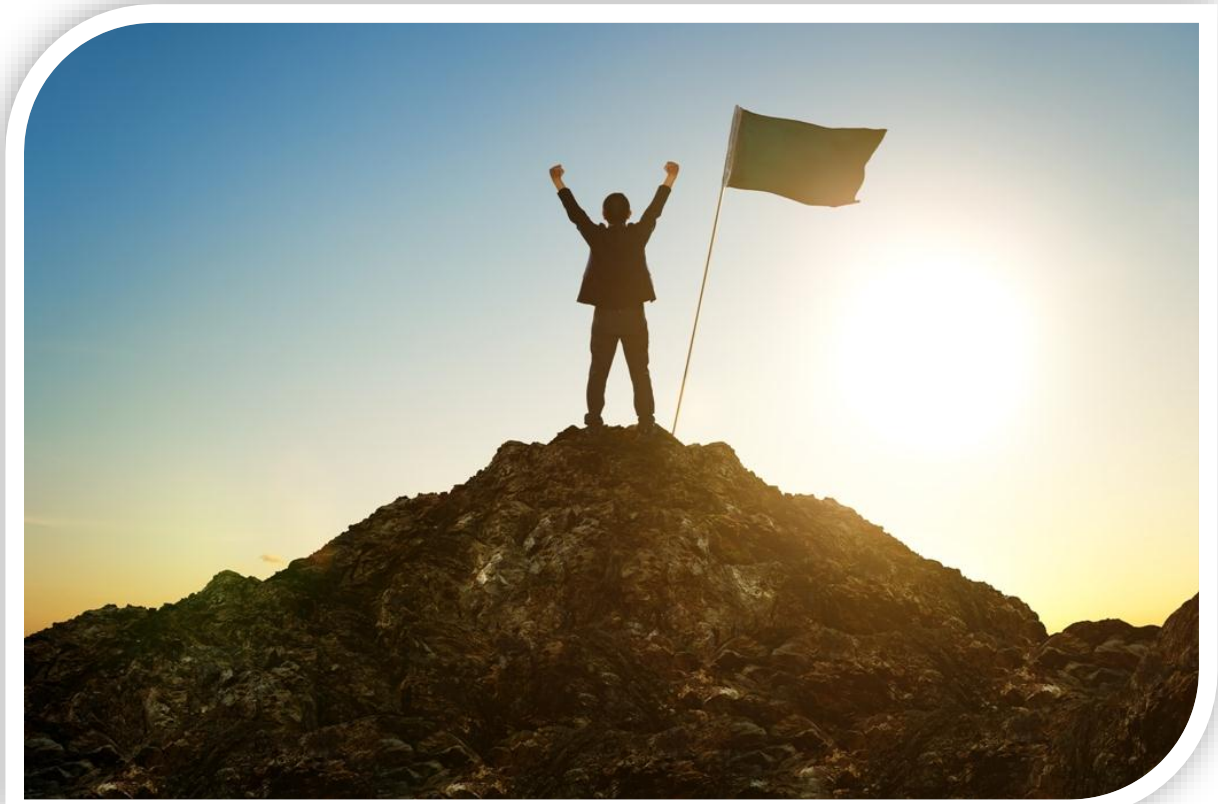




## Successful Scrum Adoption



## Guidance for Organization – Distributed Teams

### How to distribute multiple teams

- A large project can be organized into
  - Collaborating colocated teams
    - This approach is useful when there are sufficient team members in each project location.
    - For example, in a typical Onsite-offshore model, there could be one team at onsite location and another team at offshore location. Both these teams are cross-functional.
  - Deliberately distributed teams
    - In this approach, teams are deliberately distributed to overcome cultural differences.
    - For example, again in onsite-offshore model, a few resources from offshore location may work for some time at onsite location.

### Create Coherence

- Coherent means sticking together.
- With distributed teams, many factors work against creating coherence, such as language, culture, physical separation, and time zone differences.
- The following approaches can be tried to keep the team members together.

#### Acknowledge significant cultural differences

- To create coherence, we must start by acknowledging that significant cultural differences exist between team members in various locations.

#### Acknowledge the small cultural differences

- When working with distributed teams, small cultural differences are also significant, and these must be acknowledged.
- For example, religious holidays, working days in a week, etc.

#### Strengthen Functional and Team subcultures

- Across the world, professional subcultures (Doctors across the world, software developers across the world) are stronger than national subcultures.
- Individuals want to think “I am a team member of Odyssey project” rather than “I am a team member from Bengaluru, India, working on Odyssey project.”



- The following two techniques can be used to strengthen functional and team subcultures:
  - Communicate and establish a shared vision
  - Reach agreements

### Build trust by emphasizing early progress

- For the team to stick together, that is, be coherent, trust is a major contributor.
- Due to lack of face-to-face communication, distributed teams must use other means of communication channels to promote trust among team members.

### Get together in person

- Distributed teams have some benefits if they get together occasionally.
- Few techniques such as the ones listed below can be considered for planning these get togethers.

### Seeding visits

- At the beginning of a project, team members don't know each other well, have minimum shared history, and might have language and/or cultural differences.
- Allowing the complete team to collocate at the beginning of the project—a seeding visit —helps the team members to know each other and builds the trust.

### Contact visits

- After a seeding visit at the beginning of the project, one-week contact visits of short duration can be organized.
- These one-week contact visits are not for a particular task but for developing the working relationships.

### Traveling Ambassadors

- These traveling ambassadors are semi-permanent people who spend several months at the other locations.
- Personal relationships established by these travelling ambassadors will be very valuable even after they return to their home base.

### Changes in communication

- One of the most profound impacts of distributing a team will be the changes to how they communicate.



### Adding back some documentation

- A distributed team will need to write more than a collocated team.
- Status reports may be required to supplement Sprint Reviews.
- Design and User Interfaces could be shared via documentation, seeking feedback, and understanding.

### Adding detail to Product Backlog

- Supplementing high-level User Stories with more detailed written specifications help distributed teams.
- Some projects still use traditional Use Cases and Business Requirements Documents to add more details to User Stories for offshore teams.

### Encourage lateral communication

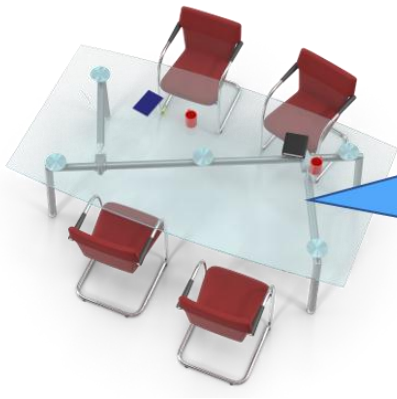
- In traditional project execution, most team members communicate via a designated team lead.
- On a scrum project, however, everyone is encouraged to communicate with others.
- As an example, let us see what reasons prevent team members from sharing bad news:
  - The fear of being punished – which includes being fired
  - A desire to maintain team solidarity
  - No clear channel through which to communicate the problem
- When there is clear and frequent lateral communication, team members will be able to break bad news (problems or issues) as soon as they discover it.

### Meetings

- More than geographic distance separating teams, the time zone difference has greater impact on how a team works together.
- Time and distance both can affect Scrum Meetings such as Daily Scrums, Sprint Planning, Sprint retrospectives, and Sprint reviews, as well as Scrum of Scrums.



## General Advice



- Include time for small talk
- Share the pain
- Tell everyone who is speaking

### *Include time for small talk*

- Distributed teams can have some small talk—talk about local news, weather, politics, sports, etc.—during their conference calls. This should be done at the beginning of the calls.
- This will help some team members who might be nervous at the beginning of conference calls.

### *Share the Pain*

- Due to time zone differences, meetings can occur before or after the usual work day.
- Do not schedule the meeting in favor of a team in a particular location.
- Alternate meeting timings, such as mornings and late evenings, monthly between teams so everyone feels their pain is shared.

### *Tell everyone who is speaking*

- During phone conversation, it is very difficult to recognize the voices of different speakers.
- Before speaking, team members can say their name: “This is Sam,” “I am Raj,” etc.

## Sprint Planning

- Let us look at two strategies for conducting Sprint Planning with distributed teams.

### *The long phone call*

- Most teams might want to dial into a conference call and conduct the Sprint Planning meeting.
- In a long phone call, whatever the team does during in-person Sprint Planning is repeated on conference call.
- The pros and cons of the long phone call approach are summarized below.



Pros	Cons
Can lead to good discussion as long as participants remain engaged	Participants may mentally disengage from such a long phone call
Sprint Planning can be finished in one day	Only works when there is significant overlap of the workday
Is consistent with the approach used by collocated teams	May involve extending the workday in one or more locations

### Two Calls

- When time zone separation is too great, teams can try two calls for Sprint Planning.
- Teams can replace an initial eight-hour session with two separate four-hour sessions conducted over consecutive days to identify major tasks, deliverables, and high-level dependencies.
- The pros and cons of the two calls approach are summarized below.

Pros	Cons
Can use time more efficiently	Usefulness can vary greatly based on how the team is distributed
Can be used even if work hours only overlap slightly	Sub teams may discuss by themselves and may not share all knowledge with full team, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunications
	Can't be completed in one day

### Daily Scrum

- Daily Scrum because of short 15-minutes duration may not present problems for teams with overlapping work days.
- If there is no overlap in work days, Daily Scrum can pose problems.
- Let us explore a few options to handle these problems.

### Single Call

- This is the most common approach. This works when time zone differences are few between teams.
- As number of time zones increases (for example, teams located in US West Coast, Germany, India, and Australia) single call will create problems.
- The pros and cons of Single call approach are summarized below.

Pros	Cons
Similar to the approach used by collocated teams – there is no new learning	Can be very inconvenient for team members



Discussions are held with the entire team present	Not sustainable if people are forced to make calls far outside of normal work hours
Everyone learns of all issues, leading to greater team learning and commitment to a shared purpose	

### *Writing the meeting*

- In this approach, a phone call is held at a time that is convenient for the largest number of team members (that is, when most team members can participate). Other non-participating members submit a written report.
- The pros and cons of Writing the meeting approach are summarized below.

Pros	Cons
Can be sustained over the long term	Issues may not be discussed and may lay dormant for days
Helps overcome language problems, including thick accents	Fails to take advantage of a great opportunity to foster improved relationships and knowledge sharing among team members through daily interaction
Everyone learns of all issues, leading to greater team learning and commitment to a shared purpose	No guarantee that written updates will be read
	Team members will be less likely to hold each other accountable for prior day's commitments

### *Regional Meetings*

- In this approach, regional teams conduct their Daily Scrum alone and then key issues from these meetings are shared.
- If a team is split across two cities with a fair distance, each team may do its own Daily Scrum.
- These regional meetings are to be followed by additional communication so that each other team is aware of the work of other teams. One representative from each team can join a phone call to do follow-up communications.
- The pros and cons of Regional meetings approach are summarized below.

Pros	Cons
Pain of off-hours calls is greatly reduced	Information relayed from one meeting to the next day may be incorrect or incomplete



Allows local sub-teams to share information most important to them	Can lead to a feeling of “us” and “them” between different sub-teams
	Not everyone is present for all discussions
	Information may not be shared between sub-teams in a timely manner

### Scrum of Scrums

- This meeting is conducted to co-ordinate the work of multiple teams.
- When distributed teams have overlapping work days, it will be easily able to schedule this meeting for about an hour.
- If there are no overlapping work days, teams can use the techniques presented above: single calls or regional meetings.

### Sprint Review and Retrospectives

- Both these meetings are not held every day and aren't as long as Sprint Planning meetings.
- Teams with overlapping work days can easily allocate the time for these meetings.
- Teams without overlapping work days may try to take alternate approaches, such as hosting one Sprint in early hours of one time zone and hosting the next Sprint in late hours of another time zone. This can be repeated as required.
- For both these meetings, ***participation from all team members is required.*** Participation in these meetings is not optional.

