Scrum vs Project Manager - Understanding Scrum Team roles

The Scrum Master

The Scrum Master is accountable for establishing Scrum as defined in the Scrum Guide. They do this by helping everyone understand Scrum theory and practice, both within the Scrum Team and the Organization. The Scrum Master is accountable for the Scrum Team's effectiveness. They do this by enabling the Scrum Team to improve its practices, within the Scrum framework." The Scrum Master makes sure that important meetings occur, like the Daily Scrum. In the same way that a coach would be aware of the game clock, the Scrum Master is tasked with making sure that the meeting is kept within the appropriate **timebox**. A timebox is a Scrum concept that refers to the estimated duration for an event.

The Scrum Master acts as a coach to the Scrum Team—they encourage the team to build the product in the time frame. They also support the team by creating a collaborative environment so the project's goals are achieved. The Scrum Master's duties include:

- Coaching the team members in self-management and cross-functionality
- Helping the Scrum Team focus on creating high-value Increments that meet the **Definition of Done** (an agreed upon set of items that must be completed before a project or user story can be considered complete)
- Causing the removal of impediments to the Scrum Team's progress
- Ensuring that all Scrum events take place and are positive, productive, and kept within the **timebox** (a Scrum concept that refers to the estimated duration for an event)

Scrum Master vs. Project Manager

The role of the Scrum Master is sometimes confused with the role of the project manager. While the two roles share related skills and qualities, they are very different roles.

A Scrum Master is responsible for helping the team understand Scrum theory and practice. They ensure Scrum events take place and help the team focus on delivering value by removing impediments. But unlike a traditional project manager, they do not take on the management of changes in scope or priorities. Additionally, Scrum Masters do not maintain traditional project artifacts like GANTT charts.

The Product Owner

According to the Scrum Guide, "The **Product Owner** is responsible for maximizing the value of the product resulting from work of the Scrum Team. How this is done may vary widely across organizations, Scrum Teams, and individuals." Product Owners maximize the value of the product by representing and expressing the voice of the customer throughout the project duration. A product isn't useful to its customers if that product doesn't fulfill their expectations and meet their needs. The Product Owner's duties include:

- Developing and explicitly communicating the Product Goal

- Creating and clearly communicating **Product Backlog** items (The Product Backlog contains all of the features, requirements, and activities associated with deliverables to achieve the goal of the project.)

- Ensuring that the Product Backlog is transparent, visible, and understood

Product Owner vs. Project Manager

In traditional project management, scope management is the primary responsibility of the project manager. But in Scrum, the definition and management of product scope falls to the Product Owner. Conversely, the Product Owner isn't responsible for team performance—they aren't considered to be a manager. The project manager leads the project team to meet the project's objectives and oversees tasks and progress.

There are also similarities between the Product Owner and project manager roles. For instance, both roles are tasked with stakeholder management. This means they both must practice and facilitate effective communication among team members and stakeholders.

Additionally, in many companies—including Google—the definition of product or solution scope is the responsibility of a separate role called a **product manager**. So, it is important when joining any new company to discover how that company approaches the area of product definition, requirements development, and user research to understand what they consider to be the domain of the project manager.

The Development Team

The **Development Team**, also referred to as **Developers**, is made up of the people who do the work to build the product. According to the Scrum Guide, Developers are "the people in the Scrum Team that are committed to creating any aspect of a usable Increment each Sprint." Their responsibilities include:

- Creating a plan for the Sprint, the **Sprint Backlog** (the set of Product Backlog items that are selected to be completed during the upcoming Sprint)

- Instilling quality by adhering to a Definition of Done

- Adapting their plan each day toward the Sprint Goal

- Holding each other accountable as professionals

- Executing sprints by designing, building, and testing Product Backlog items in increments

An important aspect of the Development Team that is worth highlighting is that they are cross-functional, meaning that you will have team members who are specialists in different disciplines. In a software team, that might mean having a web developer, a database developer, and a user experience specialist. In a marketing team, that might mean having writers, editors, search engine optimization specialists, and business analysts.

The roles working together

The Scrum roles fit together, and each brings their unique qualities, skills, and responsibilities jointly to lead to successful Scrum projects. It is crucial for everyone on the team to understand their role and how they work together to deliver value to their users and customers. When the team has this shared understanding, they can better support each other during the practices of Scrum.

Necessary traits for each role

Overall, you will want people on your team who are interested in constant collaboration and improvement. More specifically, it is great to have team members who value feedback, bring energy and fun to the team, and can admit and learn from their mistakes. Let's look at what traits each team member should exhibit:

The Product Owner should be able to confidently provide the team with general direction, requirements, and objectives for the project but will allow the team to determine how to accomplish these goals. Your team will want a Product Owner who promotes the product vision and prioritizes the product backlog to maximize the value for the customer. In order to deliver on this, the Product Owner should be organized and have strong communication skills.

The Scrum Master should have strong leadership skills that enable them to be efficient facilitators and negotiators who know how to resolve conflict. Your team will want a Scrum Master who aims to effectively coach the Development Team, facilitate events, and eliminate distractions that may impede the team's progress.

When it comes to the Development Team, you will want individuals who remain focused on completing deliverables and producing a superior final product. Since the team is self-organizing

and cross-functional, you will want people who are eager to work together and not afraid to compromise for the greater good of the product.