

CSM Practicing Certification Renewal Assessment

Name: Barbara A. Wilders
Email: baw1310@hotmail.com
Date: December 09, 2005

Scrum depends on the 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.
Describe:

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

Combined the four current tools that a 24/7 Customer Service Unit utilized into one GUI and enhance the GUI to include the manual research processes that Customer Service Representatives perform. This project will reduce the talk duration time and enhance system response time and performance.

- Length - what was the duration of the project?

The project duration time was eleven months (Nineteen Sprints).

- Cost - what were the budgeted and actual costs?

Budgeted costs were \$600K. During the 18th Sprint of the project the team was advised we were opening an additional customer service unit out side to the United States, causing the team to order additional hardware and install the hardware to support the new facility. The final actual cost was \$100,000.00 over the original budget.

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

It would reduce the number of tools the CSR would use to answer a cardholder call, decrease call/talk duration time with a cardholder, increase the number of calls a CSR can handle in a shift and a decrease in the system response time would save the company a projected \$300,000.00 the first three months, after all the CSR's were trained and using the system. Increase savings would be seen if this tool was released to other internal departments within the company and additional revenue would be generated as the tool was licensed to clients to be used in their own customer service units. Shortly after the project was completed and before it was completely rolled out to all of the Customer Service areas I left the company. I know that the GUI was successfully rolled into production and was being used by a majority of the CSR's at the time of

my departure.

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

The project was worked by a single team. The core team consisted of the following:

2 - Front end developers

1- Back office developer

1- QA person

1- Conglomerate (Temporary special skills) person. This role was a rotating spot on the team which was or could be filled by various people over the course of the project. (Accounting, DBAs, Data Center, etc.)

In addition the following personnel were assigned as Chickens to the team:

1- Scrum Master

1- Product Owner

- Teams - were the teams cross-functional and self-organizing? Were the teams collocated in an open space? Were the teams physically separated within one location, or located in more than one physical location?

The team was cross functional and self-organized. This team experienced various moves although they were always collocated. The spaces they collocated in ranged from a very small area fondly called the “chicken coop” by the team. The “chicken coop” had a built in table with desk tops for the team. And the Scrum Master at that time was located in a cubical in another building. Then the team moved to a larger area fondly called the Rooster’s Den. This area was much larger and open space. The team was then provided with stationary desks, lap tops but round tables that served as a meeting area and focal point for the team. During this time I was assigned as the Scrum Master and was collocated with the team.

As indicated above this team experienced several physical moves and three changes in Scrum Masters until I was assigned in the third month of the project.

- Initiation - how was the project initiated? How was the team trained to use the Scrum process?

Prior to this project being started utilizing Scrum Techniques, the company attempted unsuccessfully for three years to implement a tool for the Customer Service Area.

Each team member attended a half day (required) Scrum Overview session. In addition the Scrum Master attended a mandatory two day training session for Scrum Masters. Product Owners attended a half day training session on Product Owner role as well as the overview.

Additional information was provided to personnel, i.e. recommended reading, etc.

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

The product backlog and sprint backlog were posted in the team room. In addition the team tasks

for each sprint were posted. The product owner attended daily stand up meetings and was aware of the daily status of the project. Product Owner also attended the demo and the retrospective. The most important document of all for reporting, the "Burndown Chart", was posted daily in the center of the room and in the document library.

Senior Management was always welcomed to attend daily meetings and visit the team room at any time. A presentation was provided periodical to the Senior Management team by the Product Owner and Scrum Master. The Scrum Master provided information on the team's ability to adapt to Scrum process and how it self organized. The Scrum Master was responsible for showing that the Product Backlog and Sprint backlog were being maintained in the tools provided. The Product Owner fielded questions from Senior Management on the product backlog and budget.

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

This particular team did not have any major difficulties with the Scrum Process. Since the company had been practicing Scrum for awhile the challenges of change had already started to be adapted as corporate culture. Scrum had taken hold and if your project was not doing Scrum, people were asking why you are not doing Scrum.

Towards the end of the project the team was told they would be moving again, this move caused the team to become disgruntled (not with Scrum) but they felt the company was going back to "Command and Control" and not living one of the steps of the Scrum. The team was collocated but not as a team, other teams would be moving on to the same floor with this team and several other established teams on this floor. Each person was given a desk with wheels which made them more mobile only if you had a lap top, the mobility was still not easy even with a lap top since the number of people they moved into the area went from twenty people to about sixty people. Teams lost the focal point of their space; they lost the ability to meet in their team area. The set up of the area was sewing factory style hence the nick name of space was "Sweat Shop" or "Scrumatria." This move created the feeling that Senior Management did not care about the working conditions and traditional "Control and Command" was back.

This move occurred with only two more sprints left in our project. The team decided they were going to continue with Scrum and see this project to completion with Scrum Techniques. And move on to other teams with the attitude they will do what ever it takes to keep Scrum alive because they knew it worked. The team resolved not to let management's physical environment decisions stand in the way of their beliefs in the process.

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

My previous role was a Manager of an internal department before I became a Scrum Master. The day to day Product Owner is a Supervisor of the call center who had previously performed the functions of a CSR for a number of years, who was empowered by his Vice President to be the day to day product owner. The Vice President was updated on a regular schedule and reported to Senior Management.

I feel I was very successful in my role of Scrum Master of this team as I was assigned by Senior Management to be a mentor to new and existing Scrum Masters. In addition I was given several other Scrum Teams concurrently.

The day to day Product Owner was a great choice because he was very clear as to what was needed and had the ability to pull in current users to help with design and information, so that the team built a product that was useable and efficient at the end of the project.

The Vice President Product Owner did an excellent job in his role to provide funding for the

project and ensure that information was communicated to Senior Management. He also assisted with taking down road blocks when requested.

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

Several global challenges with our engineering practices and environment were exposed as we implemented Scrum Techniques; they included additional code review, coordination of build activities and updating of various environments. Scrum Techniques did not create or cause these challenges, it exposed them.

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

The product could not be used by the end user until it was completed in its entirety as determined by the product owner. The team and the product owner agreed to release code into production after every third sprint, thus allowing for code to be stable in QA, then release into production and then tested again. With each release, testing was performed on the entire application in production by a team of end users, ensuring at the time of release to the entire call center, it was a stable quality product.

- 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 very successful within a 7 month time frame. The teams delivered and released a product that an end user could be trained on and use to perform their job within one GUI. The GUI was being used by CSR's either the day of or the day after they were trained. In the months following the release the team had only been called upon once for a production issue, the result of the production issue was hardware related not code related. It should be noted that the company had been attempting to build and release this product for the past three years, but unsuccessfully, incurring a cost far more than it cost with this team and Scrum Techniques.

I believe Scrum was instrumental in that the team focused on one project. They were collocated and coordinated their work together to get the job done. And the biggest part of the process was the Product Owner was involved in every step of the process and performed his duties in regards to supplying a good product backlog with priorities, attentive to Daily Scrum meetings. The product owner worked with the team to create a tool that worked well because he made decisions when needed and was open to suggestions.

- 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?

As the Scrum Master for this project, and the fact the company had been practicing Scrum Techniques for several months and overall this team enjoyed the process. We did not modify the process other than the changes the company made, for example sprints were two weeks verses thirty days and periodic reporting to the Senior Management team by the Product Owner included the Scrum Master in a formal setting.

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

In regards to this project the initial estimates to the product backlog were based on the previous attempts over the last three years on this project. As the team was formed and the product back log was reviewed with the team the estimates were refined. After several sprints of working with each other and learning how well they were “geling the team reviewed the estimates on the product back log again, and provided a better estimate based on their abilities of working together.

In my opinion the accuracy of the estimate for the product backlog in the first pass over is to help Senior Management determine the number of dollars that will be budgeted for a project. After that, two other reviews of the estimate should be made, one at the time the team is formed so they can provide estimates because they are doing the work. And the second review should occur after the team has a minimum of four sprints completed. My overall opinion - the degree of accuracy for the product backlog is minimal because in the spirit of Scrum, change is welcome and as the product backlog changes so will the estimates. The original estimates do not need to be accurate; they need to be a best guess to get going.

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

With each team the accuracy of what a team commits to for a sprint and what they actually deliver, I have found, changes drastically from the first through the fourth sprint (Our Sprints are two weeks). This time frame allows the time needed to gain experience with each other and material. By the fourth or fifth sprint the team has estimated more accurately what they can successfully deliver.

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?

Prior to the implementation of Scrum we did not utilize any metric to chart our progress on a project. The tools we now use are the Product Backlog, Sprint Backlog and Sprint Burndown Chart.

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

The entire company I believe would benefit from refresher courses or reminders on Scrum, so if they are not involved in a current Scrum project they do not lose the knowledge of Scrum Techniques and Philosophy. The need for continuing education programs for the Scrum Master to assist with team building and team self organization skills.

Senior Management needs to constantly communicate their commitment to Scrum to the employees. Senior Management needs to acknowledge to the company, various team successes and failures with each project.

Senior Management should attend retrospective of the teams so that they can hear first hand the pros and cons that come out of these meetings. If they cannot attend they need to take the time to review the meeting notes. The information that comes out of these meetings are not just beneficial to the team but to the entire company, concerning global issues.

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

N/A

