ZEN EX MACHINA
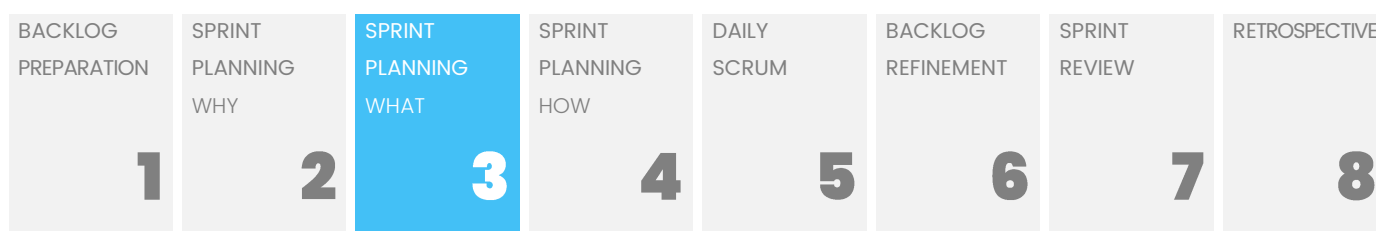
SPRINT PLANNING – WHAT

Best practices for supporting agile teams to be self-managing and cross-functional.

SPRINT PLANNING – *WHAT*

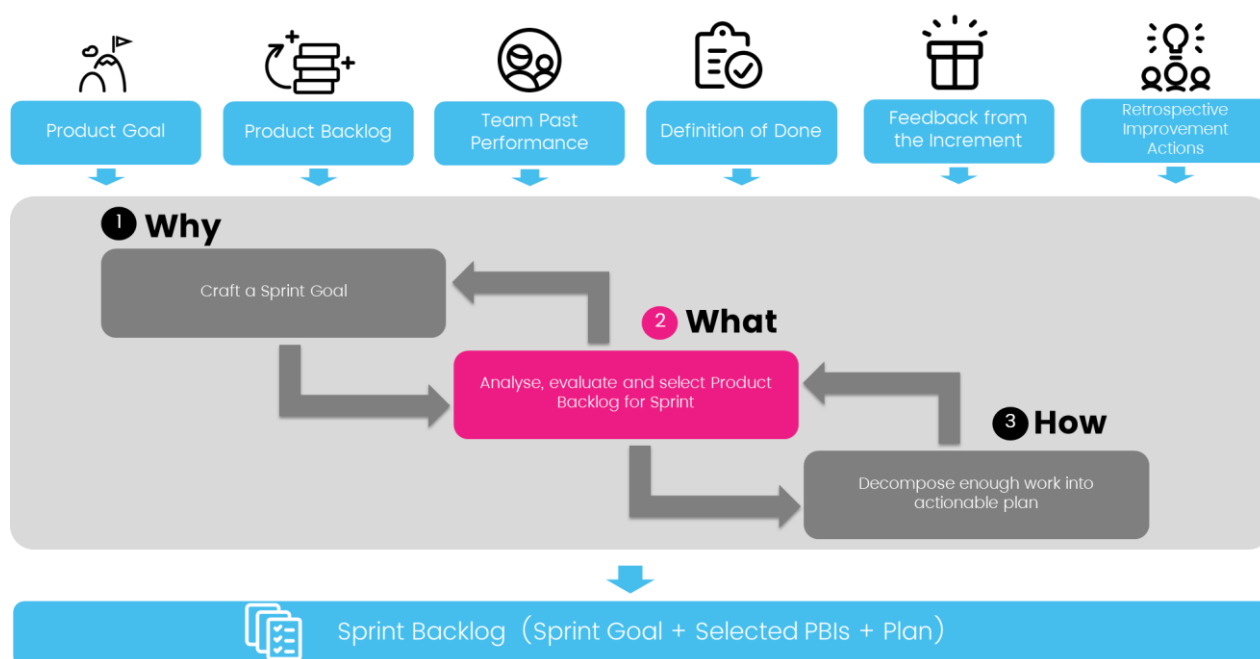| BACKLOG PREPARATION	SPRINT PLANNING WHY	SPRINT PLANNING WHAT	SPRINT PLANNING HOW	DAILY SCRUM	BACKLOG REFINEMENT	SPRINT REVIEW	RETROSPECTIVE
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Sprint Planning initiates the Sprint by laying out the work to be performed for the Sprint. Topic two of Sprint Planning addresses what work can be Done this Sprint. Selecting how much can be completed within a Sprint may be challenging. However, the more the Developers know about their past performance, their upcoming capacity, and their Definition of Done, the more confident they will be in their Sprint forecasts.

PURPOSE

Like every event in Scrum, Sprint Planning is all about empiricism. Its purpose is for the Scrum Team to inspect the Product Backlog and to create the Sprint Backlog. The Sprint Backlog represents the plan to achieve the Sprint Goal and to create a potentially releasable Increment of work.

Time-box: Maximum of eight hours for a one-month Sprint for Sprint Planning. For shorter Sprints, the event is usually shorter.

Product Goal — Product Backlog — Team Past Performance — Definition of Done — Feedback from the Increment — Retrospective Improvement Actions

❶ **Why** — Craft a Sprint Goal

❷ **What** — Analyse, evaluate and select Product Backlog for Sprint

❸ **How** — Decompose enough work into actionable plan

Sprint Backlog (Sprint Goal + Selected PBIs + Plan)

WHO ATTENDS?

Role
Scrum Team – Product Owner, Scrum Master, Developers (people in the team developing the product)
Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)
Interested stakeholders

KEY ARTEFACTS

- **Product Backlog** - The Product Backlog is an emergent, ordered list of what is needed to improve the product and achieve the product's goal. It is the single source of work undertaken by the Scrum Team. Product Backlog items that can be Done by the Scrum Team within one Sprint are deemed ready for selection in a Sprint Planning event.

AGENDA

Developers

- Discuss the Product Backlog items with the Product Owner and any Acceptance Criteria.
- Estimate each of the Product Backlog items using techniques like Planning Poker.
- Discuss any points of divergence in relation to the estimate of effort for each Product Backlog items.
- Break-down the Product Backlog items into smaller pieces, through collaboration with the Product Owner, to ensure that each item can be committed to for completion within a single Sprint.
- Communicate to the Product Owner any consequence relating to what is being asked for and its rank-order for delivery, including any technical, design or business debt that may be incurred as a result.

SMEs and other interested stakeholders

- May participate through prior negotiation with the Scrum Master and the Product Owner. This helps increase transparency of the work to be Done this Sprint.

Scrum Master

- Supports and encourages self-management within the guide rails of Scrum's rules
- Supports the discussion so that the Team sufficiently understands the outcome of each of the items and its value to the Product Owner.
- Encourages the Team to use industry best-practice practices for breaking down items into smaller "vertical" slices.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Developers understand what is required by the Product Owner and how the work and the Sprint Goal will contribute to the Product Goal.
- The value, needs, outcomes of Product Backlog items are sufficiently clarified.
- Developers understand the order in which Product Backlog items should be delivered.
- Developers are empowered to discuss how they will approach completion of the Product Backlog items and create a plan for the delivery of the outcome the Product Owner is seeking.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **No surprises** – The Team should already be familiar with the Product Backlog items to be discussed in Sprint Planning.
- **Granularity** – The top 20% of the items in the Product Backlog should be of sufficient granularity to be able to immediately commence the Sprint. The items should be small enough to be delivered to the Definition of Done within the timebox of the Sprint.
- **Ranked** – The Product Backlog should be ranked according to value.
- **Estimated** – The Team should have already worked with the Product Owner to estimate all of the Product Backlog items. Sprint Planning should produce final estimations based on any last-minute changes, emerging risks, or new information that has come to hand.
- **Three Cs** – The Product Backlog items should conform to the "Three Cs" (card, conversation and commitment).
- **Consequence** – Discussion between the Product Owner and the Team should create an understanding of the "Fourth C" – consequence – including dependencies between items, their rank order for delivery, and any rework that may result.

COMMON OBSTACLES TO AVOID

- The Product Owner comes to the event without having any clear objectives for the Sprint.
- The Product Backlog isn't ranked by value.
- The Product Owner decides how many items the Team will deliver.
- The Team wastes time talking about how they will deliver the Product Backlog item, and its solution, rather than being focussed on eliciting sufficient information as to what it is.
- The Team asks for a Design Spike when they already know the what as well as how they will complete it. If the what is well understood, design tasks should be part of the estimation of complexity to produce and deliver the item.
- The Product Owner assigns/engages individual Team members to ensure everyone has sufficient work to keep them busy for the Sprint.
- The Product Owner stops discussing Product Backlog items once PO feels the Team has sufficient items to work on and asks for a verbal commitment for its deliver.
- The Product Owner runs the meeting as the Team's manager.

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.