Fun Scrum Simulation

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(Inspired by the *59-minute Scrum* and *XP Game* simulations.)

About This Simulation

- **Give people a hands-on experience of using Scrum, and a taste of some of its essentials: teamwork, team self-organization and self-management, team commitment and focus, flow, inspect and adapt at multiple levels, overcoming obstacles, positive energy, and the role of the ScrumMaster.**
- **Deepen people's understanding of the basic practices and common artifacts of Scrum (Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum Meeting, Scrum Artifacts (Sprint Backlog, Burndown Chart, Task Board), Sprint Review, Sprint Retrospective)**
- **Simulate a variety of different kinds of work, including complex, multi-step development (including testing), task dependencies, and features with uncertainty, hidden complexity and surprise.**

Duration

- **About 2 hours, start to finish**

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Supplies (per team of 4-6 people)

- 1 pad of small Post-It notes (yellow stickies)
- 1 small ruler
- 10 balloons
- small box of paperclips (reusable)
- 1 newspaper (reclaimed from the recycling bin)
- 1 whiteboard, or 1 large sheet of flipchart paper
- 10 sheets of paper (reclaimed from the recycling bin)
- pens and scratch paper
- printed materials (reusable if laminated)
- 1 roll of string (shared among all teams)
- scissors (shared among all teams)
- 1 roll of masking tape (shared among all teams)
- bell / gong / noisemaker (for the facilitator)
- timer or wristwatch (for the facilitator)

(these are the maximum supplies required – teams will use only a portion)

Printed Materials (per team of 4-6 people)

- 1 copy of the User Stories from the Product Backlog (productbacklog.pdf)
- 2-3 blank Sprint Backlog sheets (sprintbacklog.pdf)
- 1 Sprint Burndown Chart sheet (sprintburndownchart.pdf)
- 1 Additional Info sheet (additionalinfo.pdf)

Preparation

- Prior to the simulation, participants should be introduced to the basic practices and artifacts of Scrum.
- Alternatively, the facilitator can introduce the practices and artifacts at the beginning of the relevant sections of the simulation.
- During the simulation, the facilitator will be playing the role of Product Owner, and the people participating will be team members or ScrumMasters.

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Simulation Instructions (for the facilitator)

1. Form Teams
Ask people to organize into teams of between 4 and 6 people per team. Request that no team may be more than 1 person larger or smaller than any other team.
[timebox – 30 secs]

(If the teams haven't met the team size request, call attention to this, but don't provide direction; simply pause until they figure it out.)

Call attention to the self-organization that has just taken place.

2. Pick ScrumMasters
Ask each team to select a ScrumMaster. During the Sprint, this person will help the team remove blocks, protect the team from outside disruption, facilitate team interactions, help the team remove waste and improve their practices, and guide the team's use of Scrum.

3. Sprint Planning
Announce that the Sprint will consist of 4 work days, and each work day will have 5 (real world) minutes. (Additional time will be provided for the Daily Scrum Meeting and updating of artifacts.)

Ask each team to estimate their capacity – in other words, how much time they will actually have for work during the Sprint. They will need to estimate how much time each person will have available daily (~5 mins) and multiply that by the number of days in the Sprint (4 days). Then, they'll add this up for the team total capacity. [timebox – 3 mins]

Give each team a copy of the Product Backlog, and the following supplies: 1 sample balloon, 1 sample paperclip, 1 ruler, 1 pad of Post-it notes, several blank Sprint Backlog sheets, 1 blank Sprint Burndown Chart, pens and scratch paper, whiteboard or sheet of flipchart paper.

Ask the teams to decide which of the user stories from the Product Backlog they will set as their goal for the Sprint. Each story has a business value shown, and the team's goal is to achieve as much business value as possible during the Sprint, BUT they must deliver the stories at high quality and they must work at a sustainable pace.

Encourage teams to break stories into tasks using Post-It Notes on the whiteboard / flipchart paper, create a Sprint Backlog of tasks with initial estimates (and compare those estimates to their capacity), and create a Sprint Burndown Chart. Remind the ScrumMaster of their role in facilitating the discussion and helping the team stay within the timebox. Teams can ask the Product Owner for clarifications of stories at any time.
[timebox – 30 minutes]

Suggested Debrief Questions

- What are your thoughts about the Sprint Planning experience?
- Was there anyone "in charge" during Sprint Planning?
- How well do you understand the goal your team has for the Sprint?
- Do you feel your team has set a goal for the Sprint that's achievable?
- How committed do you feel to this goal?
- Who is responsible for ensuring that the team achieves the goal?
- How would it have been different if the Product Owner had simply told the team how much to commit to?

4. Before The Sprint

Inform the team that at the beginning and end of each day the bell will ring. When the day ends, work must stop, and any teams that are found working overtime may be penalized with "burnout points".

Let the team know that testing of paper airplanes and catapaults must take place on a special test range (3m distance marked on the floor in tape, at one side of the room).

Provide each team with 2-3 balloons (fewer than they'll need), some paperclips, 1 newspaper, and one copy of the Additional Information sheet. Inform the team that additional supplies are available at any time, and that shared resources (roll of string, scissors, tape, and extra balloons) have to stay at the facilitator's table, and the ScrumMaster or team will have to come request them. They will need to manage their work to account for any issues this presents.

5. During The Sprint

Start and end each "day" by ringing the bell, with 5 minutes elapsing in between.

After each day ends, ask the teams to do a Daily Scrum Meeting [timebox – 4 mins] and then to update their artifacts (task board, Sprint Backlog, and Sprint Burndown Chart) [timebox – 4 mins]

During the Sprint, the Product Owner should approach each team and try to interrupt their work (ask to borrow a team member to help with moving the facilitator's table). See how the team and ScrumMaster react to this interruption.

Complete 4 "days".

6. Following The Sprint

Lead the group in a big round of applause!

Suggested Debrief Questions

- What are your thoughts about the Sprint experience?
- Was there anyone "in charge" during Sprint?
- If there was no single person "in charge", how did the team know what to do?
- How visible was what everyone was working on at each point during the Sprint?

- Would it have been obvious if someone was unsure what they should be doing, or if someone didn't have anything to work on?
- How visible was the team's progress during the Sprint?
- How did the team respond to delays, setbacks and surprises during the Sprint? What would have happened if the Daily Scrum Meeting hadn't taken place?
- What would have happened if the team didn't have the Scrum artifacts?
- How focused and motivated did you feel during the Sprint? Why?

7. Sprint Review

Ask each team in turn to demo what they produced. Encourage lots of applause and positive energy, and acknowledge the team's hard work. Makes sure every team gets lots of applause. Discuss the quality of what was produced, and recognize whether the acceptance criteria were met. Discuss ideas for enhancing the products in later Sprints. [Optional: Tally up the business value score that each team delivered.] The correct answer to Backlog Item #7 is 20100, and Backlog Item #8 is 500.

Suggested Debrief Questions
- What are your thoughts about the Sprint Review?
- What would have happened if the Product Owner had not participated?
- What would be the effect on the team if the Sprint Review was more like an interrogation / inquisition, or the tone was negative?

8. Sprint Retrospective

Ask teams to do a retrospective on the Sprint. A simple approach is to create 4 lists: What Went Well, What Didn't Go Well, Things to Try in the Next Sprint, and Blocks to Escalate (issues the team is assigning to management to resolve). [timebox – 12 minutes]

Suggested Debrief Questions
- What are your thoughts about the Sprint Retrospective?
- If the team were to do another Sprint, how would things go differently? What role would the retrospective have in that?
- What if the team talked only about positives or negatives during the retrospective?
- How would the retrospective be different if "management" was present?
- What would be the effect if the team skipped the retrospective?
- Did the team commit to too much or too little during the Sprint, or was the commitment about right?
- Is there a relationship between how much the team committed to do in the Sprint, and the quality of what was produced?
- Did the team work at a sustainable pace during the Sprint?

9. Cleanup

As a group, discuss and agree on a timebox for the cleanup: paper in recycling bins, unused supplies and equipment back to facilitator's table and organized into piles. Start the timer and enjoy complex self-organization in motion. End with more applause!

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