

Is Agile still valid?

# Anchor our uncertain times with Scrum Values

## Courage, Focus, Commitment, Respect and Openness

With heightened Covid-19 preventive measures around the globe, remote working is becoming a new norm. People are mastering this way of working along with their other commitments in life. We are not alone and definitely imperative in #GettingItDoneTogether.

I am refreshed to see that Scrum values are still so applicable for times of necessary remote working. In Scrum Guide 2017 used these 5 values Courage, Focus, Commitment, Respect, and Openness to explain the dynamics behind Scrum teams – current popular agile framework in the community:

Quoting Scrum Guide 2017:

*When the values of commitment, courage, focus, openness, and respect are embodied and lived by the Scrum Team, the Scrum pillars of transparency, inspection, and adaptation come to life and build trust for everyone. The Scrum Team members learn and explore those values as they work with the Scrum events, roles and artifacts.*

*Successful use of Scrum depends on people becoming more proficient in living these five values. People personally commit to achieving the goals of the Scrum Team. The Scrum Team members have courage to do the right thing and work on tough problems. Everyone focuses on the work of the Sprint and the goals of the Scrum Team. The Scrum Team and its stakeholders agree to be open about all the work and the challenges with performing the work. Scrum Team members respect each other to be capable, independent people.*

# Scrum Values X Remote Working



There are many techniques shared on how to make remote working a better experience. I believe you will be one of them who will invent a creative way of working too. I like to use the scrum values to help us anchor our agile ways of working.

Courage



"Have the courage to do the right thing and work on tough problems," as guided by Scrum. This is needed much more during times of uncertainty when you can't see what's coming at you. Be it at work or what's happening around you. You do need that courage to brave through the thick silence / surrounding noise in remote working, or your laptop just keeps failing at you. There can be countless such impediments coming your way. It is effortless to resign and accept certain constraints that can affect the outcome that you and your team want to avoid.

#### # Unmute and Speak Up

It is so easy to let others talk in conference calls, and maybe .. just maybe they will also cover what you like to say. It's usually the opposite, and the meeting has ended. Your voice makes a difference. Be participative and be courageous to unmute and speak your mind without being prompted to do that. When you are displaying that courage, your teammates will catch that wave to voice out.

#### # Ask Questions in possible channels

Sometimes, the conversation is already busy with people talking. Use the chatroom or make it a practice to always open the chatroom for discussions. As a facilitator of the meeting, remind people that they should feel free to respond over the chatroom. Use emojis too ☐

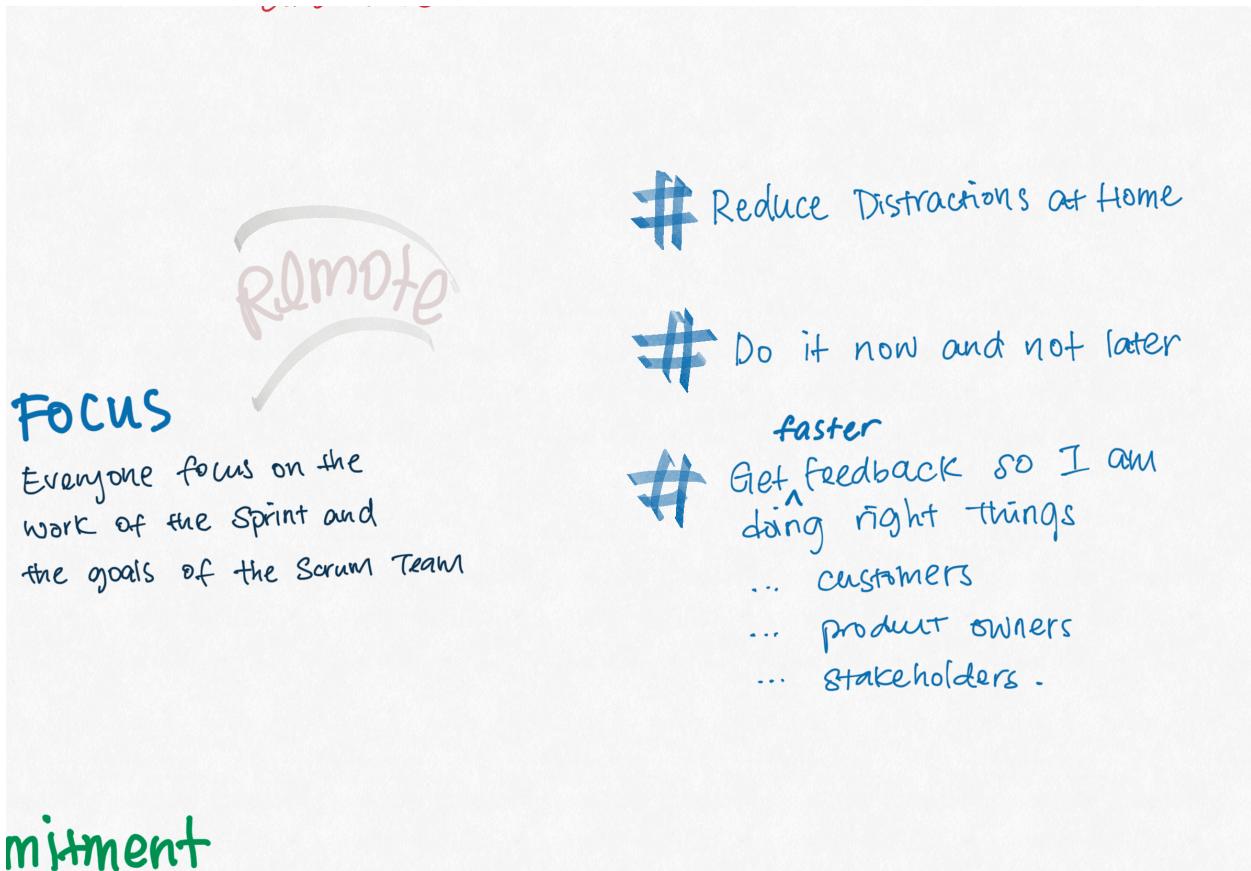
#### # Dare to call out "un-speakables"

"Do the right thing" sometimes means that what you said may hurt someone or disagree with someone. It can get to you as "I shouldn't say this because this is too tough to solve." Be courageous to call out the white elephant in the room even when it is against the flow. Be transparent about your thoughts, and ask good questions to make the discussion more productive.

#### # Take care of myself and loved ones

This is extra important in times of Covid-19. Have the courage to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Working from home can mean never-ending instant messaging to reply to, and back to back conference calls to get things done together. Take care of yourself, and take time out for your lunch, stretching time, talk to a friend or read something.

## Focus



## Commitment

By working from home, our home spaces overlap with our workspaces. Many times in remote working, your home priorities clash with your work priorities. With some space or arrangement constraints, some of us may have to use your bedroom as your workspace. For some of us reading this, you may have to share spaces with your family members or need to homeschool your children. Focus is becoming much harder than before. Scrum reminds us to "focus on the work of the sprint and the goals of the scrum team."

### # Reduce Distractions at home

Be there for your team by deliberately set up a space for working. Arrange your physical work desk to face away from possible distractions – like your bed, your tv, or shared common area.

### # Do it now and not later

With uncertainties of what could possibly happen next in this fluid Covid-19 situation, it will be wiser to act on your tasks now than later.

# Get Feedback, so I am doing the right thing

... with your Customer / Users

... with your Product Owner

... with your Stakeholders

Focusing on the goal of the scrum team means it is a team effort, you want to shorten the feedback loop wherever possible to correct what you are working on. With remote working, it can get really frustrating when communication takes a more extended and more linear way than ever. You used to be able to walk up to a group of people and talk to them immediately, but now you may have to schedule it so to get the same level of feedback. You may want to create an MSTeams chat channel #ForFeedback / review purposes. I like having a #coffeecorner channel to virtualize the water cooler conversations, which very often are the most valuable conversations you can have.

Try using Remote mobbing way of working. This is a technique where a small group of developers can work together in creating the "same thing, at the same time, in the same (virtual) space, and even the same computer." In intervals of 10 – 15 mins, one of the developers could take the typist role and rotate this role. It's real teamwork with a short feedback loop.

## Commitment



It's interesting that Scrum guide emphasized that commitment is a personal choice. It impressed on me that it is our will to commit and achieve the goals that we agreed on.

# Be clear on the sprint goals and how my work supports it

Hence, clarity on the sprint goal is super crucial. Without understanding what we are pursuing after can be a maze-run for any individual working from home – tiring and lost. The scrum team – PO, Dev team, and Scrum Master – together crafts the sprint goal. Be clear about what those goals are as a team and how your work contributes to that.

# Stay committed to my team

Working from home is quite different from working remotely. Home is a space designed typically with its own commitments and priorities. We should be aware that working from home means there is an overlap of space for both work and home commitments. Naturally, it's easy to follow your home commitments as you are at home! For example, home is a space where you take care of your children's needs, a place for your Netflix drama binges, and household chores.

So naturally, those commitments will pop-up in your work from home schedule and call out for your attention.

Commitment to the team means you carve out time and space to give priority deliberately though you are at home.

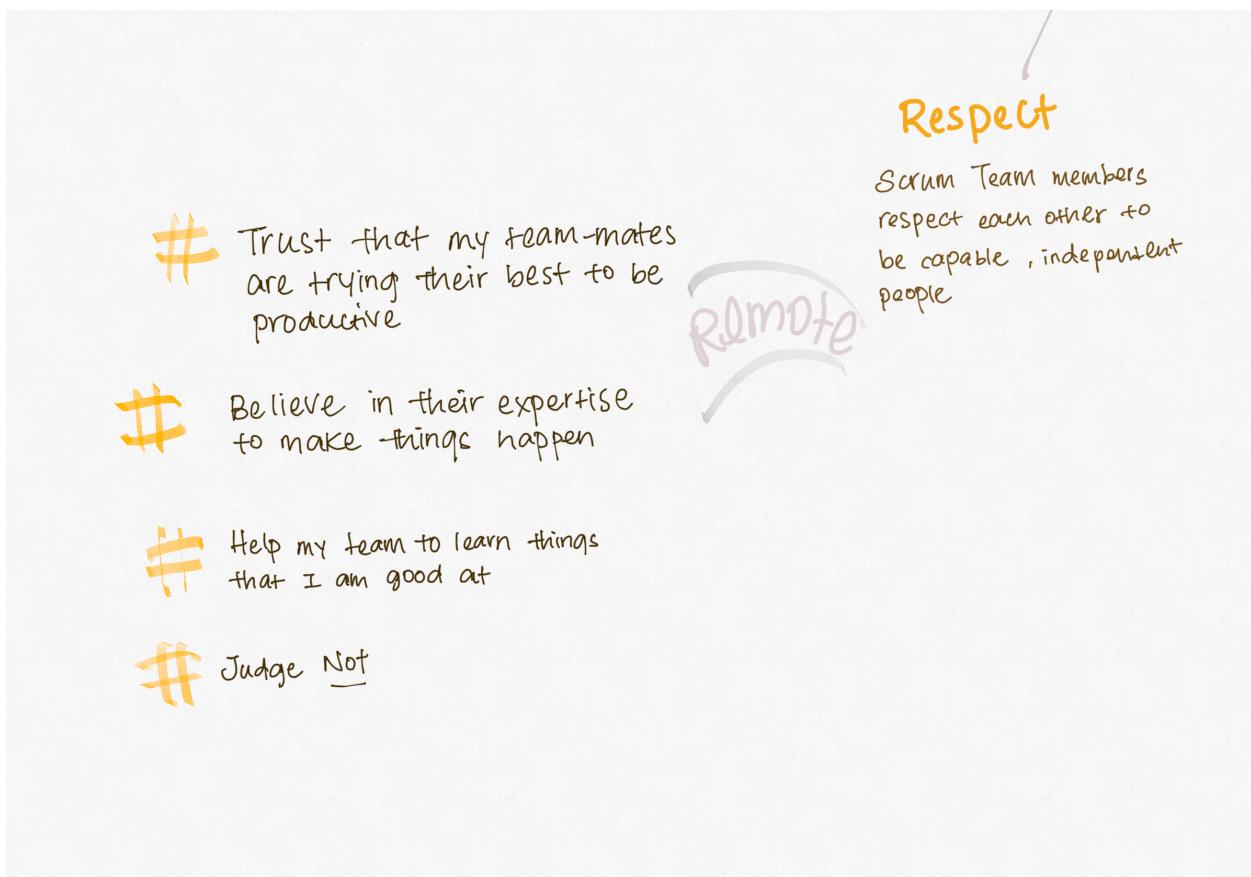
# Be on time

Be on time, or communicate your challenges to do so.

# Keep my word

Keep your word as trust can be built when you can keep to what you said you will be.

## Respect



At times, it's hard to respect when you can't see action. Scrum value – Respect – reminds us that "we respect each other to be capable and independent people.

#### # Trust that my teammates are trying their best to be productive

Much more can be done when we trust each other that we are all trying our best to be productive.". In times like Covid-19, maybe some of us have to homeschool our children or care for the elderly at home, or there's just bad internet at home while working from home. Take time to reflect on each individuals' working condition and work on improving them as you plan for your next Sprint.

#### # Believe in their expertise to make things happen

Your team mates' expertise is the same in the office or working remotely. Believe in them.  
#Trust-that-they-are-trying-their-best-to-be-productive

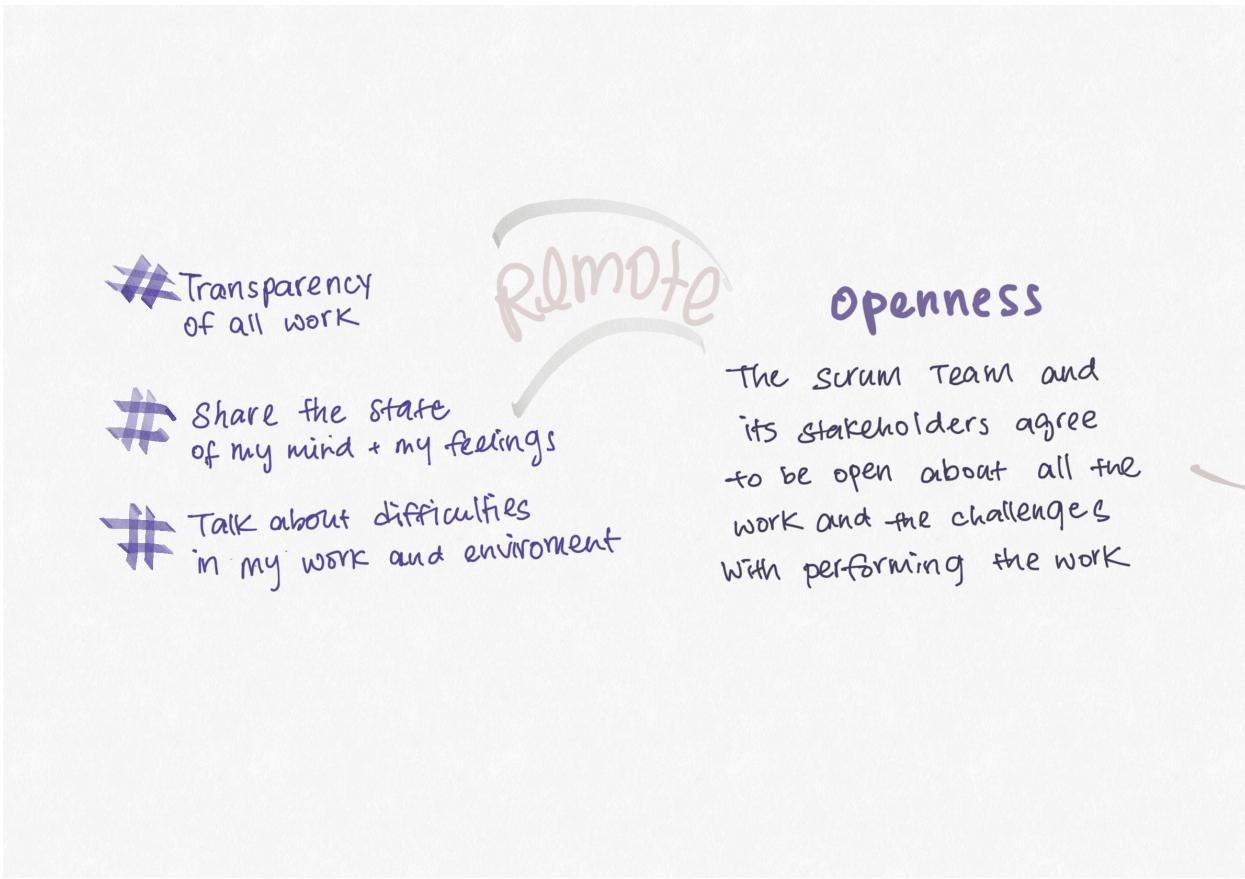
#### # Help my team to learn things that I am good at

Offer your help by sharing your skills – not to show-off but to share and help your team to be better.

#### # Judge NOT

Something to be careful about when it comes to remote working. As our mode of communication is less rich than meeting face-to-face interactions, it's so easy to fall into the trap to judge people's intentions/actions/capability. Be extra cautious of this when we are working remotely and wondering why this person takes so long to send you that file that he or she has talked about. Ask them once again before you conclude your judgment.

## Openness



Being open is one of the values of Scrum that both the Scrum Team and its stakeholders agree upon. What's interesting is that .. scrum guide reminds us to be open about all work and its challenges with performing the work. All work means, in times like Covid-19, openness about both work-work and non-work stuff you are juggling at the work-from-home situation.

### # Be transparent of all work

Be open about your working conditions with your teammates, because it's now your official working space. Maybe you have a curious child joining you during your video calls, perhaps you have a pet at home who decides to participate while you were talking. Be comfort about it and be transparent about the non-work stuff you are juggling with as well. Grow that empathy in your team; it's an opportunity for your team members to get to know you better.

### # Share my state of mind and my feelings

This could be a difficult time for you. Some of us could have friends, family, or colleagues who are affected in this situation. #ShareYourHumanity is one such value that we can have during this time.

## # Talk about my difficulties in my work and environment

Interestingly, human beings are highly adaptable beings – though of us would claim that we don't like changes. We change and we bend to our constraints. A way to improve our work and our environment is to talk about it and seek to improve them. It takes all of the scrum values to work on tough problems and overcome impediments. So if it's a technical issue, a knowledge issue, clarity issue, and the list can go on – discuss it during your kaizen moment/sprint retrospective. This is probably a high time for more creativity in our ways of working.

...

Is Agile still valid with remote working? Yes, there's so much we can do and improve upon. What do you think? Do you have any tips and tricks to work remotely smartly? Do share it with me!

...

Recommended articles to read:

about agile, Scrum, Covid-19 working conditions, remote working

- William-Jan Ageling: Scrum Master: the Crisis Has Changed Your Team — Your Leadership Approach Has to Change Too <https://medium.com/serious-scrum/scrum-master-the-crisis-has-changed-your-team-your-leadership-approach-has-to-change-too-c3496ea251c3>
- William-Jan Ageling: Scrum Master: Your Team Has to Work Remotely. Scrum Master: Time to Step Up! <https://medium.com/serious-scrum/your-team-has-to-work-remotely-scrum-master-time-to-step-up-bce9fd50bac1>
- Paddy Corry, 7 Concrete Ways to Improve Collaboration in Remote or Distributed Scrum Teams: <https://medium.com/serious-scrum/7-concrete-ways-to-improve-collaboration-in-remote-or-distributed-scrum-teams-7940fbaed52d>

- Anshul Kapoor, Remote Working and Trust Issues: <https://medium.com/serious-scrum/remote-working-and-trust-issues-7eabf1a0687>