Chief Technology Office

The Agile Product Owner: Beyond the Books & Classrooms

GSA Tech Talks
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Who is Representing the Business?

If an Agile organization is practicing Scrum and focused on delivering business value, why is there such a deficit of Product Owner representation?

Source: The 2015 State of Scrum Report
Topics

- Understand the **Value & Roles** of the Product Owner

- **Real-world Application** of Certified Scrum Product Owner (CSPO) Training

- Ideas for **Positively Influencing** Team Members

- Suggestions for **Continuous Improvement & Maturity** as a Product Owner

*Adapted from: Presented at the Fall 2016 Techwell: Agile Dev East / Better Software East Conference*
What is a Product Owner?

One of the roles in a **CROSS-FUNCTIONAL, SELF-ORGANIZING SCRUM TEAM**:

- Responsible for communicating **PRODUCT VISION**
- **PRIORITIZE** the Product Backlog & **CLARIFY** requirements for the Team
- **ONE PERSON, NOT** a committee.
- The entire organization must respect his or her decisions (i.e. **EMPOWERED AUTONOMY**)
- Change in Product Backlog item’s priority **MUST ADDRESS THE PRODUCT OWNER**
- **ACCEPT OR REJECT** each product increment & determine whether or not it is “shippable”

Source: [ScrumAlliance](https://www.scrumalliance.org) & [TECH.GSA.GOV](https://tech.gsa.gov)
Who Should Be a Product Owner?

- BA
- PM
- TECH
- PO
Differences in Approach

Focus on **5-Phase Planning**

**Manage** the Project & **Lead** the Team

Adhere to the **PMBOK** Methodology

Communicate **Project Status**

Usually Depend on the **Requirements Gathering** of Others

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**WATERFALL**

- **INITIATING**
- **PLANNING**
- **EXECUTING**
- **MONITORING & CONTROLLING**
- **CLOSING**

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**AGILE**

- **DEFINE**
- **DEVELOP**
- **RELEASE**
- **EVALUATE**
- **ITERATE**

Gather Information **Iteratively**

**Facilitate** the Project & **Develop** the Team

Typically, Business Analyst (By Title)

Communicate the **Product Vision**

**Manage** **Requirements Elicitation Lifecycle**
So, in the Real World...

The Team:
- Drive Product Vision
- Prioritize & Refine Backlog
- Provide Just-in-time Clarification
- Review & Accept Requirements

Stakeholders:
- Understand Needs
- Manage Requirements
- Report Progress
- Acquire & Include Feedback

Customers:
- Deliver the Right / Quality Product
- Fast Delivery to Market
So...

How Do We Continue to Develop?

"You don't herd ducks by chasing them."

~ Mercedes Lackey & James Mallory ~
A Product Owner Should...

- Know Your Value
- Ensure Your Team Gets the Vision
- Build Trust with Your Team
- Manage Stakeholder Requirements
- Find the Best Approach

Value | Vision | Trust | Manage | Support
"Managing bottom-up change is its own art."

~ Kevin Kelly ~

Know Your Value

To Management

- Keep **COMMUNICATION** lines open
- Identify **WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED** for tracking & reporting - then display in an **AGILE FORMAT**!!
- Always **PROTECT THE VISION** - **NEGOTIATE** - **ENSURE VISIBILITY**
Know Your Value

To the Team

PROTECT THE TEAM
Make “side projects” visible!

RELEASE CONTROL
Facilitate, DON’T dictate!

MAKE CONNECTIONS
Break down silos!

OWN RELATIONSHIPS
Communicate & Keep it Positive!
Ensure Your Team Gets the Vision

Connect the Dots

- **EXPLAIN THE “BIG PICTURE”**
  Relate the work to **strategic priority**!

- **BE AVAILABLE**
  **ONE** Product Owner, 75%+ dedication

- **CLARIFY, CLARIFY, CLARIFY**
  Don’t assume, **ask the customer**!

- **PARTNER WITH THE TEAM**
  Let the Team **give you options**!
Build Trust With Your Team

“Circle of Trust”

UNDERSTAND
Be supportive of the Team’s needs!

RELIABLE
Be consistent & knowledgeable!

BLOCK
Re-route interruptions!

ENCOURAGE
Negotiation & self-organization are key!
Manage Stakeholder Requirements

Owning the Requirements Elicitation Lifecycle

CUSTOMERS
Consider every possible impact!

THE TEAM
It’s always a negotiation - & that’s okay!

STAKEHOLDERS
Know the direct & indirect influencers!

MANAGEMENT
Push back against external pressure!
Find the Best Approach

“Be solution-oriented, not problem-oriented. Focus on what you can DO right now, rather than how much things suck.”

~ Dr. John Berardi via David Chilcott ~

WHAT’S THE BEST WAY TO DO “IT?”

It depends. Create a new standard!

REMEMBER...

Building a Team takes time!

PRACTICE MAKES...

Better! Don’t “do” Agile, BE Agile!

FOCUS ON...

...the “HOW.” Identify the best WIP.
A Product Owner Should...

1. Know your value
2. Ensure your team gets the vision
3. Build trust with your team
4. Manage stakeholder requirements
5. Find the best approach

Value
Vision
Trust
Manage
Support
Continuously Improving... Be a Conductor!

...But “conducting is more difficult than playing a single instrument,” claims Boulez. “You have to know the culture, to know the score, and to project what you want to hear.”

~ Pierre Boulez ~

Conductors...

- Beat Time
- Convey an Interpretation
- Listen
- Lead
- Be a Conduit
- Put in the Hours
- Get the Glory
- Be a Figurehead
- Immortalize a Performance

Source: What Does a Conductor Actually Do?
Thank You!

For more on Product Owner training and resources, check out the following:

[TECH.GSA.GOV/Guides](https://tech.gsa.gov/guides), [ScrumAlliance.org](https://scrumalliance.org), & [Scrum.org](https://scrum.org)