

CSM Practicing Certification Renewal Assessment

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Scrum depends on inspect and adapt mechanisms of process control to manage the complexity of projects. For inspection to work, everyone must know what is being made visible. To implement the Scrum process, such regulating mechanisms as defined roles, involvement versus commitment, time-boxes, and regular cycles are used.

1. Describe one project on which you have used Scrum over the last twelve months.

- Purpose - what business goal was the project intended to deliver?

This scrum was unique in that it included a multitude and variety of gift card applications for many clients. The applications had to be developed and delivered in a short period of time. The business goal achieved was to meet our client's expectations and deliver their gift card applications prior to holiday season.

- Length - what was the duration of the project?

The project's duration was 5 months.

- Cost - what were the budgeted and actual costs?

The budget provided for 7 team resources to deliver 23 applications. The team exceeded expectations and was able to have additional work brought into the backlog. The team not only delivered all planned backlog items but developed and implemented an additional 16 applications for a total of 39.

- Value - what were the projected benefits and actual (if measured) benefits?

The projected benefits were that the team would be able to launch 23 new gift card applications for 16 clients prior to season and increase revenue. The team exceeded the original goal and implemented additional programs for more clients.

- Size - how many people were on the project team(s), how were they organized into teams?

The team totaled 7, there were 4 developers and 3 QA testers. Also, there was one scrum master and one product owner. During each sprint planning meeting the team members discussed who would be taking on which backlog item. For each task a developer paired up with a QA resource and they worked closely together during the sprint. When we left the meeting we not only had the sprint goal defined but each team member had their own goals set.

- Teams – The team was cross-functional and self-organizing. The team was also collocated in an open space.
- Initiation - how was the project initiated? How was the team trained to use the Scrum process?

The project was initiated through account development and the product development groups. Some of the team members were previously trained and had previously participated on scrum teams. Team members that had not been trained were sent to scrum training after kick-off.

- Reporting - how did you report progress to management and the customers?

Progress was reported every morning in the daily scrum meeting. Account Managers were invited to attend this meeting and were then able to report to the clients on a daily basis. Account managers were also copied on emails and communications involving their clients. Demos and reviews were presented at the end of each sprint cycle. Management was kept informed by scheduled presentations and updates from the Product Owner.

- Change - what difficulties were surfaced by Scrum that had to be resolved? How were these resolved?

Scrum surfaced for us the impact and delays that result due to external dependencies as well as collisions that often occurred with other teams. Based on this knowledge and previous experience a proactive approach was taken at the beginning of the scrum. Meetings were held early with the external groups that the team would need to depend on and our goals and needs were presented. The tasks were discussed and scheduled early in order to align with the necessary groups. Regarding collisions, weekly team collision mapping meetings were held with the scrum masters and technical leads from each team. When an upcoming collision was identified, daily meetings were held with the respective teams and we worked together through these issues. As a result, collisions were minimal. It is more advantageous for the team if obstacles are prevented.

- Management - what was the previous role of the ScrumMaster? Who took on the role of Product Owner? To what degree were they successful in fulfilling their roles?

I was an experienced, certified ScrumMaster who prior to this project was the scrum master 2 other large scale scrums for 2 major clients. Prior to becoming a scrum master I had many years of project management experience. I believe I was successful in fulfilling my role.

The role of product owner was filled by a Director from our product group. This was her first assignment as product owner and she had previously provided support to scrums as a subject matter expert. She was very successful in fulfilling her role and this contributed greatly to the success of the team.

- Engineering - what software engineering practices or environment had to be changed?

No changes were necessary to software engineering practices or development and testing environments. What was enforced from the beginning was code reviews 100% of the time. We also held meetings with external groups and had collision mapping meetings.

- Stabilization - for how long did the software have to be stabilized before it could be released? How did you structure this stabilization process?

Since the team worked at a very quick pace with frequent implementations most of the time the code was released in less than a day. We had previously coordinated with the external team that supported code migration and as a result we did not experience any problems with stabilization.

- Success - to what degree was the project successful? To what degree was the Scrum process instrumental in the success of the project?

The project was a complete success. The team and the scrum process were recognized by the company at the quarterly meeting. The scrum process was a key component to the success of this project and enabled the team to exceed expectations.

- Scrum Process - to what degree was the Scrum process implemented "out of the box?" To what degree did you have to modify the Scrum process for this project? For each modification, how did you formulate the modification so that the basic inspect/adapt mechanisms continued to function? What parts of Scrum couldn't be implemented, or failed, and why?

The scrum process was followed very closely. The only change was the length of the iterations being modified to 2 weeks (10 days) versus 30 days. This did not inhibit the inspect/adapt mechanisms and the team was able to function effectively. Scrum planning, Sprint planning, daily Scrum meetings, Sprint review, Sprint retrospectives and implementations all took place. The adjustment to the length of the iteration served to better support the needs of our clients and frequent releases.

2. How do you cause the accuracy of Product Backlog estimates to improve? To what degree does their accuracy matter?

- Accuracy of Product Backlog estimates can improve if a few steps are taken in advance. Assess the skill set and skill level of each team member when providing initial high level sizing. It is also important to analyze historical data to assess our accuracy and improve our estimating abilities. Bring in SME's as needed to provide overview, demos etc. Provide mentoring as needed to assist with learning curves. If the backlog item is new and unfamiliar, be sure the required analysis and design activities take place prior to decomposing the tasks and the time allocated for these activities needs to be included in the estimates.

- Accuracy does matter in order to provide clear expectations for the customer, whether internal or external. Accurate estimates are relied upon for business planning, budgeting, marketing campaigns, other team(s) or client dependencies, and accuracy supports a work life balance. Daily resizing and communication via the daily scrum meeting and sprint demo are critical.

3. How do you cause the accuracy of what a team commits to for a Sprint to what the team actually delivers?

- Capacity planning, determine the teams available hours for the upcoming sprint. Be sure to account for planned meetings, days off etc. Decompose each back log item based on what is fully required. Remember to include analysis, design, documentation, etc tasks as needed. Consider external dependencies when determining what can be accomplished during the sprint and include duration times.

4. What metrics do you use to track the development process? Which metrics have been changed, removed, or newly implemented as a result of using Scrum?

- The product backlog, sprint backlog and burndown chart are all used to track the development process. All of these tools are newly implemented as a result of scrum.

5. What type of training, resources, or tools would best help you successfully employ Scrum in the future?

- Weekly scrum master team meetings. It would be supportive to have the more senior scrum masters provide mentoring support to new scrum masters as they are working through their learning curve. Building up a strong team of self-managed scrum masters would support reinforcement of the process within the teams. Quarterly Scrum Master retrospective's as well as product owner retrospectives would be helpful to maintain and improve the process.

6. (Optional) Scrum and Extreme Programming are sometimes used together. What must be considered when this is done?