involve the full Product Team and subject matter experts (as required) to develop the stories and run estimation in preparation for the next sprint.

✓ The Product Owner must be ready to describe the user stories and share the value to be delivered.

✓ Size the stories to determine whether splitting is required.

✓ Understand risks, dependencies, and expertise required to guide prioritisation.

Things to watch out

! Don't skip refinement or cut corners. Poor refinement is frustrating for the team and has a direct impact on sprint planning, and the success of the next sprint.

! Don't let stakeholders or committees prioritise the backlog for you. This is the role of the Product Owner.

! Avoid booking the backlog refinement session too close to the end of the sprint, this will only distract the team while they're focusing on completing the sprint.

! The Product Owner does not influence sizing. This is the responsibility of the team.

Estimation

During the backlog refinement meeting, the team will size high priority stories using story points. Epics and features can be sized with less precision, as they will evolve into stories that will need to be sized later.

The conversations between the team during estimation are as important as the actual sizing outcome.

The story sizing estimations are used to plan how much work will go into a sprint during splint planning. For example, an agile team may have a velocity of 20 story points. This means that they will commit to delivering 20 points during a sprint.

> " It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong. "
>
> John Maynard Keynes

Planning Poker

Planning Poker is a consensus-based, estimating and planning technique. It starts with the Product Owner reading out a user story to the team, so it can be discussed to develop a shared understanding. Next, the team use physical cards, post-it notes or an app to simultaneously show their sizing score for delivering that user story.

If the team all select the same value, that becomes the estimate. If not, the high and low estimators share their reasons, before another round is played. The Scrum Master helps the team to settle on a final agreed score.

← USER STORY FITS IN ONE SPRINT   STORY NEEDS TO BE SPLIT →

| 0 | 1/2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 13 | 20 | 40 | 100 | ? |
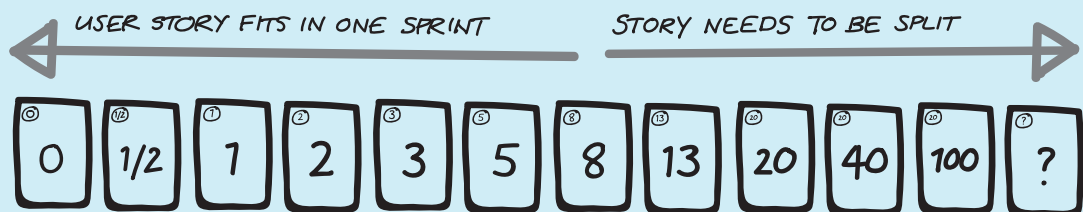
PLANNING POKER CARDS, BASED ON FIBONACCI NUMBERS

Sprint planning

During the sprint planning meeting, the team works together to agree what work they can commit to delivering in the next sprint.

The team covers these items during sprint planning:

1 Product Owner suggests sprint goal, the importance of achieving it, and what success looks like.

2 The team covers off any logistics, such as who is where, and when, and anything that might impact capacity, productivity and performance.

3 The team selects, and agrees what work will go into the Sprint Backlog for the next sprint to achieve the goal.

4 The team discusses and agrees how the chosen work will be done. The team may include external expertise if required.

5 The team raises any dependencies or risks for the Sprint Backlog items.

6 Finish with the team committing to the Sprint Backlog and goal.

PRODUCT BACKLOG
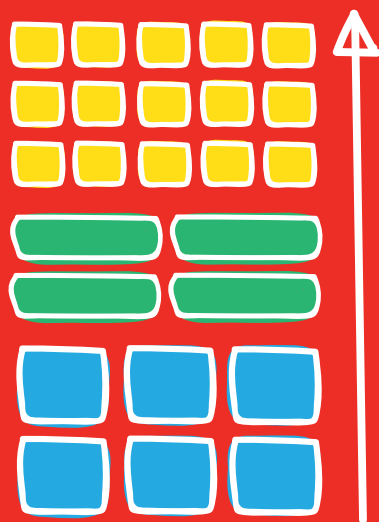
SPRINT GOAL

SPRINT BACKLOG

Sprint planning: Refined user stories are pulled from the Product Backlog to meet the sprint goal, and set the Sprint Backlog.

Sprint planning

Things to focus on

The Product Owner outlines the sprint goal, to help the team focus and make the best decisions during the sprint.

Agree up front on the capacity to be used for bug fixes and support items.

Check on team availability, and public holidays that may impact the teams velocity.

Things to watch out for

Having no sprint goal, or a sprint goal that simply describes the stories, adds no value.

The Product Owner should not try to influence or pressure the team to take on more than they are comfortable with. This will burn out the team and lead to poor quality work.

Daily stand-up

Each day, the Delivery Team assembles for a stand-up meeting in front of the team's Product Board. This is a key event for a self-organising team. The meeting is at the same time and place, every day, and runs to a strict timeframe. The Product Owner also attends the stand-up.

The stand-up should last no longer than 15 minutes. A short meeting ensures that the team is working together, sharing knowledge and reducing risk.

The stand-up format

1. **What did I do yesterday** to help meet the sprint goal?
2. **What will I do today** to help meet the sprint goal?
3. **What obstacles** are preventing me from meeting the sprint goal?

Things to focus on

The meeting is a daily routine, and needs to be on time, in the same place and using the standard stand-up format.

Having the meeting around the team board helps the them to focus on current stories and impediments.

Things to watch out

The Product Owner doesn't lead the meeting. While they are absolutely invited to stand-up, it's a meeting for the Delivery Team to check on their progress towards a goal, discuss coordination of efforts and raise impediments.

The stand-up is not a status meeting or a problem solving session. Book that in separately, or make time after the stand-up.

The daily stand-up is not the time to try and squeeze in backlog refinement, or sprint planning.

Sprint review

The sprint review is held at the end of each sprint, and is attended by the full team, and key stakeholders invited by the Product Owner. It's an opportunity to for the team to show their progress to stakeholders and customers.

The Product Owner revisits the sprint goal and outlines what has been completed in the sprint. The team then demonstrates what has been delivered during the sprint, and opens the session to valuable feedback.

The feedback and discussion promotes collaboration and a focus on value, and helps guide the team on where to focus in the next sprint.

Sprint retrospective	Sprint review
Inspect and adapt the **PROCESS**	Inspect and adapt the **PRODUCT**

Things to focus on

✓ Use this sessions to gather feedback that can be used to move the product forward.

✓ Focus on inviting the right people to ensure you get the feedback that you need.

✓ Split the meeting into two parts focusing on what was done, and what comes next.

Things to watch out for

! Never cancel the session because you feel you have nothing to show. This event is about engaging with stakeholders, gathering feedback on what the team has done, and showing the value that has been delivered.

! Only inviting the team. The sprint review is the time for the team to connect with stakeholders and customers who are receiving the value delivered by the team.

Retrospective

The sprint retrospective takes place at the end of each sprint, to review how the process and team functioned, and what improvements can be made.

The Scrum Master facilitates the 'retro' and gets input from all team members.

By the end of the sprint retrospective, the team should have identified no more than three improvements that it will implement in the next sprint.

A typical sprint retrospective model

What worked well?

What could be improved?

What will we commit to doing in the next Sprint?

Scrum Team members make actionable commitments

Sprint 'retro': The team works together to improve, by inspecting and adapting the way they work.

Things to focus on

✓ Aim to get the most out of the meeting, and the most out of each individual to help move the team forward.

✓ Always review and follow up action items from the previous meeting.

Things to watch out

! Never cancel the session. It is a valuable opportunity to work together to improve the teams effectiveness, efficiency and well-being.

! It's not a finger pointing session. It's a chance for the team to collectively move forward, solve problems and improve.

! It's a meeting for the team only. Non-team members should not be invited.

Toolbox

Product Owner's toolbox
Here are the tools used by AT Product Owners and their teams

Visual boards

**We use visual boards to make progress visible, help the team stay focussed, and to show other useful information for the team and stakeholders.
We have two types of boards, serving different purposes:**

Product Team board

Purpose

Provide a visual display of a team's progress during a sprint, allowing everyone to see which tasks are queued, which are in progress and which are done. Increase stakeholders' visibility of team activities.
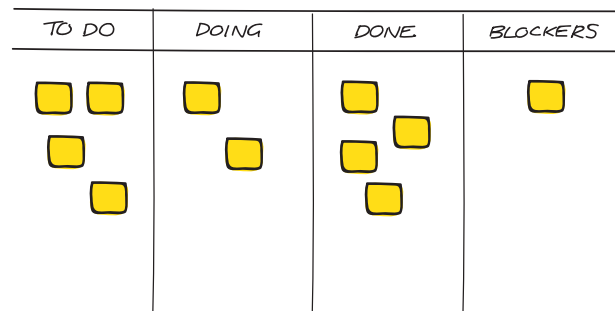
Content

Overview
Product vision and roadmap
Team and roles
Success metrics
Additional product specific items
Eg: Metrics, designs, feedback

Detail
Sprint goal (and area of focus)
Sprint dates, releases dates, demo times
Progress tracking aligned with each teams way of working
What's coming up next

Audience

Primary: Product Teams
Secondary: Stakeholders, open to view by anyone.

AT MOBILE (PRODUCT)   VISION   ROADMAP

BENEFITS TRACKING   CUSTOMER RESEARCH   TEAM

SPRINT GOAL   SPRINT DATES   NEXT DEMO   NEXT RELEASE

TO DO	DOING	DONE	BLOCKERS

Visual boards

Product Owner's feature board

|	
Purpose	① Provide a view of each product's feature funnel for Product Owners to identify dependencies and overlaps to increase alignment and efficiency, and reduce waste. ② Drive Product Owner practice development through increased collaboration. ③ Highlight current issues requiring action.
Content	**Horizons** Horizons (Idea, concept, define, initiate), with post-it notes showing features as they progress towards development. Only items being worked on will appear on this board. See the Product Roadmap on the Product Team Board for a longer term view The board also highlights the next **release** and **review**, and any **blockers** the are slowing progress.
Audience	Primary: Product Owners Secondary: Stakeholders, open to view by anyone.
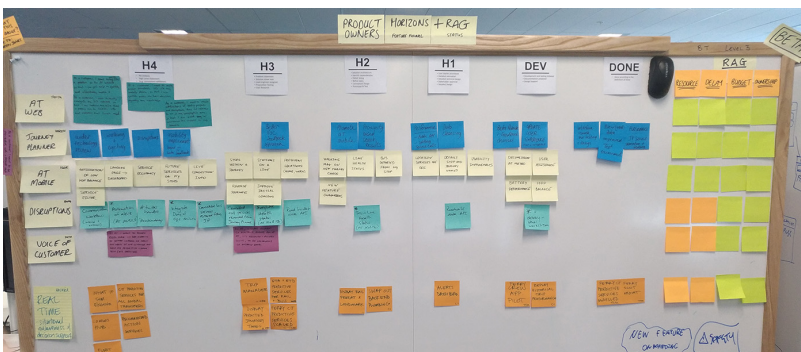
Product Owners' stand-up format
A 3-5 minute update that is meaningful to the audience, highlights dependencies, and answers these questions:
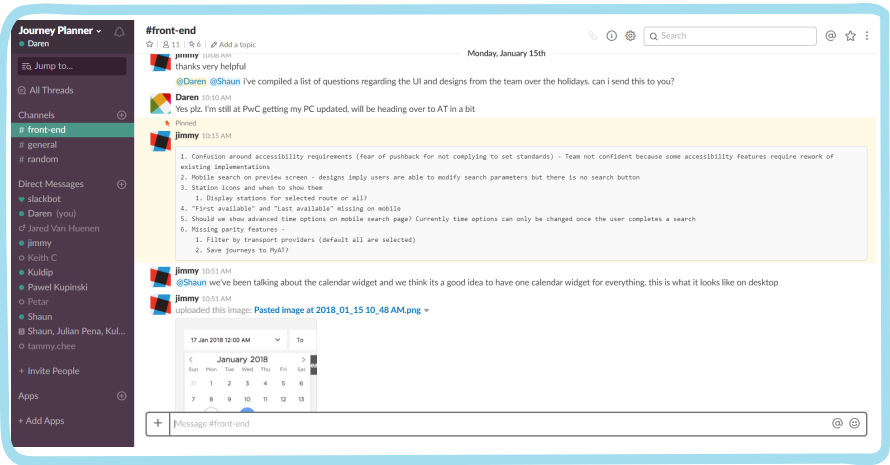
1. What's **NEW** to the board?
2. What are you starting **NEXT?**
3. What are you working on **NOW?**

Digital tools
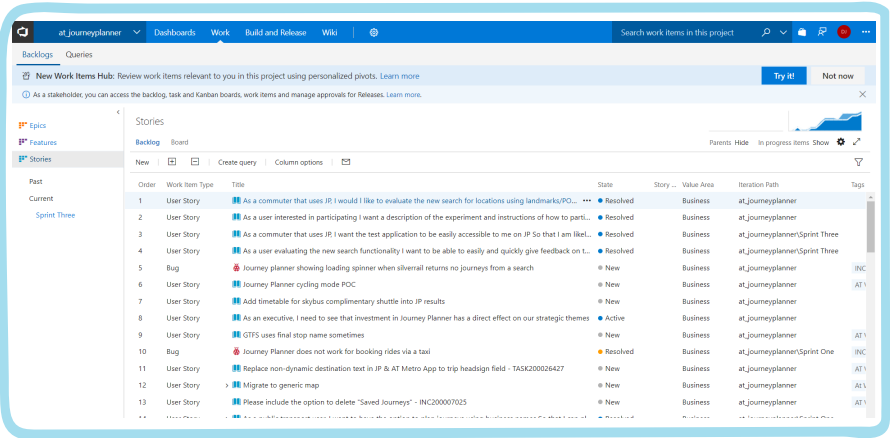
VSTS

Visual Studio Team Services is a Microsoft product that we use at AT to record and manage our epics, features and user stories. It also supports the change and release process.

Slack

Slack is a communication and collaboration tool that helps teams to stay connected. You can create channels for different work streams and invite relevant users to participate. Many teams prefer Slack over email.
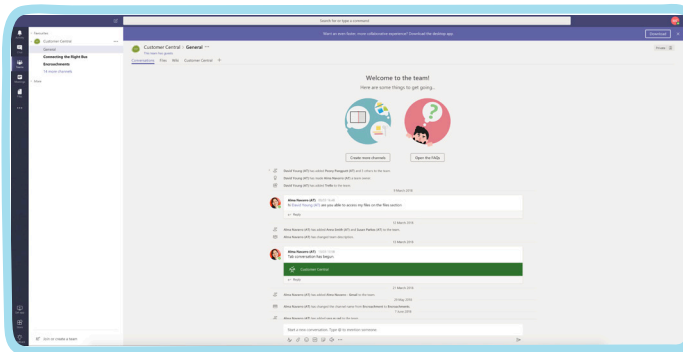
www.slack.com

Additional tools

**These are some additional tools that you may come across when working on agile projects.**

Post-it notes

Its not all digital. Keep it lean, by using post-it notes and white boards to share thoughts, group ideas, make decisions, and overall - drive better collaboration!

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams brings together the full breadth of Office 365, to provide a true chat-based hub for teamwork and gives teams the opportunity to create a more open, fluid, and digital environment.
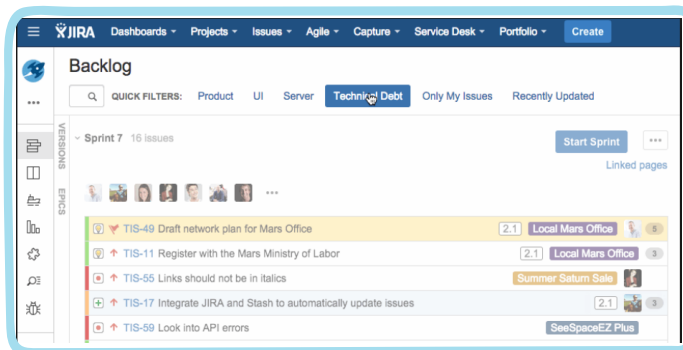
JIRA

JIRA performs the same function as VSTS. It is not AT's preferred backlog management tool, but you may see vendors using it at times.

Scaling product teams

Scaling product teams

As we create more product teams, coordination and synchronisation becomes critical. By grouping similar work areas into Tribes, we enable cross pollination of learnings and deeper collaboration. Each Tribe has an Agile Coach and a Tribe Lead, and is made up of a number of Product Team members, each with a Product Owner. Chapters and Guilds are formed across the Tribe.

TRIBE A

TRIBE B

PRODUCT OWNER

CHAPTER

GUILD

CHAPTER

TEAM 1   TEAM 2   TEAM 3   TEAM 4   TEAM 1   TEAM 2   TEAM 3
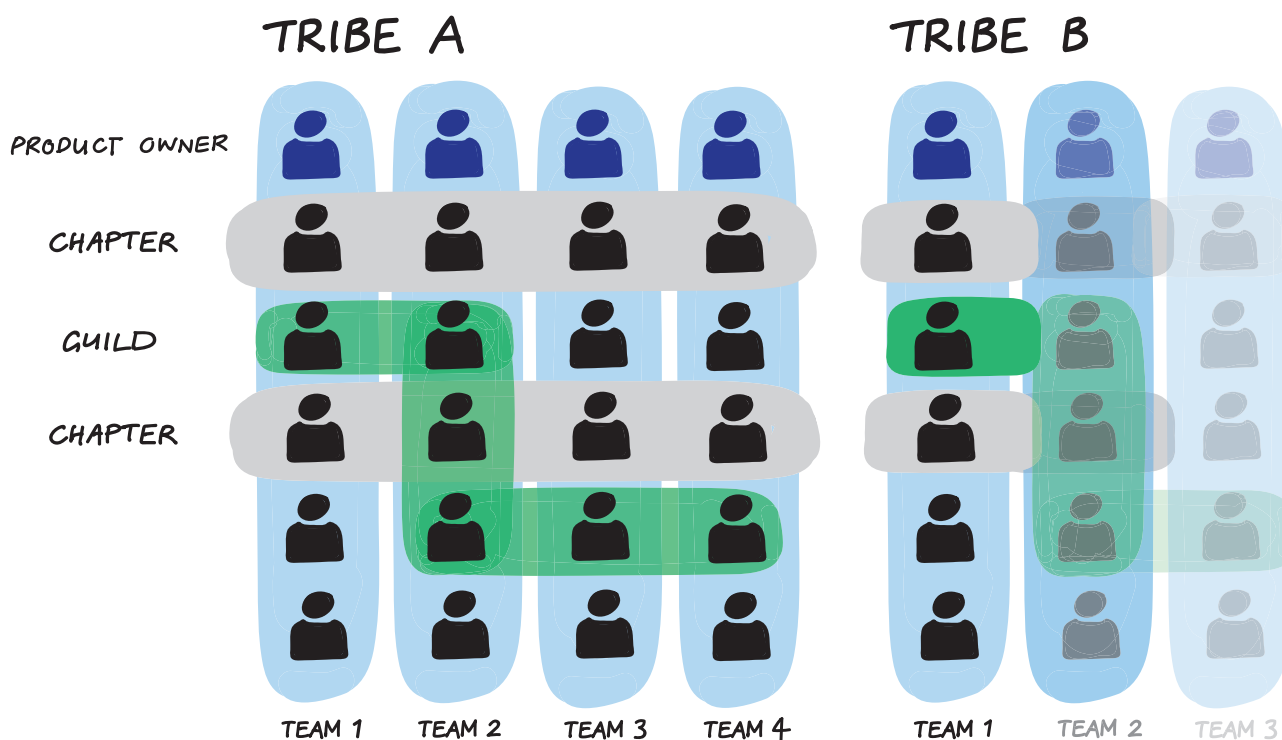
Product Teams (Squads)

Are small cross-functional teams of up to 9 people responsible for the design, development, testing and releasing of a particular product. Each squad has a long-term mission and has free reign to design solutions to achieve that mission. Each squad is self-organising and decides how they want to work. They are supported by an Agile Coach.

Tribes

Are a collection of Squads working on a similar problem area. They meet regularly to share wins, developments and learnings. A Tribe Leader is responsible for establishing Tribe priorities, supporting collaboration and ensuring KPIs/budgets are achieved.

Chapters

Are a collection of employees with similar skills/subject matter expertise (e.g. User Experience Design, Data and Analytics). Chapters meet regularly to discuss new developments, and share ideas and challenges. Chapter leaders are responsible for developing skills in chapter members and representing their interests within the organisation.

Guilds

Are a "community of interest" designed for people of similar interests to share tools, challenges and knowledge. They are larger and more organic than chapters, and extends beyond subject matter experts.

Watch this video to see how Spotify has applied this model: https://vimeo.com/85490944

" At the end of the day, your job isn't to get the requirements right - your job is to change the world. "

Jeff Patton