

WHAT IS A SCRUM MASTER?

## SCRUM MASTER

The Scrum Master is a role in Scrum – an Agile Framework. As a member of the Scrum Team, they're responsible for the effectiveness of Scrum. Ultimately, this makes them accountable for Scrum and the guardrails established by managers that underpin how high quality outcomes are produced.

## WHAT IS A SCRUM MASTER?

The Scrum Master is a role in Scrum – an Agile Framework for optimising the delivery of products. In most organisations, when someone is given this responsibility, they are concurrently given the authority necessary for success. Scrum Masters are in a different situation.

The Scrum Master is accountable for establishing Scrum as defined in the Scrum Guide. They do this by helping everyone understand Scrum theory and practice, both within the Scrum Team and the organisation.

## ACCOUNTABILITIES OF SCRUM MASTER



### Serve the Scrum Team

The Scrum Master coaches team members in self-management, helping them to solve problems regarding delivery and supporting each other to do so, without telling them how to turn their work into an Increment of Done. Often, this involves helping the team to be cross-functional rather than working in their capability silos by encouraging collaborative work and pairing.

Should the team face impediments to achieving Sprint Goals, creating and making their Increment potentially releasable, or meeting the Definition of Done, a Scrum Master supports the team to remove those impediments themselves. Should the team be unable to address the impediments, the Scrum Master then acts to escalate the problem to someone with the authority to take action.

The Scrum Master also ensures that all Scrum events take place and are positive, productive, and kept within the timebox. When Scrum events don't occur, transparency suffers and the risk of delivery failure increases.



### Serve the Product Owner

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

- Helping find techniques for effective Product Goal definition and Product Backlog management.
- Helping the Scrum Team understand the need for clear and concise Product Backlog items.
- Helping establish empirical product planning for a complex environment.

- Facilitating stakeholder collaboration as requested or needed.



## Serve the Organisation

The Scrum Master serves the organisation in several ways, including:

- Leading, training, and coaching the organisation in its Scrum adoption.
- Planning and advising Scrum implementations within the organisation.
- Helping employees and stakeholders understand and enact an empirical approach for complex work.
- Removing barriers between stakeholders and Scrum Teams.

### KEY AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY



## Facilitating events

Events in Scrum support empiricism – inspecting and adapting.

- Sprint Planning: Inspect the Product Backlog and adapt the Sprint Backlog, create the Sprint Goal.
- Daily Scrum: Inspect progress toward the Sprint Goal and adapt the Sprint Backlog.
- Sprint Review: Inspect the Increment of Done work and adapt the Product Backlog.
- Retrospective: Inspect the Scrum Team and create actionable items for the next Sprint to improve the way the team works, including people, process and tools.



## Work as a member of the Scrum Team

- The Scrum Master is an important part of the Scrum Team and has critical working relationships with the Product Owner and with Developers.
- The best solutions emerge from self-managing teams. Help the whole team build products around motivated individuals working as a single team, and give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done.
- The Product Owner is accountable for the work done by the Developers, not the Scrum Master.
- No one is allowed to tell the team to work from a different set of outcomes.



## Work closely with the Product Owner

- Work closely with the Product Owner to help cause change that increases the productivity of the Scrum Team so they can deliver more to stakeholders with higher quality, less effort and less waste.

- Work closely with the Product Owner to coach stakeholders to improve their interactions with the Scrum Team to support empiricism, improve transparency, and increase their level of interaction at Sprint Review.

## KEY OUTCOMES



- The Scrum Team uses empiricism to inspect and adapt their work and create transparency.
- The Scrum Team uses metrics to improve the effectiveness of their work and its quality.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS



- Take responsibility for the effective use of Scrum. A good Scrum Master supports the whole team to self-organise, self-manage and be cross-functional. A Scrum Master doesn't delegate responsibility for Scrum's effective use to others.
- Explain to your stakeholders why you're delivering using Agile. Agile isn't a hype, nor is it something you 'do'. It's a mindset. It's a set of values and principles which guide you. Scrum is the framework that will help them structure feedback and see results early and often.
- Simplicity – the art of maximising the amount of work not done – is essential to “building the right product” and “building it right”.

## COMMON OBSTACLES TO AVOID



- Don't remove impediments for the team. Help them work out how to remove the impediments themselves. This helps you avoid becoming the “Scrum Mum”.
- Don't become the team's secretary. Meeting invites, taking minutes, updating the board quickly turn you from a coach to an administrative assistant.
- Don't use the same pattern to facilitate Scrum's events. It's the easiest way to make your Scrum practice stale and boring.
- When you start out, you might find the team is working in functional silos. This is normal, but don't let it become the norm. Work to create a truly cross-functional team. It will take a while, but productivity and quality will increase when the team achieves this milestone.

## ABOUT ZEN EX MACHINA

Zen Ex Machina (ZXM) provides independent and objective agile coaching and consulting, founded in organisational psychology, culture and change management, to help leaders succeed in their organisations. Ranging in scope from a short strategy session to full agile operating models, ZXM services connect you directly with experienced, certified agile practitioners who apply expert insight to your specific strategic and operational challenges.

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