DAILY STAND-UPS

A daily stand-up is a short meeting used by development teams, to share information, coordinate work and identify impediments. It allows them to get a sense of overall progress towards their goal. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the work done the previous day and suggest any improvements to how the team's work is organised.

A team running its own daily stand-ups can quickly share knowledge about and coordinate its activities. Team members can voice any problems that are preventing them from working effectively and use the stand-up as a springboard for resolving these. An understanding of the current status helps the team organise itself to provide assistance where it's needed and work collectively to progress towards its goal.

A daily stand-up ultimately relies on a team being self-organising. This means the exact format will and should change from team to team. However, successful stand-ups do have some common features:

- They are held every day at the same location.

- Only people involved in doing the daily work take an active part in the stand-up (the 'team members').

- Each team member attends and talks briefly about his or her work and any issues they might have.

- They are short: generally no longer than 15 minutes. Many teams choose to remain standing during the meeting to encourage brevity and close collaboration.

Implementation

Prerequisites

Identify a location that can accommodate the entire team. If the team uses an information radiator (such as a Kanban Board), then base the stand-up around this, where possible.

- Agree a time that all team members can attend regularly, ideally close to the beginning of the day.

- Agree a set of ground rules for the meetings with all of the team members (see sample ground rules).

- Ensure that everyone is aware of the location, time and ground rules.

- Identify someone to facilitate the stand-up, at least until team members become used to it. Their task will be to make sure the team has the meeting, that it stays focused and timely and impediments are acted on. (In a daily Scrum, a variant of the stand-up in the Scrum framework, the Scrum Master carries out this role.)

Runnning the stand-up

1. Start at the agreed time.

2. Each team member takes turns to talk about his or her work, addressing the rest of the team. An effective way to keep this focused is for each team member to answer 3 questions:

   - **What have you done since the last stand-up?** This is at a summary level only and may to relate back to "what I said I would do yesterday".

Outcome

Function

Benefit

Who

Scaling Factors

Difficulty

- **What do you intend to before the next stand-up?** This represents a public commitment to the rest of the team of what the individual team member intends to accomplish between now and the next stand-up. Any discussion on how this might be done and possible solution should be followed up after the meeting.

- **What impediments do you have?** What, if anything, is blocking the individual from working effectively?

3. If a team member raises an impediment, deal with it as follows:

   - If another team member immediately knows the solution, a simple "I can help with that" will suffice and the stand-up can move on.

   - For issues that are not as immediately obvious, allow for quick questions that help to clarify the issue, but otherwise use a parking lot (such as a whiteboard) to note the impediment and move on to the next team member. Allowing the stand-up to continue will also help to determine whether the same issue affects other team members.

4. When the last team member has spoken determine whether there are any unresolved impediments that were raised during the stand-up. Identify appropriate actions to resolve these. For example, a critical impediment may require a sub-group to form to discuss it further. Another impediment may just be taken on and investigated by an individual. However, it is important that the necessary actions are carried out outside of the stand-up in order that other team members are not delayed in going about their planned work.

Sample ground rules

- We will start the stand-up on time. It is each team member's responsibility to ensure he or she is on time.

- The stand-up is for our team to actively participate in. We run this openly so that others may attend in order to observe and listen.

- The stand-up will last no more than 15 minutes.

Potential pitfalls

- **The stand-up turns into a design meeting or debate.** If a topic requires further discussion involving some or all of the team, schedule a follow up meeting with the necessary people involved to deal with this.

- **The stand-up takes too long.** Encouraging the participants to stand can have a positive impact on keeping the stand-up brief. It can also help to adhere strictly to the 3 question format proposed above.

- **The stand-up is hijacked by an attendee.** Make sure that all attendees are aware of the ground rules. After the stand-up, direct the attendee to a more appropriate forum, such as talking to the product manager.

- **The stand-up becomes a status update.** A common cause for this is if the team feels like they are reporting to an individual, such as the facilitator. Try rotating the facilitator and ask the team members to address themselves to the rest of the team.

If you want to learn more, consider reading:
Software in 30 Days by Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland; *Extreme Programming Explained* by Kent Beck and Cynthia Andres