

Achieving Product Owner Excellence

What does “Good” Look Like?



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Bob Galen



- Independent Agile Trainer & Coach at [RGCG, LLC](#)
- Somewhere “north” of 30 years overall experience ☺
- Wide variety of technical stacks and business domains
- Roots of a software developer
- Senior/Executive software development leadership for 20+ years
- Agile “Coach of Coaches” and Leaders
- Deep XP, Lean, Scrum, and Kanban experience since 2000
- From Cary, North Carolina, dog lover, grandfather, husband



The Leadership Circle[®]
CERTIFIED PRACTITIONER



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Overall Workshop Agenda

3-Modules

1. 4-Quadrants of Product Ownership
2. Putting the Story back into the User Story
3. Situational Awareness – Crucial PO Conversations
4. Assessments & Close

~ 50-minutes for each
Assessment on your own

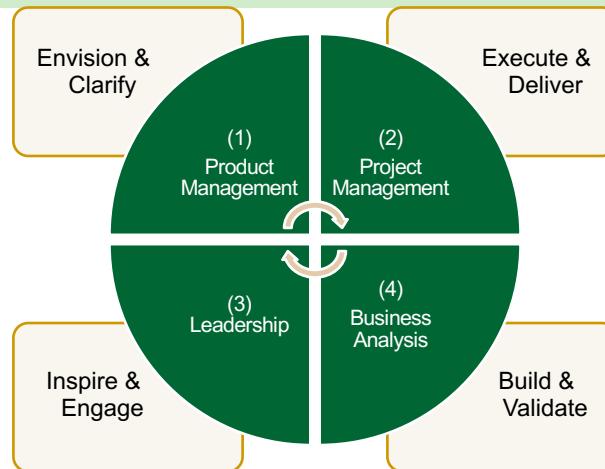
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4-Quadrants of Product Ownership



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Why Quadrants?

Product Ownership is...

- A misunderstood role
- Outward and inwardly focused
- Is it a full-time role?
- Nuanced across skills and dimensions
- Easy to lose your balance
- Too hard for one person?
- Crucial in delivering value!



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Quadrant 1 Product Management

- Champion & Evangelist
- Establishing the Vision
- Product / Release Roadmaps
- Setting Stakeholder Expectations
- Business Case & ROI
- Measurement
- Supporting Marketing & Sales
- Engaging Customers & Feedback

(1)
Product
Management

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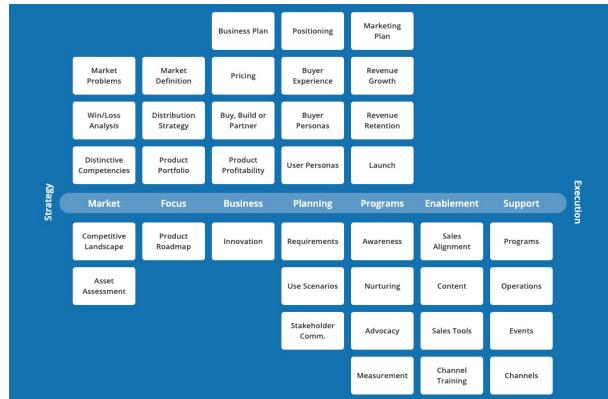
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Framework

- Often I speak in terms of this Quadrant as being – Outwardly Focused
- Pragmatic Marketing Framework
- <https://www.pragmaticmarketing.com/framework>



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Quadrant 2 Project Management

- Chartering
- Short & Longer Term Planning
- Release Management
- Expectations Management & Communication
- X-functional Dependencies
- Milestones
- Risk Mitigation
- Regulatory
- Budgeting

(2)
Project Management

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Product Backlog

A Tapestry that Includes Threads for...

Things to do...

- Features
- Value increments
- Architecture
- Design
- Process
- Quality
- Testing

In a Context-Based fashion...



- Deployment
- Regulatory
- Dependency
- Risk
- Feedback
- Customer timing
- Tempo

...Guiding us towards customer value

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Quadrant 3

Leadership

- Vision & Mission
- Organizational Alignment
- Managing Expectations
- Protecting/Trusting The Team
- Balancing the Work
- Value-Driven, Quality-Driven
- Strengths-Based
- Vulnerable – Asking for Help
- Story-telling (out/inward)

(3)
Leadership

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5 Scrum Values



1. Commitment
2. Focus
3. Openness
4. Respect
5. Courage

Often applied to the Scrum team.

What about their application to the Scrum product ecosystem leadership team – what part do YOU play?

<https://guntherverheyen.com/2013/05/03/theres-value-in-the-scrum-values/>



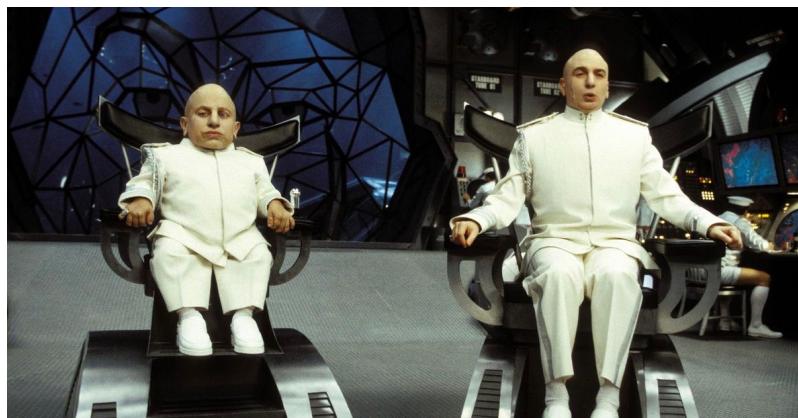
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Establishing a “Mini-Me” Team



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Quadrant 4 Business Analysis

- Requirements, the “Ask”
- Personas & User Stories
- Acceptance Criteria
- Done & Ready
- Look-ahead & Spikes
- Confirmation & Sign-off
- Backlog Refinement:
 - Clarification
 - Slicing & Sizing
 - Prioritization

(4)
Business
Analysis

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Not Rushing... Allowing for Emergence!

- Writing Stories @ 20% clarity
- Emerging stories within the sprint
- Effectively looking ahead
- Sufficient Research Spikes
- Experimenting
 - Prototyping
 - Mock-ups
 - Paper prototypes
- MVP vs. Earliest Testable/Usable/Lovable
- Willingness to Pivot



<https://blog.crisp.se/2016/01/25/henrikniberg/making-sense-of-mvp>

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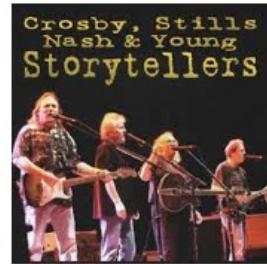


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Storytelling

Storytelling, Conversations, Narrative, Visualization, Shared Vision



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Now Balance Your Quadrants 10% increments



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The 5th Quadrant Self

- Self-care - Balance
- Self-awareness
- Personal Growth & Learning
- Personal Happiness
- Fulfilled & Trusted
- Encouraged & Engaged
- Emotionally Intelligent
- Relationship Builder

(5)
Product Owner -
Self

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Keys to “Good”

- Nobody can fulfill all aspects of the role
 - Particularly at-Scale
- Ask for...Help
- Establish...Partnerships
- Trust...Your Team
- Empower...Yourself
- Engage...Customers
- Deliver...Value
- Grow...Yourself



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Keys to “Good”

Healthy Balance across all 4-Quadrants + 1



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Happiness... a post by Len Lagestee

1. They are immersed with their customers;
2. They have the time and space to be visionary and creative;
3. They have true ownership over their product;
4. They are receiving meaningful feedback about the performance of their products;
5. They have a positive working relationship with their Scrum Master;
6. They have an even better relationship with technical leads and designers;
7. They are proud of what the team is delivering;
8. They have embraced their constraints;
9. And, they are keeping themselves healthy.

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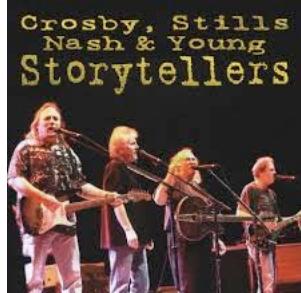


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Putting the “STORY” Back in the User Story



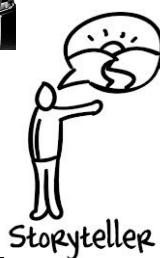
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Storytellers



Harry Chapin –
Taxi

Billy Joel –
Piano Man



Jim Croce – You
Don't Mess
Around with Jim



Harry Chapin –
Cats in the
Cradle



Tracy
Chapman –
Fast Car

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Outline

- Intro
- The Leader's Guide to Storytelling – Stephen Denning
- Storytelling Techniques
- Examples
- Workshop Storytelling
- Close

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User Story Construct

As a <role>

I want <system behavior>

So that I realize <some business value>

**And can see that it does <example>

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User Stories

- 3 Parts of a story, 3-C's by Ron Jeffries
 - **Card, Conversation, and Confirmation**
- Cards are *intentionally vague or incomplete* in order to foster conversation and an emergent solution
- Confirmation (Acceptance Tests) are the specific things required to consider the story 'done' or acceptable to our customer

High

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As traveler I want to get directions between two points, so I can get to my destination

- Verify I can enter addresses in all 50 states
- Verify directions can cross state boundaries
- Verify that directions are within +/- 5% mileage of MapQuest
 - Verify that addresses can be swapped for return
 - Verify that invalid addresses are handled w/error message

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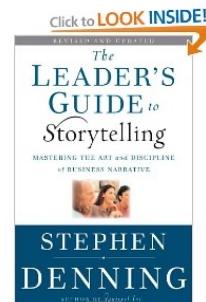


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Story Telling Model Stephen Denning

- The Leader's Guide to Storytelling published in 2005. Author of Squirrel Inc.
- Similarities to The Story Factor, but with a leadership and more in-depth focus.
- Denning has gone on to become immersed in innovation, leadership reinvention, and agile methods.



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8 Narrative Patterns

Stephen Denning

1. Motivate Others to Action
 - ❑ *Using narrative to ignite action and implement new ideas*
2. Build Trust in You
 - ❑ *Using narrative to communicate who you are*
3. Build Trust in your Company
 - ❑ *Using narrative to build your brand*
4. Transmit your Values
 - ❑ *Using narrative to instill organizational values*



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8 Narrative Patterns

Stephen Denning

5. Getting Others Working Together
 - ❑ *Using narrative to get things done collaboratively*
6. Share Knowledge
 - ❑ *Using narrative to transmit knowledge and understanding*
7. Tame the Grapevine
 - ❑ *Using narrative to neutralize gossip and rumor*
8. Create and Share Your Vision
 - ❑ *Using narrative to lead people into the future*



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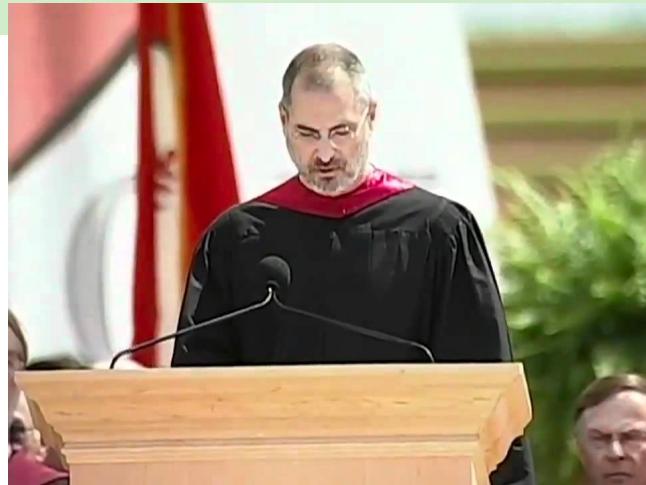


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Doing what you love...



<https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/>

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Basic Framework Still quite effective...

- Tell them what you're about to tell them
- Tell them
- Tell them what you just told them
- Oreo Cookie Model (sandwich)
- From a Planning and a Strategy perspective, consider:
 - **Opening Moves**
 - **Middle Game**
 - **End Game**



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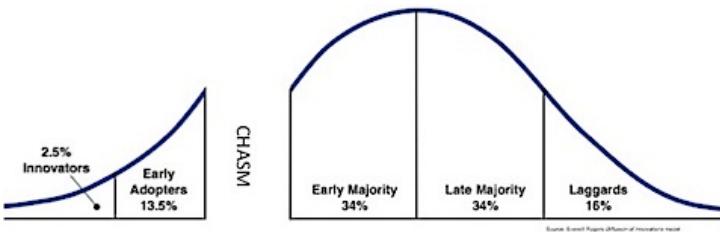
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The Pareto Principal Crossing the Chasm

- Communicate mostly to the 80%
- Communicate mostly to the Early Adopters and the Majority
- Tailor your message to these folks; reach out to their interests, connecting to them



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Connecting to Your Audience

- Reference their perspectives
- Reference their context
- What would you want to hear IF you were in their shoes
- What sorts of history relates to your topic

- Walk about, make eye contact
- Talk about what you'd like to help the audience do, how you'd like to serve them
- Keep the Servant Leadership mindset in mind throughout

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Goals & Objectives

- You can't force collaboration. You can encourage it towards specific expectations surrounding Goals & Objectives...
 - Major initiative
 - Major project
 - Major new methodology
 - Challenging new technology
 - Quarterly / Annual goal-setting
 - Connecting alignment to the top-line strategies
- We're all being measured together



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Clarifying & Listening



- Were you listening?
- Play it back to me...what were the key points?
- What do you think will be the most challenging parts of the strategy?
- Is this the right direction? Does anyone see crucial adjustments that need to be made?

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Humor



- Self deprecating humor can be incredibly powerful in stories—particularly as an introductory device
- Share internal stories that are commonly viewed as humorous
- Twist questions around, be playful with your audience
- You don't have to be a comedian; be yourself

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Adding Context



- Add appropriate breadth and depth to the context that folks normally wouldn't have—
 - Risk context
 - Organizational context
 - Impact context
 - Customer context
 - Dependency context
 - Quality context
 - Leadership context
 - Technical context
 - Revenue context

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Visualization



- Try to paint a picture
 - Directionally committed – Burn the ships behind you
- Let pictures do some of your talking for you
- Mine the organization for supportive “pictures”
 - Defect reports, project failures, M&A intentions, success & failure email, metrics, virtually anything that adds to the imagery

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When trying to make a point...



- Let it **emerge**...
- Don't start with it:
 - *This is a story about incredible courage. At the end, you will aspire to be like me*
- Or end with:
 - *And now I expect you all to be like me*
- Allow everyone to come to their own conclusions.
- Of course, you can recount what it means to YOU

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Group-based Storytelling

- Now let's try some practice. We're going to try:
 - First to use a User Story format to communicate a request
 - And then try telling a story to get the same point across
 - You get to pick:
 - Refrigerator, Vacation, Mousetrap,
 - Or something of your own choosing
- Flow
 - 5 minutes for the User Story
 - 10 minutes for the STORY
 - 10 minutes for Debrief

Please get into your role playing, make stuff up, and have fun!

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Product Owners

Increasing Your Situational Awareness



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Scrum Guide

Product Owner Definition

The Product Owner is responsible for maximizing the value of the product and the work of the Development Team. How this is done may vary widely across organizations, Scrum Teams, and individuals.

The Product Owner is the sole person responsible for managing the Product Backlog. Product Backlog management includes:

- Clearly expressing Product Backlog items;
- Ordering the items in the Product Backlog to best achieve goals and missions;
- Optimizing the value of the work the Development Team performs;
- Ensuring that the Product Backlog is visible, transparent, and clear to all, and shows what the Scrum Team will work on next; and,
- Ensuring the Development Team understands the work in the Product Backlog to the level needed.

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Scrum Guide

Product Owner Definition

The Product Owner may do the above work, or have the Development Team do it. However, the Product Owner remains accountable.

The Product Owner is one person, not a committee. The Product Owner may represent the desires of a committee in the Product Backlog, but those wanting to change a Product Backlog item's priority must address the Product Owner.

For the Product Owner to succeed, the entire organization must respect his or her decisions. The Product Owner's decisions are visible in the content and ordering of the Product Backlog. No one can force the Development Team to work from a different set of requirements.

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Scrum Guide

Scrum Master Service to the Product Owner

The Scrum Master serves the Product Owner in several ways, including:

- Ensuring that goals, scope, and product domain are understood by everyone on the Scrum Team as well as possible;
- Finding techniques for effective Product Backlog management;
- Helping the Scrum Team understand the need for clear and concise Product Backlog items;
- Understanding product planning in an empirical environment;
- Ensuring the Product Owner knows how to arrange the Product Backlog to maximize value;
- Understanding and practicing agility; and,
- Facilitating Scrum events as requested or needed.

Scrum Guide, November 2017 version, excerpts from pages 5-6

<http://www.scrum.org/Scrum-Guides>

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4 Quadrants of Product Ownership



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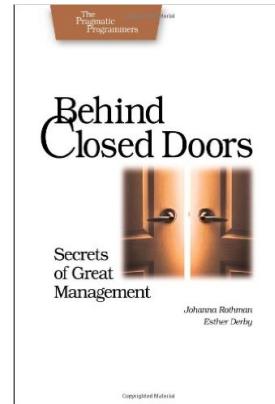


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Giving & Receiving Feedback

- Management “Behind” Closed Doors
 - Rothman & Derby
- Ask first
- Listen deeply (words, context, body language)
 - What wasn’t said that should have been said...
- In agile contexts you have various “opportunities”
 - In the ceremonies – team(s)
 - In group settings
 - Via normal collaborative discussions/messaging
 - Via regularly scheduled 1:1 meetings
- Active observation
- Engage the Scrum Master and PO



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Feedback on Feedback

5 Tips for receiving feedback

- 1) Take it as a gift
- 2) Remain calm
- 3) Get clear understanding
- 4) Compartmentalise
- 5) Review and create next steps



TIPS FOR FEEDBACK

GIVING

Ask the intended recipient beforehand if they are open to feedback

Describe actual and specific behaviours that have been seen (written in the first person)

Allow the recipient time to respond

Discuss together how everyone can learn from the feedback and work towards the desired behaviour

RECEIVING

Take responsibility for feedback

Avoid taking the feedback personally and don't be afraid of appearing vulnerable

Think about what actions you will take on the feedback provided

Respond in a way that is conducive of a frank and constructive discussion



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Other Situational Considerations

- Emotional Intelligence
- Empathy – see it through their eyes, first
- Meet them where they are, not where you want them to be
- Be aware of and control – your Baggage
 - In context
 - Historical
- Be crisp & clear with your language
- Walk your talk, model the behavior you want to see
- Don't assume understanding: Shu-Ha-Ri

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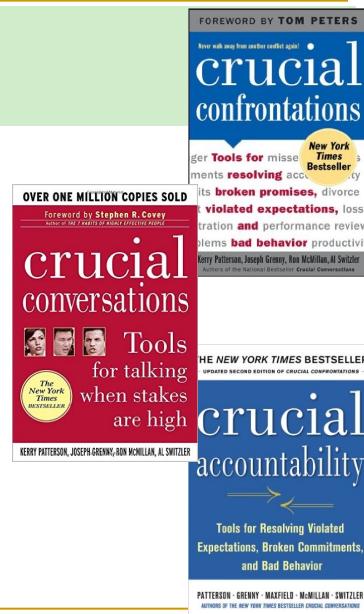


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Crucial Conversations

- In agile contexts, leadership feedback is essential
 - Sprint & Release reviews
 - 1:1 meetings
 - Real-time opportunities
- I have a view that Pareto Principle rules here in that only 20% of leaders are willing to give 80% of the feedback
- And it needs to be honest...



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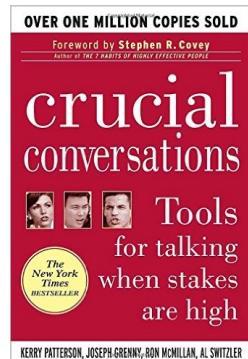


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Crucial Conversations 7 Key Steps



- 1) **Start with the heart**
Open minded, empathetic, and positive intent
- 2) **Agree on a mutual purpose**
Goals, clarity, roles, outcomes
- 3) **Make it safe**
Listening, clarifying, observing body language; Intentions
- 4) **Stay in dialogue**
Keep talking, don't shut down or trigger, fully engage
- 5) **Don't get hooked by emotion**
Name it, acknowledge it, don't allow it to dominate
- 6) **Separate facts from story**
Allow feelings, stories, perceptions; but focus on / return to facts
- 7) **Agree a clear action plan**

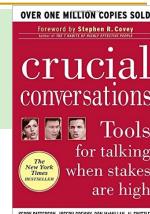
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The “One Thing”



When it comes to risky, controversial, and emotional conversations, skilled people find a way to get all relevant information out into the open.

That's it. At the core of every successful conversation lies the free flow of relevant information. People openly and honestly express their opinions, share their feelings, and articulate their theories.

They willingly and capably share their views, even when their ideas are controversial or unpopular.

-- Crucial Conversations: Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler

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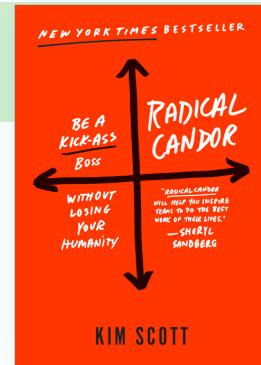


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Radical Candor

- Published Radical Candor in late 2016 by Kim Scott
- Central story from Google w/Sheryl Sandberg
- Intro video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yODalLQ2IM>



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A Moral Obligation

Starting from a position of relationship and caring personally,

You tell people what you,
really think
So that either...



People don't always tell you what they are thinking. They just see to it that you don't advance in life.

— Anthony Hopkins —

AZ QUOTES

*Your thinking can change
Or their thinking can
change*

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Radical Candor

GUIDANCE =	PRAISE	CRITICISM
GET	F	F
GIVE	F	F
ENCOURAGE	F	F

HIP-tool

- Stay humble
- Be helpful
- Immediate
- In person
- In private (criticism), in public (praise)
- Don't personalize

■ *Practice giving feedback - don't hold it in*
 ■ *Don't dish it out if you can't take it. In fact, demonstrate your ability to take radical candor*
 ■ *Deeply care*

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Situational Conversations A Simple Model

Opening Moves	Middle Game	End Game
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission • Exploration • Clarification • Questions • Listening • Direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening / brainstorming • Options • Strategies • Ownership • Actions • Narrowing / planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure • Next steps • Action plans • Who does what • Repeat, confirmation • Schedule

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Negotiating the Rules of Engagement

- Start with...
 - How do you want to receive constructive feedback, radical candor?
 - How to handle it if you get defensive, stonewall, or otherwise shutdown?
 - How do you want to receive bad news?
 - Balanced feedback
 - Caring personally
- How would your “boss” like to handle the above?
 - Protocol?



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Speaking (Up) Truth to Power



- Grace, API
- Energy & effort
- Courage
- Safety
- Relationship
- Empathy & curiosity
- Simon Sinek Video:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/simonsinek/videos/how-do-you-speak-truth-to-power/403242987075497/>
- Leaders need to...
 - Bring humility
 - Invite feedback
 - Show curiosity and interest
 - Provide safety
 - React to feedback
 - Do something with the feedback
 - Power dynamic awareness
- Megan Reitz TED talk:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq475Us1KXg>

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Now onto the situations...



- Review the handout
- Either individually, in a pair, or a small group; pick a situation
- Take 7 minutes to explore it
- We'll debrief the observations, learnings, approaches as a group
- We'll do it again...trying to cover 3 situations

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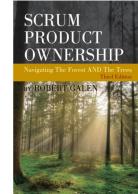
Product Ownership Assessments *Another dimension of “Good”*

- Comparative Agility – Product Owner PI assessment
 - Free with CSPO from Scrum Alliance, check on your member dashboard
- Lean Agile Intelligence – Product Owner assessment
 - Based on my Agility Journey Index work
- Agile Journey Index – Product Ownership assessment
 - 20 areas for

The Agile Journey Index - Product Ownership Extensions

AJI - Agile Journey Index

Product Owner Extensions



Author: Bob Galen
Version: 3.0
Last Updated: March 2019



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Final Thoughts... Questions? Insights? Sharing?

Please consider taking the AJI –
PO assessment @home

Thank You!



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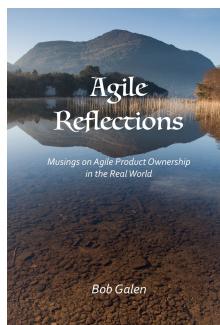


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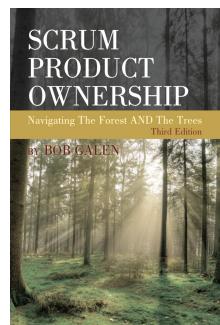
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Scrum Product Ownership, 3'rd Edition PO - PDF eBooks

<https://leanpub.com/agilereflectionsforagileproductowners>



Discount: \$19.95 eCopies -
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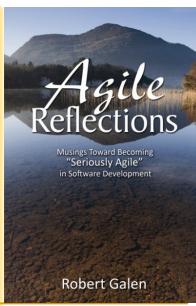
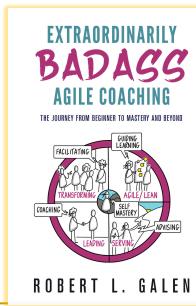
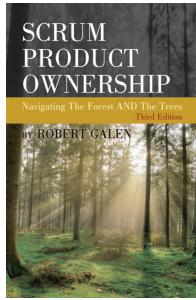
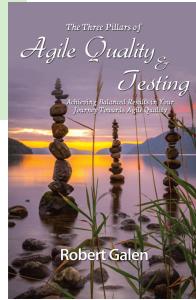
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President,
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