

Process 514: Develop a Product Vision

Last Updated: 10/27/2016

Audience:

CWDS Service Delivery Teams

Frequency:

Within 30 days of your service team kickoff

After reading this procedure, the audience will be able to understand how to develop a product vision statement that best reflects the overarching goals of the service team.

Overview:

Every Scrum project needs a product vision that acts as the project's true north, sets the direction and guides the Scrum team. It is the overarching goal everyone must share – Service Manager, Scrum Master, service team, management, customers and other stakeholders.

As Ken Schwaber puts it: "The minimum plan necessary to start a Scrum project consists of a vision and a Product Backlog. The vision describes why the project is being undertaken and what the desired end state is." (Schwaber 2004, p. 68)

The product vision paints a picture of the future that draws people in. It describes who the customers are, what customers need, and how these needs will be met. It captures the essence of the product – the critical information we must know to develop and launch a winning product. Developing an effective product vision entails carefully answering the following questions:

1. Who is going to use the product? Who is the target customer?
2. Which customer needs will the product address?
3. Which product attributes are critical to satisfy the needs selected, and therefore for the success of the product?

Answering these questions also gives us the information to create a business case. It allows us to decide if and how the project should proceed.

Creating the Product Vision:

Since the Service Manager is responsible for the success of the product, he or she should lead the vision-creation activities in close collaboration with the service team. For innovative projects, this team may include business and technical people; for instance, marketers, product and user interface designers, and developers.

The more innovative and complex the product is, the more important the vision is and the more effort is required to create it. The vision statement becomes a guiding light, the

“what we are trying to achieve” statement that the development team, scrum master, and stakeholders refer to throughout the project.

Like any important goal, a good vision equally appeals to our intellect and to our emotions. It should motivate and inspire people. The product vision should be clear and stable; broad and engaging; and short and sweet.

1. *Clear and Stable*

The product vision must be clear and easy to understand to create alignment and a common purpose, and to avoid misinterpretation and confusion. The product vision should allow us to see the future product. The vision should not be fuzzy or hazy.

Vision changes, particularly with regards to customer needs and critical attributes, can cause confusion, de-motivation, and project failure. Small adjustments are usually fine, as long as the product's value proposition stays the same.

2. *Broad and Engaging*

The product vision should describe a broad and engaging goal: a goal that guides the development, operations or project support effort but leaves enough room for creativity; a goal that engages and inspires people, fosters creativity, and generates buy-in.

3. *Short and Sweet*

The product vision should be brief and concise. It should contain only information critical to the success of the product. The product vision is not a feature list and should not provide unnecessary detail.\

Crafting or Revising a Vision Statement:

The vision statement documents three main concepts: what the project should accomplish, why it is valuable, and the project's success criteria. Use this template to help capture the main points of your service team's vision:

Value Statement	
For	<customers>
who	<do something>
the	<solution>
is a	<something – the <i>how</i> >
that	<provides this value>
unlike	<competitor, current solution, or non-existing solution>
our solution	<does something better – the <i>why</i> >

Examples of CWDS Service Team vision statements:

1. Project Management Office

For the project team who is developing a new Child Welfare System, the Project Management Office provides agile project management processes, procedures, fiscal and reporting; unlike the previous PMO SDLC processes and procedures, our service allows for light touch, low impact direction, guidance and training and of all agile processes which supports the new CWDS procurement and system development life cycle methodology and approach.

2. Intake

The Intake Digital Service will provide county Child Welfare Agencies an easy to navigate and efficient way to record and access information regarding child abuse, neglect, and exploitation allegations, investigative findings and outcomes. Unlike the current system, our service will provide a modern user-friendly application which supports our strategy to provide quick, comprehensive information to make timely informed decisions regarding child safety.

3. Certification, Approval and Licensing Services (CALS)

For State and County workers who ensure that safe and quality licensed facilities and approved homes are available for the children and non-minor dependents (NMD) who need them, the CALS will facilitate activities related to ensuring that licensed facilities, approved homes and associated individuals meet and maintain required standards. Our Service will be seamless and consistent throughout the state and, unlike the multiple existing systems, support immediate access to current and necessary information needed to ensure the health, safety and quality of life for the children and NMD in licensed facilities and approved homes, increase web services for stakeholders, and assist in the prioritization and management of State and County workload.

4. **Implementation**

For the CWS-NS end-user community who require assistance in developing the strategies, documentation, training, and tools for implementing and deploying CWS-NS; Implementation Support guides user organizations through the steps necessary to adopt new services. Unlike a monolithic large-system deployment, our service provides direction and support which supports our strategy to help end user organizations adopt and use new services as quickly as possible.

Validating your Product Vision

After you have developed a draft of your product vision, ask the team these questions to validate that the vision accurately reflects the overarching goal:

- Is this team vision statement clear, focused, and written for an internal audience?
- Does the team vision support the project vision?
- Does the statement provide a compelling description of how the product/service meets customer needs?
- Does the team vision describe the best possible outcome?
- Is the business objective specific enough that the goal is achievable?
- Does the statement deliver value consistent with project strategies and goals?
- Is the team vision statement compelling?

When all answers to the above questions are “yes”, move on to reviewing the statement with others, including:

- *Project stakeholders*: The stakeholders will be able to identify that the vision statement includes everything the product should accomplish.
- *Other Service Teams*: Because all service teams will participate in the project, they must all understand what the product needs to accomplish. It helps other service teams to know that your service team is just as serious about success as their service team is.
- *Scrum Master*: A strong understanding of the product helps the scrum master remove roadblocks and ensure that the team is on the right path later in the project.
- *Agile Mentor or Coach*: Share the vision statement with your agile mentor or coach. They may be able to provide an independent and external perspective, qualities that can make for a great objective voice.

Discover whether others think the vision statement is clear and delivers the message you want to convey. Review and revise the vision statement until the project stakeholders, the team, and the scrum master fully understand the statement.

Hang up a copy on the wall in the team's work area, where everyone can see it every day. You refer to the vision statement throughout the life of the project.

Summary:

An effective product vision guides the Scrum team and aligns stakeholders and customers. Spending time and money on vision creation is a worthwhile investment. You cannot move from the idea stage right into development with little or no up-front homework. The trick is to spend as little time as possible but as much as required; to use Scrum to create the vision; and to ensure that as many of the team members involved in the vision creation as possible also transform it into the actual product.